



MASSWILDLIFE

DIVISION OF FISHERIES & WILDLIFE

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

PRESENT: Michael Roche/Vice Chair, Bonnie Booth/Secretary, Bob Durand, Stephen Sears, Dr. Brandi Van Roo, Ron Amidon/Commissioner/DFG, Mary-Lee King/Deputy Commissioner/DFG, Mark S. Tisa/Director, Jon Regosin/Deputy Director, Eve Schluter/Assistant Director/NHESP, Michael Huguenin/Assistant Director/Wildlife, Trina Moruzzi/Assistant Director/Operations, Todd Richards/Assistant Director/Fisheries, Marion Larson/Chief/Information and Education, Joe Rogers/Supervisor/Conn. Valley Wildlife District, Todd Olanyk/Supervisor/Central Wildlife District, Nicole McSweeney/Outreach and Marketing Manager, Elizabeth Wroblicka/Chief/Wildlife Lands, Major David Loos/OLE, Mark Reil/Legislative Director/DFG; PUBLIC: Elizabeth Magner, Dave Morin

DATE: January 15, 2020

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

Chair Larson was delayed and Vice Chair Roche opened the January meeting of the Fisheries and Wildlife Board at 10:05 a.m.

Acceptance of Minutes

A motion was made by Secretary Booth to table the minutes from the December meeting until the February meeting. The motion was seconded by Dr. Van Roo. The motion passed unanimously.

Chair's Comments

Vice Chair Roche asked for a motion to delay this agenda item until the arrival of the Chair. Dr. Van Roo so moved; Secretary Booth seconded the motion; it passed unanimously.

Commissioner's Comments

Commissioner Amidon introduced new Legislative Director Mark Reil, who was present and will be working with and under the direction of Deputy Commissioner Mary-Lee King on legislative issues.

Director's Comments

Director Tisa welcomed the Board and the meeting to the first meeting in the new year. Director Tisa was pleased to report the passage and signing by the president of the Modernization of Pittman-Robertson (P-R) Act. Since 1937, P-R has provided funding for wildlife and habitat conservation. The Director noted that the monies come from excise taxes on hunting equipment that is disbursed by the Federal Aid Program to the states. Director Tisa explained that the modernization act has been updated not by more funding, but in that it allows states to use funding on R3 activities and will allow states to address declining participation, in Massachusetts and all over the country, where it is also a major issue. He noted that it has become such an issue that the bill moved right through both houses and president signed it quickly.

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Vice Chair Roche asked the Director to provide a presentation to the Board so that members understand the details of how Pittman-Robertson works and how it impacts our wildlife management and habitat work in Massachusetts. Director Tisa reported that these issues are why the Board has always mandated the Director to work actively at the national level. Relationships between the U.S Fish and Wildlife Service, the Federal Aid Program, and state staff have never been stronger or more active. The Director stated that he will develop a presentation to tell the Board about P-R for a future meeting.

Director Tisa asked Deputy Director Regosin to report. The Deputy Director stated that he had learned the previous evening that Representative Neal is the latest co-sponsor of RAWA [the Recovering America's Wildlife Act], which is a great development because there are currently fewer co-sponsors than there were in the last Congress.

Law Enforcement Comments

Major Loos reported on year-end numbers of calls for service for 2019. He also reported that the OLE would again be exhibiting and talking with sportsmen and visitors to the Springfield Sportsmen's Show in February (dates), where the OLE and MassWildlife traditionally have displays in close proximity.

The Major also reported ongoing LART [Large Animal Response Team] training in cooperation with Assistant Director Huguenin and his Wildlife staff, anticipating an April rollout for a new training protocol they have developed.

Major Loos briefed the Board on a recent baiting case in Royalston and reported that the harvested deer had been confiscated. OLE had also worked with counterparts in New Hampshire on a Hubbardston case that brought four violations and a confiscated deer. The Major cited a brief example of an investigation sparked by user posted on Facebook that brought a charge for an illegal taking of bobcat.

Personnel Report (Jon Regosin)

Deputy Director Regosin submitted the following personnel report for the Board's consideration and vote:

New Hire

<u>Employee</u>	<u>Position</u>	<u>Location</u>
Eli Pease	Western Wildlife District Wildlife Technician II	Dalton

Mr. Sears moved acceptance of the report as presented, Secretary Booth seconded the motion; the vote in favor was unanimous.

Update on Hunting Access on U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Refuges (Michael Huguenin)

Assistant Director for Wildlife Michael Huguenin reported that there are 11 National Wildlife Refuges in Massachusetts, with a total area of 25,000 acres, and that MassWildlife staff has been working for years to enable more access to them for hunting, fishing, and trapping. He explained that the refuge system has a process to open refuges to sporting activities, but newly acquired refuges are assumed closed until otherwise opened, and opening them requires the development of a hunt plan, a compatibility determination, and an environmental assessment.

Assistant Director Huguenin briefly provided background for the current effort to increase hunting opportunities on national refuges and ran through the timeline of steps that have led up to the present stage of negotiation, including meetings with refuge management; a USFWS-proposed rule governing opening refuges; the development by the USFWS of a communications process with states specifically

for access issues; and, in 2019, the application of the process to the Assabet River, the Great Meadows, and the Oxbow NWRs, which were all opened on a limited basis for some species on some of the respective refuge acreages. In May of 2019, MassWildlife also submitted comments on the hunt plans for the Mashpee and the Parker River NWRs and in December, following a meeting and the written comment, additional access and expansions were announced. The Assistant Director also detailed the recent increases in open acreage for particular species on the Eastern Massachusetts refuges, and reported next steps, including getting more details about the proposed hunt plans, learning how the increases compare and whether the open acres are open to all. In addition, he will examine whether the season lengths are the same as our regulations, find out what is next for the other refuges, and continue MassWildlife's collaboration and line of communication with the USFWS on this important issue.

After a brief discussion, Vice Chair Roche thanked Assistant Director Huguenin for his update and asked him to continue to update the Board on his progress.

Natural Heritage and Endangered Species Advisory Committee Report

Vice Chair Roche asked for a motion to delay this agenda item until the arrival of the Chair. Dr. Van Roo so moved; Secretary Booth seconded the motion; it passed unanimously.

Set Meeting Date

Vice Chair Roche asked for a motion to delay this agenda item until the arrival of the Chair. Dr. Van Roo so moved; Secretary Booth seconded the motion; it passed unanimously.

Member's Comments

Mr. Durand reported that he had gone to the Essex County League meeting the previous Thursday and enjoyed meeting and talking with the members from the clubs.

Dr. Van Roo, Vice Chair Roche, Secretary Booth, and Mr. Sears reported no comment.

A motion was made by Secretary Booth to move into Executive Session for the purpose of discussing certain land acquisitions and to reconvene and return to open session to complete the agenda after the arrival of the Chair. The motion was seconded by Mr. Sears. The motion passed unanimously.

Executive Session

Chief of Wildlife Lands Wroblecka presented three proposed acquisitions, which were each reviewed and all unanimously approved by the Board.

The Board closed the Executive session and reconvened in open session, and the public was invited to rejoin the meeting.

Set Meeting Date

The Chair had not yet arrived, so members discussed dates for the February Fisheries and Wildlife Board meeting. Members selected Tuesday, February 18, 2020, at 10:00 a.m., at the Field Headquarters.

Members also discussed dates for the March meeting, and after a brief discussion chose Tuesday, March 31, 2020, at 10:00 a.m., at the Field Headquarters.

The Chair not having arrived and there being no further business, Mr. Sears moved that the meeting adjourn; Dr. Van Roo seconded the motion, and the meeting was adjourned at 11:10 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Bonnie Booth
Secretary

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

January Agenda

OLE reports on total calls for service from CY 2019 and the 5-year period, CY 2015-2019

Personnel Report

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

Documentation for the executive session