



DIVISION OF FISHERIES & WILDLIFE

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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, Sasha Dyer, Emma Ellsworth, John Organ, Matthew Sisk, Mark S. Tisa/Director, Tom O'Shea/Commissioner/DFG, Eve Schlüter/Deputy Director, Mike Huguenin/Assistant Director/Wildlife, 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/Connecticut Valley Wildlife District Manager, Capt. Scott Amati/OLE; PUBLIC: James Cardoza, Dave Morin, Marion Larson, Steve LaRivee, Tony Schuko

DATE: December 7, 2023

LOCATION: MassWildlife Field Headquarters, Westborough, Massachusetts, and on Zoom

Chair Sears opened the December meeting at 10:00 a.m.

Acceptance of Minutes

A motion was made by Mr. Durand to approve the minutes from the November business meeting. The motion was seconded by Dr. Organ; the vote in favor was unanimous.

Chair's Comments

Chair Sears thanked everyone at MassWildlife and DFG for a year where the stage was set for positive things going forward. He stated that one of the things the governance meeting has been used for is reviewing goals. Chair Sears asked the Board members that by the March governance meeting the Board will have set goals for the year. He also thanked Deputy Director Schlüter for materials she had provided for him to present at the Berkshire Natural History Conference the previous month. He noted one speaker at the conference with a new bird book coming out showing changes to bird species in the region. Chair Sears also thanked staff members for conducting a hunter safety course in his building in Dalton, stating that there were 52 students in attendance and that 49 passed the test. He noted there was one interpreter onsite and that the test went out in five languages; he reported being thrilled to see the diversity that represents. Finally, he wished everyone a happy and safe holiday.

Director's Comments

Director Tisa reported that the previous day Commissioner O'Shea had held a ceremony in the Field Headquarters to recognize the department's Performance Recognition Program winners. The Director stated that there were three MassWildlife winners: Walt Tynan, the BioMap team, and the Hunters Share the Harvest core team; and the DER habitat restoration team. He noted that this was the first time in a long time getting so many department staff together, and that it was an excellent event to recognize that the work staff is doing is making a difference, both in conservation outcomes and in impacting people's lives. Director Tisa noted that Mr. Tynan's mother Judy had been a journalist for the AP and a strong supporter of MassWildlife when he congratulated Mr. Tynan on being nominated by his colleagues for his hard work on multiple Connecticut Valley District projects.

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Director Tisa also reported that MassWildlife and the department are continuing to work on the DFG strategic plan and implementing the Governor's executive order. He stated that staff recognizes that this is a tremendous opportunity and is highly engaged.

In closing, the Director reported that DFG staff would provide a comprehensive review and update on the MassFishHunt system during the January meeting.

Commissioner's Comments

Commissioner Tom O'Shea agreed that the Performance Recognition Program celebration was a great opportunity to see in person all the participating staff from throughout the department. He noted that they are peer-nominated awards, so they're very meaningful to staff. The Commissioner reported that 60 staff attended, and that their teamwork and leadership of projects are exactly what the Administration is focused on.

Commissioner O'Shea also reported that the department's strategic plan is moving forward, and that a lot of work on the climate and habitat pieces, especially, has been accomplished.

Regarding the update on MassFishHunt at the next monthly meeting, the Commissioner reported that an RFR is out now, and his staff is actively seeking a vendor to take over the system.

The Forests as Climate Solutions Initiative will probably launch next week, Commissioner O'Shea reported. There will be a public comment period for constituents and state agencies to provide comments. He was not sure at that point whether an event was planned, but the launch is coming. He reported that existing DFW projects are being updated to reflect the recommendations in the final report.

Commissioner O'Shea also reported that the department's DER will be overseeing preliminary design studies for dam removals in seven municipalities. The removals would help dam owners deal with dam safety issues and improve water quality, while the projects will also have positive impacts for habitat and climate resilience. The DER staff is both biologists and construction project managers, so they go above and beyond with these important projects. The Commissioner also reported that there has been some avian evidence of zebra mussels in Lake Onota, stating that there is no reason to panic yet, but staff are investigating.

Law Enforcement Comments

Major Kevin Clayton from the Office of Law Enforcement reported on a recent investigation OLE officers conducted in cooperation with the state police.

He reported that six officers had started field training with experienced officers, and that in January four police academy graduates will enter the in-service academy.

Regarding the implementation of the Wildlife Violators Compact, the Major reported that Captain Scott Amati is taking the OLE lead and is looking forward to working with MassWildlife staff in that enforcement effort.

Major Clayton also reported that OLE is holding a series of stakeholder meetings with TU, the Mass. Trappers Association, and others, to open and maintain lines of communication.

Personnel Report

Assistant Director Todd Richards presented the Board members with the hiring managers' recommendations for four positions as follow. He touched on highlights in each of the candidates' resumes and experience.

Promotion

<u>Employee</u>	<u>Position</u>	<u>Location</u>
James Burnham	Assistant Federal Aid and Construction Procurement Coordinator Program Coordinator III	Westborough
Mark W. Coughlin	Assistant Hatchery Manager Fish Culturist II	Belchertown

New Hire

<u>Employee</u>	<u>Position</u>	<u>Location</u>
Matthew T. Lyons	Assistant Hatchery Manager Fish Culturist II	Belchertown
Micah Jasny	NHESP Information Manager Conservation Biologist IV	Westborough

Dr. Organ moved acceptance of the Personnel Report as presented; Ms. Dyer seconded the motion. The vote in favor was unanimous.

A discussion was held regarding the best way for Board members to meet newly hired staff. Director Tisa reported that he encourages staff to meet the Board members and interact with them, and he fully supports having new staff attend the next practicable meeting after they begin their new duties. He encouraged the Board members to remain for a short time after Board meetings to interact with staff old and new.

Confirm the January Meeting Date

Members confirmed the January meeting on January 17, 2024. A governance meeting was set for 10:00 a.m. and the business meeting will be held at 1:00 p.m.

Members also discussed the February meeting and chose Wednesday, February 15, with a 10:00 a.m. discussion meeting and the Business meeting at 1:00 p.m. The Chair also confirmed that a joint meeting with the DCR Stewardship Council will be held at 4:00 p.m. the afternoon of the February meeting.

Members' Comments

Mr. Sisk wished everyone happy holidays.

Ms. Dyer also wished everyone happy holidays. She reported that she had been invited to speak to the Mass. Trappers Association meeting. She had asked them to also invite Dr. Organ, and she had greatly appreciated his participation. She found it a fascinating discussion that she enjoyed. Ms. Dyer also reported that she had participated in a BOW program at Devens and thought it was a great experience. She also reported that she had had a flat tire as she was leaving the November meeting. She called Mr. Olanyk and was very grateful that he came and helped her fix her tire.

Mr. Foster reported being very pleased to hear about the preparations toward dam removals and was looking forward to the February meeting with DCR, to maintain and increase state forests open to hunting.

Mr. Durand reported that he and Ms. Ellsworth had attended a Mass. Farm Bureau meeting and that Assistant Director for Wildlife Mike Huguenin had presented on the depredation working group

recommendations. He also reported the development of a relationship between the Franklin Farm Bureau and Franklin County League to match landowners to hunters.

Ms. Ellsworth wished everyone happy holidays. She reported that she had had many reports to her on the success of pheasant stocking program this year. She also alerted the meeting that the following Tuesday evening a hearing would be held in Winchendon and Ashburnham regarding a 1,350-acre Winchendon Forest LLC parcel that is proposed to be made into a solar development. She reported that the Mount Grace Land Conservation Trust is working with the town to exercise a right of first refusal and then convey the property to Mass Audubon.

Dr. Organ reported that on June 15, 2024, in Princeton a tree stand training program will be held. He stated that it is an excellent course and that it would be great for other Board members to participate, even if they don't use a tree stand, to see industry standards and safety issues around tree stands. He thanked Ms. Dyer for asking him to attend the Mass. Trappers meeting and stated that he hasn't interacted with trappers in decades and was very gratified to listen to the very knowledgeable people in the meeting.

Mr. Sears reported that, during the second FACS comments, someone complained about effects of forest management. Encouraged opportunities to give site walks in managed areas, to

Public Comment (Meg Sheehan)

Chair Sears ascertained that Ms. Sheehan was not in attendance at the meeting and had not notified staff that she was not attending.

There being no further business, a motion was made by Mr. Durand to adjourn. The motion was seconded by Mr. Foster. The vote in favor was unanimous, and the meeting was adjourned at 11:25 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Ernie Foster
Secretary

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

December agenda
Draft November business meeting minutes
December personnel report