



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, 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, Nicole McSweeney/Marketing and Outreach Manager, Joseph Rogers/Supervisor/Conn. Valley Wildlife District, Todd Olanyk/Supervisor/Central Wildlife District, Jason Zimmer/Supervisor/Southeast Wildlife District, Andrew Madden/Supervisor/Western Wildlife District, Pat Huckery/Supervisor/Northeast Wildlife District, Lt. Colonel David Loos/OLE

DATE: April 23, 2021

LOCATION: Via Zoom Meeting

Chair Larson opened the meeting at 9:00 a.m.

Acceptance of Minutes

A motion was made by Mr. Foster to accept the minutes from the March meeting as presented. The motion was seconded by Mr. Sears.

Chair Larson: yes

Vice Chair Roche: yes

Secretary Booth: yes

Dr. Van Roo: yes

Mr. Foster: yes

Mr. Sears: yes

Mr. Durand: yes

The motion passed unanimously.

Chair's Comments

Chair Larson reported that he wanted to praise the staff for the Birch Hill controlled burn. He stated that the burn areas presented a more complex situation than usual, but it came off very well. He also reported that he has been studying how to use zip codes from Mass. state tax form donors to analyze patterns and create a plan for promoting the Heritage Fund to existing and potential donors. The Chair reported that he heard from staff that they have capacity to do the digital mapping, so he has been able to turn it over to them and will report to the Board again when he has some results.

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Commissioner's Comments

Commissioner Amidon agreed that the controlled burn at Birch Hill went very well. He reported that it was a very well-run and focused event, and offered his congratulations to [Prescribed Fire Program Manager] Caren Caljouw and [Habitat Project Leader] Brian Hawthorne and their staff. The Commissioner also thanked Director Tisa and his team for their work throughout the license fee process; he reported that it is going well and he is pleased with the progress.

Director's Comments

Director Tisa reported that he had no comments at that time.

Law Enforcement Comments

The OLE's Lt. Colonel David Loos compared where OLE calls for service are now vs. last year at this time. Noting that last year we were all in the throes of the beginning of the pandemic, he remarked that OLE officers were out in the field as much as possible, dealing with historic numbers of people at day-use areas of state parks and other public areas across the state. The Lieutenant Colonel reported that this year is looking more 'normal,' with officers recently focused on MassWildlife's trout stocking activities. He reported that OLE staff are also working with the OFBA (Office of Fishing and Boating Access) to get the new Forest Lake WMA's parking area open to the public, and offered his congratulations to MassWildlife for this very attraction acquisition.

Reporting on activities on the coast. Lt. Col. Loos reported that an uptick in the price of elvers (eels) has caused an uptick in incidents of elver harvest, which is illegal here. He also reported that officers were ready for the opening of turkey season and preparing for the opening of shad fishing, targeting historical high-use areas for enforcement. He was also pleased to report successful opening days at Wachusett and the Quabbin.

Lt. Col. Loos told the Board about a recent case of 17 spotted salamanders found to be in someone's possession without permits. The party involved was separately charged by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service for importing and exporting amphibians, which led to the Massachusetts charges.

ATV season: gearing up patrols. He also reported that OLE is restarting the Conn. River, Merrimack River, and soon-to-be Quinsigamond task forces, explaining that law enforcement task forces are created to assist OLE's efforts with combined effort and coordination with local and other law enforcement agencies. He stated that the OFBA is also a huge asset in those efforts.

It not being time to open the public hearing scheduled for 9:30 a.m., Vice Chair Roche moved that the Board move the hearing down the agenda and come back to it at 9:30. Dr. Van Roo seconded the motion.

Chair Larson: yes

Vice Chair Roche: yes

Secretary Booth: yes

Dr. Van Roo: yes

Mr. Foster: yes

Mr. Sears: yes

Mr. Durand: yes

The motion passed unanimously.

Natural Heritage and Endangered Species Advisory Committee Report

Chair Larson reported that the Advisory Committee met on Zoom in April. He reported that traditionally the Advisory Committee has no problem getting a quorum, with very high participation rates. He stated that he believes this is because the meeting is a good opportunity for the people who are involved with other statewide agencies and other nonprofits who sit on the Committee to share recent news and issues of interest to all around the state.

The Chair reported that the drafting of BioMap3 is going well and that staff expect to complete it in the fall of 2022, noting that it is a 2-year-project. He also reported on website improvements for the Heritage program and that the process has been redesigned to report listed species online because there are more electronic filings and staff wanted the whole process more streamlined for data compilation. He also reported that wildlife rehabilitators are licensed by the Heritage program, that the requisites for that license have been revised, and a website has been created specifically for wildlife rehabilitators.

Set Meeting Date

Members briefly discussed dates for the May Fisheries and Wildlife Board meeting, scheduling it for Monday, May 17, 2021, at 1:00 p.m.

Moved by Secretary Booth; seconded by Dr. Van Roo.

Chair Larson: yes

Vice Chair Roche: yes

Secretary Booth: yes

Dr. Van Roo: yes

Mr. Foster: yes

Mr. Sears: yes

Mr. Durand: yes

The motion passed unanimously.

Waiting for 9:30 to start to hearing, Director Tisa explained the migratory hunting season process and stated that the Board needs to vote without the normal written comment period after the hearing because of the tight timeline between the setting of the federal frameworks and the deadline for states to file their seasons with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service of April 30.

Chair Larson stated that he wanted to share information shared with him by the Director, which is that the general public contributes through capital funds to the protection of WMA lands, and that, in the recent past, about 60% of DFG-MassWildlife land acquisition monies come from those sources, which ultimately come from the General Fund. Director Tisa reported that of the remainder, about 20% is contributed by environmental partners and 20% from the land stamp monies.

Mr. Durand reminded everyone that an event was being held in Hudson at 1:00 the afternoon of the meeting to celebrate Mary-Lee King's 40-year career in conservation.

Public Hearing: 9:30 a.m.: 2021-2022 Migratory Bird Hunting Seasons (Michael Huguenin)

After the close of the public hearing, the Board returned to open session.

Member's Comments

Secretary Booth, Dr. Van Roo, and Mr. Durand reported no further comments.

Vice Chair Roche stated that he was just back from a week in Kansas and that it was a very good trip.

Mr. Sears requested an update from staff at an appropriate time and asked about progress on the new software system being developed, wondering whether staff had chosen a vendor. He also asked for an update on the effects of emerald ash borer and hemlock woolly adelgid on MassWildlife properties. He also wondered whether there was any research being done by MassWildlife staff on pesticides and their effect on bees. Mr. Sears reported that he had been hearing from members of the fishing community in Berkshire County, and, prior to the rain a week before the meeting, there was very slow refilling of the lakes after they had been drawn down for the winter. He stated that people were reporting detrimental effects on resources. Mr. Sears gave the example of Stockbridge Bowl as a limited access area that we stock that people have trouble accessing. Better access at fish-stocked waters by working with OFBA?

Director Tisa stated that the Department has chosen a vendor for the new license system and that he is anticipating a report to the Board in August or September. In brief, he reported that it is going well but there is a lot involved. Regarding access points at stocked sites, he suggested working with Western District Manager Andrew Madden to get a list of specific waters and determine whether it is a physical boat problem or shoreline access, because there can be specific problems for each. The Director stated that different properties have different access controls. He also wondered whether the ramps were state boat ramp vs. municipal ramps. He acknowledged that there are many complicated issues and a lot goes into each stocking decision. Secretary Booth reported similar problems in the Central District, where some stocked waters appear to have poor public access. She stated that she will work with Mr. Sears to coordinate their efforts to explore the issue with staff.

Mr. Durand replied to Mr. Sears that the Mass. Department of Agriculture Resources had come out with guidance that, starting in 2022, they will start limiting neonicotinoids (suspected part of bee colony collapse) to the public.

There being no more discussion, a motion was made by Vice Chair Roche to move into Executive Session for the purpose of discussing certain land acquisitions and to not return to open session. The motion was seconded by Dr. Van Roo.

Chair Larson: yes

Vice Chair Roche: yes

Dr. Van Roo: yes

Mr. Foster: yes

Mr. Sears: yes

Mr. Durand: yes

The motion passed unanimously.

Executive Session

Deputy Director Jon Regosin presented one proposed acquisition, which was reviewed and unanimously approved by the Board.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 10:42 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Bonnie Booth
Secretary

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

April agenda

Draft March meeting minutes for review

Spreadsheet of Natural Heritage Fund Taxpayer Donations (1992 to 2020)

Documentation for the executive session