



MASSWILDLIFE

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, Bob Durand, Ernest W. Foster IV, Stephen Sears, Dr. Brandi Van Roo, Ron Amidon/Commissioner/DFG, Mary-Lee King/Deputy Commissioner/DFG, Mark Tisa/Director, Jon Regosin/Deputy Director, Kris McCarthy/CFO, 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, Marion Larson/Chief/Information and Education, Nicole McSweeney/Outreach and Marketing Manager, Astrid Huseby/R3 Coordinator, Lt. Col. David Loos/OLE

DATE: November 24, 2020

LOCATION: Via Zoom Meeting

Chair Larson opened the meeting at 9:02 a.m.

Acceptance of Minutes

A motion was made by Mr. Sears to accept the minutes from the October meeting as presented. The motion was seconded 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 motion passed unanimously.

Chair's Comments

Chair Larson reported that he had no comments.

Commissioner's Comments

Commissioner Amidon reported that the capital budget had been announced, with \$3,500,000, an increase from \$2,650,000 last year, for land protection. He reported that the legislature also approved additional funding for six projects that couldn't be completed in fiscal year 2020 because of the COVID-19 pandemic, and also approved was an additional \$67,000 for a habitat management project that couldn't be completed because of COVID.

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Director's Comments

Director Tisa asked that the Board move the December meeting to December 22, 2020, 11:00 a.m., because a significant land project will hopefully be finalized on the current date, and it will need to be approved before the end of the year.

Vice Chair Roche moved rescheduling the December meeting; Dr. Van Roo seconded.

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 Larson invited Deputy Commissioner Mary-Lee King to say a few words to the Board on her approaching retirement when she joined the meeting. Deputy Commissioner King reported to the Board that she would be retiring at the end of the year. She stated that she is very proud of the work that the Department has accomplished and feels ready to move on to a new phase of life. She stated that she will miss working for conservation, hunters' rights, and improved access for hunting and fishing in the Commonwealth. She stated her last day would be January 2, 2021.

Mr. Durand stated that he and Deputy Commissioner Lee have been friends since high school. He listed the many past posts she has held for the Legislature and throughout state government, and he wished her the very best in retirement.

Vice Chair Roche stated that Deputy Commissioner Lee has worked behind the scenes for decades and that he has appreciated all her work on MassWildlife's behalf.

Director Tisa resumed his comments, agreeing that Deputy Commissioner Lee was always working behind the scenes for the Division and the Department, and consequently did not receive credit for all that she did because she worked quietly in the background. The Director stated that he really appreciated all that she has done for MassWildlife, the Department, and the Commonwealth.

All the Board members joined in thanking Deputy Commissioner Lee and wishing her well in retirement.

Law Enforcement Comments

The OLE's Lieutenant Colonel David Loos reported that, in addition to the Calls for Service statistics, the OLE is having an ongoing issue with baiting during the hunting season or hunting over bait, which is illegal. He reported that OLE is getting some help from its canine officers in trying to locate baited areas, but the practice is still a problem OLE is addressing. The Lieutenant Colonel reported that OLE found no Archery Stamp violations thus far in the season. There was one turkey shot with a shotgun in the closed season and that person was cited. He also reported that, for the first time, OLE identified someone who had falsified the [Wildlife Management] Zone on an ADP [Antlerless Deer Permit] tag on a computer prior to going out to hunt, and officers have since been on alert for other such alternations. In another rare case, the Lieutenant Colonel reported that someone had falsified their online data for Hunter Education, stating that they had when they actually had not completed Hunter Education and were not

certified. He also reported that a moose was found to have brain worm in Central Massachusetts and had to be put down.

Mr. Durand stated that he wanted to ask about reports of a coyote that had supposedly bitten three people in Stoneham and whether the Lt. Colonel could give the Board any update. Lt. Colonel Loos stated that the OLE was currently investigating that incident. He also reported that there had been a report of a similar incident in Revere, but that it appears the animal in that case was a domestic dog and not a coyote.

Vice Chair Roche asked whether there was any way to control the sale of corn for baiting. He reported seeing bags of corn specifically marketed as deer corn in hardware stores, etc., and questioned how many people might not know that it is illegal during the deer hunting season. Assistant Director for Wildlife Mike Huguenin reported that baiting is legal up to 10 days before the start of a season, at which time the bait needs to be removed from the area. Possible ways to promote the fact that hunting over bait is illegal were discussed. Dr. Van Roo stated that she believed there should be evidence that the problem is widespread and not just limited to a few individuals before the agency expended too many resources on the issue beyond what it normally does.

Personnel Report (Kris McCarthy)

CFO Kris McCarthy submitted the following promotion for the Board's approval:

Promotion

<u>Employee</u>	<u>Position</u>	<u>Location</u>
Kurt Palmateer	McLaughlin Hatchery Manager Aquatic Biologist IV	Belchertown

A motion was made by Dr. Van Roo to accept the Personnel Report 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 motion passed unanimously.

Election of Officers (Bonnie Booth)

The Chair asked for a motion to turn the meeting over to the Secretary for the purpose of conducting the Board's annual elections. Dr. Van Roo so moved; Mr. Foster 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 motion passed unanimously.

Secretary Booth called for nominations for the Chair. Mr. Durand nominated Dr. Larson; Dr. Van Roo seconded.

Hearing no more nominations, Secretary Booth asked for a motion to close the nominations. Dr. Van Roo so moved; Mr. Durand 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 motion passed unanimously.

Secretary Booth called the vote for Chair for Dr. Larson.

Chair Larson: yes

Vice Chair Roche: yes

Secretary Booth: yes

Dr. Van Roo: yes

Mr. Foster: yes

Mr. Sears: yes

Mr. Durand: yes

Dr. Larson was elected Chair unanimously.

Secretary Booth called for nominations for the Vice Chair. Mr. Durand nominated Mr. Roche; Dr. Van Roo seconded.

Hearing no more nominations, Secretary Booth asked for a motion to close the nominations for Vice Chair. Dr. Van Roo so moved; Mr. Foster 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 motion passed unanimously.

Secretary Booth called the vote for Vice Chair for Mr. Roche.

Chair Larson: yes

Vice Chair Roche: yes

Secretary Booth: yes

Dr. Van Roo: yes

Mr. Foster: yes

Mr. Sears: yes

Mr. Durand: yes

Mr. Roche was elected Vice Chair unanimously.

Secretary Booth called for nominations for the Secretary. Mr. Sears nominated Ms. Booth; Dr. Van Roo seconded.

Hearing no more nominations, Secretary Booth asked for a motion to close the nominations. Mr. Durand so moved; Dr. Van Roo 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 motion passed unanimously.

Secretary Booth called the vote for Secretary for Ms. Booth.

Chair Larson: yes

Vice Chair Roche: yes

Secretary Booth: yes

Dr. Van Roo: yes

Mr. Foster: yes

Mr. Sears: yes

Mr. Durand: yes

Ms. Booth was elected Secretary unanimously.

Secretary Booth returned the meeting to the Chair at the close of the elections.

Social Media While Social Distancing (Nicole McSweeney)

Outreach and Marketing Manager Nicole McSweeney presented the Board with a detailed analysis of how MassWildlife has been using social media during the COVID-19 pandemic. Noting that it has been a challenging time for all of us, Ms. Sweeney reported that she was proud to share some of the great work staff has been doing to leverage MassWildlife's successful social media accounts to continue engaging with constituents during this time and to demonstrate how she and her colleagues have adapted to these unprecedented circumstances.

With only very limited social contact possible, Ms. McSweeney reported that people were spending more time online during the previous 8 months, and that the use of social media and video chat services has increased substantially as a way for people to feel connected and get entertainment. At the same time digital was increasing, she noted that outdoor recreation also surged. Due to stay-at-home orders, indoor business closures, travel restrictions, and health guidelines, many people looked for activities that could be done outside in open spaces to allow for social distancing close to home. As a result, participation in outdoor recreation, including fishing, hiking, birdwatching, and boating, increased across the country. This put MassWildlife at a great position to engage with its constituents on social media, to meet people where they were spending a lot of time (on the internet), and deliver them content they were looking for (how to get outside and enjoy nature in a way that was still safe).

Ms. Sweeney reported that, in the early days of the pandemic, there was a lot of very basic information that MassWildlife had to get out to the public, to both minimize the spread of misinformation and get the word out about how to recreate safely. She was initially flooded with questions about whether WMAs were open or closed, how the shutdown would impact trout stocking, boat ramps, licensing, and regulations. Since the pandemic has impacted almost every aspect of our lives, she noted that staff had to quickly adapt to be able to answer those inquiries from the public.

She reported that there were also many operational logistics that the agency needed to quickly create new processes for, such as how to sell a hunting license to a minor when they typically need to go to a physical location, how to handle harvest reporting, and how to adapt in-person educational courses for a digital format. After staff from across the agency figured out how to adjust the logistics, the job for Ms. McSweeney and her colleagues who work in communications was to effectively and efficiently get the word out. She reported that they conducted extensive outreach through targeted emails to stakeholders, newsletter articles, outreach to partner groups, and media advisories, and stated that those efforts are ongoing.

For the remainder of her presentation, Ms. McSweeney focused specifically on how communications staff used social media during this time. She reported that MassWildlife is currently most active on Facebook and Instagram. The agency launched its Facebook account in 2014, and now has over 52,000 followers. Last year, she received and responded to nearly 3,000 private messages through the MassWildlife FB page and received over 33,000 comments from the public on Facebook posts. She launched an agency account on Instagram back in 2018, and now MassWildlife has over 16,600 followers on that platform.

On both Instagram and Facebook, Ms. McSweeney reported that MassWildlife has one of the most-followed state agency social media accounts. In terms of followers, it is only behind the Mass. State Police and the Mass. Emergency Management Agency. MassWildlife's great following on both these platforms make social media a major way for the public to stay engaged with the agency. When the pandemic hit, staff knew it would need to rely heavily on the social media accounts to keep constituents informed about agency activities, staff projects, outdoor recreation, and more.

Ms. McSweeney then discussed in detail the three main areas related to MassWildlife's social media activities during the pandemic: platform posts, fishing ads, and Facebook livestream events. She provided samples of each and noted public participation rates for and participant responses to them.

She closed with some lessons learned and final thoughts. MassWildlife will continue to use social media as a way to keep constituents engaged and keep sharing the great work staff is doing across the Commonwealth. Ms. McSweeney noted that you get fairly instant feedback from the public on social media about what they're interested in. After a post or a livestream, she can ask agency followers whether the information presented was helpful, what did they wish staff had talked about instead, and what other content they are interested in, and she reported that she pays attention to the questions they're asking to get ideas for other events staff will want to hold in the future.

Ms. McSweeney reiterated that she and her colleagues have quickly adapted to provide more and more of MassWildlife's content in a digital format. And she gratefully acknowledged the other staff who have worked very hard on this effort, including Communications Coordinator Emily Stolarski, R3 Coordinator Astrid Huseby, Outreach and Communications Specialist Cait Sawicki, and Chief of I&E Marion Larson, noting that there is a lot of work behind the scenes to make these adjustments and create this new content and that all of the work she presented was a big team effort. She stated that even when the agency can resume more in-person offerings, staff will be able to continue using more of the digital formats as well, as an effective way to accommodate different types of talks and allow more people to access MassWildlife's information. Staff is currently in the process of planning ahead to look at the agency's regular winter and spring activities and think about how staff might make digital some normal programming, such as walks or talks, and Ms. McSweeney was confident that she and her colleagues would continue to adapt to changing circumstances.

After a brief discussion, the Board members complimented Ms. McSweeney and her colleagues on their great work on behalf of MassWildlife and its constituents.

Natural Heritage and Endangered Species Advisory Committee Report

Chair Larson reminded the Board that the NHESAC had been considering reducing the number of its meetings in a year to the statutory number of four. He reported that, at the last meeting, the Committee voted to adopt the new format beginning in calendar year 2021.

Set Meeting Date

Members confirmed the Director's request to change the December meeting date to December 22, 2020, at 11:00 a.m. Members then discussed dates for the January Fisheries and Wildlife Board meeting. Members selected January 14, 2021, at 9:00 a.m.

Member's Comments

Dr. Van Roo reported no comments.

Mr. Durand reported that Mike Veloza of the Barnstable County League had forwarded a link to a survey that BU [Boston University] has sent out to licensed hunters, and Mr. Veloza had asked whether it is legitimate and should be shared. Assistant Director for Wildlife Huguenin reported that the survey was created this past year and that the MassWildlife Deer and Moose Project Leader had given input on some of the questions. Director Tisa stated that he personally was not aware of the survey in advance nor did he review it, and he does not know what is being asked nor the objective of it. Secretary Booth reported that she had received, had reviewed it, and does not intend to participate in it. Chair Larson asked Mr. Durand to share the survey with the rest of the Board. Mr. Durand also reported a great horseback hunting trip to Montana.

Mr. Foster thanked Deputy Commissioner Lee for her service and wished her well in her retirement.

Mr. Sears reported that he had received a nice comment from a long-time bird hunter who had hunted a Wildlife Management Area in the Connecticut Valley and stated that it was the best he had ever hunted.

Mr. Sears offered kudos to Conn. Valley Wildlife District Supervisor Joe Rogers and his staff. Mr. Sears also reported that he had run into State Botanist Bob Wernerehl, who was doing rare-plant surveys on the Cape, and had a very nice chat with him. Mr. Sears wished Deputy Commissioner King a wonderful, long retirement and said that he greatly appreciated her wisdom and guidance over the years.

Vice Chair Roche noted the great loss of Nancy Begin, who served a long term on the Fisheries and Wildlife Board and was active in so many issues and projects through the years. He stated that she had also been an accomplished wildlife artist, and that she was the most impactful person he had ever met.

Mr. Durand proposed that the motion to adjourn be held in honor of Nancy Begin; Vice Chair Roche 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 motion passed unanimously.

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, but to adjourn in memory of Nancy Begin. The motion was seconded by Dr. Van Roo.

Chair Larson: yes

Vice Chair Roche: yes

Secretary Booth: yes

Dr. Van Roo: yes

Mr. Foster: yes

Mr. Sears: yes

Mr. Durand: yes

The motion passed unanimously.

Executive Session

Deputy Director Jon Regosin presented two proposed acquisitions, which were individually reviewed and unanimously approved by the Board.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned in memory of Nancy Begin at 10:45 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Bonnie Booth

Secretary

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

Agenda

Draft October meeting minutes for review

OLE Calls for Service log: MassWildlife YTD October

Personnel Report

Copy of Nancy Begin obituary

Copy of NHESP donation letter

Spreadsheet of Natural Heritage Fund Taxpayer Donations (1992 to 2019)

Documentation for the executive session