# Policy Committee Meeting Minutes

Committee Members Present: Jennifer Wilson, Jeff Collins, Phil Doherty

Other Councilors Present**:** Dicken Crane

DCR Staff Attendees: Matthew Perry, Eric Seaborn

## Public Attendees: Chris Redfern, Chris Sumner

## Call to Order and Welcome – Committee Chair Jennifer Wilson

Chair Wilson welcomed the attendees, introduced the committee, and welcomed the members of the public that were attending. She went over the public comment guidelines. She then welcomed Eric Seaborn, Director of Natural Resources at DCR and thanked him for coming to present.

Before Mr. Seaborn’s presentation, Chair Wilson updated the committee that Commissioner Arrigo will be presenting on plans for the RMP program at the September meeting and giving a fuller presentation at the October meeting.

## Presentation on Rodenticide Use on DCR Property

Councilor Collins thanked Mr. Seaborn for coming and said it was great to see so many members of the public at the meeting. He said that Second-generation anticoagulant rodenticides (SGARs) can effect raptors that consume rodents that have ingested the rodenticides and then die as a result. He said that from his work at Mass Audubon, they were taking a lot of action to limit the use of rodenticides, and that the committee would like to learn what the DCR approach and practice of rodenticides is, if the agency is using SGARs, and if there is a way to use integrated pest management. He said that if DCR can figure it out, it would be a great model for other state agencies to use.

Chair Wilson said that this is an area where DCR should be leading, and that the committee is proud and happy to be supportive of that.

Mr. Seaborn thanked the committee and said that he echoes a lot of what Councilor Collins just said. He said that there is a lot of awareness throughout the agency of the detrimental effects of SGARs, and that they are working with the operations division to get a handle on what people know about these rodenticides and where they are employed, and it has been reassuring to hear from Director of Operations Rob King that staff have an awareness that SGARs are problematic and that they avoid them to the greatest extent possible. He said that they are still collecting information about where they may be in use, but the feedback right now is that staff are not using them, particularly in outside locations, but that there is still some continued use in indoor locations especially in urban locations, but staff there is open to limiting or eliminating their use.

Mr. Seaborn said that the bird specialists and shorebird team on staff at DCR including Stewardship Conservation Biologist Sean Riley are very aware of this problem, the impacts it has on raptors, and he and Mr. Seaborn have made efforts to make a best management practices document for staff. He said that it is still in draft, but is moving forward to being finalized. The document will go into the bio accumulative effects of the use of SGARs and makes an attempt to solve some of the problems for operations staff by giving them alternatives including going back to snap traps, making sure that all trash is cleaned up, eliminating the use of trash cans, and having a “carry in/carry out” policy at parks. Beyond that, Mr. Seaborn said that they are encouraging staff to look at long term and other solutions that would have additional benefits including restoring habitat that is attractive to predators of rodents, managing for meadows and low mow areas, and other ways that can encourage raptors and other predators of rodents.

He said that there is some concern about highly urbanized areas and interior spaces at DCR, and that they are looking into piloting an integrated approach and other long-term solutions. He said that they don’t want to completely take something off the table and cause another health issue by having an interior rat population, but from the input that he is receiving from field staff, Mr. Seaborn said that he would be surprised if that was a problem. He said that in general, staff is not using these materials in the parks and they are very aware of the issue. Mr. Seaborn is proposing to senior staff to work with the research office for the opportunity to look at pilot studies and applications, and where SGARs might still be in use to study the effects of limiting or eliminating.

Councilor Collins asked if DCR was subject to the requirement to document the use of SGARs.

Mr. Seaborn said that he is not sure and can check. He said that if chemicals are used in the shorebird program, they have to report it and work with the federal government. He said that he’ll have to look into what reporting is currently, but that operations has mostly responded that they are not using them on DCR property.

Councilor Collins said that it was a good idea to work with the research office and that it would be good to report or keep internal records especially to show how much is eliminated.

Chair Wilson asked if in urban areas, is DCR coordinating with municipalities to make sure that there is consistency.

Mr. Seaborn said that it is something that they would like to do, and that they are being very deliberate about the process. He said that the Boston area is one of the greatest concerns because of the rodent population there. The concerns that Mr. King is getting about complete elimination of SGARs is primarily coming from DCR’s Boston region and other urbanized areas. He said that whatever the agency ends up doing, there would be a process or working with all partners, both municipal and non-profit.

Chair Wilson said to Councilor Collins point about monitoring, she hopes there will be an opportunity for public education and to show the public how management is done at DCR and how they can implement the same practices.

Mr. Seaborn said that it would be a very attractive campaign, adding that they received a significant amount of ARPA funding and one project through the funding is new signage and information materials and that they may want to do a sign about not using SGARs that would get the message across in an engaging way.

Councilor Crane commented that one place where rodenticides are often used is farms and suggested partnering with the Massachusetts Department of Agricultural Resources (MDAR) to discuss how it is being used on farms and public properties.

Councilor Collins asked about partners and lease holders on DCR lands and if the policy will be comprehensive or if there are any subsets of DCR operations where decisions are left to outside groups.

Mr. Seaborn said that the intent is that the policy would be comprehensive and as the land owner, even if DCR is leasing the land or turning operations over to a different group, this is a decision that would be applied to all properties. He said that they don’t want to end up in a position where our operations staff is prohibited from doing something that a partner group can do.

Chair Wilson asked what the timing was for a presentation to the entire council.

Mr. Seaborn said that several interesting questions have been raised that they would like to look at and that he will work with Deputy Commissioner Priscilla Geigis and Mr. King and that they will keep moving forward on the policy timeline and will report back.

Chair Wilson said that she advocates for not waiting for everything to be perfect before coming to the council and said that they can maybe be helpful as a testing ground.

## Public Comments

Public comments were offered by the following:

Glen Ayers, Greenfield

Don Ogden, Leverett

Gary Menin, Sterling

Laura Kiesel, Arlington

Clint Richmond, Sierra Club

## Approval of Minutes

Councilor Collins made a motion to approve the June 26, 2024 meeting minutes.

Councilor Wilson seconded.

### ***Roll Call on the Approval of Minutes***

Councilor Collins: Yes

Councilor Doherty: Yes

Chair Wilson: Yes

The June minutes were approved.

## Councilor Comments

Councilor Collins said that the Conservation Committee will be meeting the following week on biodiversity goals and how they relate to landscape designations.

## Adjournment

Chair Wilson thanked everyone for their attendance and adjourned the meeting.

*Please check the DCR Stewardship Council webpage for notice of upcoming meetings.* [*https://www.mass.gov/service-details/dcr-stewardship-council*](https://www.mass.gov/service-details/dcr-stewardship-council)