



MASSWILDLIFE

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, Mark S. Tisa/Director, Tom O'Shea/Commissioner/DFG, Eve Schlüter/Deputy Director, Mike Huguenin/Assistant Director/Wildlife, Jesse Leddick/Assistant Director/NHESP, Nicole McSweeney/Assistant Director/Outreach and Education, Trina Moruzzi/Assistant Director/Operations, Todd Richards/Assistant Director/Fisheries, Pat Huckery/Northeast Wildlife District Manager, Andrew Madden/Western Wildlife District Manager, Todd Olanyk/Central Wildlife District Manager, Joe Rogers/Connecticut Valley Wildlife District Manager; Jason Zimmer/Southeast Wildlife District Manager

DATE: February 15, 2024

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

Chair Sears opened the December business meeting at 1:00 p.m.

Acceptance of Minutes

A motion was made by Mr. Durand to approve the minutes from the January business meeting as presented. The motion was seconded by Mr. Foster; the vote in favor was unanimous.

Chair's Comments

Chair Sears reported that the Zoom portion of the meeting wasn't active at that moment, and that staff was working to bring it online. He stated that the meeting would continue and hopefully the problem would be fixed shortly.

He stated that the ARPA funds for land protection were a pleasant surprise, and that the Department's Christy Edwards would be addressing the Board later in the meeting to provide some background information.

The Chair reported that Tom Ferguson, who was the president of the 600-member Lenox Sportsmen's Club, is retiring, and he wished him well after all his years of service. He also reported that the Berkshire County League's Silvio O. Conti Sportsman of the Year will be Western Wildlife District Fisheries Biologist Leanda Fontaine. Noting that this was very exciting and well-deserved, he stated that anyone who wants to attend the Berkshire County banquet can do so.

Chair Sears also reported briefly on a situation in Pittsfield with a potential identification of zebra mussels in Lake Onota. He stated that municipal officials took upon themselves to put DCR and MassWildlife seals on signage saying that boat-washing was required, but that they had no authority to do so. He stated that Western District Manager Andrew Madden was apprised of the situation.

Director's Comments

Director Tisa reported that he had a brief update on the diversion of Federal Aid funds related to vehicle sales that he had reported at the previous meeting. He reported that the OSD has reimbursed the Inland

MASSWILDLIFE

Fish and Game Fund for 11 of the 15 vehicles sold – \$85,000 – and he expected the rest would be returned any day.

Commissioner’s Comments

Commissioner Tom O’Shea introduced Assistant Commissioner for Strategic Initiatives and Climate Policy Jen Ryan. He reported that Ms. Ryan is a previous MassWildlife employee and has also worked at Mass Audubon and The Trustees. She will be a huge asset for amplifying and executing the Department’s strategic plan and has been a big asset in the Community Preservation Initiative. Mr. Durand and Director Tisa each shared their respect and enthusiasm for their experience working with Ms. Ryan and wished her well in her new position.

Commissioner O’Shea reported that the Governor’s Report on the state has the Department listed in the EEA section, including the recent projects he had reported on in the previous meeting. He also reminded the Board members of the upcoming workshop he was hosting on the Department’s Biodiversity Executive Order implementation. The Commissioner said he and his staff will come back before the Board with the updated Strategic Plan and the implementation plan for the Biodiversity EO. He also reported that legislation is moving forward to codify the reimbursement of free and reduced-fee licenses in statute. He was looking forward to meeting and spending time with Worcester County League members at their upcoming banquet.

Law Enforcement Comments

Major Kevin Clayton brought greetings from OLE Colonel Sean Santos. As of end of January, he reported there are 99 officers, including four in the West Boylston academy. OLE hopes to add the hundredth in May when another recruit will enter the academy. The Major also detailed the process of training for new recruits.

Captain Scott Amati then provided the Board with a brief overview of actions connected to the current hunting and other recreational seasons and activities; a detailed report of recent OLE activities, including fish-and-wildlife-related examples of calls for service that Environmental Police officers had responded to in the previous month; and the outlines of ongoing and recently completed investigations.

Chair Sears asked for the previous year’s calls for service for a local reporter in Berkshire County. Capt. Amati stated that he would work with his colleagues provide the report as requested.

Personnel Report

Assistant Director Jesse Leddick, Assistant Director Todd Richards, Assistant Director Trina Moruzzi, and Assistant Director Nicole McSweeney, respectively, presented the Board members with the hiring manager’s recommendations for four positions as follow, touching on highlights in each of the candidates’ resumes and experience, and then introduced recently hired employees to the Board.

Approvals

Promotions

<i>Employee</i>	<i>Position</i>	<i>Location</i>
Alex Entrup	Prescribed Fire Project Leader Conservation Biologist IV	Westborough
Jeremy Davis	McLaughlin Hatchery Technician Wildlife Technician III	Belchertown

Eli Pease	Western District Technician Wildlife Technician III	Dalton
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New Hire

<u>Employee</u>	<u>Position</u>	<u>Location</u>
Michelle Collins	Outreach and Marketing Coordinator Conservation Biologist III	Westborough

Mr. Durand moved that the Personnel Report be accepted as presented; Mr. Sisk seconded the motion; the vote in favor was unanimous.

Introductions

<u>Employee</u>	<u>Position</u>	<u>Location</u>
Ian Sypek	Outdoor Education Specialist Game Biologist I	Westborough
Micah Jasny	NHESP Information Manager Conservation Biologist IV	Westborough
Matthew T. Lyons	Assistant Hatchery Manager Fish Culturist II	Belchertown

The Board members congratulated Mr. Sypek, Mr. Jasny, and Mr. Lyons for their recent promotion and hiring and wished them the best in their careers with MassWildlife.

Preview and Request for Hearing for Proposed 2024-2025 Migratory Game Bird Hunting Regulations (Michael Huguenin)

Assistant Director for Wildlife Michael Huguenin gave the Board members a brief PowerPoint that outlined the staff's projections and expected recommendations for the 2024-2025 migratory bird hunting seasons. Mr. Huguenin reported that the Atlantic Flyway Council meetings would not be held until later in the month, but that staff was confident of about 90% of the expected federal frameworks that would determine what was possible in Massachusetts. He stated that, if the request for a public hearing on the matter was received, he and other MassWildlife staff would develop the regulations draft as quickly as possible and submit it to the necessary authorities for approval. Once approval was received, staff would forward the draft regulations to the Board members and advertise them widely to the public for comments. Mr. Huguenin stated that he would present the federal frameworks and the final staff recommendations, after consideration of all comments received, at the public hearing.

After a brief discussion, Mr. Foster moved that staff submit the following dates for the woodcock season: October 3—November 30, as part of package sent to a public hearing. Dr. Organ seconded the motion; the vote in favor was unanimous.

Mr. Durand moved that the Board approve the proposals, instruct staff to create regulations based on them, and take them to a public hearing as soon as possible; Ms. Dyer seconded the motion. After a brief discussion, the vote in favor of drafting regulations based on the amended proposals and submitting them for public hearing was unanimous.

Director Tisa reported that about a month previously he was walking to his car and was recognized by a falconer who had attended the hearing the previous year in Turners Falls. The falconer thanked the Director and the Board for listening to the falconers at that time and making the change they had requested. It was very much appreciated.

FY 2024-2025 Land Protection Budget Review (Christy Edwards)

Commissioner O'Shea introduced DFG Director of Land Policy and Capital Budgets Christy Edwards, who briefly explained the 2024-2025 land acquisition budget.

Natural Heritage and Endangered Species Advisory Committee Report (Matthew Sisk)

Mr. Sisk reported that the Advisory Committee had held a separate meeting to discuss the Forests as Climate Solutions forestry team report and the possibility of submitting comments to the EEA Guidelines portal. He stated that the Advisory Committee did decide to submit comments, and a copy of those comments was included in the Board's meeting packets.

Confirm the March Meeting Date

Members rescheduled the March meeting to March 20, 2024. The Chair reported that the governance meeting would begin at 10:00 a.m., the Board members could have a brown-bag lunch with staff, and business meeting is set for 1:00 p.m.

Director Tisa stated that the April date will be set as soon as staff knows when the hearing can be held. The Board agreed that April should be held in Westborough because of the migratory bird public hearing, which must be held before the end of April. He also noted the possibility of a public hearing on the proposed MESA List changes somewhere around the April meeting, in addition to that for the migratory bird hunting regulations. He advised that he would provide the details when the hearing approval was received from EEA and ANF.

Members' Comments

Dr. Organ reported that the Regional U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service office hunter education team was scheduled to teach a Basic Hunter Ed class on March 23, and that they had two more, on April 6 and 7, at Westfield State University. He noted that these three Basic Hunter Education classes would all be held prior to turkey season, to allow more new hunters to participate.

Ms. Ellsworth reported seeing a big opportunity on all sides for a push to protect more land. She highlighted the difficulty and the skills involved in land protection for conservation. She reported that the biggest bottleneck is having enough experienced agents who have the skills to carry projects through all the due diligence. She also reported an emphasis on conservation restrictions, with mostly pros and some cons, including especially the money saved.

Mr. Durand reported his congratulations to retired MassWildlife Director Wayne MacCallum, who was inducted into the national turkey hunting hall of fame. He reported receiving invitations to the upcoming county league banquets, and reported that he had spoken at OLE Lt. Rob Roy MacGregor's funeral and was very honored and happy to do it.

Mr. Foster reported that Southeast District pheasant hunters are upset that there will be no pheasant stocking on the National Seashore this year. He reported that Director Tisa had written an excellent letter asking to substitute bobwhite quail in the same areas, which Mr. Foster hopes will be acceptable to the National Park Service.

Ms. Dyer reported her thanks to Assistant Director Huguenin for being very helpful in her experience hunting with dogs. She reported that the social media posts have been excellent. She also offered her thanks to the staff involved in helping edit her recent article in *Massachusetts Wildlife*. Ms. Dyer reported her planned participation in a March 10 turkey calling seminar and contest at the Field Headquarters.

Mr. Sisk reported attending a recent Greater Boston Trout Unlimited meeting where the guest speaker was Dan Harrison, who talked about pike fishing. He reported that he had met with Assistant Director Richards a few weeks previously regarding the catch-and-release areas and regulations.

Public Comment

Mr. Clayton Sydla, president of the Quabbin Fisherman's Association, provided the Board with comments on fishing in the Quabbin Reservoir. Mr. Sydla reported that he fishes the Quabbin every day, his boat is sealed for the Quabbin, and that the fishing there has gone downhill. Mr. Sydla specifically fishes for salmon and he reported that it is all stocked and there is no regeneration. He asked for the salmon to be put in the Quabbin and not transferred to New Jersey in exchange for pike every year. He stated that the Quabbin is the only place to fish for salmon and that the fishing is worse every year. He also spoke about rainbow trout and smallmouth bass, suggesting a possible special regulation specifically for the Quabbin to save bass during spawning. Mr. Sydla complimented the Freshwater Sport Fishing Awards program and its inclusion of catch-and-release categories for children.

Chair Sears thanked Mr. Sydla for his comments.

There being no further business, a motion was made by Mr. Durand to adjourn the meeting and go into executive session for the purpose of discussing proposed land acquisitions whose negotiations would be compromised by discussion in open session, and to not return to open session afterward. The motion was seconded by Mr. Foster. The vote in favor was unanimous, and the meeting was adjourned at 3:20 p.m.

Executive Session

There were two parcels presented to the Board for consideration. Both parcels were accepted in roll call votes of the Board members.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 3:25 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Ernie Foster
Secretary

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

February agenda

Draft January business meeting minutes

Letter from Director Mark S. Tisa to Cape Cod National Seashore Superintendent Jennifer Flynn RE quail stocking on the National Seashore

February personnel report

Department of Fish and Game February FY 2024-2025 land protection budget

Documentation for the executive session