



MASSWILDLIFE

## DIVISION OF FISHERIES & WILDLIFE

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### 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, Bob Durand, Ernest W. Foster IV, Stephen Sears, Dr. Brandi Van Roo, Ron Amidon/Commissioner/DFG, Mary-Lee King/Deputy Commissioner/DFG, Mark Tisa/Director, Jon Regosin/Deputy Director, Kris McCarthy/Associate Director/Finance and Administration, Eve Schlüter/Assistant Director/NHESP, Michael Huguenin/Assistant Director/Wildlife, Trina Moruzzi/Assistant Director/Operations, Todd Richards/Assistant Director/Fisheries, Marion Larson/Chief/Information and Education, Jason Zimmer, Joe Rogers, Pat Huckery, Todd Olanyk, Elizabeth Wroblecka/Chief/Wildlife Lands, Nicole McSweeney/Manager/Outreach and Marketing, Captain Terry Davis/OLE; PUBLIC: Steven LaRivee, Dave Morin, Bill Davis.

DATE: November 19, 2019

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

Chair Larson opened the November meeting of the Fisheries and Wildlife Board at 10:05 a.m.

#### Acceptance of Minutes

A motion was made by Secretary Booth to accept the minutes from the October meeting as presented. The motion was seconded by Dr. Van Roo. The motion passed unanimously.

#### Chair's Comments

Chair Larson welcomed the attendees. He reported that a gift from the Board for retiring Chief of Hatcheries Ken Simmons had been secured as requested.

#### Commissioner's Comments

Commissioner Amidon detailed his meetings, site tours, and events for the previous month and informed the Board about his upcoming schedule. He also reported that there were recent retirements announced in the Commissioner's office, including Division of Marine Fisheries Director David Pierce and DFG General Counsel Rich Lehan. After many decades of state service, the Commissioner noted, the retirements are well deserved. The Commissioner reported that he had attended a recent North Quabbin Trails Association meeting and that he had had a productive meeting with Acting DCR Commissioner Jim Montgomery on topics of common interest.

Vice Chair Roche commended the efforts of the Commissioner and former Central WD Manager Bill Davis on inroads made with the North Quabbin Trails Association. He stated that it is good that the Department and the agency are maintaining those relationships.

#### Director's Comments

Director Tisa reported that he had no comments at that point in the meeting.

MASSWILDLIFE

### Law Enforcement Comments

Chair Larson thanked Captain Terry Davis for attending the meeting and providing the Board with the Office of Law Enforcement report. Captain Davis reported on a number of issues the OLE officers have been working on, including 4 baiting cases for which a 2-year investigation had been completed with no charges filed. He reported that an ATV operator had allegedly attacked a hunter and had been charged with hunter harassment. He also reported that officers found 17 spotted salamanders in the Worcester-Oakham area that had been illegally imported from China, noting that the animals had been seized. The Captain reported that there have been recent bear incidents that OLE has helped to resolve, as well as meetings with town officials explaining the importance of deer hunting on town lands. He reported 3 hunting accidents so far in the deer season and 2 hunting incidents of falls from tree stands.

Captain Davis reported a number of hunting investigations, including a bear hunting charge with a party seen dragging a bear 2 days before the fall season began. He reported a case where a Massachusetts resident took a deer illegally in New York State using a license and tags of an uncle; Massachusetts officers assisted in the investigation but there were no Massachusetts charges filed.

Chair Larson thanked Captain Davis for his report.

### Using iNaturalist for MassWildlife Projects (Lynn Harper)

Before introducing the presentation, Assistant Director for NHESP Eve Schlüter asked for the opportunity to briefly report on her recent experience with the program Conservation Leaders for Tomorrow (CLFT), which she stated was an excellent learning experience for a conservation professional like herself with no direct experience of hunters or hunting.

Director Tisa asked for the opportunity to comment and reminded the meeting that CLFT was set up about 15 years previously in response to a nationwide need for basic exposure to hunting ethics, practices, and experiences because many wildlife professionals coming out of graduate school have no experience or understanding of the importance of hunting in wildlife conservation in America.

The Director stated that the real challenge is to provide additional opportunities to these staff that come back and want more experience, noting that this is the biggest logjam, both in Massachusetts and nationally. Dr. Van Roo observed that she sees the same thing in college students, where they get the exposure to ideas about hunting, but no opportunities to try it. Secretary Booth noted that any women staff could join Becoming an Outdoor Woman (BOW) seminars for deer and turkey. Dr. Van Roo added that only 50% of potential students (i.e., the women) can take BOW courses, and that there is a need for exposure for all young wildlife professionals.

Vice Chair Roche called for a concerted effort to get interested people together to figure out what is needed to provide these opportunities to our professionals. Mr. Foster reiterated his offer of guided bird hunts for MassWildlife staff. Director Tisa reported that the need was greater and more far-reaching. He reported that staff has been meeting over the previous year to develop an R3 [Recruitment, Retention, and Reactivation] Plan to address the next-steps issue for all hunter education graduates and others interested in exploring hunting and fishing more intensively, and that the goal was to have the entire agency buy into and provide support for the steps and work needed to implement the plan. The Director explained that staff is always interested in going to CLFT; stressed that the agency staff is supportive of hunting, fishing, and trapping; and noted that the entire agency has a very strong culture of support for those core activities.

Assistant Director Schlüter introduced Habitat Protection Specialist Lynn Harper, who provided a PowerPoint that introduced the Board to iNaturalist, a new phone-based app that allows naturalists to make observations and post pictures and comments about them in the field, including by connecting their observations to 'projects' created by others for the given area. She explained briefly how to join, make observations, post observations, check back for feedback on your observations, and even confirm observations by others in the iNaturalist app.

Ms. Harper reported that she has created MassWildlife's All Wildlife Biodiversity Project, which is targeting the biodiversity of 15 Wildlife Management Areas across the state, and reported that observations in a project area are automatically added to the project. Dr. Van Roo expressed concerns about the algorithms used to decide among disagreements. Harper explained that the process has been found to be mostly accurate, and clarified that it's not designed to be used for hard science. In her personal and professional experience, Harper reported that the IDs are quite good on balance and that she finds the app is doing exactly what it says it will do: engage people to look closely.

Ms. Harper offered a number of tips for getting started. She stated that iNaturalist gets easier the more you use it: Take your phone or camera with you every time you take a hike, and try to post a few photos every week. She also advised taking the time to take good photos. They don't have to be perfect, but they should show the species you've observed as best you can. She advised following other people who make lots of observations, and see what they find, and to follow her (username lynnharper) or MassWildlife (username masswildlife). If you're going somewhere new, zoom to that spot in iNaturalist and see what other people have found there. She encourage<sup>3</sup> document common and exotic species, because, over the years, the ranges of these species are likely to shift and iNaturalist is one way to track those shifts. Set yourself a goal: Make observations of 100 species in your hometown, or document every occurrence of Common Milkweed and what insects live on it, or photograph every fish you catch (there aren't many fish observations in iNaturalist), or see how many species you and your friends can find on a piece of conservation land.

Finally, she advised joining a project, such as MassWildlife's All Wildlife Biodiversity Project, which is targeting the biodiversity of 15 Wildlife Management Areas across the state. To find a project, click the Community button at the top of a page, and then the Projects button in the drop-down menu. In the Search bar (middle of the page on the left), type in, say, MassWildlife, and all of the MassWildlife projects will show up.

Chair Larson thanked Ms. Harper for her work on the project and her report.

#### Natural Heritage and Endangered Species Advisory Committee Report

Chair Larson reported that the Committee voted on officers for the coming year: Mark Mello (Southeast District area and a moth man) was acting and is now the Chair. The Vice Chair is Tim Flanagan (Berkshire Community College faculty and active with conservation commissions on listed species) and Kevin Powers (a marine specialist) has agreed to be the Secretary.

Chair Larson stated that Chief of Regulatory Review Jesse Leddick gave a report on regulation enforcement issues, including a sulfuric acid spill in the North River, a tributary to the Deerfield in Colrain. The Chair reported that it was an accidental spill, but killed thousands of fish, and he stated that staff is working with the DEP [Department of Environmental Protection] and other regulators. In another enforcement case, a person went to the town for a new building permit, then ignored the conditions of permit to file for being in Priority Habitat, built barn in the area, etc., so staff has to deal with enforcement after the fact.

He also reported that information is being put together on potential new members of the Advisory Committee, and informed the Commissioner that a list would be submitted to him for approval within the next few months.

Referring to the monthly Spreadsheet of Natural Heritage Fund Taxpayer Donations in the Board members' meeting packets, the Chair deplored the lack of data available on NHESP donations via the state income tax form, because there is not much staff can do to encourage or target more interested people.

#### Confirm Next Meeting Dates

Members confirmed the December date of Wednesday, December 18, 2019, ~~at 10:00 a.m.~~, at the Field Headquarters.

**SECRETARY'S NOTE:** The December meeting time has subsequently been changed because of conflicting schedules. **The time of the December meeting will be 1:30 p.m.;** same date and location.

#### Member's Comments

Mr. Sears reported a lot of continuing issues with and interest in lake drawdowns and invasive species control in Berkshire County. He noted that the year had brought only 10% of the normal number of fishing tournaments, with many people ascribing this to a lack of largemouth bass. Lake access for fishing, including at Otis Lake (a DCR ramp) and the Goose Pond access (Office of Fishing and Boating Access), is also an issue. Mr. Sears also reported that a young hunter had lost his wallet while hunting in Berkshire County but that it was miraculously recovered. He offered his thanks to NHESP Chief of Conservation Science Dr. Hazelton for his presentation on NHESP projects to which the Massachusetts Outdoor Heritage Foundation has been contributing. Mr. Sears also reported on a large bear (530 pounds) that had been shot with a bow; he noted that Berkshire *Eagle* outdoor writer Gene Chague had written an article on it, and there was a question whether it was a new record for the state.

Mr. Sears also made a request for data of Captain Davis from the Office of Law Enforcement. He stated that he reports at the monthly Berkshire County League meetings and members are always very interested in the details of the OLE call reports that Major Loos will often share with the Board. Mr. Sears asked if a report could be generated for the previous year, to compare with this year's monthly and, eventually, year-end figures.

Dr. Van Roo reported that she has 2 students (bow hunters) looking for deer-hunting mentors, if anyone is interested, please let her know. She also reported that 5 of her students are working deer check stations during biological week. She herself is almost finished with northern saw whet owl banding in the current field season, noting that it has been a very low year. She stated that Boreal owls are having a very good year, so she has been asked by colleagues to try to band them as well, though she has had none at her stations so far.

Mr. Foster and Vice Chair Roche reported no comments.

Secretary Booth reported that Central District Technician Ethan LaPlante would be at the North Brookfield Sportsmen's Club checking deer during biological week.

There being no further business, a motion was made by Mr. Foster to adjourn. The motion was seconded by Dr. Van Roo. The motion passed unanimously and the meeting was adjourned at 11:40 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Bonnie Booth  
Secretary

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

November Agenda

Draft October meeting minutes for review

Commissioner's Comments to the Board

MassWildlife/NHESP Handout: Starting Out with iNaturalist; Lynn Harper, NHESP

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