



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, Bonnie Booth/Secretary, Dr. Brandi Van Roo, Ernest W. Foster IV, Steve Sears, Bob Durand, 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, Nicole McSweeney/Acting Chief/Information and Education, Pat Huckery/Northeast Wildlife District Manager, Todd Olanyk/Central Wildlife District Manager, Jason Zimmer/Southeast Wildlife District Manager, Andrew Madden/Western Wildlife District Manager, Joe Rogers/Conn. Valley Wildlife District Manager, Captain Scott Amati/OLE

DATE: May 24, 2022

LOCATION: MassWildlife Field Headquarters, Westborough

Chair Larson opened the meeting at 1:35 p.m.

Acceptance of Minutes

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

The motion passed unanimously.

Chair's Comments

Chair Larson reported a bear at his mailbox as he was leaving for the meeting.

Commissioner's Comments

Commissioner Amidon reported many public events and legislative outreach efforts, as well as working with stakeholders and advocates. The Commissioner has started a forest habitat management advocacy group, with DFG's MassWildlife, DCR, the Ruffed Grouse Society, the Mount Grace Land Trust, and the National Wild Turkey Federation. Working with Mark Reil, the group has received \$500,000 in grants to monitor before-during-aftereffects of habitat management. He reported that other partner organizations are interested and more grants could be coming. Commissioner Amidon also reported that the effort has an offer to document the monitoring with aerial photography, adding that the MCA promoted the effort and helped make it happen.

Commissioner Amidon then reported that Amendment #4 of the Governor's budget has been signed, including the reimbursement of MassWildlife's free licenses this year. He noted that he hopes for permanent legislation by the end of the year.

Director's Comments

The Director offered kudos to Commissioner Amidon and the coalition he's built for the license reimbursement and the momentum for habitat management promotion in the state. Director Tisa noted that both issues are heavy lifts these days and took a lot of work; he took it as very good news. The Director said he would have more comments at Item 7 on the agenda.

Law Enforcement Comments

Captain Scott Amati reported that as the seasons change the MEP will begin shifting its work from spring to summer recreational activities, including boating safety, off-road vehicle use, and other enforcement issues for the sister agencies. He provided the Board with an overview of actions connected to the current hunting and other recreational seasons and activities; a detailed report on recent OLE activities, including numerous fish-and-wildlife-related examples of calls for service that Environmental Police officers had responded to in the previous month, both inland and marine; and the outlines of ongoing and recently completed investigations of suspected violations and infractions.

The Chair thanked Captain Amati for his report.

Personnel Report (Kris McCarthy)

CFO McCarthy provided brief summaries of the credentials and experience of three candidates, as follows:

New Hires

| <u>Employee</u> | <u>Position</u> | <u>Location</u> |
|-----------------|---|-----------------|
| Rebecca Colby | Central District Aquatic Biologist Aquatic Biologist III | West Boylston |
| Kalina Flood | Sunderland Hatchery Technician Wildlife Technician II | Sunderland |
| Jeremy Jachym | McLaughlin Hatchery Technician Wildlife Technician II | Belchertown |

Dr. Van Roo moved to accept the Personnel Report as presented. Mr. Durand seconded the motion.

The motion passed unanimously.

321 CMR 2.01: Retriever or Bird Dog Trials in Massachusetts (Todd Olanyk)

Director Tisa reported the importance of maintaining the traditions of hunting with bird dogs. He reported that he has trained many people, helping them train their dogs. The owners he worked with saw how happy their dogs were to be flushing birds, responding to the sound of the gun, etc. He reported many opportunities to talk to them, many being women, and found a lot of interest among them to understand more about the opportunity to hunt or find out more about hunting. The Director always thought it was a great way to draw people in and engage them more in what MassWildlife does.

The Director stated that Commissioner Amidon and he had a meeting with the presidents of eight major clubs that are interested in using WMAs for field trials for sporting dogs. He reported that staff was before the Board to advocate for adjusting regulations and giving District Managers more flexibility to permit these activities. The Director reported that Central Wildlife District Manager Todd Olanyk had participated in the meetings with the club owners and would give the presentation on the specific regulations staff will ask the Board to send to the public hearing process.

Mr. Olanyk reported that field trials test a dog's training and hunting ability, and includes Retriever Trials, Field Trials, and Hunt Tests. Noting that they've been permitted on WMAs for decades, Mr. Olanyk stated that field trials are a great vehicle that can contribute to MassWildlife's R3 and Relevancy efforts with some revisions to the existing regulations. When licensing field trials, Mr. Olanyk reported that the District Supervisors designate exactly where the activity can take place, thereby protecting sensitive habitat and creating a separate, safe space for it. The area is clearly marked so that other visitors to the WMAs will be aware of the permitted activity.

Mr. Olanyk reported that the last revision of these regulations was in September 2001. He provided a summary of the proposed changes, including to eliminate the named properties in the regulations, which is unnecessarily restrictive; allow the Director, through the District Supervisor, the discretion to approve times and locations for field trials in the respective districts; clarify the language regarding the use of horses in field trials; and eliminate outdated language barring trials from High Ridge WMA and Herm Covey WMA. Mr. Olanyk took the Board members through the applicable existing regulations and highlighted the language that was proposed to be updated in each case.

After a brief discussion and some questions, Vice Chair Roche moved to direct staff to finalize and send the proposed regulatory changes to a public hearing; Mr. Foster seconded the motion.

The motion passed unanimously.

Natural Heritage and Endangered Species Advisory Committee (NHESAC) Report

Chair Larson reported that the Board members had copies of the NHESAC most recent minutes in their meeting packets. He suggested they review them to become acquainted with all the recent work of the Heritage Program.

Set June Meeting Date

Director Tisa stated that he would like to plan another in-person meeting at the Field Headquarters in June and asked the Board members to consider scheduling the June monthly meeting during the week of June 20, offering June 22 in the early afternoon with the public hearing on the pheasant and small game proposals at 3:00 p.m. After a brief discussion, members set the date and time for the June Fisheries and Wildlife Board meeting on Wednesday, June 22, 2022, at 1:00 p.m., with the public hearing at 3:00 p.m.

Member's Comments

Secretary Booth reported no comments.

Mr. Durand congratulated to Commissioner Amidon and Director Tisa for their work on the budget and the free-license reimbursement.

Mr. Foster stated that he was repeatedly hearing the word 'heritage' everywhere and he encouraged everyone to stay on that theme because it resonates with young people.

Vice Chair Roche reported that he took a walk around the building and felt very good about the future. He also reported that he had helped to stock some fingerlings from the Teaching with Trout program with a local school class, stating that the young people were fascinated and he had a great time.

Mr. Sears reported that a very important vote was taken in the Berkshires. In the Town of Richmond, a certain cadre of abutting landowners wanted to restrict access to Berkshire Natural Resources Council lands. The town has developed language to allow and preserve access for passive recreation in the town. It was an overwhelming vote in favor of preserving access to the lands and Mr. Sears reported feeling very gratified. He also reported that he had had a trout study presentation at a Berkshire County League meeting the previous month and it went extremely well.

Dr. Van Roo offered a shoutout to MassWildlife staff for taking some of her students out to demonstrate electrofishing techniques, and she thanked Jason Stolarski and Steven Mattocks for providing the students with much-needed field time.

A motion was made by Vice Chair Roche to move into Executive Session for the purpose of discussing certain land acquisitions whose negotiations would be affected by discussion in open session and not return to open session afterward. The motion was seconded by Dr. Van Roo.

The motion passed unanimously at 2:50 p.m.

Executive Session

Deputy Director Jon Regosin presented one parcel for review and potential approval by the Board. The parcel was discussed, voted on, and unanimously approved.

There being no further business, Dr. Van Roo moved to adjourn the executive session; Mr. Foster seconded the motion.

The vote was unanimous, and the session was adjourned at 3:10 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Bonnie Booth
Secretary

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

Agenda

Draft April minutes

Personnel Report

Minutes from the January meeting of the NHESAC

Spreadsheet of Natural Heritage Fund Taxpayer Donations (1992 to 2021)

Executive Session packet