



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, Mark S. Tisa/Director, Tom O'Shea/Commissioner/DFG, Eve Schlüter/Deputy Director, Mike Huguenin/Assistant Director/Wildlife, Jesse Leddick/Assistant Director/NHESP, Nicole McSweeney/Assistant Director/Outreach and Education, Trina Moruzzi/Assistant Director/Operations, Todd Richards/Assistant Director/Fisheries, 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, Alex Entrup/Prescribed Fire Project Leader, Rebecca Quiñones/NHESP Conservation Science Program Manager

DATE: May 15, 2024

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

Chair Sears opened the May business meeting at 12:30 p.m.

A motion was made by Chair Sears to adjourn and go into executive session for the purpose of discussing proposed land acquisitions whose negotiations would be compromised by discussion in open session, and to return to open session afterward. The motion was seconded by Mr. Durand. The vote in favor was unanimous, and the meeting was adjourned at 12:32 p.m.

### Executive Session

There were eleven parcels presented to the Board for consideration. All eleven parcels were accepted in roll call votes of the Board members.

A motion was made by Mr. Foster to adjourn the executive session and return to open session. Dr. Organ seconded; the vote in favor was unanimous. Chair Sears reported that the open session would reconvene after a 5-minute break.

The open meeting reconvened at 1:13 p.m.

### Acceptance of Minutes

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

### Chair's Comments

Chair Sears reported that he had attended the cooter program held that morning and that it was very impressive. Among the data he shared about the program was that there have been about 5,000 cooters released in the 40 years the head-starting program has been running. He also learned that morning that there were about 300 cooters in the wild when the program started, and that there are now more than 2,000 adults in the state. Chair Sears noted that the entire program is an incredible collaboration between MassWildlife and schools and institutions across the state. He then congratulated several staff

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who were recently honored for their work, including retired Black Bear and Turkey Project Leader Jim Cardoza, Hunter Education Program Administrator Sue Langlois, and Western Wildlife District Aquatic Biologist Leanda Fontaine.

The Chair also reported news on a long-hunted property in Berkshire County. He stated that the Stockbridge-Munsee Band of Mohican Indians has proceeded to purchase the property to regain a homeland in the tribe's original area. He noted that the Stockbridge-Munsee are currently in Wisconsin and that the tribe has expressed interest in joining the Berkshire County League of Sportsmen's Clubs in hunting and fishing the property. He also reported that he continues to work gathering information on guide services in Massachusetts and stated that Commissioner O'Shea has offered to broker discussions about the topic. Mr. Sears reported that longtime outdoor journalist Gene Chague of the *Berkshire Eagle* has announced his retirement. Stating that Mr. Chague is the glue that sticks things together in the sporting community in Berkshire County, Mr. Sears added that communities need to find ways to encourage young people to enter outdoor journalism. He also thanked Vice Chair Durand for the work he is doing to pass legislation to permanently fund reduced-price and free licenses.

#### Director's Comments

Director Tisa agreed with the Chair's call for more outdoor journalists among young people interested in conservation and noted that hopefully some of the young people involved in the cooter effort, for example, would explore that possibility. He reported that he had told the attending students during the morning session that there are many great ways to contribute to the conservation of wildlife and the environment, including as outdoor writers who make connections between people and the natural world.

The Director acknowledged and congratulated Leanda Fontaine, who received the Silvo Conti Sportsman of the Year award from the Berkshire County League at its annual banquet, and he introduced her to the board and the meeting attendees. He stated that he had hired her himself 19 years ago, and that anything he ever asked her to do, she always did with a smile. He also acknowledged Sue Langlois, who had received the Hesselton Award from the Northeast Wildlife Administrators' Association at the NEAFWA conference in April. As MassWildlife's Furbearer Biologist, he reported that Ms. Langlois had been involved in issues both nationally and internationally, and that she was equally highly respected as a Hunter Education Administrator and a longtime instructor and organizer of the Conservation Leaders for Tomorrow (CLfT) program. The Director stated that William T. Hesselton was born in Worcester. After his stint in the navy, he graduated UMass in 1960 and was hired by the New York Department of Environmental Conservation. Mr. Hesselton was part of the team that developed antler beam diameter as a metric for deer and habitat health and went on to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to lead the Pittman-Robertson Federal Aid program. Director Tisa said that Mr. Hesselton would be very proud to see Ms. Langlois receive this award that was named after him.

Director Tisa then acknowledged retired Black Bear and Turkey Project Leader Jim Cardoza, who had received the Robert McDowell Award for Conservation Management Excellence from the NEAFWA at its recent conference. Among Mr. Cardoza's many accomplishments during his 45-year career with MassWildlife was the successful reintroduction of the eastern wild turkey in Massachusetts. Director Tisa reported that in addition to being the current president of NEAFWA he is also the chair of the annual awards committee and had had the honor of presenting the award to Mr. Cardoza himself. He then read his award speech, which contained details of Mr. Cardoza's career and many accomplishments, and the Director noted that Mr. Cardoza's knowledge of the history and present status of wildlife of all types in the Northeast is truly encyclopedic. The Director then invited Mr. Cardoza to say a few words. Mr. Cardoza stated that, first and foremost, whatever successes and

accomplishments he has had, they did not occur in a vacuum. He felt himself part of a long stream of biologists, scientists, administrators, and board members who have worked to conserve the wildlife of the Commonwealth. From May 11, 1969, his first day on the job, he was part of a team of people who were doing the work of conservation and wildlife management in Massachusetts. Mr. Cardoza also spoke of the critical roles of the board members as both protectors of the science-based work of staff and long-term visionaries for the good of the agency.

Director Tisa then announced that the Environmental Business Council of New England (EBCNE) is giving its Merit Award for Leadership by a nonprofit organization to The Trustees, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, MassWildlife, and DFG's Division of Ecological Restoration for their collective work on the Great Marsh. June 13 is the award event date, and EEA Undersecretary Stephanie Cooper will be presenting the award on behalf of EBCNE.

Director Tisa stated that many people may have heard about the motor vehicle accident involving a bear in Western Mass. He asked that Black Bear Project Leader Dave Wattles be allowed to provide a brief report. Mr. Wattles reported that on Sunday, May 5, the Mass. Environmental Police (MEP) and Mr. Wattles initiated their recently adopted animal attack protocol for the first time. He clarified that it turned out not to be the case that there was an attack on a person by a bear, but at the time he and the other authorities didn't know that. He reported that the State Police had responded to an accident off Interstate 91 and found that a black bear had made contact with the individual, who, they determined, was already deceased. MassWildlife and the MEP were alerted initially and initiated the bear attack protocol because the exact circumstances were not known at the time. A short time later, a bear matching the description from the State Police was identified in the area and was euthanized. Mr. Wattles reported that the incident response went as well as possible under the very unfortunate circumstances, and MassWildlife and MEP staff have since held debriefing discussions about how well the protocol worked in practice.

Director Tisa reported that the annual employees' conference will be held at the Connecticut Valley District office and that he and Commissioner O'Shea will be talking to staff about the Department's Strategic Plan, among other sessions and activities.

The Director closed his report with a brief review of his efforts to establish a quail-stocking program at the Cape Cod National Seashore. After a brief discussion among the board members, Director Tisa stated that all opportunities to move the effort forward would be explored.

#### Commissioner's Comments

Commissioner O'Shea congratulated Ms. Fontaine for her recognition and also voiced his appreciation for Ms. Langlois and Mr. Cardoza, with whom he worked during his career at MassWildlife. Referencing the Director's remarks about the EBCNE's award, the Commissioner reported that he had started work on the Great Marsh restoration while he was at The Trustees, had received technical assistance from MassWildlife and seed money from DER to get the project off the ground, and that it has since turned into a very important partnership for all the organizations involved.

Commissioner O'Shea reported that he had wanted to introduce Conrad Crawford, first Environmental Justice (EJ) Coordinator at DFG, but Mr. Crawford had had to leave the meeting because of a previous commitment. The Commissioner stated that Mr. Crawford would work on sustainability and urban livability issues and improve the Department's work with partners in EJ communities around the state. Mr. Conrad had been a senior manager at The Trustees and at Charles River Watershed Association before coming to DFG. Commissioner O'Shea said that Mr. Crawford will work to help DFG make connections to EJ communities, to enhance and improve their access to the outdoors.

The Commissioner reported that he had participated in the trout stocking at Jamaica Pond this year. He applauded MassWildlife staff, which he said does a tremendous job with all stocking events. He saluted Assistant Director for Fisheries Todd Richards and Hatchery System Supervisor Caleb Slater for their excellent work and leadership, especially their efforts to engage kids who don't normally have access to fish and fishing.

Commissioner O'Shea reported an interagency meeting held the previous week at the Field Headquarters of all the agencies in EEA about implementing the Governor's Biodiversity Executive Order. He said the workshop went very well and recognized the hard work of DFG's Assistant Commissioner of Strategic Initiatives and Climate Policy Jen Ryan and Deputy Director Eve Schlüter in their leadership of the effort. He reported that he had participated in a right whale event on Right Whale Day, celebrating 30 years of the right whale license plate of the Mass Environmental Trust (MET). He stated that the MET will launch a new effort to provide grants and increase publicization of the plates.

The Commissioner also reported that DFG is going through the annual budget process. He confirmed that there is an amendment included to reimburse MassWildlife for its free and discounted licenses in FY 2025 and noted that there are other amendments the Department is seeking, too. Mr. Durand reported that there are 26 co-sponsors on the House side, but that the Ways and Means Committee was not ready to move for a vote. Senator Moore on the Senate side has provided support, and Mr. Durand reported that there is a large coalition of sporting, environmental, and conservation organizations supporting the amendment, noting that it is Amendment #2 on the Senate side. He encouraged the board members to contact their senators if they have not already done so.

#### Law Enforcement Comments

Lt. Lees of the Office of Law Enforcement (MEP) reported that he was standing in for Captain Amati, who could not attend. He reported that six new officers are joining the OLE and that all will be assigned to Western Mass; all of the Southwest has only two officers patrolling currently. The Lieutenant was very pleased to report that there were no turkey hunting accidents during the spring season this year, which, he said, is a tribute to the Hunter Education Program classes and the MEP officers' educational interactions with hunters.

Lt. Lees then provided the Board with a brief overview of MEP actions connected to the current hunting and other recreational seasons and activities and the outlines of a recently completed investigation.

Mr. Foster suggested that it might be more helpful to the board members and more convenient for MEP personnel to convert the OLE report to a written report submitted to the members, instead of officers having to attend the meetings. He reported that he will speak to Captain Amati about changing the format of the OLE's reports.

#### Personnel Report

Assistant Director Jesse Leddick introduced two members of his staff who were both approved for promotion at a recent board meeting.

#### Introduction

<i>Employee</i>	<i>Position</i>	<i>Location</i>
Alex Entrup	Prescribed Fire Project Leader Conservation Biologist IV	Westborough

Rebecca Quiñones

NHESP Conservation Science Program Manager  
Environmental Analyst V

Westborough

The Chair and the members congratulated Mr. Entrup and Dr. Quiñones on their promotions and wished them well in their new positions.

#### Update on the Department of Fish and Game's Strategic Plan (Tom O'Shea)

Commissioner O'Shea presented the outlines of the Department of Fish and Game's draft strategic plan, *Connections*, which he described as a bold action plan for conserving nature for people and wildlife. Created collaboratively across the four DFG divisions, *Connections* creates a unifying vision to guide the Department's critical work over the next five years. By aligning staff efforts across the divisions, the Commissioner stated that this plan will allow the Department to leverage the necessary funding and resources to respond to some of the most pressing challenges of our time, including biodiversity loss, the climate crisis, and environmental injustice.

The Commissioner highlighted that three themes, climate and biodiversity, environmental justice, and relevance, frame the goals, objectives, actions, and key results that the Department aims to accomplish by 2030. He pointed out that climate, equity, and biodiversity are also top priorities of the Healey-Driscoll Administration, and that a clear connection to and alignment of DFG's strategic plan with key state priorities is critically important because DFG has a responsibility to the people it serves to help advance our state's nation-leading efforts to transition to clean energy, create climate resilience, achieve environmental justice for all, and conserve biodiversity for generations to come.

After reviewing the plan's major parts, the Commissioner went through the board's specific comments, captured during the workshop he held with the board with help from facilitator Pat Field at its February discussion meeting, and pointed out where the updated draft plan addresses their comments. He also thanked the members for their thoughts and input at that time.

Commissioner O'Shea stated that *Connections* will be a living document, a road map, and a guide to future work. He noted that a strategic plan is strategic and doesn't include everything the divisions do; rather, it's a vehicle to bring into focus the larger issues staff wants to elevate.

#### VOTE: Proposed MESA List Changes at 321 CMR 10-90 (Jesse Leddick)

Assistant Director for Natural Heritage Jesse Leddick provided the board members with the Natural Heritage Program's final recommendations for the 2024 changes to the state MESA List at 321 CMR 10.90. Mr. Leddick very briefly reviewed the list-change process; presented a summary table of the changes as originally proposed to vertebrates, invertebrates, and plants, including listing, delisting, and changes in status of species currently listed; and provided a summary of the comments received before, during, and after the April 9 public hearing. He reported that the large majority of the comments were in reference to the Atlantic horseshoe crab, a species that was proposed for listing in an external proposal as a Species of Special Concern and that was not recommended to the board for listing by staff. Mr. Leddick discussed five major themes in the comments that supported listing the Atlantic horseshoe crab and demonstrated that none of them meets the criteria in the regulations for the listing of species. He then presented the final list of recommended changes, including listing seven animals (five mammals, two moths/butterflies, and two bees), listing fifteen plants, and changing the listing status (i.e., Endangered [E] ↔ Threatened [T] ↔ Species of Special Concern [SC]) of three plants.

After a brief discussion, Dr. Organ moved adopting the recommended changes as proposed; Ms. Ellsworth seconded the motion; the vote in favor was unanimous.

### Confirm the June Meeting Date

The members confirmed June 18; 12:30 p.m., at the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's Region 5 Headquarters in Hadley. Mr. Durand suggested that the July meeting be held in Lowell, and setting the July date was postponed until a venue was found.

### Members' Comments

Mr. Sisk commended the Natural Heritage and Endangered Species Advisory Committee and its work on the proposed MESA List changes. He reported that he had attended the Jamaica Pond trout stocking where the Commissioner helped a clearly new angler to hook a fish. He also reported on the revitalization of and dam removal on the Monaquot River in Braintree and its smelt run, noting that its headwaters are in the Blue Hills. He stated that both are part of a very exciting revitalization of the larger area. He reported that he had attended a Trout Unlimited gathering and spoke about MassWildlife and what it does for fisheries, and that he would be participating in a team fishing tournament in the coming week.

Ms. Dyer stated that she really enjoyed interacting with the students at the morning's cooter return event. She reported that she had attended a recent Mass Bowhunters meeting and saw a preview of Dr. Feehan's deer review presentation during which he mentioned that there would be some proposals for regulation changes brought to the Board, but he had not provided any specifics. Ms. Dyer also reported that she had helped run a BOW turkey hunting event by accompanying two women who were new hunters; one harvested her first bird in the morning, the other went out subsequently and harvested her own first bird.

Mr. Foster reported that he would like to have a license procurement process update. He also noted that Mr. Mike Roche and the New England Outdoor Writers might be good sources of suggestions for recruiting more outdoor writers.

Mr. Durand reported that he had joined Ms. Dyer and Mr. Foster at the Mass Bowhunters' pig roast and meeting where he gave a short presentation about the license reimbursement amendments he is championing. He stated that he wanted to specifically name the other organizations who have been organizing and supporting the effort, including ELM, TU, and AMC.

Ms. Ellsworth reported starting to receive depredation calls from farmers as the farming season begins. She is looking forward to the deer review and hoping to see encouraging signs for successful population management. She also reported that she is seeing an increase in private conservation investment, which will increase the potential to meet statewide land conservation goals, so she is feeling optimistic about the chances for success in meeting those goals. Ms. Ellsworth reported that she recently spoke at a New England Fly tyers Association meeting, which was a fundraiser for equipment for kids to fly-tie and rods for them to fish.

Dr. Organ wanted to congratulate Mr. Cardoza again on receiving the prestigious MacDowell award, and Ms. Langlois on her Hesselton award as well, and he stated that he thinks the awards' namesakes would be very proud of them both.

There being no further business, Mr. Durand moved to adjourn; Mr. Sisk seconded; the vote in favor was unanimous and the meeting was adjourned at 3:40 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Ernie Foster  
Secretary

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

May agenda

Draft April minutes

Copy of a letter from Cape Cod National Seashore Superintendent Jennifer Flynn to Director Mark Tisa  
RE MassWildlife's request to stock bobwhite (quail)

May personnel report (2 introductions)

DFG Strategic Plan overview

DFG Strategic Plan final draft of climate change and biodiversity theme document

DFG Strategic Plan final draft of environmental justice theme document

DFG Strategic Plan final draft of relevance theme document

MESA List public hearing (oral) comments

MESA List written public comments

Copies of 2 letters to legislators from Bob Durand on the Board's behalf RE support for statutory  
permanent reduced-price license reimbursement

DFG updated land protection budget for May 2024

May executive session packet (11 parcels)