

FINAL MINUTES

Natural Heritage & Endangered Species Advisory Committee (NHESAC)

September 12, 2019

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

MEMBERS:

Present: Mark Mello, Joseph S. Larson PhD., Wayne R. Petersen, William E. Brumback, Timothy Flanagan, David H. Small

Absent: Kevin Powers

ASSOCIATE MEMBERS:

Present: Andy Finton, Bryan Windmiller, Russ Hopping

Absent:

AGENCY STAFF:

Present: Sarah Maier, Amanda Veinotte

OTHERS:

N/A

– The meeting was called to order at 1:30 P.M. –

1. Approval of the July Minutes

Joseph Larson motioned that the July minutes be accepted, David Small seconded, and members voted unanimously to approve.

2. Acting Chair's Comments – Mark Mello

Mark shared a Boston Globe article on solar backlash, which discussed how the public is unhappy with big solar arrays. It was noted that the SMART program revision is out for public comment. There was also a very in-depth article (8 pages) in the Globe on ticks, Lyme, and other diseases, plus an additional essay on ticks in the Globe magazine.

3. Board Member's Comments – Joseph Larson

The Fisheries and Wildlife Board is moving forward with regulations which would prohibit hunting contests for predators and furbearers. Public hearings will be held in Westborough and the Berkshires; details to follow.

Joe shared a recent article on invasive earthworms with a new invasive worm arriving in the Northeast ("Crazy Snake Worm" *Amyntas agrestis*). This species is considered very invasive and a forest pest.

The Restoring America's Wildlife Act bill was discussed. Passage could mean a substantial amount of money to the State's NHESP and would be targeted to help species identified in the State Wildlife Action Plan (SWAP). There was a discussion on inclusion of plants in this process, and Massachusetts did include plants in the SWAP.

4. NHESP Report – Sarah Maier

Sarah Maier updated the committee on the following:

- Kevin Powers and David Small have been appointed as full voting members of the Committee. Next month's agenda will include the reorganization of the committee with a Chairman, Vice-chairman, and Secretary voted on.
- The August 28th Fisheries and Wildlife Board meeting included a hearing on the proposed changes to the MA endangered species list. It is hoped that this process can be completed by the end of the calendar year.
- Staff changes include the hiring of an Aquatic Ecologist, Jason Carmignani, and the departure of Elaine Brewer who accepted a new position in the Department.
- Mosquito spraying is occurring in many parts of the state and heritage staff are monitoring and advising on the spray activity. Discussion of excluded sites now includes organic farms and large water bodies including certain drinking water supplies.

5. NHESP Data Improvement Initiative – Amanda Veinotte (NHESP Project Coordinator) and Sarah Maier (Information Manager)

This was an excellent presentation on the many aspects of the digital interface in the NHESP. Programs were outlined and new advances in upgrading the programs were explained. Programs include PIPODES/Ternodes, online donations, online MESA filing, VPRS 2.0, Plant Collector/Survey 123 Project, habitat management, and a Lepidoptera Collector Project.

6. Member's and Associate Member's Comments

Wayne Petersen – No Comment

Bill Brumback – No Comment

Tim Flanagan – No Comment

Andy Finton – Will be attending a resilience land initiative being called by Robert O'Connor at EOEEA. A range of interests will be represented including water supply, land trusts, forestry, wildlife, etc.

Bryan Windmiller – It's turtle hatching time. Many Blanding's, Wood, and Box turtles have been released.

Dave Small – Lynn Harper (NHESP) and Dave Small (Athol Bird and Nature Club) hosted a "Get your Geek On" program at the Millers River Environmental Center in Athol. The main topic was an introduction to iNaturalist. 16 attendees learned how to set up their smartphones and use the app. Several Wildlife Management Areas, including Muddy Brook and Montague Plains, are project areas and naturalists are encouraged to document the plants and animal life occurring at these WMAs.

Russ Hopping – Russ reported on a very successful year for Piping plovers at TTOR properties. Russ discussed predator control and the variety of different predators occurring along coastal beaches from Great horned owls, skunks, and crows. Discussion on the increase in fish crow populations around the state was noted.

– The meeting adjourned at 4:00 P.M. –

Drafted & Submitted by: David H. Small