



MASSWILDLIFE

## 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, 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, Joe Rogers/ Connecticut Valley Wildlife District Manager

DATE: January 17, 2024

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

Chair Sears opened the December business meeting at 1:00 p.m. Vice Chair Bob Durand attended the meeting via Zoom.

### Acceptance of Minutes

A motion was made by Mr. Sisk to approve the minutes from the December 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 state is in a public comment period for the Forests as Climate Solutions report. He stated that he has been in discussions with the Director and the Commissioner and has been assured that staff is also involved in the process. He is also assured that MassWildlife's habitat goals will not change as a result of that process; rather, they may change after the Commissioner's Strategic Plan has been finalized and those goals have been established.

Chair Sears also reported that the following month the Board will have a joint meeting with the DCR Stewardship Council, with Board member Emma Ellsworth and Council member Dicken Crane presenting on landscape-scale biodiversity conservation. He also noted that bear den trips will be available in February for new members of the Healey-Driscoll Administration.

### Director's Comments

Director Tisa reported that he has been involved nationally in an effort to reform the federal e-duck stamp regulations. Previously, the e-stamp expired after 45 days, and the hunter was required to have a physical stamp after that period and carry it in the field with them. This caused confusion and put hunters in harm's way for being noncompliant with the regulations. Director Tisa reported he was chair of a task force of directors and sporting organizations that included Texas, Arkansas, Alabama, and Oklahoma and worked to correct the law. He reported that President Biden has signed into law the bill that corrects the system so that the e-duck stamp is valid throughout the duck hunting season. Director Tisa stated that there were many important partners involved in this effort to make it a reality, including but not limited to the Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies (AFWA), the Congressional Sportsman's Foundation, Ducks Unlimited, and the Flyway Councils.

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The Director also reported on an issue that pertained to a letter from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's (USFWS) Wildlife and Sport Fish Restoration Program (WSFR) that was included in the Board's meeting packets. He stated that WSFR has identified that vehicles owned by MassWildlife and paid for with license dollars were sold as state surplus, but the proceeds have not been returned to the Inland Fish and Game Fund (IFGF) as required by federal law. Director Tisa stressed that this appropriation of funds is a diversion of license dollars and jeopardizes Massachusetts' entire federal aid apportionment. The letter gives Massachusetts until February 15, 2024, to restore the relevant monies to the IFGF, or the Chief of WSFR may by law write to the Director of the USFWS to declare Massachusetts in diversion and recommend that its access to federal aid funds be cut off, amounting to over \$16,000,000 per year in lost revenue.

After a brief discussion, Director Tisa stated that he would keep the Board informed of all further developments.

#### Commissioner's Comments

Commissioner Tom O'Shea confirmed Chair Sears' comment that the report on climate-oriented forestry guidelines has been issued by the expert panel assembled by the Secretary. That report is open to public comment and will then be adopted in some form by the Administration.

The Commissioner reported that the Governor's State of the State event was scheduled the evening of the Board meeting and stated that he will be present, representing the Department. An inaugural report has been issued, and the Biodiversity Executive Order and MassWildlife's Hunters Share the Harvest program were both included in it as accomplishments during the year, along with the two accessible fishing piers Commissioner O'Shea had previously reported to the Board. The Commissioner also reported on a number of large grants received by the Department, including by the Division of Marine Fisheries and the Division of Ecological Restoration. He was excited to report that Marine Fisheries is developing a companion program on the saltwater side to MassWildlife's Hunters Share the Harvest, to donate fish that can't be otherwise utilized to increase food security in the Commonwealth. He also reported that he is hiring three new staff in the Commissioner's office, including a press person and an Environmental Justice community liaison.

#### Law Enforcement Comments

There being no representation from the Office of Law Enforcement, there were no comments provided.

#### Personnel Report

Assistant Director Nicole McSweeney presented the Board members with the hiring manager's recommendations for two positions as follow, touching on highlights in each of the candidates' resumes and experience.

#### *Promotion*

<u>Employee</u>	<u>Position</u>	<u>Location</u>
Ian Sypek	Outdoor Education Specialist Game Biologist I	Westborough

*New Hire*

<i>Employee</i>	<i>Position</i>	<i>Location</i>
Jeffrey Osgood	Outdoor Education Volunteer Coordinator Game Biologist III	Westborough

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

*Introduction*

Assistant Director Richards introduced a candidate that was approved by the Board at a previous meeting. He reported that Mark Coughlin is a dedicated and highly valued 22-year employee at the McLaughlin Hatchery who was promoted to the Assistant Culturist at McLaughlin during the December 2023 Board meeting.

<i>Employee</i>	<i>Position</i>	<i>Location</i>
Mark W. Coughlin	Assistant Hatchery Manager Fish Culturist II	Belchertown

The Board members greeted Mr. Coughlin and congratulated him on his promotion.

MassFishHunt Update (Dan Koch)

Dan Koch, the DFG Information Technology Coordinator, provided the Board with a comprehensive report on the history and current state of the *MassFishHunt* license sales system, including the timeline from the original development of the current system through to the procurement happening now of a new contract to build and maintain a licensing solution for the Department. He also reviewed the problems the Department and its agencies experienced in its relationship with Kalkomey Enterprises, the original vendor, and detailed the ways the Department is addressing the “pain points” experienced with Kalkomey in the new procurement. There were many lessons learned and Mr. Koch reported that the Department’s team has incorporated all that accumulated knowledge into the present procurement process for a new vendor. He then outlined the selection process the new vendor will undergo, as well as the best practices the Departments team will follow in its work with and oversight of the new vendor moving forward.

After a brief discussion, the Board members thanked Mr. Koch for attending, for his leadership on the MassFishHunt procurement, and for his very informative report.

Confirm the February Meeting Date

Members confirmed the February meeting on February 15, 2024. The business meeting is set for 1:00 p.m., and a joint meeting with the DCR Stewardship Council is planned at 4:00 p.m. in which Chair Sears reported that Board member Emma Ellsworth and DCR Stewardship Council member Dicken Crane will lead a discussion of landscape-scale conservation in Massachusetts.

Chair Sears reported that the members had also discussed the March meetings during the governance meeting, and stated that the March business meeting, on March 21, 2024, will begin at 1:00. Director Tisa reported the possibility of a public hearing on the proposed MESA List changes sometime during the March meeting. He advised that he would provide the details when the hearing approval was received from EEA.

### Members' Comments

Dr. Organ reported no comments, other than thanking staff for the excellent interview process he had participated in.

Ms. Ellsworth reported on a property acquisition in Winchendon and Ashburnham she had outlined at the previous meeting. She reported that Mass Audubon and Mt. Grace had collaborated on acquiring a 1,400-acre parcel that they hoped would be a right of first refusal assignment instead of a huge solar installation that would have developed up to 400 acres of the parcel. She reported that the townspeople had demanded a public hearing and then participated in the hearing and in providing comments, including MassWildlife's Travis Drudi, who has hunted the land from his youth. Ms. Ellsworth credited the huge amount of community organizing and community engagement, particularly among hunters and anglers, that resulted in the unanimously voted award of the right of first refusal to Mass Audubon and Mt. Grace.

Mr. Foster reported that he has received many, many comments from bird hunters in his region for the pheasant-stocking, expressing their thanks and enthusiasm for how well it was conducted.

Ms. Dyer thanked the staff involved for all the work behind the scenes to make the MassFishHunt experience as good as it can be for license-buyers. She also reported that she was personally happy for Ian Sypek in his promotion.

Mr. Sisk reported that the Advisory Committee had met on January 11. It was Mr. Leddick's first meeting as the Assistant Director, and he had briefed the Committee about the progress of the updates to the MESA list. Mr. Sisk reported that the Advisory Committee was planning to meet again the following week to discuss the Forests as Climate Solutions report and the committee's possible comments on it.

Chair Sears thanked the Board members for their participation in the goals-setting process in the previous governance meeting.

There being no further business, a motion was made by Mr. Sisk 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 2:50 p.m.

### Executive Session

There were three parcels presented to the Board for consideration. All three parcels were unanimously accepted in roll call votes of the Board members.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 3:15 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Ernie Foster  
Secretary

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

January agenda  
Draft December business meeting minutes  
Letter from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service regarding a diversion of license revenue  
January personnel report  
Annual Summary of the Conflict of Interest Law for State Employees  
Documentation for the executive session