



MASSWILDLIFE

DIVISION OF FISHERIES & WILDLIFE

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Jack Buckley, *Director*

COMMONWEALTH OF MASSACHUSETTS
DIVISION OF FISHERIES AND WILDLIFE
FISHERIES AND WILDLIFE BOARD
MEETING MINUTES

PRESENT: Dr. Joseph Larson/Chair, Michael Roche/Vice Chair, Bonnie Booth/Secretary, Ernest Foster IV, Stephen Sears, Dr. Brandi Van Roo, Fred Winthrop, Ronal Amidon/Commissioner/DFG, Mary-Lee King/ Deputy Commissioner/DFG, Jack Buckley/Director, Mark Tisa/Deputy Director, Kris McCarthy/Associate Director/Finance and Administration, Trina Moruzzi/Assistant Director/Field Operations, Tom French/Assistant Director/NHESP, Michael Huguenin/Assistant Director/Wildlife, Todd Richards/Assistant Director/Fisheries, Marion Larson/Chief/ Information and Education, Craig MacDonnell/Chief/Wildlife Lands, James Burnham/Program Coordinator/ Regulations, Nicole McSweeney/Outreach and Marketing Coordinator; PUBLIC: Dave Morin, Jim Wallace, David Vance, Mark Galkowski, Charles Lewis, Michael Veloza, John Kellstrand, Tina Fortier, Conor Kenny, Matt DiBona, Ann Suazo, Gabriella Suazo, Danielle Carr

DATE: February 6, 2018

LOCATION: Division of Fisheries and Wildlife Field Headquarters
Westborough, Massachusetts

Chair Larson opened the February meeting of the Fisheries and Wildlife Board at 3:00 p.m.

Acceptance of Minutes

A motion was made by Vice Chair Roche to accept the minutes from the January 2018 meeting as presented. The motion was seconded by Mr. Winthrop. The motion passed unanimously.

Chairman's Comments

Chair Larson reported that in the Board's meeting packets was a newspaper article regarding the long process of clean-up of PCB contamination in the Housatonic River. The Chair stated that interested parties have been waiting for the EPA to rule on an appeal from GE, and that Deputy Director Tisa is involved in the negotiations but cannot speak about it yet. Chair Larson reported that, generally, the process has been upheld by the EPA, and that Dr. Tisa had a major role in the science and rationale that has survived and coordinated with other state agencies to keep the message the same throughout the EPA process.

Chair Larson also stated that several board members have expressed a desire to have a better understanding of the Division's finances. He noted that there has not been an annual report published since 2015 and that the Board should not have to wait 2 years for the information.

Commissioner's Comments

Commissioner Amidon stated that he was busy with Marine Fisheries in the previous month. He reported that the FTE (full-time-employee) cap has been relaxed and that MassWildlife's key positions that have been filed are coming through. He also noted that the Board has some regulations coming up for review.

Regarding the Hyannis Pond complex, the Commissioner reported that Southeast Supervisor Jason Zimmer has been doing an outstanding job, and that he prepared a three-way USFWS-Barnstable Water-USGS agreement to move forward with a study of possible impacts of withdrawals on the complex. He noted that the water bodies are kettle ponds with sensitive habitats that need to be protected, including from the testing itself.

MASSWILDLIFE

Commissioner Amidon also reported that the DFG and MarineFish (Division of Marine Fisheries) met to discuss recent Monomoy studies, and staff from both is working on an MOU on sharing the results of studies and dividing up the work. He stated that throughout the meeting the team discussed possibility of hunting on Monomoy.

Director's Comments

Director Buckley reported that Associate Director Kris McCarthy was recently named as Vice Chair of the NEAFWA (Northeast Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies) R3 Committee, which is a very good thing given all her work with RBFF (the Recreational Boating and Fishing Foundation).

The Director also reported that Massachusetts broke a record with the 2017 deer harvest, including during the Archery and Primitive Firearms seasons.

Director Buckley reported that a meeting was held at the Cronin Building the previous weekend with 60 bird banders; Dr. Van Roo had been in attendance at the meeting and would offer a brief report. Dr. Van Roo confirmed that 60 people who are bird banders came together at the Cronin Building on the previous Saturday. Everyone was very enthusiastic; the attendees talked of organizing training, workshops, and data collaboration. She offered congratulations to State Ornithologist Drew Vitz for all his work pulling the meeting together, including three presentations, and she noted that the networking potential among the participants is great.

The Director then reported that Central Wildlife District Supervisor Bill Davis has announced his retirement, effective the end of April, and Director Buckley stated – not to steal Mr. Davis' thunder – but he will also retire at the same time.

Old Business

Species Management on USFWS Refuges (Jack Buckley)

Director Buckley reported that three Directors of the NEAFWA, including himself, have begun working together on this relationship because the goals are shared across the Northeast states.

New Business

Proposed Extended Archery Deer Season in Certain Zones (David Stainbrook)

Deer and Moose Project Leader David Stainbrook presented the Board with a proposal to consider extending the Archery hunting season for deer in Wildlife Management Zones 10-14 by starting it 2 weeks earlier, to be in line with neighboring states, which was developed by staff at the request of the Board as part of the 2017 Deer Review process after a public comment from a constituent at the March 2017 Board meeting.

As part of the annual Deer Review in June 2017, staff recommended starting the Archery Deer Hunting Season 2 weeks earlier in WMZs 10-14, where deer numbers are above our management range and can support the increased hunter opportunity and deer harvest. The Board voted to send the proposal to a public hearing, which has been scheduled for March 7, 2018.

Staff recommended starting the archery season 2 weeks earlier, which would extend it from 6 weeks to 8 weeks, and start the season on the eighth Monday prior to Thanksgiving (October 2, in 2018), after the Youth Deer Hunt Day. The staff did not recommend an extension in WMZs 1-9 because deer numbers are already balanced within MassWildlife's management range with the current framework. Mr. Stainbrook cautioned that, depending on the effect of the proposed change on the population, a season extension could lead to further restrictions, such as fewer antlerless permits or a reduced bag limit on bucks. Mr. Stainbrook then briefly informed the Board about the outreach to other state and federal agencies, conservation groups, local land trusts and municipalities, and other groups such as the MSPCA and the Massachusetts Bowhunters Association that staff had done as part of the review process and before drafting the final regulation.

There was a question from the Board regarding possible impacts to the process of checking deer. Mr. Stainbrook stated that online checking will primarily be used and check stations will be open because of the Youth deer Day. In

response to a question about ADPs (Antlerless Deer Permits), Mr. Stainbrook reported that the over-the-counter sale day will move forward by a couple of weeks to let hunters get their permits lined up well in advance.

Presentation on Proposed 2018-2019 Migratory Bird Hunting Seasons (Michael Huguenin)

Assistant Director Huguenin reported to the Board on the 2018-2019 federal frameworks that set the boundaries for the states' hunting seasons, reminding the members that states can be more restrictive but cannot be more liberal than the federal frameworks. He then presented the recommendations for the 2018-2019 Migratory Game Bird Seasons in Massachusetts:

MIGRATORY BIRD SEASON RECOMMENDATIONS

Rails:

Season	Sep 1 - Nov 7
Sora	Bag 5, Poss. 15
Virginia	Daily Bag 10, Poss. 30

Common Snipe:

Season	Sep 1 - Dec 16
	Daily Bag 8, Poss. 24

Woodcock:

Season	Oct 4- Nov 24
	Daily Bag 3, Poss. 9

Waterfowl

Statewide September Resident Canada Goose:

Season	Sept 4 - 21
	Daily Bag 15, Possession 45

Statewide Youth Waterfowl Hunt:

Season	Sat. Sep 22 & Sat. Oct 6
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****Bag Limits: Daily bag of 6 ducks but no more than 4 of any species that is not further restricted**

****Possession Limits are 3 times the daily bag limit**

Berkshire Zone

Duck:

Season	Mon. Oct 8 to Sat Nov 24 & Mon. Dec 3 to Sat. Dec 22
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Goose:

Season	Wed. Oct 10 – Sat. Nov 24 & Mon. Dec 3- Thur. Dec 13
	Daily Bag 3

Central Zone

Ducks:

Season	Mon. Oct 8- Sat. Nov 24 & Wed. Dec 12- Tue. Jan 1.
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Geese: Changed to moderate package from 70 and 3 to 60 and 2 due to declining breeding population in Labrador and Newfoundland

Season	Mon. Oct 8 – Sat. Nov 24 & Wed. Dec 12- Tue. Jan 1
	Daily Bag 2

Special Late Canada Goose season:

Season Tue. Jan 15 – Fri. Feb 15
Daily Bag 5

Coastal ZoneDucks:

Season Fri. Oct 12- Sat. Oct 20 &
Mon. Nov 12– Thur. Jan 10

Geese: Changed to moderate package from 70 and 3 to 60 and 2 due to declining Canadian population in Labrador and Newfoundland

Season Fri. Oct 12- Sat. Oct 20 &
Mon. Nov 12– Thur. Jan 10
Daily Bag 2

Brant: **Assumes the same framework as 2017; the Brant federal framework will not be determined until mid-February.

Season Mon. Nov 19– Sat. Jan 26
Daily Bag 2 birds; 6 possession

Special late goose season Cape Cod Canal and north only:

Season Tue. Jan 15 – Fri. Feb 15
Daily bag 5

Snow Geese:

Season Same as ducks for each zone and during the late special goose season in areas open to Canada goose hunting
Daily Bag 15, Possession 45

Sea Ducks:

Season Mon. Nov 19– Sat. Jan 26

In Sea duck zone (Count as regular ducks in all other zones):

5 birds (but no more than 4 scoter, 4 eider [1 female], 4 long tailed ducks)

15 poss. (but no more than 12 scoter, 12 eider [3 females], 12 long tailed ducks)

Falconry

Season Statewide: Oct.8 to Feb 8.
Daily Bag 3; Possession 9
(ducks and coot only, no geese)

The Board asked a question regarding the ongoing Woodcock Initiative, whether staff has access to that data. Mr. Huguenin reported that Massachusetts has a number of listening stations. Upland Game Biologist David Scarpitti reported that the latest and most effective woodcock research is using radio-telemetry, which is extremely expensive; staff in Massachusetts focuses on the migratory process and the bird's ecology. He reported that researchers had just found out that funding will not be available, so small states will not be able to afford to conduct intensive research. He also noted that the research is overdue in the Atlantic Flyway.

Law Enforcement Comments

Captain Tony Kabir reported on Office of Law Enforcement (MEP) activity in the month preceding the February meeting. He stated that MEP responded to 21 DFW-assist calls. It also investigated one exotic wildlife issue, involving red-eared sliders. He reported that 250 large animals were found coming in through the food trade. He also reported 13 cases of hunter harassment, which mostly involved understanding setbacks and the rights of hunters in coastal areas. The MEP received 433 hunting complaints in this time period, two resulted from potential

Lacey Act violations: One man harvested 15 deer this season and some prohibited species. He also reported another violation involving a Connecticut resident hunting over bait and with a rifle who extended his activities into Massachusetts. Coordinating with Mr. Stainbrook, Captain Kabir stated that officers investigated 300 cases of potential hunting violations, including that of buying stamps for the Primitive Firearms season after the harvest took place and of license buyers falsifying Hunter Education Program qualifications.

Natural Heritage & Endangered Species Advisory Committee Report

Dr. Joseph Larson reported that the Natural Heritage & Endangered Species Advisory Committee met for its January meeting on January 8 in the Cronin Building. Assistant Director for NHESP Tom French reviewed vacancies in the Regulatory Review section of the Heritage Program, where there are two vacancies that are causing delays in processing reviews. The Assistant Director had also reported that state tax donations were nearly \$100,000 above the previous year's levels. The Chair stated that it was difficult to say why the increase, but word may be getting out better. The Assistant Director had also reported that we are up to 68 breeding pairs of Bald Eagles in the state.

Chair Larson also reported that MassWildlife Habitat Biologist Marianne Piche gave a presentation on the work she does on projects to assist landowners who want to improve wildlife habitat for species of conservation need. She had reported that there are two federal programs that help landowners create or improve habitat on their lands, the Environmental Quality Program and the Wetland Reserve Easements Program. The NRCS is a federal partner and its monies come to the states through the Farm Bill. Ms. Piche proactively determines who owns areas of significant habitat and reaches out to the owners with information about the programs for which their lands make them eligible.

Set Meeting Date

Members confirmed April 10, 2018, for the April Board meeting date. The meeting will begin at 11:00 a.m. and the Waterfowl hearing will begin at noon.

Member's Comments

Chair Larson wished to add to his comments at the beginning of the meeting with a few words about the Director. The Chair stated that he appreciated the Director's work on outreach, publications and branding, and opening the building to outsiders. These are all very timely initiatives, he said, which interest the Director and are good for the agency.

Fred Winthrop commented that he was sorry to hear about Director's retirement and that he wished him well.

Michael Roche commented that the Director brought skills and ideas that were needed and that were appreciated.

Brandi Van Roo stated that the Director should enjoy his retirement.

Ernie Foster reported that he had attended the Western Lands Committee meeting and found it a real highlight of his tenure; he thought it was very interesting and enjoyable seeing the enthusiasm and attention to detail of all the participating staff. All were extremely knowledgeable and passionate about the work.

Mr. Roche moved that the Board go into executive session to discuss proposed land acquisitions whose negotiations would be compromised by discussion in open session and then to immediately adjourn the meeting without returning to open session; Dr. Van Roo seconded; the vote in favor was unanimous.

Chief of Wildlife Lands Craig MacDonnell presented the details of three projects to the Board; each was individually reviewed and approved unanimously by the Board.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 4:40 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,

Bonnie Booth
Secretary

List of documents presented to the Board in its February meeting packets

February Agenda

Draft January meeting minutes for review

Berkshire *Eagle* article, "Winners, losers in 'Rest of River' appeal decision"; January 27, 2018

Copy of letter of resignation from Director Jack Buckley to Chair Joseph Larson

Spreadsheet of Natural Heritage Fund Taxpayer Donations (1992 to 2018)

March 7, 2018, Public Hearing Notice

2018-2019 Migratory Bird Hunting Season recommendations

Executive session documentation