

## FINAL MINUTES

### **Natural Heritage & Endangered Species Advisory Committee (NHESAC)**

October 14, 2021

DFW Field Headquarters, Southwest Meeting Room #103  
1 Rabbit Hill Road, Westborough, MA 01581  
*Meeting held virtually via Zoom*

#### **MEMBERS:**

Present: Mark Mello, Wayne Petersen, Kevin Powers, Dave Small, Bill Brumback, Tim Flanagan

Absent: Joseph Larson

#### **ASSOCIATE MEMBERS:**

Present: Andy Finton

Absent: Russ Hopping

#### **AGENCY STAFF:**

Present: Eve Schlüter, Mike Nelson, Jason Stolarski, Brian Hawthorne, James DeNormandie (contractor)

#### **OTHERS:**

Present: none

– The meeting was called to order at 1:35 P.M. –

#### **1. Approval of the Previous Month Minutes**

Kevin Powers motioned that the July 8, 2021, minutes be accepted, Bill Brumback seconded, and members voted unanimously to approve.

#### **2. Chair's Comments – Mark Mello**

Mark noted that he has been working on a project in conjunction with NHESP to characterize moths on Martha's Vineyard and Nantucket this year.

#### **3. Board Member's Comments – Joseph Larson**

No comments since Joe was absent.

#### **4. NHESP Report & Assistant Director's Report – Eve Schlüter**

- NHESP was granted a line item in the Commonwealth's budget of \$1M for FY 2022
- NHESP published the Natural Heritage Atlas on schedule (8/1/21).
  - The Atlas is updated on a 4-year cycle.

- Next round of changes to the MESA list will be closed in 2024 which will allow it to be incorporated in the 2025 State Wildlife Action Plan (SWAP)
  - All data for that report will be submitted by 2023
  - Advisory Committee vote on proposed changes is targeted for Oct 12, 2023 meeting
- Eve noted that the “Recovering America’s Wildlife Act” (RAWA) is now moving forward with 125 co-sponsors from the House of Representatives and 28 from the Senate
  - This act will amend the Pittman-Robertson Act and is projected to provide \$1B in funding for all states. MA apportioned target is \$14.8M.
  - House: <https://www.congress.gov/bill/117th-congress/house-bill/2773/cosponsors?r=1&s=1&q=%7B%22search%22%3A%5B%22HR2773%22%5D%2C%22cosponsor-state%22%3A%22Massachusetts%22%7D>
  - Senate: <https://www.congress.gov/bill/117th-congress/senate-bill/2372/cosponsors?q=%7B%22search%22%3A%5B%22S.2372%22%5D%7D&r=1&s=1>
- Natural Heritage is expecting \$1.1M for a competitive regional wildlife grant to study Brook Floaters (*Alasmidonta varicosa*), a freshwater mussel.
- Eve also noted that the Biden Administration has reinstated the previous (long standing) interpretation of the Migratory Bird Treaty Act (MBTA). The prior administration had implemented a more stringent definition of ‘incidental take’, which had more negative effects on migratory bird populations.

5. **BioMap3 Update** – Eve Schlüter, James DeNormandie, Jason Stolarski, Andy Finton, Brian Hawthorne

- Group presentation on the BioMap3 Interim Report detailing out BioMap products, why BioMap3, and what’s new since BioMap2
- An in-depth discussion was provided on important aspects of BioMap3 and how it’s different from BioMap2
- BioMap3 will provide new conservation tools that are directly applicable to different federal/state/regional/municipal agencies
- BioMap2 is now more than 10 years old and is a static document
- BioMap3 builds on its legacy but adds additional data from other sources and is scalable on several levels for conservation and planning
- It will include an interactive web-based interface for interested agencies or municipal groups to work with directly and scale to their spatial level
- Different aspects of core habitats (forest, aquatic) and natural landscapes were explained as examples.
- TNC’s involvement introduces a resilience analysis and Index of Ecological Integrity (IEI) coefficient which has been expanded nationwide
- Habitat management and restoration takes the prior focus (BioMap and Biomap2) of identifying important areas to now include resilience to restoration and management. This is to identify such areas that can be restored or recreated back to more resilient prior habitats that have lost their diversity.
- BioMap3 release is targeted for Jun/Jul 2022 and will be integrated with the SWAP

## **6. Member's and Associate Member's Comments**

**Wayne Petersen** – Wayne provided his thoughts on a new book by Scott Weidensaul, “A World on the Wing: The Global Odyssey of Migrating Birds”. It combines research telemetry with his personal experiences. A good reference book for bird migration.

**Bill Brumback** – No comment

**Tim Flanagan** – Commented on his utmost support for BioMap3

**Dave Small** – No comment

**Kevin Powers** – Kevin commented on a dramatic increase in workload now seen by state and federal agencies for planning and developing offshore wind power. Renewable energy development on national scale is taking place.

**Andy Finton** – Andy drew an analogy of the state's solar development (other form of renewable energy) and its use of BioMap2 to steer incentives in the state's planning of where to locate solar farms.

**Russ Hopping** – Absent

Kevin motioned to adjourn, which was seconded by Bill with unanimous vote.

– The meeting adjourned at 2:50 P.M. –

Drafted & Submitted by: Kevin Powers