



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, 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, Adam Kautza/Coldwater Fisheries Biologist, Brian Keleher/Connecticut Valley Wildlife District Aquatic Biologist, Pat Huckery/Northeast Wildlife District Manager, Todd Olanyk/Central Wildlife District Manager, Jason Zimmer/Southeast Wildlife District Manager, Andrew Madden/Western Wildlife District Manager, Joe Rogers/Conn. Valley Wildlife District Manager, Captain Scott Amati/OLE

DATE: December 14, 2021

LOCATION: Zoom

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 November meeting as presented. The motion was seconded by Secretary Booth.

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 didn't have any comments at that point.

### Commissioner's Comments

Commissioner Amidon was not able to attend the meeting and sent his regrets through the Director.

### Director's Comments

Director Tisa stated that a very important endeavor over the past year parallel to the effort to secure a license increase was the design and development of the new MassFishHunt online license sales system. He reported that it was made active on December 1. It is a significant project for many staff in the

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agency and is still ongoing as the system continues to be refined and improved. The Director asked Deputy Director Jon Regosin to give the Board an update on the development and rollout of that system.

Deputy Director Regosin confirmed that the new MassFishHunt did launch at midnight on December 1 with no major glitches. The system opened to sell both 2021 and 2022 licenses, retains the profiles of all past license buyers and their purchase histories, and includes a harvest reporting component, among many other features. Dr. Regosin thanked the staff across the agency who worked long hours with the vendor, Kalkomey, to develop the system and prepare it for launch and who were still working to improve it. He reported that the new system offers customer management, an events module for offering workshops and courses through the system, an analytics and dashboard system for staff, and the ability to issue special permits online. The Deputy Director explained that the agency previously had to issue special permits in thousands of pieces of paper mail, but this manual processing will go away with the new system. He noted that system development and refinement continues as the staff and vendor are troubleshooting in real time, improving features, and prioritizing working out glitches in the customer experience, and noted that staff continues to work on the agency's relationship with the vendor, including improving customer service at its end.

Deputy Director Regosin added that the system is a joint effort with the Department of Fish and Game, Information Technology Coordinator Dan Koch, in particular, and the Division of Marine Fisheries. Staff from all the agencies put a lot of time and effort into developing the system and MassWildlife owes them all our thanks.

Vice Chair Roche reported that he had gone on the new MassFishHunt system in early December and did not have a good experience, both from his personal standpoint and as an outdoor writer who had planned to write a column on the new system. He stated that he called the Director and quickly got a call back from a customer service person at Kalkomey. She was very interested to know the details of his experience, answered his questions, and could not have handled the interaction better from his point of view.

#### Law Enforcement Comments

Captain Scott Amati reported that December is an extremely busy time of the year for the MEP and MassWildlife is at the forefront of activity because of all the hunting seasons that are open, particularly deer hunting. He provided the Board with an overview of actions connected to the current hunting and other recreational seasons; a detailed report on recent OLE activities, including numerous fish-and-wildlife-related examples of calls for service that Environmental Police officers had responded to in the previous month, both inland and marine; and the outlines of ongoing and recently completed investigations of suspected violations and infractions.

The Chair and Board members thanked Captain Amati for his detailed report.

#### Personnel Report (Kris McCarthy)

CFO Kris McCarthy presented the Board with the following nomination:

Promotion:

<i>Employee</i>	<i>Position</i>	<i>Location</i>
Lori Cookman	Federal Aid and Compliance Manager Program Manager V	Westborough

A motion was made by Dr. Van Roo to accept the Personnel Report as presented. The motion was seconded by Secretary Booth.

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.

#### Swift River Wild Trout Study (Brian Keleher and Adam Kautza)

Assistant Director of Fisheries Todd Richards introduced Connecticut Valley Wildlife District Aquatic Biologist Brian Keleher and Coldwater Fisheries Biologist Adam Kautza. Dr. Kautza reported that the Fisheries section and the Connecticut Valley Wildlife District have proposed a project to study the wild brook trout fishery in the Swift River tailwater between Quabbin Reservoir and the Swift River impoundment above the Bondsville Dam. The project is designed to answer long-standing questions about seasonal movement patterns and habitat use by adult brook trout using PIT [Passive Integrated Transponder] tags in conjunction with a series of fixed PIT-tag readers placed at important habitat and/or angling regulation boundaries within the tailwater. The project also seeks to quantify population abundance, individual growth rates, and age and size structure of the wild brook trout population in the Swift River using mark-recapture methods. Dr. Kautza stated that continuous water-temperature and water-level loggers will also be deployed in conjunction with the PIT-tag readers, to assess movement and habitat use in association with environmental changes that are likely to influence coldwater fish, now and especially into the future under changing climate conditions.

Dr. Kautza reported that the Swift River tailwater supports one of the most abundant populations of wild brook trout in Massachusetts, based on comparisons of catch-per-unit-effort. Although true population estimates are not available, he reported that abundance estimates from electrofishing surveys indicate 1,000–4,000+ wild brook trout per kilometer of river, depending on the section of the tailwater. The river also harbors more ~12-inch wild brook trout than all other wild brook trout streams in Massachusetts combined. He explained that this population is maintained by consistent annual flows and consistently cold water being released from deep in the Quabbin Reservoir. These characteristics make the Swift River tailwater the premier wild brook trout fishery in Massachusetts. Dr. Kautza reported that the unique wild brook trout fishery present in the Swift River tailwater and the overall popularity of this section of river make it imperative that MassWildlife understand brook trout population dynamics and how brook trout use the river in order to manage the fishery effectively over the long term, adding that this project will be a big step in that direction.

Connecticut Valley Wildlife District Fisheries Manager Brian Keleher discussed the proposed objectives and methods of the study. The team intends to track movement of tagged adult brook trout to determine overall movement, seasonal habitat use, and spawning locations for different size classes of fish and for fish initially tagged in different parts of the study area. The biologists will also develop annual population estimates as well as age structure and length-frequency for brook trout and track population trends over the course of the study. Third, the study will quantify estimates of recruitment, mortality, and growth for brook trout based on mark-recapture methods, and Mr. Keleher noted that

the study will continue to use tiny spots of color introduced near the eyes of the fish to make them easy to identify at a glance. Next, the team intends to communicate its findings to other fisheries professionals via a peer-reviewed publication and conference presentations. Finally, Dr. Kautza and Mr. Keleher will also communicate their findings to interested anglers, possibly via in-person and digital presentations and the agency's website and social accounts.

Explaining some of the technology that will be deployed for the study, Mr. Keleher reported that data collection for the project will utilize in-stream PIT arrays. PIT tags are relatively small individually identifiable internal tags that use RFID technology to remotely transmit tag data to field data loggers without the need for a battery. The low cost and small size of this type of tag allows for the marking of relatively large numbers of individuals and consequent data collection across larger groups and populations. Tags will primarily be read by semi-permanent submerged antennae placed at discrete locations across the river channel, and Mr. Keleher indicated with a map where the locations are planned. Optimally, three arrays will be installed at significant locations between the Windsor Dam and the first Bondsville Dam. Specific site selection will depend on a variety of variables but, initially, the team anticipates that the locations will center around the Route 9 bridge year-round catch-and-release area, the hatchery outflow pipe and Cady Lane, the demarcation between impounded and riverine habitat downstream of the Cold Spring Road boat ramp, and just downstream of the Bondsville Dam, which would indicate that the individual had emigrated from the study area. Tag data is recorded any time a tagged fish passes over each antenna, allowing for a variety of data relative to each individual. Additionally, these same tags can be read by handheld units during recapture events, when the fish are handled by biologists, and track growth through successive recaptures.

Mr. Keleher also explained that the in-stream PIT tag arrays would be placed at meaningful locations to take advantage of natural chokepoints, sites with minimum channel width and depth, to maximize reading range and tag detection. Each onsite reader will be outfitted with double antennae and can determine directionality of movement. In the field, each array will consist of a large loop of wire housed in PVC and anchored to the stream bed. The loop will be connected to the data recording device and a battery bank that will be housed nearby on the stream bank in a metal jobsite box. Mr. Keleher reported that anglers tend to be very interested in research, and appropriate signage and project information will be posted adjacent to the field infrastructure, which will require battery changes, data collection and downloads, and basic equipment maintenance and site upkeep.

After a brief discussion, the Chair and the Board members thanked the biologists for their very interesting report and wished them good luck in the study.

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

Chair Larson reported that there had not been an Advisory Committee meeting in December. He asked the Board to note in the month's Heritage donation report that donations are maintaining the level they've reached over the past 3 years. He also pointed to very interesting recent increases in the size of individual donations.

#### Set January Meeting Date

Director Tisa requested that the meeting be held as late as possible in January, hopefully after January 24, so that some potential regulations can be brought to the Board. Members discussed the date for the January Fisheries and Wildlife Board meeting and, after a brief discussion, members selected Tuesday, January 25, 2022, at 9:00 a.m.

Member's Comments

Mr. Sears congratulated the relevant staff on the successful launch of the new MassFishHunt system, noting that this was not just a small IT group but involved all staff pitching in at a critical time. He noted the launch was at the start of deer season, when staff is typically even busier, so kudos to them.

Secretary Booth called for a moment of silence in honor of the family of retired Director Wayne MacCallum, who recently lost his father, and for [Worcester *Telegram* outdoor writer] Mark Blazis, who had passed away suddenly. Chair Larson called for a moment of silence.

Vice Chair Roche observed that there is still a lot of deer season left, and that he hopes everyone has a great season.

Mr. Foster related a story he was told by a constituent: the successful deer hunter arrived 45 minutes after closing time at the Western District office during shotgun week. Far from the office being closed, the staff present greeted him with enthusiasm and immediately helped him check his deer, which is more evidence of the above-and-beyond customer service provided in all parts of the agency. Mr. Foster offered his personal thanks to Western Wildlife District Manager Madden and his staff.

Dr. Van Roo and Mr. Durand both wished the assembly a healthy and relaxing holiday season. The rest of the Board echoed those sentiments.

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. Mr. Durand amended the motion to adjourn in memory of Mark Blazis. 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 at 10:45 a.m.

Executive Session

Deputy Director Jon Regosin presented four parcels for review and potential approval by the Board. Each parcel was discussed, voted on, and unanimously approved.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 11:10 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Bonnie Booth  
Secretary

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

Agenda

Draft November minutes

Personnel Report

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

Executive Session packet