



MASSWILDLIFE

DIVISION OF FISHERIES & WILDLIFE

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

PRESENT: Steve Sears/Acting Chair, Bob Durand/Acting Vice Chair, Ernest W. Foster IV/Acting Secretary, Sasha Dyer, Emma Ellsworth, John Organ, Matthew Sisk, Ron Amidon/Commissioner/DFG, Mark Tisa/Director, Jon Regosin/Deputy Director, Kris McCarthy/Associate Director/Finance and Administration, Eve Schlüter/Assistant Director/NHESP, Michael Huguenin/Assistant Director/Wildlife, Trina Moruzzi/ Assistant Director/Operations, Todd Richards/Assistant Director/Fisheries, Nicole McSweeney/Acting Chief/Information and Education, Pat Huckery/Northeast Wildlife District Manager, Todd Olanyk/ Central Wildlife District Manager, Jason Zimmer/Southeast Wildlife District Manager, Andrew Madden/ Western Wildlife District Manager, Joe Rogers/Conn. Valley Wildlife District Manager, Captain Scott Amati/OLE; PUBLIC: Meg Sheehan, Dave Morin, Bethany DeZoit

DATE: July 18, 2022

LOCATION: MassWildlife Field Headquarters, Westborough

Commissioner's Comments

Commissioner Amidon opened the meeting at 1:00 p.m. and thanked everyone for attending. He introduced four new Board members, Sasha Dyer of Barre, who is the Fish Health Manager at Great Falls Aquaculture, representing the Central District; John Organ of Buckland, the at-large member who is a Certified Wildlife Biologist; Emma Ellsworth of Orange, Executive Director Of the Mount Grace Land Trust representing the Connecticut Valley District; and Matthew Sisk, Executive Director of Civil Process and Community Corrections with the Norfolk County Sheriff's Office, who is the at-large member interested in species not hunted or fished.

Commissioner Amidon reported that he had met with Mr. Sears, Mr. Durand and Mr. Foster prior to the meeting and suggested that they volunteer to be the Board's officers in an acting capacity until such time as the Board was ready to vote its own officers. Mr. Foster then nominated Mr. Sears as Acting Chair, Mr. Durand as Acting Vice Chair, and himself as Acting Secretary. Mr. Sisk seconded the motion, and the vote in favor was unanimous.

The Commissioner reported the good news that the House had passed a vote to add to the Fish and Game line item to reimburse the free and discounted licenses that MassWildlife issues, and he stated that he learned earlier that most of the financial line items asked for will be passed.

Director's Comments

Director Tisa welcomed the new Board members, who he said clearly bring passion and commitment to their roles on the Board. The Director stated that he looks forward to working with them and thanked them for agreeing to do the job. Director Tisa reported that over the next five months through the end of the calendar year, his staff will be offering a comprehensive review of programs and district reports to bring the new members up to speed. He then asked his managers to go around the room to introduce themselves to the Board members.

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Acceptance of Minutes

A motion was made by Mr. Durand to accept the minutes from the June meeting as presented. The motion was seconded by Mr. Foster; it was unanimously approved.

Law Enforcement Comments

Captain Scott Amati reported that there are 3 new officers who've graduated from the police academy and are entering field training with the OLE. He reported that most issues recently involve jet skis, bears, and off-road vehicles. He also reported that the MEP has shifted its work to summer recreational activities, including particularly boating safety and infractions, parks, search-and-rescue, off-road vehicle use, and other enforcement issues for the sister agencies. He provided the Board with an overview of actions connected to the current hunting and other recreational seasons and activities; a detailed report of recent OLE activities, including numerous fish-and-wildlife-related examples of calls for service that Environmental Police officers had responded to in the previous month, both inland and marine; and the outlines of ongoing and recently completed investigations of suspected violations and infractions.

The Chair thanked Captain Amati for his report.

Public Comment review for Proposed Regulatory Amendments to 321 CMR 3:00 Hunting; specifically, regulations relating to hunting of Pheasant, Quail, and Small Game (Michael Huguenin)

Assistant Director for Wildlife Mike Huguenin reviewed the proposals that had gone to public hearing the previous month, which had originally been detailed during the January Board meeting [refer to the minutes of the January 25, 2022, Board meeting for a full review]. The proposals were to:

- Create a late pheasant/quail season to overlap with primitive deer season, closing at the end of the calendar year, so that interested hunters could pursue previously stocked, unharvested birds;
- Expand hunting hours on stocked WMAS and standardize hunting hours for pheasant/quail on all properties to between sunrise and sunset;
- Remove the WMA hunting implement restriction; standardize implements, i.e., shotgun and archery, for pheasant/quail; and
- Simplify and expand hare/cottontail/gray squirrel season and remove the black-tailed jackrabbit season.

Assistant Director Huguenin then reviewed the public comments received between the posting of the draft regulations and 2 weeks after the close of the public hearing. He reported that the vast majority of the comments were in support of the changes as proposed, a few hunters opposed the loss of the half-hours at the beginning and end of days when hunting properties other than WMAs, and a couple of the comments were opposed to hunting entirely. Assistant Director Huguenin stated that staff recommended no changes to the original proposal based on the public comments.

After a brief discussion, Acting Vice Chair Durand moved that the Board accept the changes as proposed; Mr. Sisk seconded the motion; the vote in favor was unanimous.

The Acting Chair thanked Mr. Huguenin for his presentation and explanations.

Confirm August Meeting Date

The members confirmed the date and time for the August Fisheries and Wildlife Board meeting on Tuesday, August 23, 2022, at 9:00 a.m. After a brief discussion, members also scheduled the September meeting, on September 12, 2022, at 9:00 a.m.

Member's Comments

Acting Chair Sears thanked the former Board members, Mike Roche, who had served on the Board for 35 years; Joe Larson, who had served for 22 years; Brandi Van Roo, who served on the Board for 17 years; and Bonnie Booth, a member for 13 years. Acting Chair Sears stated that the members had performed a lot of service as volunteers for MassWildlife and the Commonwealth, and asked for a round of applause in gratitude. He also welcomed the new Board members and stated that he was humbled as the Acting Chair and would work hard in the position.

Acting Vice Chair Durand also welcomed the new Board members. He reported that the \$1 million in reimbursements is very good news and a big issue that many sportspeople throughout the commonwealth supported.

Ms. Dyer reported that as a lifelong hunter she had always heard her father speak with respect for the Board, and she was very glad and honored to be a member.

Acting Secretary Foster read a statement from Southeastern Massachusetts organizations commending the former Board members for their service and dedication.

Ms. Ellsworth stated that she was both overwhelmed and honored to join the Board. She reported taking a walk with retired Habitat Program Leader John Scanlon in a recent burn site where she saw lots and lots of blueberries. Ms. Ellsworth said she loves to see the results of MassWildlife's habitat work and is looking forward to supporting the effort.

Mr. Sisk reported that his appointment to the Board is also a lifelong dream come true.

Mr. Organ reported that he's humbled and honored to be a Board member. He stated that he has worked in various capacities with MassWildlife for many decades and has nothing but respect for the hard work of the staff.

Public Comment: Meg Sheehan

Ms. Sheehan stated that over decades her family had donated significant acreage in Southwestern Massachusetts to conservation organizations. She stated her opinion that the operations of A.D. Makepeace are not getting the attention they need for sensitive areas and rare habitats where they have Conservation and Management Permits from the Natural Heritage Program. Ms. Sheehan reported her belief that massive destruction was occurring on existing Priority Habitat over hundreds of acres, where Makepeace operations are polluting, contaminated, and strip mining. She also stated her belief that permits for takes of listed species in so-called agricultural projects are a ruse and a cover for strip mining of sand and gravel, and not consistent with the MESA. She then cited various projects that she said were cover for illegal sand mining. Ms. Sheehan also stated that MassWildlife is failing to monitor the Town Forest Conservation Easement, resulting in habitat destruction, and that the agency is considering a CR amendment requested by the town that she believes will lead to further problems. Ms. Sheehan referred the Board members to the last slide of the PDF she had provided in advance of the meeting that lists five demands in relation to her allegations.

Acting Chair Sears thanked Ms. Sheehan for her comments and for the detailed information she provided. He stated that he would be looking into the matter.

There being no further business, a motion was made by Acting Secretary Foster to adjourn. The motion was seconded by Ms. Ellsworth.

The vote was unanimous, and the meeting was adjourned at 2:20 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Ernie Foster

Acting Secretary

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

Agenda

Draft June minutes

Spreadsheet of Natural Heritage Fund Taxpayer Donations (1992 to 2021)

Draft regulations package for Proposed Regulatory Amendments to 321 CMR 3:00 Hunting; specifically, regulations relating to hunting of Pheasant, Quail, and Small Game

Compilation of public comments received via email, snail mail, and oral testimony during the public hearing

PDF document from Meg Sheehan in support of her public comments