



MASSWILDLIFE

DIVISION OF FISHERIES & WILDLIFE

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

PRESENT: Steve Sears/Chair, Bob Durand/Vice Chair, Ernie Foster/Secretary, Sasha Dyer, John Organ, Matthew Sisk, Ron Amidon/Commissioner/DFG, Mark Tisa/Director, Mike Huguenin/Assistant Director/Wildlife, Eve Schlüter/Assistant Director/ NHESP, Trina Moruzzi/Assistant Director/Operations, Nicole McSweeney/Assistant Director/Outreach and Education, 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, Jennifer Sulla/General Counsel/DFG, Christine Smith/Assistant General Counsel/DFG, Major Kevin Clayton/OLE, Captain Scott Amati/OLE. PUBLIC: Dave Morin, Steve LaRivee

DATE: November 7, 2022

LOCATION: MassWildlife Field Headquarters, Westborough

Chair Sears opened the meeting at 9:05 a.m.

Acceptance of Minutes

A motion was made by Mr. Durand to accept the minutes from the October meeting as presented. The motion was seconded by Ms. Dyer; the minutes were unanimously approved.

Chair's Comments

Chair Sears reported that he had no comments at that time.

Commissioner's Comments

Commissioner Amidon reported a meeting of a working group to study climate change impacts that was held at the MassWildlife Field Headquarters. Participating were staff from MassWildlife, the DCR, UVM, the USFWS, and TNC. He reported that the meeting was very well attended and considered successful by the participants. The feedback he received is that the working group wants to hold another meeting.

The Commissioner also reported working with Director Tisa and Assistant Director Richards on the Quinepoxet Dam removal, noting that there is interest in a collaboration from the Central Mass. Chapter of Trout Unlimited. The Commissioner expects the permits to be secured in the next 6-12 months, and the dam removal could start as early as next fall or the following spring. He reported that TU is interested in working to create limited-mobility access points on the Quinepoxet.

Director's Comments

Director Tisa reported that he had no comments.

Law Enforcement Comments

Maj. Clayton reported that seven new officers have entered the police academy, three are currently in field training, and another officer is expected to start academy in the summer. So, by this time next year the OLE will have eleven additional personnel. He also reminded the meeting that the Interstate Wildlife

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Violator Compact had gone into effect on November 4, 2022, and reported that a case has already emerged that may become a test for the effectiveness of the compact, which mandates that any state's license suspensions will automatically result in suspensions in Massachusetts.

Captain Scott Amati then provided the Board with a report on calls for service that Environmental Police officers had responded to in the previous month.

Personnel Report (Eve Schlüter)

Assistant Director of Natural Heritage and Endangered Species Program Eve Schlüter presented the Board with the hiring manager's recommendation for the position of Restoration and Prescribed Fire Ecologist, including highlights of the candidate's qualifications and extensive experience.

New Hire

<i>Employee</i>	<i>Position</i>	<i>Location</i>
Alex Entrup	Restoration and Prescribed Fire Ecologist Conservation Biologist III	Westborough

Vice Chair Durand moved to accept the personnel report as presented; seconded the motion. Ms. Dyer seconded the motion. The vote passed unanimously.

Vote: Regulatory Amendments to 321 CMR 2.01 Retriever or Bird Dog Trials in Massachusetts (Mark Tisa)

Director Tisa reported that all the public comments received before, during, and after the public hearing were in support of the regulations as proposed and that staff recommended no changes to the proposals. He asked the Chair for a vote to approve the draft regulations.

Chair Sears called for a motion and Mr. Sisk moved that the regulations be adopted as proposed; Vice Chair Durand seconded the motion. After a brief discussion in which some of the Board members affirmed their support for the regulations, the vote in favor was unanimous.

Archery Deer and Fall Turkey (Mike Huguenin)

Assistant Director for Wildlife Mike Huguenin stated that Deer and Moose Project Leader Martin Feehan had proposed amendments to the Archery deer hunting regulations to the Board at its June meeting during his report of the 2021 Deer Review and the 2022 ADP Allocations. Particularly for the benefit of the new Board members, Mr. Huguenin explained that, based on deer harvest data, Mr. Feehan had asked the Board to direct staff to develop specific regulations that would extend the Archery deer hunting season statewide to match the current extended season in zones 10-14 and take those proposed regulations to a public hearing for public feedback and comments. The Board had complied and voted unanimously in favor of the proposal.

Mr. Huguenin reported that DFG legal counsel had subsequently advised staff that the Board needed to be made specifically aware that modifications to the Archery deer season will result in automatic modifications to fall turkey season, specifically at 321 CMR 3.02(9). He stressed that no regulatory change is required in that regard. Mr. Huguenin reported that all the fall turkey regulations were intentionally framed to match the Archery deer regulations. An additional dedicated fall turkey tag was created in 2020 because it had been found through surveys that about half of fall turkey hunters do so while Archery deer hunting. He reported that the Archery fall season represents more than 50% of the total turkey harvest since 2020. A modest harvest increase is expected across Zones 1-9, while only 15 turkeys were reported during the Archery-only season in the first 2 weeks in zones 10-13 in 2022, so the overall increase in harvest is expected to be modest and sustainable.

After a brief discussion, Vice Chair Durand moved that the Board accept and endorse the staff explanation and reaffirm drafting the proposed regulations extending the Archery deer hunting season statewide; Mr. Foster seconded the motion; Dr. Organ reported that he would abstain because he did not see the presentation and did not feel he had enough information. The vote was five in favor and one abstention; the motion passed.

Depredation Working Group Report (Bob Durand)

Vice Chair Durand reported that depredation working group was created as result of a request from the Mass. Sportsmen's Council, which had provided the Board with a report detailing 200 incidents of depredations by wildlife. He reported that about 20 are from farmers, and the Board had wanted to look at the issues and possible remedies. Mr. Durand reported that the working group expected to have recommendations for the Board at the December meeting.

Confirm December Meeting Date

The members confirmed the date and time of the December meeting, on December 21, 2022, at 9:00 a.m. The Chair asked for a reminder of the dates of the January and February meetings, which are January 19 at 9:00 a.m. and February 21 at 9:00 a.m.

Member's Comments

Mr. Sisk reported that he'd already made most of his comments during the retriever trial discussion, adding that the pheasant changes were a good outcome.

Ms. Dyer reported that she had had an excellent tour of Birch Hill WMA from Central District Stewardship Biologist Scott Kemp, and she thanked Central District Manager Todd Olanyk for making Mr. Kemp available to show her around. Ms. Dyer reported that she had been called by a concerned constituent who thought that MassWildlife was not stocking pheasants at Birch Hill at a level the constituent thought was acceptable, so she had wanted to see first-hand the locations where MassWildlife had stocked. After the tour, Ms. Dyer reported that she believed that the stocking conducted had been appropriate.

Vice Chair Durand reported that he had hunted at Birch Hill and saw some of the habitat improvements that have been made there. He said it was a great project and he was glad to have more management in that area. He also introduced Jeff Miller, the new Executive Director of the Mass. Snowmobile Association, who was present, and reported that Mr. Miller had expressed his interest in addressing the Board at some future meeting about his organization.

Mr. Foster reported no comments.

Ms. Ellsworth reported that Commissioner Amidon had been the guest speaker at the Mount Grace Land Conservation Trust annual meeting, that his remarks were primarily focused on habitat restoration, and that they were very well received.

Dr. Organ reported no comments.

Chair Sears reported progress on the congressional delegation letter on RAWA. Mr. Durand moved that the Board approve sending the letter in support of RAWA, that Mr. Sears will sign it as Chair, and that he will carbon-copy the rest of the Board. Mr. Foster seconded the motion; it carried unanimously.

There being no further business, a motion was made by Mr. Durand to adjourn the meeting and reconvene in executive session for the purpose of discussing proposed land acquisitions whose negotiations would be compromised by discussion in open session and not return to open session afterward. The motion was seconded by Mr. Foster. The vote was unanimous, and the meeting was adjourned at 9:35 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Ernie Foster
Secretary

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

November agenda
October minutes draft for review
Personnel report
NHESP tax-form donation report
Comments package on the retriever trial regulations