



MASSWILDLIFE

DIVISION OF FISHERIES & WILDLIFE

1 Rabbit Hill Road, Westborough, MA 01581

p: (508) 389-6300 | f: (508) 389-7890

MASS.GOV/MASSWILDLIFE

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

PRESENT: Dr. Joseph Larson/Chair, Michael Roche/Vice Chair, Bonnie Booth/Secretary, Dr. Brandi Van Roo, Ernest W. Foster IV, Stephen Sears, Bob Durand, Ron Amidon/Commissioner/DFG, Mary-Lee King/Deputy Commissioner/DFG, Mark Tisa/Director, Jon Regosin/Deputy Director, Kris McCarthy/Associate Director/Finance and Administration, Michael Huguenin/Assistant Director/Wildlife, Trina Moruzzi/Assistant Director/Operations, Todd Richards/Assistant Director/Fisheries, Marion Larson/Chief/Information and Education, Lt. Col. David Loos/OLE

DATE: May 19, 2020

LOCATION: Via Zoom Meeting

Chair Larson opened the May meeting at 1:05 p.m.

Acceptance of Minutes

A motion was made by Mr. Sears to accept the minutes from the April meeting as presented. The motion was seconded by Secretary Booth.

Chair Larson: yes

Vice Chair Roche: yes

Secretary Booth: yes

Dr. Van Roo: yes

Mr. Foster: yes

Mr. Sears: yes

Mr. Durand: yes

The vote in favor was unanimous.

Chair's Comments

Chair Larson stated that it was very nice to see faces as well as voices after so long and he welcomed everyone to the meeting. He reported that he was very glad to hear from the Director that the staff has been working without too much difficulty despite the office closures.

Commissioner's Comments

Commissioner Amidon reported that things are going well. He reported that he had been asked by Secretary Theoharides and Governor Baker to co-chair an Outdoor Recreation Working Group for reopening the state relative to hunting and fishing. He noted that he was made co-chair with [former Energy and Environment Secretary] Matthew Beaton, with others in recreation and recreation-related retail in the group, and reported that the group received almost everything the members wanted in Phase 1 of the reopening and assume they will get the rest in subsequent phases.

MASSWILDLIFE

Director's Comments

Director Tisa reported that agency is planning for limited reentry and limited onsite operations this summer and into the fall. The Director reported he anticipates the process going into the fall and even the following spring. Director Tisa stated that communications with and among his staff are going well and that he keeps meeting regularly with senior staff. Noting that some staff may need technological upgrades to continue operating remotely, the Director reported that he is planning as though staff will be operating this way for the next 6-8 months and that it is going very well.

Law Enforcement Comments

Office of Law Enforcement Lt. Col. David Loos stated that he would skip a detailed report on the Calls for Service statistics that have been sent to the Board. He did point out that some statistics are going down because officers are spending the majority of their time on patrons of state parks, ensuring proper social distancing and responding to the greater demand on those spaces as new users continue to come to the parks for safe recreation. In regard to turkey season, he reported that officers have found many violations in towns around the state. He also reported that Shad fishing is going strong, with two violations on the Connecticut River. He also reported briefly on an interesting recent case of an illegal possession of a kinkajou, conducted in cooperation with law enforcement in Connecticut.

The Lieutenant Colonel also reported on unusual recent horseshoe harvest violations. He reported that two bears had to be tranquilized and relocated recently, noting that OLE is reminding people to not feed bears. He stated that the OLE anticipates continuing to help keep order in state parks and WMAs, primarily issuing reminders for safe social distancing.

2020 Deer Review: 2019 Harvest Data and 2020 Antlerless Deer Permit Allocations (David Stainbrook)

Deer and Moose Project Leader David Stainbrook provided a brief outline of the coming presentation. He briefly reviewed MassWildlife's approach to deer management in Massachusetts; reported on the 2019 deer harvest and trends, breaking out the western and central regions (zones 1-9) and the eastern region (zones 10-14) and discussing them separately; and then presented the proposed 2020 antlerless deer permit allocations, also by management zone.

2019 Deer Harvest, by Season

Season	Average	
	2016-2018	2019
Archery	5,004	6,149
Shotgun	5,591	4,985
Primitive	2,639	2,692
Youth/Paraplegic	133	94
Total	13,368	13,920

Mr. Stainbrook reported that the total harvest for 2019 (including the 29 deer taken at the Quabbin Reservation) was 13,920, just shy of last year's all-time-record harvest of 14,551. He noted that the harvest did set a new all-time archery harvest record and that the primitive season harvest was the second-highest ever. Noting that the shotgun total harvest was well below average, Mr. Stainbrook reported that this was most likely related to the weather conditions during the shotgun season and how they affected hunter effort during that time.

After his 2019 harvest analyses, Mr. Stainbrook reported the staff recommendations for the 2020 Antlerless Deer Permit Allocations, which, as he discussed throughout the presentation, do not propose any changes to antlerless deer allocations for the 2020 season. This is because changes were made over the past few years to stabilize deer numbers and staff would like to see how the deer population trends are affected by those changes over the next few years.

WMZ	2019 Allocation	2020 Allocation	Proposed Change	Population Trend
1	600	600	-	Stable/Increasing
2	300	300	-	Stable/Increasing
3	1,600	1,600	-	Stable/Increasing
4N	600	600	-	Stable/Increasing
4S	500	500	-	Stable/Increasing
5	1,500	1,500	-	Stable/Increasing
6	300	300	-	Stable/Increasing
7	2,400	2,400	-	Stable/Increasing
8	2,600	2,600	-	Stable/Increasing
9	5,500	5,500	-	Stable/Increasing
10	12,000	12,000	-	Increasing
11	13,000	13,000	-	Increasing
12	1,000	1,000	-	Stable/Increasing
13	2,700	2,700	-	Increasing
14	2,700	2,700	-	Increasing

Mr. Durand asked how staff accounts for the high antler beam diameters in Zone 6. Mr. Stainbrook reported that there has been a lot of habitat management, increasing available food sources. When asked about the openness of town conservation lands and who in the towns controls access, Mr. Stainbrook reported that towns are different in how they allow access, but that in general conservation commissions tend to direct hunter-access programs on town lands.

Mr. Sears stated that he was happy to hear about the replacement permit program, especially for hunters in Western Mass. He also stated that, in Zone 2, hunters continue to express frustration about their inability to get [Antlerless Deer] permits. He asked how many applicants for ADPs there were in Zone 2, and Mr. Stainbrook reported that there were 1,751 applicants for 300 available permits. Mr. Sears also asked for an update on CWD [Chronic Wasting Disease], thinking particularly of the incidences in Eastern New York, and Mr. Stainbrook reported that there are no cases closer to Massachusetts than in the past.

Vice Chair Roche stated that he remembers when the focus on the Eastern zones started, and he noted that the results have been remarkable. He applauded staff for being able to reach towns and increase

the harvest in those difficult-to-manage zones, and offered his congratulations to Mr. Stainbrook and the Wildlife staff.

Mr. Foster asked whether staff thought about increasing the Archery season statewide, similarly to what has been done in the East. Mr. Stainbrook reported that staff is not recommending such an expansion at this time. He explained that as you increase the season, success rates go up, so staff must either increase the length of the Archery season and reduce permit numbers, or address hunter effort. When asked whether he thought a setback reduction by the towns was possible, Mr. Stainbrook reported that the towns do not have the authority to change setbacks because they are set out in statute. The exception that towns can and do work to coordinate is where the hunter or hunters get written permission from all the homeowners in a given area. He noted that the Town of Weston was able to get a large community to sign off, and that it can and does happen.

Vice Chair Roche moved to accept all the staff recommendations; Secretary Booth seconded the motion;

Chair Larson: yes

Vice Chair Roche: yes

Secretary Booth: yes

Dr. Van Roo: yes

Mr. Foster: yes

Mr. Sears: yes

Mr. Durand: yes

The vote in favor was unanimous.

Natural Heritage and Endangered Species Advisory Committee Report

Dr. Larson reported that the Natural Heritage and Endangered Species Advisory Committee's May meeting was held the previous week. He referred to the report in the Board's meeting packets and noted that the last year of state tax form donations that has been completely reported shows the period 2016-2018 yielded the highest amount donated on record. He added that 2019 has not finished reporting and it is still too early to tell what the result will be. He also reported that Assistant Director Schlüter gave a report on current Natural Heritage program activities that was very informative.

Confirm Meeting Date

Members confirmed the date of the June Fisheries and Wildlife Board meeting, June 16, 2020, at 1:00 p.m.; via a Zoom Meeting.

Members also discussed the July meeting and selected July 14, 2020, at 1:00 p.m.

Member's Comments

Dr. Van Roo, Secretary Booth, and Mr. Durand reported no comment.

Mr. Sears thanked Western District Manager Andrew Madden for setting up Zoom meetings for the Berkshire County League, noting that Mr. Madden is doing a wonderful job. Mr. Sears also noted that the staff's presentations are so good, it will be great to continue the use of Zoom meetings for future meetings so that the public is able to watch and listen in.

Vice Chair Roche wanted to note the recent passing of Mr. Durand's father. Mr. Durand thanked Mr. Roche and the Board and staff for their condolences. Mr. Roche also noted the passing of former Southeast Wildlife District Wildlife Manager Dick Turner. Mr. Foster stated that he had not had the opportunity to know him, but that there is a lot of love in the Southeast Wildlife District for Mr. Turner.

A motion was made by Vice Chair Roche to move into executive session for the purpose of discussing certain land acquisitions and to not return to open session. Mr. Durand offered an amendment to adjourn in memory of Dick Turner. The motion was seconded as amended by Mr. Foster.

Chair Larson: yes

Vice Chair Roche: yes

Secretary Booth: yes

Dr. Van Roo: yes

Mr. Foster: yes

Mr. Sears: yes

Mr. Durand: yes

The vote in favor was unanimous.

Executive Session

Director Tisa presented two proposed acquisitions, which were both reviewed and were unanimously approved by the Board.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 2:50 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Bonnie Booth

Secretary

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

May meeting notice with agenda and Zoom access information

Draft April meeting minutes for review

OLE Calls for Service report to April 30, 2020

PDF copy of the 2020 Deer Review presentation

NHESP report on state tax form donations to May 1, 2020

Documentation for the executive session