



MASSWILDLIFE

## DIVISION OF FISHERIES & WILDLIFE

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

PRESENT: Dr. Joseph Larson/Chair, Michael Roche/Vice Chair, Bob Durand, Ernest W. Foster IV, Stephen Sears, Dr. Brandi Van Roo, 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, Marion Larson/Chief/Information and Education, Nicole McSweeney/Marketing and Outreach Manager, Joseph Rogers/Supervisor/Conn. Valley Wildlife District, Todd Olanyk/Supervisor/Central Wildlife District, Jason Zimmer/Supervisor/Southeast Wildlife District, Andrew Madden/Supervisor/Western Wildlife District, Pat Huckery/Supervisor/Northeast Wildlife District, Captain Terry Davis/OLE

DATE: March 23, 2021

LOCATION: Via Zoom Meeting

Chair Larson opened the meeting at 9:00 a.m. Director Tisa reported that he had heard from Mr. Durand, who was not able to attend the meeting.

### Acceptance of Minutes

A motion was made by Mr. Roche to accept the minutes from the January meeting as presented. The motion was seconded by Mr. Sears.

Chair Larson: yes

Vice Chair Roche: yes

Secretary Booth: yes

Dr. Van Roo: yes

Mr. Foster: yes

Mr. Sears: yes

The motion passed unanimously.

A motion was made by Mr. Foster to accept the minutes from the February meeting as presented. The motion was seconded by Dr. Van Roo.

Chair Larson: yes

Vice Chair Roche: yes

Secretary Booth: yes

Dr. Van Roo: yes

Mr. Foster: yes

Mr. Sears: yes

MASSWILDLIFE

The motion passed unanimously.

#### Chair's Comments

Chair Larson reported that he had no comments at that time.

#### Commissioner's Comments

Commissioner Amidon reported that it isn't often that the Department, MassWildlife, and the Board members get to engage with so many members of the public as they have in last several months [during the MassWildlife information sessions]. He stated that he uses the interactions as opportunities to learn, to find out what he and his staff don't know or could know more about, both internally and in legislative matters. He noted that he is encouraging the Board members to reflect and use these opportunities to explore the issues raised.

Vice Chair Roche asked whether the Commissioner has had any indication of when the proposed licensing hearings will be approved. The Commissioner reported that he has no information, and he is currently working through the process with Director Tisa and both their staffs.

#### Director's Comments

Director Tisa reported that the last public information session would be held on Thursday, March 25, at 6:30 p.m. He reported that the agency has conducted extensive public outreach since the meeting on January 14 and that he is confident that the majority of our sporting public now understands the reasons for the need for the license fee increase. The Director reported that he has received a lot of positive feedback on the presentation itself, that it is clear, detailed, and easy to understand. This is important because he and his staff don't want to raise fees, especially during a pandemic, but he has found that the agency has no choice, and the public needs to understand that fact. The Director reported that the big concern in most comments is the amount of necessary increase that must be requested all at once. Most questions relate to why increases have not been proposed earlier and whether the increases can be phased in over several years. Those are the major concerns, the Director reported, but at least everyone seems to appreciate the position the agency is in.

#### Law Enforcement Comments

The OLE's Captain Terry Davis reported a busy winter and spring. He reported that the nice weather has brought an uptick in ATV use and heightened patrols on WMAs. He also reported heavy snowmobile activity. In a related personnel note, the Captain reported that two classes of new officers had come through snowmobile training. He reported an increase in bear calls with the warming weather, and that they were mostly just sightings. Captain Davis also reported that OLE officers had cooperated with Illinois officials on 2 deer hunters from Massachusetts who had been charged with violations there; he reported no Massachusetts charges stemming from the incident.

The Captain gave an update on the fish moss inspections that the US Fish and Wildlife Service is currently heading, explaining that pet shops have been notified that they cannot sell the fish moss because of zebra mussel contamination detected in some samples. Captain Davis reported that the Medina Street boat ramp in Chicopee has been being renovated and that OLE and local police had conducted patrols while the construction was going on. He stated that the ramp is due to open May 1. OLE had also participated in two searches for missing persons on rivers.

On the personnel front, Captain Davis reported 3 officers in the police academy and 4 more in field training with existing officers. Looking ahead, he reported that OLE is gearing up for the opening of Wachusett Reservoir and the start of spring turkey season, while officers are currently patrolling trout-stocked waters statewide.

Vice Chair Roche offered his thanks for the professionalism and helpfulness demonstrated by the officers who helped him get his boat registered recently. He stated that he was very appreciative of their advice and assistance.

#### Preview of 2021-2022 Migratory Bird Hunting Seasons (Michael Huguenin)

Assistant Director for Wildlife Research Mike Huguenin provided the Board members with a preview of the 2021-2022 federal frameworks for the hunting seasons for migratory birds and the draft regulations that had been submitted for public hearing. Mr. Huguenin explained that the timeline for submitting the regulations this year was extremely tight because of the lateness of the flyway meetings and subsequent release of the federal frameworks. He also reported that the analysis of responses to the annual bird hunters' survey was also incomplete at the time of required filing, so the resulting draft regulations that had to be submitted in order to meet the federal requirements for final submission may differ slightly from the recommendations staff will make based on public comment at the close of the hearing.

After a brief discussion in which Mr. Foster and Mr. Sears raised several questions regarding some of the species season details, opening days, and the stamps required for youth, Chair Larson thanked Mr. Huguenin for giving the Board a preview of the draft regulations so far in advance and for such a detailed analysis and discussion. Mr. Huguenin stated that he would give the complete presentation again during the public hearing, as usual, and that all comments received before and during the hearing would be taken into consideration in the final staff recommendations for the respective bird hunting seasons.

#### Natural Heritage and Endangered Species Advisory Committee Report

Chair Larson reported that the Advisory Committee is starting its protocol of four meetings a year and will decide at the meeting later the same day to set its meeting schedule for the year. It will also be open to scheduling additional meetings if and when needed by staff. The Chairman reported that he has embarked on a project to analyze the zip code data where donors are in order to target areas that may be underrepresented with information to encourage new donations. Some towns do not have a unique zip code, like Pelham; other towns have many zip codes. Has been wading through data and will continue to report on his findings. Was contacted by former Chair of the Board Brad Gage, who has offered to give the Division a lovely picture, "Mountain Laurel Fishing," of himself on a then-new catch-and-release area on the Swift River. He has donated it to the agency.

#### Set Meeting Date

Members confirmed the Director's request for the April Fisheries and Wildlife Board meeting, scheduled for April 23, 2021, at 9:00 a.m.

Confirmed by Secretary Booth; seconded by Dr. Van Roo.

Chair Larson: yes

Vice Chair Roche: yes

Secretary Booth: yes

Dr. Van Roo: yes

Mr. Foster: yes

Mr. Sears: yes

The motion passed unanimously.

### Member's Comments

Dr. Van Roo and Vice Chair Roche reported no comments.

Secretary Booth reported that she was happy to see everyone and was looking forward to fishing and the turkey season. She asked the Commissioner for a follow-up on the fishing access improvements planned to the Browning Pond in Spencer, which he had reported at the previous meeting.

Commissioner Amidon stated that the OFBA [Office of Fishing and Boating Access] had received bids the previous week and hoped to accept one the following week to complete the work at Browning Pond. He stated that OFBA was hoping to include a survey of the actual property bounds to clarify distinctions from surrounding properties. He noted that one of the things determined by the site inspection was the advisability of a limited-mobility fishing platform at that location, and he reported that the questions raised by town officials and the community were all addressed. Ms. Booth expressed appreciation for all those working on the effort and said it will be enjoyed by the many people who use that pond.

Mr. Foster thanked all staff that helped run the information sessions. He stated that he had attended all of them, all the league meetings, etc., and that he was seeing a renewed interest in R3 [recruitment, retention, and reactivation of hunters and anglers]. Mr. Foster stated that he had seen the podcast that [Southeast Wildlife District Manager] Jason Zimmer had participated in, that it was very good, and that it reached a lot of unaffiliated hunters. He stated that he thinks this year will see a surge in all hunting and getting people out on the WMAs that the Board and the agency are so proud of.

Mr. Sears echoed Mr. Foster's comments on Mr. Zimmer's podcast. He was glad that he could share that information with the local county league and the larger community, including through outdoor writer Gene Chague in the Berkshires. He reported that he is very happy things are being shared so extensively with unaffiliated hunters because they are the majority of hunters and the Board and the agency don't often hear from them. Mr. Sears reported that he also is very impressed with all the engagement the agency has had with the information sessions. He appreciated the very thoughtful comments from many different perspectives and offered his thanks to the public for participating so meaningfully. Mr. Sears believes the Director and his staff have done a great job and he doesn't want the staff to take any criticism as on them. Things not done in the past are on the Board, not the staff, who Mr. Sears said are doing such a great job. He reported that he had heard from one person unable to attend the information sessions who would like some consideration of a veteran hunting license. Mr. Sears also asked for a presentation on Hunter Education sometime in the near future, stating that he would like to support staff efforts and to learn more about how the Board members can help.

A motion was made by Vice Chair Roche to adjourn the open session and move into executive session for the purpose of discussing certain land acquisitions and to not return to open session. The motion was seconded by Dr. Van Roo.

Chair Larson: yes

Vice Chair Roche: yes

Dr. Van Roo: yes

Mr. Foster: yes

Mr. Sears: yes

The motion passed unanimously.

Executive Session

Deputy Director Jon Regosin presented two proposed acquisitions, which were each reviewed and each unanimously approved by the Board.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 10:30 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Bonnie Booth  
Secretary

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

March agenda

Draft January and February meeting minutes for review

Spreadsheet of Natural Heritage Fund Taxpayer Donations (1992 to 2019)

Documentation for the executive session