



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, Major David Loos/OLE;
PUBLIC:

DATE: August 25, 2020

LOCATION: Via Zoom Meeting

Chair Larson opened the meeting at 12:05 p.m.

Acceptance of Minutes

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

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 had no specific comments, but that he continues to be amazed by the amount of work the staff is getting done.

Commissioner's Comments

Commissioner Amidon reported about the state fishing piers and boat ramps. He reported that boat sales are up 300%-500% during the pandemic, so boat ramps are very busy and, in some cases, being inappropriately used by people who are trying to get out and enjoy the water. In the process, there have been some mishaps with people unfamiliar with boating and overcrowding of launch areas. The Commissioner reported that the administration has agreed that the problems are best dealt with through educational enforcement from OLE. In consequence, he stated that the MEP are working

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overtime to help keep the ramps open and maintaining order, and the problems seem to be working through.

Director's Comments

Director Tisa thanked the Chair for his positive comments about the hard work of staff to maintain social distancing, cleanliness, and their scheduled work assignments.

Law Enforcement Comments

The OLE's Lieutenant Colonel David Loos thanked the Commissioner for his comments about the positive role of MEP in managing the increases in boat ramp traffic, and he reported that those duties are in addition to the also-increased use of our open space and recreational areas generally. The Lieutenant Colonel reported that the Deerfield River is also more crowded than usual with rafting people, some of whom are very inexperienced. He stated that the OLE is working with the local outfitters and guides to help educate the public and maintain safety for all.

He reported an uptick in bear contacts and some bear complaints, including some investigations in preparation for bear season and the other hunting seasons coming in the fall.

Lieutenant Colonel Loos also offered his kudos to the Hunter Education Program for its hard work to meet demand for hunter education classes during the pandemic.

Ornithology Project Update (Andrew Vitz)

Assistant Director for Wildlife Mike Huguenin introduced State Ornithologist Andrew Vitz, who has worked for the agency since 2012.

Dr. Vitz reported on recent work surveying and managing for grassland birds in the state, a collaborative project with Maine to restore common loons to the Southeast region; a young-forest bird-banding and study project; a collaborative project to study deer ticks on birds; early groundwork on a multi-state expansion of MOTUS, an automated tracking system for radio-tracked birds; and an in-depth look at the ongoing eastern whip-poor-will study project.

After a brief discussion, the Chair and Board members thanked Dr. Vitz for his excellent and very informative presentation.

Natural Heritage and Endangered Species Advisory Committee Report

Dr. Larson reported that the Natural Heritage and Endangered Species Advisory Committee does not meet in August, so there was no report. He did call the Board's attention to the monthly report on Heritage donations from the state personal income tax forms. He noted that this is the fourth year of increase in donations and wondered whether there is a correlation between the agency's increased social-media exposure over the past several years and the number and size of donations during the same period, but noted that individual donor information is not available from the Department of Revenue.

Set Meeting Date

Members discussed dates for the September Fisheries and Wildlife Board meeting. Members selected September 22, 2020, at 9:00 a.m.

Member's Comments

Mr. Durand offered his condolences to Mike Roche for the loss of his brother-in-law.

Mr. Foster reported that he is a new member of the American Chestnut Foundation and has been putting energy toward promoting the orchard at the Field Headquarters.

Dr. Van Roo and Secretary Booth reported no comment.

Mr. Sears reported that he has 12 chestnut trees, of two different strains, and got chestnuts for the first time the previous year. He agreed with Mr. Foster that the strides made in Chestnut research and breeding are very exciting. He also reported on the ongoing Stockbridge Bowl debate regarding the use of herbicide treatment for weeds; recent investigations have found no apparent Eurasian milfoil in amounts enough to be treated. They are putting off any targeted treatments until at least next year. Mr. Sears reported that he had heard that a lake association at Cheshire Lake had taken it upon itself to lower the lake level in anticipation of a coming tropical storm. It stated that it did have the authority to do so, and then couldn't close the release. He expressed frustration that MassWildlife cannot intervene in private lake and pond cases where state-listed species are not involved. He also stated that he had instant comments from deer hunters when the Antlerless Deer Permit (ADP) lottery opened, and reported that people have waited a long time without a permit and still haven't received one, while others seem to get them every year. He reported that it is very frustrating for deer hunters in the Western District where the number of ADPs issued is small.

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

Secretary Booth: yes

Dr. Van Roo: yes

Mr. Foster: yes

Mr. Sears: yes

Mr. Durand: yes

The motion passed unanimously.

Executive Session

Land Protection Specialist Lynn Harper presented four proposed acquisitions, which were each reviewed and all approved by the Board.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 2:10 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Bonnie Booth

Secretary

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

Agenda

Draft July meeting minutes for review

Spreadsheet of Natural Heritage Fund Taxpayer Donations (1992 to 2019)

Documentation for the executive session