



## DIVISION OF FISHERIES & WILDLIFE

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

PRESENT: Steve Sears/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, Kris McCarthy/CFO, Nicole McSweeney/Assistant Director/Outreach and Education, Trina Moruzzi/Assistant Director/Operations, Jesse Leddick/Assistant Director for Natural Heritage and Endangered Species, Todd Olanyk/Central Wildlife District Manager, Andrew Madden/Western Wildlife District Manager, Jason Zimmer/Southeast Wildlife District Manager, Jim Pollock/Operations Specialist, Jon Regosin/Contractor, Christy Edwards/Strategic Plan Program Manager/DFG, Sarah Maier/Strategic Plan Program Coordinator/DFG, Pat Field/Contract Facilitator/DFG; PUBLIC: Amy Schumer, Dave Morin, Steve LaRivee,

DATE: November 15, 2023

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

Chair Sears opened the discussion meeting at 9:35 a.m.

#### Acceptance of Minutes

Mr. Durand moved acceptance of the September minutes as submitted; Dr. Organ seconded the motion; the vote in favor was unanimous.

Director Tisa reported that MassWildlife had learned the previous afternoon that it was awarded its second America the Beautiful grant, for \$3.5 million. He stated that it was an unprecedented honor as the grants are highly competitive. Assistant Director Fisheries Todd Richards provided a brief background on the grant.

#### Welcome and Introductions (Tom O'Shea)

Commissioner O'Shea commended Assistant Director Richards and the team for their impressive grant, which is a model for funding through partnerships. He noted that Assistant Director Richards demonstrated leadership on his own initiative in taking the lead on the grant.

The Commissioner then called on his staff to introduce themselves. Christy Edwards introduced herself and her role at DFG as the Director of Land Protection and Capital Planning, as well as the Project Lead for the strategic plan. Commissioner O'Shea stated that Ms. Edwards is another example of staff taking on more than is in their job description to make things happen. Sarah Maier recently joined DGF from MassWildlife and is the plan's Project Coordinator. The Commissioner also pointed out that one of the working group leaders for the plan's elements was present and saluted Deputy Director Eve Schlüter, who is leading the Biodiversity Working Group.

Commissioner O'Shea then introduced Mr. Pat Field of the Consensus Building Institute, who is functioning as the strategic plan's professional facilitator.

### Overview of the DFG Strategic Plan and Planning Process (Tom O'Shea)

Commissioner O'Shea reported that the department's last planning effort was a number of years ago, noting that there are four divisions under one umbrella and one overarching mission. Given the department's position in EEA, Commissioner O'Shea reported that he had quickly seen that DFG needed a unifying vision around its divisions' shared priorities. He also saw that the entire department needs to message to EEA and the Administration that it is aligned with their missions and priorities. He stated that DFG is not a large agency, but it has an outsized role within EEA, and the divisions need to be able to take on further challenges as professionals working together.

The Commissioner also noted that biodiversity is under threat – is in crisis, in fact, here and around the world. The divisions of DFG have nature-based solutions for climate mitigation that will take on more and more importance, such as wetlands for flood control, etc., and are developing more nature-based solutions to our biggest challenges. He stressed that DFG staff is working on this effort all while doing their regular work, and the plan will be mindful of incorporating and supporting the core duties of each division.

### Strategic Plan Theme Discussions (Pat Field)

Facilitator Pat Field led extended discussions among the Board members to explore the four themes of the strategic plan using the following questions:

- Within the context of the DFG Strategic Plan, what are three big things MassWildlife could do to advance biodiversity conservation over the next five years?
- Within the context of the DFG Strategic Plan, what are three big things that MassWildlife could do to address climate impacts over the next five years?
- Within the context of the DFG Strategic Plan, what are three big things that MassWildlife could do to engage, collaborate with, and include underserved communities and populations over the next five years?
- Within the context of the DFG Strategic Plan, what are three big things that MassWildlife could do to raise our profile, ensure our relevance, and advance our missions with all Massachusetts residents?

While discussing each theme, Mr. Field also asked the members to consider any cautions or concerns that the strategic plan team should be aware of moving forward.

### Final Reflections on the Morning Discussion (Tom O'Shea)

At the close of the discussion, Commissioner O'Shea thanked Mr. Field and the Board members for their assistance and thoughtful input on the roadmap. He reported that he had found certain themes running through the discussion. First, the Commissioner noted that much of the discussion brought out the importance of partnerships and the need to make new connections and expand beyond the department's current audiences. He touched on DFG's identity and reported he had heard that it is perceived one way and needs to change to a broader message, and he highlighted a recurring theme that DFG and its divisions have to elevate their mission in order to increase the number and role of partnerships, and that they have to keep to their core missions while also expanding the vision of their collective roles in the community. This included enhancing biodiversity by staying focused on our land and the stewardship needed to maintain its habitats and ecosystem functions. Further, he heard the concept of equity coming through and the idea that DFG and its divisions can give back and have something to offer to the larger community, to foster and meet an expanding group of constituents

where they are and simultaneously build greater support, including for necessary growth and increased, stable funding.

Commissioner O'Shea reported that the next step will be finalizing the DFG Strategic Plan in draft, at which point he and his team would like to share it with the Board and get the members' comments.

Chair Sears reported that he appreciated that the Commissioner took the time to solicit the Board's opinions and ideas. He opined that the department is taking a lead that will benefit everyone in the state, and he stated his belief that MassWildlife has the capacity to support those efforts. Commissioner O'Shea stated that the department can't do it alone and that the incredible staff at MassWildlife makes him hopeful that a lot can be accomplished.

There being no further discussion, Mr. Foster made a motion to adjourn; Mr. Sisk seconded; the vote in favor was unanimous and the meeting adjourned at 12:15 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Ernie Foster  
Secretary

List of documents presented to the Board in its September governance meeting packets

Draft minutes from the September governance meeting  
November governance meeting notice with agenda  
Annotated governance meeting agenda  
Department of Fish and Game Strategic Plan overview document