



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, Sasha Dyer, Emma Ellsworth, John Organ, Matthew Sisk, Mark S. Tisa/Director, Tom O'Shea/Commissioner/DFG, Eve Schlüter/Deputy Director, Jesse Leddick/Assistant Director/NHESP, Nicole McSweeney/Assistant Director/Outreach and Education, Trina Moruzzi/Assistant Director/Operations, 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, Austyn Morin/Sunderland Hatchery Technician, Jennifer Ryan/Assistant Commissioner/DFG, Conrad Crawford/DFG Environmental Justice Liaison, Captain Scott Amati/OLE

DATE: July 25, 2024

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

Chair Sears opened the July business meeting at 10:05 a.m. and reported that Mr. Foster was away and would not be attending.

Acceptance of Minutes

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

Chair's Comments

Chair Sears reported that he and two other board members had attended the MassWildlife employees' conference and had enjoyed it very much. He then thanked Commissioner O'Shea for his remarks when he opened the Biodiversity Executive Order (EO) public listening sessions. He stated that the comments during the second session were very interesting. In response to one comment that said MassWildlife staff was unresponsive to constituents' concerns, the Chair stated that he wanted to correct it: MassWildlife staff had been very responsive to that person's concerns. The person may not like the response, but Mr. Sears affirmed that staff had responded and in detail.

The Chair then reported that Eversource is requesting that rights-of-way around power lines be extended to 1 mile. He asked staff to look at the proposal because the agency may want to consider a position and respond. He had a pertinent document and would share it with staff.

Chair Sears asked and staff confirmed that the bear review will be provided during the September business meeting. He also reminded the attendees of the 1:30 meeting that afternoon with a presentation of the Forests as Climate Solutions team's state response to the Climate Forestry Committee's report.

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Director's Comments

Director Tisa thanked the board members who did for attending the employees' conference. He stated that it was a very nice day. He reported that after the Director's and Commissioner's remarks, staff had opportunities to shoot, try archery, and participate in other outdoor activities.

Secretary's note: Later in the meeting, in response to part of the license vendor discussion at Item #9, Director Tisa reported that there was a gun bill on the Governor's desk, and that it was expected to be signed into law. The Director reported that the new law may have implications for hunters in Massachusetts, and, at 110 pages, a thorough review would be conducted because it was important to get it right. The review may take some time since there were a number of significant changes in the law. He announced the formation of an internal review committee to be co-chaired by Susan Langlois, Hunter Education Program Coordinator, and DFG General Counsel Jennifer Sulla and Assistant General Counsel Tori LaBate. The Director reported that as soon as the committee has completed its review, it would report back to the Fisheries and Wildlife Board to identify any possible implications for MassWildlife's programs, operations, or regulations and implications for the hunting public moving forward.

Commissioner's Comments

Commissioner O'Shea stated that he also enjoyed the MassWildlife staff conference, adding that it was great to see the board members there. He reported that he had announced the completion of the Department's Strategic Plan to staff and spoke about it in some detail, then answered some questions that were raised; it was a very good discussion. He thanked MassWildlife staff and the board for their help developing it and then giving input because it is a great opportunity to secure funding for important work that the divisions already do, and it is also an opportunity to mainstream and highlight the work of DFG with the public, many members of which don't have a clear idea what the Department's staff does. Noting a comment that the DFG Strategic Plan is a living document, he reported that updates to it will happen quarterly and thought that a suggestion to bring 2-3-minute presentations from next Strategic Plan quarterly meeting to the board was a good idea.

The Commissioner reported that the budget was on the Governor's desk, including the annual budgets for DFG and DFW and language to reimburse MassWildlife for the free and reduced-price licenses it provides by statute. He credited the many state NGO partners for their help getting the amendment introduced and Mr. Durand's work to promote it.

Law Enforcement Comments

Captain Amati of the MEP reported six new officers going into the field in early August, and late in August another group will go to the police academy. He stated that there would be an 18% increase in MEP staff size by year-end. He then provided the board with a brief overview of MEP actions connected to the current hunting and other recreational seasons and activities during the previous month.

Personnel Report

Deputy Director Eve Schlüter and Assistant Director of NHESP Jesse Leddick presented the following candidates for hiring approval. They provided some highlights of each candidate's resume and qualifications.

New Hires

<i>Employee</i>	<i>Position</i>	<i>Location</i>
Raymond Bressette	Central District Wildlife Technician Wildlife Technician II	West Boylston
Leah Derleth	McLaughlin Hatchery Technician Wildlife Technician II	Belchertown
Devon Harrington	Endangered Species Review Biologist Conservation Biologist III	Westborough

Deputy Director Schlüter also introduced a new employee who had been hired at the previous meeting and was present at the July meeting.

Introduction

<i>Employee</i>	<i>Position</i>	<i>Location</i>
Austyn Morin	Sunderland Hatchery Technician Wildlife Technician II	Sunderland

Dr. Organ made a motion to accept the Personnel Report as presented; Mr. Durand seconded the motion. Ms. Dyer recused herself from the vote because of her collegial relationship with one of the candidates. The vote in favor was five members with one recusal and the report was accepted.

Update on the Development of Goals for the Biodiversity Executive Order (Jennifer Ryan)

DFG Assistant Commissioner Jennifer Ryan reported on DFG staff's work to create goals for the Biodiversity Executive Order. She began with a brief review of the import of Executive Order (EO) #618, signed by Governor Healey at the Cronin Building in September, which mandated a whole-of-government approach to biodiversity conservation. The Department was tasked in the EO with developing first-in-the-nation biodiversity goals for 2030, 2040, and 2050 that would build on existing state plans and efforts, including BioMap and the State Wildlife Action Plan, and recognize biodiversity conservation as a climate solution that imparts resilience and the ability to adapt to a changing climate.

Ms. Ryan reported that after the EO was signed, the Department stood up a working group with members of the four divisions: MassWildlife, Fishing and Boating Access, Ecological Restoration, and Marine Fisheries. This team worked through existing data and policies, and developed a draft framework, themes, and goals. The Department then took its draft to other agencies and branches of the administration; held two biodiversity workshops, one with conservation organizations, commercial fisheries, hunting and fishing, and academics and the other with environmental agencies; and are currently reaching out to engage environmental justice groups and tribes as the public process continues through a written comment period that ends August 30, 2024. DFG also held two listening sessions over the previous week and are incorporating feedback, continuing engagement and analysis, and anticipate a report to the Governor this fall. Ms. Ryan stated that the release of the report will kick off DFG's statewide ongoing Biodiversity Initiative, which will be grounded in the recognition that healthy biodiversity benefits everyone.

After defining biodiversity as all the species, habitats, and complex interactions that have inherent value and are intertwined with history and culture, sustain our health and economy, and enrich our lives, Ms.

Ryan reviewed examples of how biodiversity sustains our quality of life, discussed some of the major threats to biodiversity, and illustrated why biodiversity is in crisis by pointing to habitat and species loss in Massachusetts. She then introduced the Massachusetts Vision 2050 for Biodiversity, where the Commonwealth seeks to protect, restore, sustain, and connect by developing actions that can be taken to convene interested organizations and individuals; provide direction through goals, policy, law, and regulation; provide training and technical assistance, and funding; support municipalities and community organizations, and identify and support actions each person can take. Ms. Ryan provided brief discussions and examples of the different emerging goals and themes of the plan, including practicing prioritized conservation for biodiversity, creating climate corridors for migration and resilience, supporting the 'blue economy' with policies and programs to support healthy coasts, incorporating green planning and design, increasing food security, bringing nature into public-school classrooms, and spotlighting and encouraging appreciation for nature in our neighborhoods.

Next steps include finishing the state agency survey and interviews, incorporating the public feedback received before August 30, final discussions and drafting among the team, and delivering the report to Governor Healey in the fall. The work will really begin after that with implementation, outcomes tracking, periodic updates, and a coordinated outreach and communication initiative that will be iterative and ongoing.

After a discussion among the board members, the Commissioner, and Ms. Ryan, Chair Sears thanked Ms. Ryan for her leadership in the work and for her report.

Department of Fish and Game's Environmental Justice Initiative (Conrad Crawford)

DFG's Environmental Justice Liaison, Conrad Crawford, was introduced by Commissioner O'Shea. Mr. Crawford began his presentation by defining environmental justice as the fair treatment and meaningful involvement of all people, regardless of race, color, gender, sexual orientation, national origin, tribal affiliation, religion, disability, or income during the development, implementation, and enforcement of environmental laws, regulations, and policies. He also noted that environmental justice is distinct from DEI and universal access but has mutually complementary goals with both of those concepts. He explained that most of his work is framed by DFG's Strategic Plan, and he provided numerous examples identified by each of the divisions as well as opportunities with the Tribes of Massachusetts and the EEA Office of Environmental Justice and Equity, where he is housed. He enumerated four goals he is working on with all those offices and gave examples of each: 1) strengthening current capacity by enhancing the capabilities of existing staff; 2) enhancing equity by improving communications and outreach, talking about what we do in plain language, and improved translation and access services; 3) improving physical access to nature and its benefits, including access to wild foods; and 4) improving our relationships with Native Peoples, including by listening and identifying existing projects to replicate.

He also emphasized that environmental justice is central to climate resilience and that EEA Climate Chief Melissa Hoffer called for bold environmental justice goals as a key strategy for adaptation to climate change. Mr. Crawford reported that he is doing a lot of assessment as he reaches out to community partners and collaborates with colleagues across EEA on the Tribal Issues Working Group and the Environmental Justice Task Force. He also described some of the tools he is using from examples of recent environmental justice initiatives around the country and at multiple levels and highlighted an environmental justice resource clearinghouse that facilitates searches for available resources. He noted that all the initiatives he cited are examples of funding resources that he is starting to try to garner for new and existing DFG work and programs.

After a brief discussion, the Chair thanked Mr. Crawford for his very interesting and timely report.

MassFishHunt License Vendor Procurement Update (Dan Koch)

DFG Information Technology Coordinator Dan Koch began by noting that the last time he reported to the board, he had said that the vendor selection team had to go back out to bid. Since that report, the Department has contracted with Brandt Information Services. Noting that Brandt offered a full-featured solution, he reported that the company also has the largest market share with 16+ state contracts, which means they have a lot of experience in the space. Noting that Brandt scored highest in qualifications, technical response, and cost and had the highest total score, the selection team expects a mature, robust solution delivered from a seasoned team. Brandt's fully formed solution allows it to meet almost all DFG's requirements with minimal customization or enhancement required. In particular, he stated that the maturity of Brandt's permit draw system provides confidence that DFG can offer a positive customer experience for one of its most visible service offerings. He also pointed out that Brandt's extensive experience in event management and customer relationship management will greatly improve the Department's R3 initiatives. All bids represented an increase in transaction fees which was expected, and they are increasing from \$1.45/2% to \$2.75/5%. He added that those fees are only for license products; stamps and permits are not subject to the fees.

Turning to the bidding process, Mr. Koch reported that the selection team had designed a highly structured process and drafted a detailed RFR [request for responses], which included both required and highly desired elements. The RFR was designed to mitigate bias and the proposal was scored only on the bid response, the in-person demonstration, and the parties' references. He stated that bidders were asked to present an overview of their qualifications and to demonstrate in detail how their solution would address 1) the user experience, including migration of customer history, purchase navigation, and the printing of receipts, 2) the antlerless deer permit draw, and 3) surplus ADP sales.

Mr. Koch reviewed the project timeline, most of which was in the past. He reported that the contract negotiation was completed with no changes to scope, services, or pricing, and the in-person kickoff meeting was scheduled for 2 days in mid-August and that the product launch date is May 2025. He explained that May was chosen as the 'quietest' month to launch, after turkey hunting season and well before the ADP lottery window would close.

Mr. Koch reported that the event management component was important to the selection team, and the question-and-answer session provided DFG with the opportunity to ask specific questions related to marketing, analytics, technology, and project management. He also stated that he thought it important to note that this contract differs from the last in that DFG pays for the events module through a subscription fee. This is in line with the statutory language that allows the collection of transaction fees and means that hunters and anglers do not subsidize the event participation components of the system.

After a brief discussion, Chair Sears thanked Mr. Koch for his report and for all his hard work toward securing a new license vendor.

Natural Heritage and Endangered Species Advisory Committee (NHESAC) Report

Mr. Sisk reported a quarterly meeting of the NHESAC on July 18 at which the members had the same presentation from Assistant Commissioner Ryan. He also reported that Assistant Director Leddick had given reports on recent hires and the completed update of the MESA List. Mr. Sisk stated that the NHESAC's next meeting will be held in October in Hardwick.

Set the August Meeting Date

Chair Sears reported that Director Tisa now has a conflict on the proposed date of August 21; he suggested August 20, 2024, at 10:00 a.m., at the Parker River NWR for the business meeting, if the Refuge can accommodate a meeting on that day. It will be a long agenda, so Director Tisa suggested

planning for a lunch break at 12:30 p.m. and continuing the rest of the meeting after lunch. If the Parker River Refuge is not available on August 20, the fallback is to hold the meeting in Westborough; staff will advise the board members and the public as soon as the details are confirmed.

The members also discussed the September business meeting, and it was decided to hold it in Westborough on September 11, 2024, at 1:00 p.m. The October meeting was also set, on October 2, 2024; at 10:00 a.m., and the November business meeting was scheduled for November 5, 2024, at 2:00 p.m.

Members' Comments

Mr. Sisk expressed his gratitude to the Chair for having DER Director Beth Lambert speak at the August meeting. He also reported that Assistant Director Todd Richards will bring a report on catch-and-release areas to the same meeting.

Ms. Dyer reported thanks to Southeast Wildlife District Manager Jason Zimmer for his assistance with issues at a hatchery in Barnstable. She also reported that she had enjoyed a Quabbin fishing trip with Clayton Sydla. Ms. Dyer announced another pint night for women in the outdoors coming up in September; the details will be shared when finalized. She also noted that she was impressed with the format and features of the Biodiversity EO listening sessions.

Mr. Durand gave congratulations to Northeast Wildlife District Manager Pat Huckery for being one of the staff on the Environmental Business Council of New England's merit award for the Great Marsh project. He also thanked everyone involved for their efforts to pass the annual budget amendment for the free and discounted license reimbursement.

Ms. Ellsworth reported that she also had attended and enjoyed meeting staff at the employee's conference. She applauded the state's ambitious biodiversity conservation goals and pointed out the burden involved in Central and Western Mass. Much of the conservation opportunity will be in the western part of the state where there are major obstacles around the PILOT [payments in lieu of taxes] program. She noted that some towns are facing real budget consequences for all the conserved lands in them and stressed that a fix for the PILOT program will be critical to getting conservation restrictions passed because they all must go to each town's select board for approval.

Dr. Organ said he also appreciated and thanked the Director and the staff for inviting him to attend the employees' conference. He reported that he will be meeting with Deputy Director Schlüter and other key staff on August 14 regarding potential restrictions on the use of thermal imagery in hunting.

There being no further business, Mr. Durand moved to enter executive session for the purpose of discussing a proposed land acquisition whose negotiation would be compromised by discussion in open session and to not return to open session afterward. Dr. Organ seconded; the vote in favor was unanimous; and the meeting was adjourned at 12:00 p.m.

Executive Session

There was one parcel presented to the Board for consideration. Mr. Durand moved acceptance of the parcel; Dr. Organ seconded the motion.

Mr. Sisk: yes

Ms. Dyer: yes

Mr. Sears: yes

Mr. Durand: yes

Ms. Ellsworth: yes

Dr. Organ: yes

The parcel was unanimously accepted in a roll call vote of the Board members.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 12:10 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Ernie Foster
Secretary

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

July agenda

Draft June minutes

Email and letter from Michael Veloza RE deer hunting opportunities in WMZ 10 and 11 in January

Letter from Paul Johnson for Barnstable CLSC: CCNS pheasant and/or quail hunting

Letter from Paul Johnson for Plymouth CLSC in support of deer hunting opportunities in WMZ 10 and 11
in January

Email and memo from Commissioner O'Shea RE DFG's budget language

July personnel report

Supporting documentation for the executive session