



DIVISION OF FISHERIES & WILDLIFE

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

PRESENT: Steve Sears/Chair, Bob Durand/Vice Chair, Ernie Foster/Secretary, Sasha Dyer, Emma Ellsworth, John Organ, Matthew Sisk, Mark S. Tisa/Director, Todd Olanyk/Central Wildlife District Manager, Major Kevin Clayton/OLE

DATE: August 15, 2023

LOCATION: MassWildlife Field Headquarters, Westborough, Massachusetts

Chair Sears opened the discussion meeting at 12:00 p.m.

Acceptance of Minutes

Mr. Durand moved acceptance of the June minutes as submitted; Mr. Sisk seconded the motion; the vote in favor was unanimous.

Chair's Opening Remarks

Chair Sears reported that he has consolidated and started to make comparisons between the members' statements. He has also asked Director Tisa and Commissioner O'Shea to present to the Board at their convenience and in this meeting their respective goals, etc.

In the meantime, Chair Sears has collated and consolidated the responses from the Board members, and he wanted to share the overlaps that came out of it. He intends that the analysis, combined with the Director's and Commissioner's goals, will provide a road map that will reveal either opportunities or needs for additional resources to accomplish those objectives.

Board Members' Goals, Skills, and Likes, and Dislikes

Chair Sears reported that the main common goals were to maintain enjoyment of wildlife-based recreation, increase funding, and continue stewardship and habitat management on WMAs. R3 was also high on everyone's list. He stated that the Board needs an action plan if it hopes to achieve its goals. He suggested forming subcommittees to tackle individual goals.

A discussion ensued, including about getting future funding to update hatchery infrastructure and make it more resilient and 2) exploring the funding mechanisms that will allow the agency to have enough funding to tackle bigger objectives for which the agency currently doesn't have staff or funding.

Mr. Sisk stated that he intends to work on securing the free and reduced-price license reimbursements in statute. He knows something about state funding so feels equipped to pursue, and he will appreciate Mr. Durand's help as a knowledgeable person in that realm. He stated that he is of two minds about forming a subcommittee. He would prefer to listen to Mr. Durand as the expert on government and government processes and follow his direction.

Mr. Durand reported that he doesn't believe there are any remaining representatives who hunt; a few of them fish. He knows the current senate Ways and Means chair is sympathetic to hunting and fishing, and former Senator Anne Gobi was a champion. He agreed to work with Mr. Sisk on the issue and his advice was to start with one or two current leaders who will be sympathetic and talk about how to get it done, noting that the Director and the Commissioner can weigh in when they are asked by legislators, which is likely.

Director Tisa noted that this action is potentially a legacy goal for the Fisheries and Wildlife Board because it is well within reach of the members. The Director reported that the agency has received the reimbursement in the budget annually because it has outside partners that have championed the idea, including The Nature Conservancy, the Mass. Audubon Society, and The Trustees. Having the support of those organizations, it is attainable for Board members who work with them to get the reimbursement into legislation. Director Tisa reported that legislation has been written by former Senator Gobi, Mr. Durand stated he could secure that draft and work from it. Chair Sears asked Mr. Durand to draft something and take the lead to carry it through, with assistance from Mr. Sisk. Chair Sears stated that he will add an item to the governance meeting agenda for the project going forward.

Chair Sears would like to see the Board be educated on the needs of the hatchery infrastructure improvements. Mr. Durand stated that a goal should be to have the plan cued up to benefit from the next environmental bond bill. Ms. Ellsworth noted that the Board members need a statement to demonstrate the benefits to the state beyond those who fish. Director Tisa reported that MassWildlife staff has crunched the numbers on the economic impact of the state hatcheries. For every dollar spent on hatcheries, \$20 are accrued to the state in economic benefits, so improving hatchery infrastructure has a significant return on investment. Director Tisa stated that a facility that is both up to date and climate-resilient would have many additional benefits. He also noted that the agency would have to take McLaughlin offline for a couple of years while the work was being done. Former EEA Secretary Beaton had funded improvements that allow water to flow to the McLaughlin Hatchery from the bottom of the Quabbin. It now has the clean, secure source of coldwater needed to have a state-of-the-art facility, so it makes sense to pursue the infrastructure update now.

Chair Sears recapped the discussion by saying that the Board will tackle the license reimbursements first, then secure funding to update the hatcheries, then get the Board educated on the Missouri solution. Mr. Durand reported that he will find out the schedule for next environmental bond; Dr. Organ said he will gather information on the history of the Missouri funding model.

Dr. Organ stated that he will get a list of trainings offered through WMI and funded by AFWA, on governance, board operations, the Missouri model, etc., to bring back to the Board. He understands that it will be at no cost to the agency for the Board to participate.

A general discussion ensued about the possibilities for staff in increased funding for research and expanded work; of some of the opportunities and reasons why MassWildlife's work is important and relevant to everyone; and on the importance of the continuation of R3 efforts, to do everything the Board can to maintain and increase license sales. Chair Sears stated that the members have many goals in common and that there is a lot of diversity across the Board, but that he wants to agree to tackle a few of the highest ranked goals first.

Set Next Meeting Date and Time

The Board members discussed its discussion meeting. They decided that the next discussion meeting could be held at 3:00 p.m. on September 13, 2023.

Mr. Sisk made a motion to adjourn; Mr. Durand seconded; the vote in favor was unanimous and the meeting adjourned at 12:50 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Ernie Foster
Secretary

List of documents presented to the Board in its August governance meeting packets

August governance meeting notice with agenda
Draft minutes from the June governance meeting