



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, Bob Durand/Vice Chair, Ernie Foster/Secretary, Sasha Dyer, Emma Ellsworth, John Organ, Matthew Sisk, Ron Amidon/Commissioner/DFG, Mark Tisa/Director, Jon Regosin/Deputy Director, Kris McCarthy/CFO, Mike Huguenin/Assistant Director/Wildlife, Eve Schlüter/Assistant Director/NHESP, Trina Moruzzi/Assistant Director/Operations, Nicole McSweeney/Assistant Director/Outreach and Education, Todd Richards, Assistant Director/Fisheries, Todd Olanyk/Central Wildlife District Manager, Pat Huckery/Northeast Wildlife District Manager, Jason Zimmer/Southeast Wildlife District Manager, Andrew Madden/Western Wildlife District Manager, Joe Rogers/Conn. Valley Wildlife District Manager, Jennifer Sulla/General Counsel/DFG, Major Kevin Clayton/OLE, Captain Scott Amati/OLE. PUBLIC: Chris Giglio, Jeff Miller

DATE: January 19, 2023

LOCATION: MassWildlife Field Headquarters, Westborough

Vice Chair Durand opened the monthly business meeting at 10:05 a.m., announcing that the Chair was unexpectedly delayed in traffic and would join the meeting when he could.

Acceptance of Minutes

A motion was made by Dr. Organ to table the minutes from the December meeting. The motion was seconded by Mr. Sisk; the vote in favor was unanimous.

Chair's Comments

The Vice Chair delayed the Chair's comments until his arrival.

Commissioner's Comments

Commissioner Amidon reported a meeting at the Ecotarium science center in Worcester, arranged by State Senator Moore, including a tour of the grounds and facility. The Commissioner reported that the Ecotarium had had difficulty fundraising, then operations and programs were interrupted by COVID. He stated that the organization now has a new director, and the staff wants to renew its interactions with the public and restart the aquarium. Commissioner Amidon stated that he will introduce the Ecotarium staff to MassWildlife staff over the ensuing weeks and noted that the facility participated in the head-starting program for turtles in the past and would like to present angler education programs and join the Trout in the Classroom program. Noting the large property and impressive archive, the Commissioner stated that it is among the oldest in New England, originating from a collector who donated a very large collection.

Commissioner Amidon also reported a meeting the previous week with new EEA Secretary Tepper. He reported that she is enthusiastic and wants to learn more about the Department's programs. He anticipated a high-level follow-up meeting the following week.

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Director's Comments

Director Tisa stated that the following week he would be leading the Northeast Regional Landscape Conservation Planning workshop at the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's Region 5 office in Hadley. The Director stated that Assistant Director for NHESP Eve Schlüter and Assistant Director for Fisheries Todd Richards are also part of the planning group. He reported that the Northeast states organize regional landscape priorities because more funding opportunities are coming this year, and that this workshop is part of an exercise with NEAFWA to identify top priorities; the priorities that come out of the four regional AFWAs will thereafter go up to the Department of the Interior.

Chair's Comments

Chair Sears joined the meeting during the Director's comments. He asked for approval of a draft letter he had had Mrs. Sacco email to the Board members, addressed to the new EEA Secretary, Rebecca Tepper. Vice Chair Durand moved that the letter be sent as presented; Ms. Ellsworth seconded; the vote in favor was unanimous.

Law Enforcement Comments

Major Kevin Clayton of the Office of Law Enforcement (OLE) introduced Captain Scott Amati, who reported completing his reports for the previous calendar year. He stated that there were 10 hunting accidents reported for the year, most of them involving tree stands. He also reported the successful relocation of a habituated moose to a more remote location.

Major Clayton reported that the New England Fly Fishing Show was scheduled for the following weekend, Friday through Sunday, in Marlborough, and noted that he planned to be there on Friday. The Major also reported that he had initiated a forum to talk about bears with police officers. Part of that conversation is facilitation meetings with chiefs of police in Northeast and Southeastern Massachusetts. The goals are to get the message out about normal bear behavior and manage expectations when the LART [Large Animal Response] team is called to an incident.

Major Clayton also reported that OLE plans to hire 13 officers in the coming year and is doing background checks on 30-32 candidates in all. He noted that the current number of MEP officers is 83-85 across the state. The Major also stated that he is monitoring the situation as processes develop around enforcing the Wildlife Violator Compact.

Personnel Report (Michael Huguenin, Trian Moruzzi, and Eve Schlüter)

Assistant Director of Wildlife Michael Huguenin presented the Board with the hiring manager's recommendation for the position indicated below, including highlights of the candidate's qualifications and experience.

New Hire

<u>Employee</u>	<u>Position</u>	<u>Location</u>
Meghan Crawford	Community Engagement Biologist Game Biologist III	Westborough

Assistant Director of Operations Trina Moruzzi presented the Board with the hiring manager's recommendation for the position indicated below, including highlights of the candidate's qualifications and experience.

Promotion

<i>Employee</i>	<i>Position</i>	<i>Location</i>
Joshua Gahagan	Northeast District Wildlife Technician Wildlife Technician III	Ayer

Assistant Director of the Natural Heritage and Endangered Species Program Eve Schlüter presented the Board with the hiring manager's recommendation for the position indicated below, including highlights of the candidate's qualifications and experience.

Promotion

<i>Employee</i>	<i>Position</i>	<i>Location</i>
Amy Hoenig	Senior Endangered Species Review Biologist Conservation Biologist IV	Westborough

Vice Chair Durand moved to accept the personnel report as presented. Dr. Organ seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

Southeast Wildlife District Overview (Jason Zimmer)

Southeast Wildlife District Manager Jason Zimmer began by referencing the detailed presentations that have already been made to the Board by Joe Rogers, The Connecticut Valley District Manager, and Todd Olanyk, the Central District Manager, stating that he believed the Board already had a very good understanding of the core functions of the Districts and their collective basic operations, so, like the Northeast District Manager, Pat Huckery, at the December meeting, he had structured his presentation on the Southeast District by skipping over the basic operations and instead focusing on some of the more interesting, unique, and important projects and activities in the Southeast.

Mr. Zimmer provided a very brief description of the Southeast District and the impressive natural resources he and his staff are charged with conserving and managing. He reported an amazing variety of habitats and resources in Southeastern Massachusetts, many of which owe their existence to glacial activity, including pitch-pine/scrub oak barrens; large freshwater wetland complexes, including the largest vegetated freshwater wetland complex in the state, in the Hockomock Swamp WMA; ponds and rivers, including many that flow into saltwater estuaries and provide habitat for anadromous fishes and a unique sea-run variant of Eastern brook trout; coastal plain ponds; coastal salt marshes; nearshore islands; sand dunes; coastal beaches; and the Elizabeth Islands, Martha's Vineyard, and Nantucket.

Mr. Zimmer then drew brief portraits to highlight each of his staff, illustrating the many ways they each individually help MassWildlife meet its conservation mission. Mr. Zimmer stated his belief, shared and repeated often by the rest of the Senior Staff, that MassWildlife's people are its #1 resource. Mr. Zimmer stated that he felt very fortunate to have the best group of people working for and with him. He intended that by talking about each one the Board members will gain a sense of the amount of pride each employee takes in their work for MassWildlife.

Deb Silva is the Clerk of the Southeast District and has worked for MassWildlife for 12 years. Ms. Silva is the frontline for the many phone calls the District receives, and is adept at handling most of them and knowing when to refer them to the District biologists or manager; her favorites are the wildlife calls from people who have questions or concerns. She conducts most of the license sales for the District and has a wonderful rapport with the sporting community. Ms. Silva also does all the purchasing and the related reports for the District. She is a talented artist as well and has made contributions to issues of the *Massachusetts Wildlife* magazine, including crappie, woodpecker, and moth illustrations. Her other

contributions are many, and include helping to rescue and transporting sick and injured wildlife and rescuing reptiles and amphibians in cranberry bogs.

Steve Hurley, the Southeast Fisheries Biologist, has worked at MassWildlife for more than 33 years. On top of his other duties and skills, Mr. Hurley is a leading expert in research on and management of saltier brook trout, which spend part of their life cycle in salt water, and has conducted surveys, research, and restoration projects to benefit the species for decades. Mr. Zimmer also reported that Mr. Hurley has developed many partnerships over the years to further fisheries management and aquatic habitat restoration in the Southeast. He has designed and overseen numerous restorations, including large-scale river restoration projects. Mr. Hurley also provides many public talks and presentations on his work, including to students.

Steve Wright is the District Wildlife Biologist and has been at the Southeast District for over 12 years, having worked for MassWildlife for over 25. In addition to the day-to-day duties of a District biologist, Mr. Wright conducts field research, including a wide, diverse range of projects with the Westborough project leaders; the pheasant and quail stocking; and the controlled hunts in the District. Mr. Zimmer reported that, like all District staff, a large portion of Mr. Wright's time is devoted to public service, including answering countless questions about nuisance and injured wildlife. He is also very active in the youth and paraplegic hunts in the District every year.

Jeff Breton is a Southeast Technician of more than 24 years. He is the District maven of all things mechanical, including vehicle and equipment maintenance and repairs, welding, electrical work, and machine operation. He also has the CDL for the District. Mr. Zimmer reported that Mr. Breton maintains, transports, and uses equipment throughout the District, keeping the entire staff fully flexible to complete a wide variety of projects, and that Mr. Breton is an expert in the work he does on fuel-break creation and maintenance, mowing, and road and parking-lot construction and maintenance.

Joan Pierce is the DFG Land Agent assigned to the Southeast District, has been there for 24 years, and is a critical member of the team. Ms. Pierce works on land acquisition throughout the District, building relationships with landowners, sometime over decades; helping with boundary work by researching titles and deeds; and working to resolve land issues.

Dan Fortier is a Southeast Technician, having been with MassWildlife for over 23 years. His specialties are prescribed fire, in which he is very active and highly skilled; grassland management; invasive plant control; mowing and tractor work all over the Southeast; and general equipment repair.

Aaron Best is the Southeast Stewardship Biologist and has worked in the District for more than 16 years. His primary activities include marking and maintaining the boundaries of the WMAs; monitoring WCEs and working with the landowners; and controlling wildfire when necessary. Mr. Zimmer reported that Mr. Best is particularly passionate about making improvements to access points in the District and helping to conduct the paraplegic hunts.

John Garofoli is a Southeast Technician. He started his MassWildlife career at the Sandwich Hatchery, working there for 7 years before transferring to the District, where he has been now for another 7 years. Given his experience, Mr. Garofoli is extremely handy and knowledgeable whenever there are trout involved, and when the Sandwich Hatchery needs assistance of any kind. Mr. Zimmer reported that Mr. Garofoli also works hard at the New England cottontail research project, and that he is constantly learning new skills and equipment maintenance working alongside his senior colleagues.

Connor Fleming is the newest Southeast Technician, having worked there for 6 years. Mr. Zimmer reported that Mr. Fleming is particularly adept at working with reptiles because of previous work experience elsewhere, and also knows his shorebirds extremely well. He is part of the Prescribed Fire

Program and wants to continue to grow his knowledge and experience in that area, and he takes a strong interest in and helps with fisheries research. Mr. Fleming is also very active in MassWildlife's R3 activities, including in game-cooking demonstrations and creating online content, including how-to and naturalist videos for social media.

After highlighting the staff, Mr. Zimmer briefly detailed some projects and activities that are either unique to the Southeast District or exemplify an aspect of District operations he thought the Board may not be aware of, to provide the members with a better understanding of the breadth and variety of work completed in the Districts. He highlighted a few projects and activities that are unique to the Southeast District or that the District has a particularly large role in, including projects for salter brook trout involving PIT tagging and habitat restoration partnerships on the Childs River and on the Coonamesset, Red Brook, and Quashnet, which enhance climate change resiliency. Other important and long-running projects include the American black duck banding efforts; tern research support; coastal water bird monitoring; and enhancements to outdoor recreation in the Camp Edwards controlled hunting programs, the special paraplegic and youth hunts, permitted field trials, the winter gamebird hunting program, and permitted dog training. The Southeast District also organized MassWildlife's first Huntstock event the previous August in Westminster and participates in other similar events. At Huntstock, Mr. Zimmer reported that staff had a deer-aging display; had the District's dermestid beetle colony on display; organized a complete deer processing workshop from field-dressing to butchering and packaging; and many staff were there to go on podcasts, answer questions, and educate people about the agency and what staff does for conservation.

Mr. Zimmer also stressed the important role the Districts play in MassWildlife's administration and operations, as well as the vital connections the Districts have and maintain in their communities. District staff attend agency section meetings and provide input on important issues. The District Managers are members of the agency's senior staff, which meets regularly and helps to create, review, and deliberate on important policy and regulatory decisions and recommendations that may ultimately be brought before the Board, some of which originate in the Districts. The District Managers routinely attend board meetings, and they develop and maintain partnerships and relationships with a wide variety of both statewide and local conservation organizations, which are critical in helping MassWildlife meet its conservation mission.

After a short discussion, the Chair and Board members thanked Mr. Zimmer for his work and his informative report.

Wildlife Program Overview (Michael Huguenin)

Assistant Director for Wildlife Michael Huguenin reported that the Wildlife Section's mission is to conserve and manage wildlife populations and habitats, and to enhance wildlife-based recreation and public appreciation of wildlife. Wildlife conservation and management and public service are the section's priorities. To serve those priorities, staff consults and reviews the best available science, and conducts population research, monitors for disease, and tracks harvest trends. Wildlife staff also tracks human-wildlife conflicts, conducts annual surveys that go back decades, participates in a myriad of other R3 and relevancy efforts, and contributes to MassFishHunt's (MFH) ongoing development.

When data has been collected, the biologists combine that information with the collective experience and professional judgement of Wildlife staff and senior staff to initiate management actions, such as regulation reviews, outreach strategies, habitat management, and surveys, and to develop and manage programs such as crossbow permitting, falconry and PAC [Problem Animal Control] permits, pheasant-stocking, and LART [Large Animal Response Team].

Assistant Director Huguenin displayed a slide listing the major aspects of M.G.L. Chapter 131 and 321 CMR 2.00 and 3.00, noting that it is important to provide the context that really governs all the Wildlife Section's work. The law provides MassWildlife with its authority to fulfill its mandate, and Assistant Director Huguenin reported that the single most important piece in the conservation puzzle is the law. Further, he noted that Chapter 131 gives MassWildlife the authority to create regulations and permits that dictate the manner in which one can take, possess, or impact wildlife. In turn, the research and monitoring the science staff conducts are essential to informing those regulations and permit parameters for conservation and management, just as they inform other management actions.

Assistant Director Huguenin reported that the team the Wildlife Section has to accomplish all of this is not very big, but it gets a lot done. Noting that the Wildlife section also houses the six Habitat Program staff, Assistant Director Huguenin stated that he would not repeat what Habitat Program Manager Brian Hawthorne had already presented to a previous meeting, except to note that the Habitat Program has grown and evolved over time, and essentially serves all sections in the agency. Instead, Assistant Director Huguenin would focus his report on the project leaders and wildlife biologists.

Assistant Director Huguenin reported that Wildlife has four Project Leaders (PL), Black Bear and Furbearer PL Dave Wattles, Turkey and Upland Game PL Dave Scarpitti, Waterfowl PL H Heusmann, and Deer and Moose PL Martin Feehan. There are also three Wildlife Biologists, Sue McCarthy, Erik Amati, and Bridgett McAlice, who assist the PLs, among other duties; State Ornithologist Drew Vitz, who splits his time with NHESP; and GIS Specialist Jonathan Brooks, who also works with Habitat. The Habitat Program consists of Manager Brian Hawthorne and Habitat Biologists Ben Mazzei, Marianne Piche, Fletcher Clark, Tom Wansleben, and Patrick Conlin.

The Wildlife Section coordinates closely with District staff, O&E, and other staff to accomplish all that it does. Staff works across the state, sometimes in urban areas more than forested, but most of the work is at a desk behind a computer, answering calls, conducting testing on and answering questions about MassFishHunt (MFH), meeting with partners, planning, coordinating, reacting, interviewing, and writing. Assistant Director Huguenin stated that his goal for the presentation was to demonstrate the importance of the work staff does and the volume of responsibility that the staff bears, and that he would introduce and highlight some examples of the two major areas of responsibility of Wildlife: 1) research, monitoring, and management and 2) human-wildlife interactions, R3, relevancy, outreach, and MFH. He would also show how staff efforts in both arenas inform management and conservation decisions.

After describing the waterfowl program and MassWildlife's disease-monitoring work; briefly touching on the deer program (because the annual Deer Review will be presented in a few months); providing an in-depth look at the black bear program, and using black bear issues to segue into detailing the Wildlife Section's work on human dimensions and human-wildlife conflicts; detailing its public-outreach responsibilities and education effort, its work to increase hunting opportunities and access, and its extensive survey and other research activities, Assistant Director Huguenin observed that many of the species the Wildlife Section deals with are very comfortable living in the same spaces as people. The single biggest contributing factor to conflicts with wildlife is food, he reported. The most important piece of advice for people is to remove the food source, which is easier said than complied with. He pointed out that Western District Manager Andrew Madden had contributed a great article in the last issue of *Massachusetts Wildlife* magazine about bears and wildlife feeding that he recommended everyone read. Assistant Director Huguenin would have liked to say that the Wildlife Section staff engages in the human-dimensions aspects of the job in between the fun stuff that he had shown in earlier slides, but it is really the other way around. Biologists fit the wildlife biology in between the fires that need to be put out.

After a brief discussion, Chair Sears and the Board members thanked Assistant Director Huguenin for his detailed report.

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

Mr. Sisk reported that a quarterly meeting of the NHESAC had been held on January 12, his second. He said that the members are fantastic; very knowledgeable and focused on the materials, and that they are very good meetings that he enjoys. He reported that Dr. Schlüter had talked about the new BioMap rollout and how the effort was going, and she also related some of the same information about the recent grants that the Director had shared with the Board during the previous meeting. He also reported that Coastal Waterbird Biologist Carolyn Mostello had given a very interesting report on her work conserving and maintaining habitat for coastal waterbirds.

Mr. Sisk then reported that the NHESP staff is starting the process of reviewing and updating the Massachusetts Endangered Species List, as is done every 3-5 years. He noted that proposals for listing or changing listings are due in early March; they will undergo internal and external review, will be brought to the NHESAC for discussion, and then brought to the Board in December for its approval, projecting promulgation of the updated list early in 2024.

Confirm February Meeting Date

The members confirmed the date and time of the February meeting, which is February 21 at 9:00 a.m. Members considered March and decided on March 30, 2023, at 9:00 a.m.

Member's Comment

Mr. Sisk reported no additional comments.

Ms. Dyer asked whether visitors could be asked to wear name tags so that she knows them from staff. She also asked whether any staff would be willing to work with students who are interested in doing interviews with people. If any staff are interested, they can contact her.

Ms. Ellsworth reported an interesting and enjoyable program on fly-tying. She said she had heard from fishing tackle shops that there is a spike in fly-fishing and therefore fly-tying workshops, and wondered whether any were offered by MassWildlife.

Vice Chair Durand reported that he had heard from constituents who would like a presentation on the working group's depredation proposal, which was accepted at the previous meeting. He also reported participating in a field trial with his Brittany spaniel at the Brittany Club and had joined it, so he joined the club. He also reported that he had hunted the Millers River WMA and had loved it, remarking that it is a great area and offering his kudos to Mr. Olanyk and his staff.

Dr. Organ reported no comment.

There being no further business, a motion was made by Vice Chair Durand to adjourn the meeting. The motion was seconded by Mr. Foster. The vote was unanimous, and the meeting was adjourned at 12:30 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Ernie Foster
Secretary

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

January agenda

Draft letter to EEA Secretary Rebecca Tepper for Board review and approval

Personnel report