



MASSWILDLIFE

DIVISION OF FISHERIES & WILDLIFE

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COMMONWEALTH OF MASSACHUSETTS DIVISION OF FISHERIES AND WILDLIFE FISHERIES AND WILDLIFE BOARD GOVERNANCE MEETING MINUTES

PRESENT: Steve Sears/Chair, Ernie Foster/Secretary, Sasha Dyer, Emma Ellsworth, John Organ, Matthew Sisk, Mark S. Tisa/Director, Eve Schlüter/Deputy Director, Kris McCarthy/CFO, Nicole McSweeney/Assistant Director/Outreach and Education, Trina Moruzzi/Assistant Director/Operations, Jesse Leddick/Assistant Director for Natural Heritage and Endangered Species, Pat Huckery/Northeast Wildlife District Manager, Joe Rogers/Connecticut Valley Wildlife District Manager, Jason Zimmer/Southeast Wildlife District Manager, Susan Langlois/Administrator/Hunter Education Program, Jim Pollock/Operations Specialist; PUBLIC: Steve LaRivee

DATE: January 17, 2024

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

Chair Sears opened the discussion meeting at 10:05 a.m.

Acceptance of Minutes

Dr. Organ moved acceptance of the November minutes as submitted; Ms. Dyer seconded the motion; the vote in favor was unanimous.

Chair's Comments

Chair Sears welcomed the public to the meeting. When the meeting opened, the Board members were signing their annual Conflict of Interest law compliance receipts. He reported that Mr. Durand was not present but would be listening on Zoom. He also reported that Mr. Foster was held up in traffic and would be arriving late.

Free License Reimbursement Report

Mr. Sears reported that Mr. Durand has developed language to submit to state representatives for putting free and discounted license fee reimbursements into statute to ensure their permanence.

Discussion of the Board's Goals for the Coming Year

Mr. Sears reported that the meeting was being devoted to discussing the Board's goals for the coming year. He stated that one thing all the Board members agree is a worthy goal is to work to expand opportunities to experience Massachusetts' resources of fish and wildlife and develop additional funding sources to support the work of MassWildlife. He noted that it is a very broad goal, and that he thinks the Board should focus on trying to develop funding mechanisms if possible. Discussion ensued about options.

Director Tisa reported that probably the best approach to securing additional short-term funding will be to look to the Department's Strategic Plan when it is released. There will be an opportunity, when the

Department's goals and objectives are presented, to ask the Administration for the resources that will be needed to accomplish those goals.

Chair Sears asked for a discussion about other possible goals, noting that R3 was also a shared goal among the members, to support what MassWildlife is trying to do, including outreach to non-traditional audiences and broadening support for programs by publicizing the work MassWildlife does to benefit all citizens. An extended discussion ensued of examples of different possible goals.

Chair Sears asked if any members had individual goals, or things they want to work on in the new year.

Mr. Sisk reported that he has set himself a personal goal of providing six BioMap presentations a year. He also wants to do a personal tour to review MassWildlife's fly-fishing-only and catch-and-release areas to determine where they are now, how they were developed, and how they are created. He looks forward to discussing these matters with members and staff.

Ms. Ellsworth reported her goal is to address the state of bathroom facilities at fishing access points, noting that reliable sanitary facilities are important for new participants in outdoor recreation, while ownership of facilities and responsibility for them are complicated issues.

Director Tisa recommended another review of the Fisheries Program, given the members' interest in issues around fisheries.

Ms. Dyer reported that she has personal goals for contacting legislators and helping MassWildlife staff with R3 programs, especially the BOW [Becoming an Outdoors Woman] program. Her personal goal is to work with Assistant Director Huguenin or the Director to look into making it legal to use tracking dogs for the purpose of recovering harvests.

Mr. Foster reported that his personal interest is in mentoring, particularly in introducing adults and youth to shooting. Another of his goals is to address the problems and declines in the county league system, and he reported that he believes the state needs a future system of conducting outreach and gathering feedback for MassWildlife.

Ms. Ellsworth reported that she will focus on bringing together more closely the conservation community and MassWildlife. She is interested in fostering co-management of WMAs with indigenous partners. She also believes work should continue on depredation issues, including in light of the farmers who've reached out to MassWildlife recently.

Dr. Organ reported that he is interested in working on securing a permanent funding mechanism for MassWildlife. Another of his goals is to get the word out better to the 95% of residents who don't hunt or fish and make them understand that MassWildlife is their expert resource on all matters to do with wildlife.

Chair Sears stated that he wants to work on a fair system of distribution of antlerless deer permits, including using a lottery system, and also as an incentive for people who are new to hunting. He stated that he will work with Assistant Director Huguenin and the Director in this effort. Another of the Chair's goals is to elevate MassWildlife's authority in the state as an expert on watershed and fisheries issues.

In closing, the Chair reported that the Board will invite approved candidates for hiring to attend the first subsequent meeting they are able to attend after being hired or promoted.

Confirm February Meeting Date and Time: February 15, 2024, at 10:00 a.m.

Chair Sears reported that there will not be a governance meeting in February and that there will be one held in March. He also requested that an upcoming meeting be held in an urban area where the Board doesn't usually meet. Director Tisa noted that there will be at least one public hearing during the April

business meeting and advised that the hearing be held in Westborough and on Zoom. Dr. Organ suggested a future meeting at the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service regional office in Hadley and getting the Cooperative Fish and Wildlife Research Unit based at UMass Amherst to participate.

There being no further discussion, Mr. Sisk made a motion to adjourn; Dr. Organ seconded; the vote in favor was unanimous and the meeting adjourned at 11:50 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Ernie Foster
Secretary

List of documents presented to the Board in its January governance meeting packets

Draft minutes from the November governance meeting
January governance meeting notice with agenda