



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, Mike Huguenin/Assistant Director/Wildlife, Eve Schlüter/Assistant Director/NHESP, Nicole McSweeney/Assistant Director/Outreach and Education, Trina Moruzzi/Assistant Director/Operations, Todd Richards/Assistant Director/Fisheries, Todd Olanyk/Central Wildlife District Manager, Pat Huckery/Northeast Wildlife District Manager, Andrew Madden/Western Wildlife District Manager, Joe Rogers/Conn. Valley Wildlife District Manager, Jennifer Sulla/General Counsel/DFG, Christine Smith/Asst. General Counsel/DFG, Lieut. Michael Lees/OLE. PUBLIC: Dave Morin, Jeff Miller, Elizabeth Magner, Steve LaRivee, Jim Wallace

DATE: May 16, 2023

LOCATION: MassWildlife Field Headquarters, Westborough, Massachusetts

Chair Sears opened the May meeting at 9:00 a.m.

Acceptance of Minutes

A motion was made by Vice Chair Durand to approve the minutes from both the March and April business meetings. The motion was seconded by Mr. Sisk; the vote in favor was unanimous.

Chair's Comments

Chair Sears welcomed the new DFG Commissioner, Tom O'Shea, and said he was looking forward to working with him. He also reported that he had visited with Hunter Education Specialist Tim Bradbury to create a Basic Hunter Education course right before shotgun deer season this year. He also reported that he would be joining Western Wildlife District Manager Andrew Madden and the Berkshire Natural Resources Council to celebrate some new conservation restrictions in Monterey later in the month.

Director's Comments

Director Tisa welcomed Commissioner O'Shea, who was 15 years with MassWildlife about 10 years previously. The Director reported that he and Mr. O'Shea had worked together very closely when both were Assistant Directors and stated that MassWildlife was very fortunate to have someone like Mr. O'Shea as its commissioner, including because of his undergraduate degree from the Yale School of Forestry and master's in public administration from the Kennedy School at Harvard. The Director reported that Mr. O'Shea had served as the Wildlife District Manager in the Southeast, then as the Assistant Director of Wildlife, before going on to have an excellent and highly productive decade with The Trustees.

Commissioner's Comments

Commissioner Tom O'Shea thanked the Director for his kind words, adding that they were thought partners and close colleagues during his tenure in Westborough, which he finds helpful when dealing

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with difficult issues. The Commissioner said he was thrilled, honored, and excited to be appointed as part of the Healey-Driscoll Administration, noting that this is a transformational time and he is happy to be a part of it.

Commissioner O'Shea then took the opportunity to briefly share his priorities. He stated that MassWildlife was still an excellent division doing excellent work. He noted that, in his 10 years at The Trustees in the NGO and land trust world, he hadn't really been away; he had just been doing different work. In coming back, he brings his colleagues, constituencies, and experiences with him. On the other hand, having been away from state government, he said he knows that the world is changing. The Department of Fish and Game needs to be relevant and provide leadership on attaining climate resilience and biodiversity goals in Massachusetts, and he noted that very few states around the country have even set biodiversity goals. Commissioner O'Shea stated that there is no other organization in the state with the same impact on biodiversity, which is also compatible with climate-change and other goals. He stated that MassWildlife is central to his goals for biodiversity conservation in the state, along with the Division of Ecological Restoration and the Division of Marine Fisheries. He will join the work to connect with people in urban areas to provide engagement and outreach, and pointed out that climate resilience is core to sustaining fish and wildlife populations. That said, Commissioner O'Shea stated that the Department's core responsibilities are still there, still important, and will continue to be. He thanked Director Tisa again for his welcome and emphasized that he is very happy to be in the position of commissioner.

Law Enforcement Comments

Lieutenant Michael Lees of the Office of Law Enforcement (OLE) reported that officers were recently focused on supporting the trout stocking activities of MassWildlife. He also reported that there are currently 14 positions to be filled at OLE and the agency has 15 candidates. The interviews began at the end of March, and background checks were ongoing. He reported that one trainee is starting in the northeastern part of the state. OLE is hoping to get 14 new officers, Aug 14 is academy start date, then the candidates will have about a year of work before they are ready for deployment in the field.

Lt. Lees then provided the Board with a brief overview of recent OLE activities, including wildlife-related examples of calls for service that Environmental Police officers had responded to in the previous month. He also thanked Ms. Sacco for coordinating with MEP for its annual award ceremony, to be held that evening in the Cronin Building. The Chair thanked Lt. Lees for his report.

Hunter Education Working Group Update

Mr. Foster reported that the working group has designed a series of questions as a survey to go out to past and present instructors and others. The working group will also conduct in-person listening sessions in each of the five districts, to get ideas that aren't captured in survey. He stated that he had already scheduled and held a listening session in the Central Wildlife District.

Mr. Foster reported that he had attended an instructor training with nine other would-be Hunter Education instructors. He stated that he had asked many questions in the course of that training and that Hunter Education Program Administrator Susan Langlois did an excellent job, the Cronin Building offered a great space to conduct it, and the teaching materials were excellent. Mr. Foster reported that he had many reasons for attending the training, but basically wanted to be part of teaching Hunter Education and pass along his passion. He reported that he was also going to interview and/or survey other Board members for their attitudes and goals related to Hunter Education and would bring all the information together before bringing back any recommendations or report.

Mr. Foster reported that the working group had met to review the procedures and processes of the Hunter Education Program for the benefit of the Board members. He also reported that staff is sending out the survey to potential participants before subsequent listening sessions.

Confirm June Meeting Date

The members confirmed the date and time of the June meeting, which is June 8, 2023, with the business meeting at 1:30 p.m. and a joint meeting with the DCR Stewardship Council at 4:00 p.m. Members briefly discussed the question of a governance meeting earlier the same day, but the Chair opted to discuss it further during the governance meeting at 11:00 a.m. that morning.

The members looked ahead to July and selected July 19, with Director Tisa to determine the location and meeting time.

Members' Comments

Mr. Sisk offered his welcome and congratulations to Commissioner O'Shea.

Ms. Dyer reported that she had enjoyed Ms. Huseby's presentation at the previous meeting and is looking forward to attending the R3 Summit on June 3. She also offered her thanks to Central District Manager Todd Olanyk and his staff for a day's visit. Ms. Dyer added her welcome to Commissioner O'Shea and said she looked forward to working with him.

Mr. Foster welcomed Commissioner O'Shea.

Mr. Durand also welcomed Commissioner O'Shea. He reported that Rep. Paul Schmid had requested a briefing on the results of the depredation work group and noted that Rep. Schmid had expressed support for a reduction in hunting setbacks. He also reported that he had visited the Delaney WMA and had really liked it, giving his compliments to the District Manager.

Ms. Ellsworth reported that the Mount Grace Land Conservation Trust is reaching a critical moment when conservation is being priced out of large parcels on a large scale. She reported tremendous opportunities but warned that those opportunities may also slip away because of the expense. She also reported that she was glad to hear Commissioner O'Shea talk about biodiversity: She was out turkey hunting and found herself in a standing dead forest. She thought the state needs more habitat restoration and management. Ms. Ellsworth thanked Director Tisa and Assistant Director Schlüter for giving of their time to meet with her board and staff, and she noted that Dr. Schlüter will be the speaker at a coming Saturday event at Mount Grace.

Dr. Organ welcomed the Commissioner and reported that he had been thrilled to hear of Mr. O'Shea's appointment. They had worked together when the Commissioner was the MassWildlife Assistant Director and at NEWWA [the Northeast Wildlife Administrators Association]. Dr. Organ noted that Mr. O'Shea had been such a great MassWildlife employee and he very glad to have him back in state service. Dr. Organ also lauded the Hunter Education instructor training; he felt that Ms. Langlois and staff had made the participants feel comfortable and really cared about passing along the information they need to know. He also reported that his hunter education team was soon to hold its first course since the pandemic back in Hadley. He is on the Campfire Club of America conservation funding board and reported that he may want to work with the Director to explore funding possibilities from that quarter.

Chair Sears reported that he had had a meeting with Undersecretary Cooper when Commissioner O'Shea was appointed. He asked the Commissioner to convey to the Undersecretary and the Secretary an invitation to attend a Board meeting or just visit the Field Headquarters. Commissioner O'Shea replied that this was great idea, to raise awareness of this division and its great work.

There being no further business, a motion was made by Mr. Durand to close the open session and open an executive session for the purpose of discussing proposed land acquisitions whose negotiations would

be compromised by discussion in open session, and to not reconvene in open session. The motion was seconded by Mr. Foster.

Mr. Durand: Yes

Ms. Dyer: Yes

Ms. Ellsworth: Yes

Mr. Foster: Yes

Dr. Organ: Yes

Mr. Sears: Yes

Mr. Sisk: Yes

The vote in favor was unanimous, and the meeting was adjourned at 10:05 a.m.

Executive Session

Staff presented six parcels for the Board's consideration and approval. The six parcels were each voted on by the members and all were unanimously approved.

There being no further business, Mr. Durand moved to adjourn; Ms. Ellsworth seconded the motion; the vote in favor was unanimous and the meeting adjourned at 10:48 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Ernie Foster
Secretary

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

May agenda
Draft March business meeting minutes
Draft April business meeting minutes
Packet for the executive session