

FINAL MINUTES

Natural Heritage & Endangered Species Advisory Committee (NHESAC)

July 12, 2018

DFW Field Headquarters, Southwest Meeting Room #103
1 Rabbit Hill Road, Westborough, MA 01581

MEMBERS:

Present: Kathleen Anderson, Thomas Rawinski, Mark Mello, Wayne Petersen

Absent: Gwilym Jones, Joseph Larson

ASSOCIATE MEMBERS:

Present: Dave Small, Kevin Powers, Timothy Flanagan

Absent: Mark Pokras, Andy Finton, Bryan Windmiller, William Brumback

AGENCY STAFF:

Present: Tom French, Mike Nelson, Jake Kubel, Jon Regosin

– The meeting was called to order at 1:40 p.m. –

1. Approval of June Minutes

Dave Small motioned that the June minutes be accepted, Kevin Powers seconded, and members voted unanimously to approve.

2. Chair's Comments – Kathleen Anderson

Kathleen shared news of the 14 Atlantic White-sided Dolphins that were recently stranded on Cape Cod. Most were able to be rescued, but some died.

3. Board Member's Comments

There were no board member's comments because Dr. Larson was absent.

4. NHESP Report – Jon Regosin

- Jon, once again, spoke highly of the Division's prescribed burning activities – many successful burns and hundreds of acres restored.
- Daniel Bove is a new hire who will work with Chris Buelow as a Restoration Ecologist.
- Three MassWildlife staff have just traveled to Quebec, along with DCR staff, to fight wildfires and will be gaining valuable experience.

- Jon introduced Jake Kubel who spoke to the Committee about the Eastern Spadefoot Toad introduction in Westfield. Jake then gave an overview of his work with the Blue-spotted Salamander/Jefferson's Salamander Complex. The genetics are fascinating. The polyploid members of the group are unisexual females, but require a sexual male to breed. This year's breeding season was unusual. First breeding occurred on February 26, but was sporadic thereafter.

5. Assistant Director's Report – Tom French

- The field season is in full swing. Tom expressed his concern about attempts to weaken the federal Migratory Bird Treaty Act, which was enacted in 1918. A recent court ruling held harmless the people who destroyed an Osprey nest in Georgia because the nest destruction was incidental to replacing bulbs on a light pole.
- Our Senator Markey introduced federal legislation that would help prevent Right Whales from going extinct. Only 450 North Atlantic Right Whales remain and no young were born this year.
- Banding of Peregrine Falcons is underway. One bird, known for 16 years, succumbed to a rival bird who took over the older bird's territory and mate.
- Members' packets included a paper on public perceptions of endangered species conservation. Not surprisingly, most respondents were for it.
- The annual coastal waterbird cooperators' meeting will be held on August 7 in Barnstable. Massachusetts has been granted a Section 10 permit for Piping Plovers by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. This required the development of a Habitat Conservation Plan (HCP). The permit allows more flexibility in the management of Piping Plovers, but requires mitigation to compensate for any harm these relaxed requirements might cause.

6. Recommended Changes to the Massachusetts List of Endangered, Threatened, and Special Concern Species – Mike Nelson, Invertebrate Zoologist

A total of 17 list changes have been proposed, each of which has been reviewed by external reviewers. Advisory Committee members will be able to read the proposals via a file transfer link.

It's been almost five years since the list was last updated. Mike said his presentation was largely an overview. Members will be able to provide their comments during the September meeting.

The process for recommending a list change is transparent. Anyone can submit such a proposal by using the form on the Division's website. The Committee provides its recommendations to the Board. The Board then votes on the proposed list changes. If approved by the Board, the list changes get published in the state register.

Rarity, trends, and threats are the criteria upon which list changes are made.

Mike then discussed each species under consideration. The graphics were excellent. Members received a very good overview and asked probing questions. For example, in the past, some

dragonflies may have been listed too hastily, only to realize now that some species are more common than once believed. Ultimately, all understood that periodic list changes are necessary to reflect the state of knowledge.

7. Member's and Associate Member's Comments

Kevin Powers – Kevin spent two days off Chatham affixing satellite tags to shearwaters. This will be the sixth year tracking their movement patterns.

Wayne Petersen – Wayne reported that Sandhill Cranes successfully bred at Burrage Pond WMA this year. He was in Montana recently and observed some of the long-lasting effects of the 1988 wildfire at Yellowstone National Park. Biologists there are learning much more about large mammal migrations through the use of satellite tracking. Kathleen Anderson commented that she did not remember her first trip to Yellowstone, as she was just a baby in a back-seat clothes basket!

Dave Small – Dave inquired about the process of making changes to Committee membership. Evidently, the Division takes the lead on that.

Mark Mello – Mark raised a questions of data ownership as it relates to his moth records generated not only from Natural Heritage Program contracts, but also from contracts with other client entities.

Tom Rawinski – Tom attended a stakeholders' meeting with Vermont Fish & Wildlife. They are in the early stages of updating their ten-year big game management plan.

– The meeting adjourned at 4:35 P.M. –

Drafted & Submitted by: Thomas J. Rawinski, Secretary