



## DIVISION OF FISHERIES & WILDLIFE

1 Rabbit Hill Road, Westborough, MA 01581

p: (508) 389-6300 | f: (508) 389-7890

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

PRESENT: Steve Sears/Chair, Bob Durand/Vice Chair, Ernie Foster/Secretary, Sasha Dyer, Emma Ellsworth, John Organ, Matthew Sisk, Ron Amidon/Commissioner/DFG, Mark S. Tisa/Director, Mike Huguenin/Assistant Director/Wildlife, Eve Schlüter/Assistant Director/NHESP, Nicole McSweeney/Assistant Director/Outreach and Education, Trina Moruzzi/Assistant Director/Operations, Todd Richards/Assistant Director/Fisheries, Todd Olanyk/ Central Wildlife District Manager, Pat Huckery/Northeast Wildlife District Manager, Andrew Madden/ Western Wildlife District Manager, Joe Rogers/ Conn. Valley Wildlife District Manager, Astrid Huseby/R3 Coordinator, Captain Scott Amati/OLE, Lieut. Tara Carlow/OLE. PUBLIC: James Curtin, Dave Harbison, [two unidentified people].

DATE: April 26, 2023

LOCATION: Silvio O. Conte Anadromous Fish Laboratory, 1 Migratory Way, Turners Falls

Hearing Officer and MassWildlife Director Mark S. Tisa closed the public hearing at 2:20 p.m.

Secretary Foster moved to go into open session; Dr. Organ seconded the motion. The vote in favor was unanimous. After a brief pause, Chair Sears opened the monthly business meeting at 2:25 p.m.

Mr. Sisk moved that the Chair move a portion of Agenda Item #1, the vote to approve the Migratory Bird Hunting regulations, to the second item on the agenda; Mr. Foster seconded the motion; the vote in favor was unanimous.

Assistant Director Huguenin provided the Board with a summary analysis of the comments received before and during the public hearing. He explained that, uniquely among MassWildlife's regulations, the migratory bird regulations are opened every year, because the seasons' opening and closing dates must adjust for the calendar each year, and they are watched by avid waterfowl hunters, so they generate a lot of comments.

After a brief discussion among the Board members, Assistant Director Huguenin provided the staff's final recommendations. After reviewing all the comments received, staff recommended that the Board accept all the original recommendations as presented, with the following proposed amendments:

1. Amend the falconry season recommendation as follows:

Original proposal: October 1--February 2

Final proposal: October 9--February 9

2. Amend the brant season recommendation as follows:

Original proposal: November 28--January 1

Final proposal: December 12--January 15

### 3. Amend the Berkshire late goose season as follows:

Original: December 15--January 30

Final proposal: January 1--February 15

At the close of Mr. Huguenin's exposition, Mr. Durand moved that the regulations be adopted as amended; Mr. Foster seconded the motion. After a brief discussion, the vote in favor was unanimous.

#### Acceptance of Minutes

A motion was made by Vice Chair Durand to table the minutes from the March meeting. The motion was seconded by Mr. Sisk; the vote in favor was unanimous.

#### Chair's Comments

Chair Sears commented that he appreciated the public input that had been received, both before and during the hearing, on the migratory bird hunting regulations. He stated that staff was doing a great job on trout stocking efforts, including generating high-quality engagement from large groups of the public.

The Chair thanked Dr. Organ for sharing a very recent study that looked at how people's participation at different levels of wildlife-related recreation relates ultimately to their support for their state fish and wildlife agency. He also thanked the Berkshire County League for awarding him the Conte Award as Sportsman of the Year. He reported that he had met with local legislators about establishing the permanence of MassWildlife's reimbursement for the free licenses it issues each year. Chair Sears reported that he had been approached by a local Board of Health person about jurisdiction over the use of herbicides in lakes and ponds. He also thanked the members of the hunter education working group for their efforts thus far.

#### Commissioner's Comments

Commissioner Amidon reported that the current budget is favorable for DFG, and the department could gain \$12-24 million in capital monies this year. He reported that the budget might include another hatchery renovation feasibility study, funding for some dam studies and removals, and there are large fishing piers that need renovation. He also stated that the budget should include reimbursement for the free and reduced-cost licenses mandated by statute and the NHESP funding as outside sections. The Commissioner also reported that, as of end of the month, his term as commissioner will end. The Board members thanked Commissioner Amidon for his service.

Mr. Durand moved that the Board adjourn the day's meeting in honor of the outgoing Commissioner; Mr. Sears seconded the motion; the vote in favor was unanimous. Commissioner Amidon thanked the members and stated that he will continue to stay active in the sporting community.

#### Director's Comments

Director Tisa thanked the Commissioner for his service and for trying to move the needle on some legislative matters. He appreciates the Commissioner's passion for the sporting community and knows he really cares about it.

Director Tisa reported to be Board about two positive comments he had recently received. In an email, Paul Shirley, one of the active field trial people who had come to the hearing, had reported that he had held a field trial on the Herm Covey WMA. He had stated that his members couldn't believe how good the habitat was, and he couldn't believe how enthusiastic and helpful the District staff was on a holiday weekend. Director Tisa also reported that he had received a handwritten letter from a 70-year-old citizen who had seen and greatly appreciated all the improvements in Massachusetts' habitats and wildlife populations during his long life of hunting. Now eligible for a free license, the gentleman

included a donation in honor of his appreciation for all that MassWildlife does for the sporting community in the Commonwealth.

#### Law Enforcement Comments

Captain Scott Amati of the Office of Law Enforcement (OLE) reported that officers were recently focused on supporting the trout stocking activities of MassWildlife. He also reported that there are currently 14 positions to be filled at OLE and the agency has 15 candidates. The interviews began at the end of March, and background checks were ongoing. He reported that OLE still hopes to have its candidates enter the police academy by August. He also briefly reported on activities for the spring seasons, including the trout stocking and turkey hunting. On the education side he reported a ramping up of the OLE's programs on boating safety and its continuing participation in MassWildlife's Basic Hunter Education classes.

Captain Amati then introduced OLE Lieutenant Tara Carlow, who reported she hadn't been to a Board meeting in over 3 years and was glad to be back. She's stated that she is the lieutenant for the area around Turners Falls, which includes 33 towns with 4 officers; she noted that a full staff would be 7 officers. Lieutenant Carlow provided some details and highlights about her area of service, which borders New York and Vermont. She noted that when she was checking hunters on opening day of the 2022 shotgun deer season, half of the hunters she checked were from New York. She also reported her personal involvement with boating safety and OHV safety classes, and that she has also taught hunter education classes.

#### R3 Review (Astrid Huseby)

R3 Coordinator Astrid Huseby provided the Board with an in-depth look at MassWildlife's efforts to increase participation in and support for hunting, fishing, and shooting sports in Massachusetts. She began by laying the groundwork to explain why these efforts are needed, the demographics and social forces behind the decades-long decline in our populations of hunters and anglers, the trends among people taking Basic Hunter Education courses and engaging in fishing and the shooting sports, and past efforts to address the barriers that have been identified by research into participation in these activities.

Ms. Huseby then introduced the Massachusetts R3 Plan, a paper copy of which had been distributed to the members, which is the guiding document designed to help direct and focus R3 efforts in the state. She detailed the extensive process Massachusetts followed to develop the plan, including in meetings and consultations with key partners, both statewide and nationally, ultimately to reach MassWildlife's stated goal of increasing participation in and support for hunting, fishing, and shooting sports in Massachusetts:

- Provide coordination and develop and strengthen partnerships;
- Provide learning resources and targeted R3 skills programs;
- Increase access to habitat and resources and opportunities to engage in R3 activities;
- Increase outreach to publicize programs to target audiences and enrich customer experiences with next-step resources;
- Increase the acceptance of hunting, fishing, and shooting sports among the general, non-sporting population.

Ms. Huseby provided detailed examples MassWildlife has already implemented for each of the strategies and offered research sources and explanations for the effectiveness of each. She also discussed the tools MassWildlife uses to evaluate its programs and its marketing strategies around R3 programs and content with the intent of understanding what works where and what might benefit from further refinement or increased resources. The results of MassWildlife's efforts around R3 were also

examined, and Ms. Huseby reported on the quantitative data staff had to show the levels of success of its efforts thus far.

She closed by noting that, as she had tried to demonstrate, MassWildlife has been doing a lot for R3, and staff is in a good position both internally and nationally. She reported that the next step is building on MassWildlife's existing statewide partnerships, including through the partner summit that is planned for early June with an invited list of state partners. She pointed out that staff is not looking to do more, but to be more strategic and focused, both internally and with our state partners, to increase collaboration and effectiveness for everyone.

After a brief discussion, The Chair thanked Ms. Huseby for her presentation.

#### Hunter Education Working Group Update

Mr. Foster reported that he had scheduled and held a listening session in the Central Wildlife District and intended to hold one in each district. He reported that the working group had met to review the procedures and processes of the Hunter Education Program for the benefit of the Board members, two of whom are new to the Board. He also reported that staff is sending out a survey to potential participants before subsequent listening sessions.

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

Mr. Sisk reported that the Advisory Committee had held its quarterly meeting on April 13, 2023, on Zoom. He stated that the work of the Advisory Committee is impressive and advised the Board members that they would be welcome to attend one of the meetings and would find it very interesting. He advised the Board members that the next meeting would be in person and will be held on July 27, at 1:30 p.m., in Westborough. During that meeting, the Advisory Committee will be starting the review of species on the MESA [Massachusetts Endangered Species Act] List. Mr. Sisk reported that the northern long-eared bat's status under the federal Endangered Species Act has changed from Threatened to Endangered, and that the Massachusetts list must be changed to reflect the same status. Mr. Sisk also reported an excellent presentation from Dr. Becca Quiñones on the state's efforts around climate change mitigation and impacts.

#### Confirm May Meeting Date

The members confirmed the date and time of the May meeting, which is May 16, 2023, at 9:00 a.m., and Chair Sears reported that the Director had advised him that the meeting would best be held at the Field Headquarters, and he had agreed. He stated that the Board members will also hold a governance meeting at 11:00 a.m. on the same day.

#### Members' Comments

Ms. Ellsworth thanked Commissioner Amidon for being a mentor to her and for his work in the Otter River area.

Mr. Durand reported that he attended the Essex County banquet, that 125-130 people had attended, and that Mike Robinson had been elected the new president, taking over for longtime president Tom Walsh.

Mr. Sisk reported that he had been at the Nissitissit WMA in the morning and that it is a beautiful area.

Ms. Dyer reported that she had participated in a BOW [Becoming an Outdoors Woman] turkey hunt and had really enjoyed it.

Mr. Foster reported that he had attended the Plymouth County League banquet where the Southeast Wildlife District office was voted the collective Sportsmen of the Year award, which he felt was well deserved.

Dr. Organ reported his thanks to the Commissioner. He also reported that the Conway Sportsmen's Club had had him, Ms. Dyer, and Ms. Ellsworth attend its most recent meeting. He thought it was very productive and that they had some excellent interactions with the members.

There being no further business, a motion was made by Mr. Durand to close the open session and open an executive session for the purpose of discussing proposed land acquisitions whose negotiations would be compromised by discussion in open session, and to not reconvene in open session. The motion was seconded by Ms. Dyer.

Mr. Durand: Yes

Ms. Dyer: Yes

Ms. Ellsworth: Yes

Mr. Foster: Yes

Dr. Organ: Yes

Mr. Sears: Yes

Mr. Sisk: Yes

The vote in favor was unanimous, and the meeting was adjourned at 5:10 p.m.

#### Executive Session

Staff presented six parcels for the Board's consideration and approval. The six parcels were each voted on by the members and all were unanimously approved.

There being no further business, Mr. Durand moved to adjourn; Mr. Sisk seconded the motion; the vote in favor was unanimous and the meeting adjourned at 5:25 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Ernie Foster  
Secretary

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

April agenda

Regulations packet for public hearing

"Exploring the relevance of the multidimensionality of wildlife recreationists to conservation behaviors: A case study in Virginia." Grooms et al. 2023. In *Conservation Science and Practice* [via email].

Copy of letter from MassWildlife constituent receiving a free (over age 70) license

The Massachusetts R3 Plan

Packet for the executive session