



MASSWILDLIFE

DIVISION OF FISHERIES & WILDLIFE

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

PRESENT: Steve Sears/Chair, Bob Durand/Vice 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, Mike Huguenin/Assistant Director/Wildlife, Nicole McSweeney/Assistant Director/Outreach and Education, Trina Moruzzi/Assistant Director/Operations, Todd Richards/Assistant Director/Fisheries, Todd Olanyk/ Central Wildlife District Manager, Pat Huckery/Northeast Wildlife District Manager, Andrew Madden/Western Wildlife District Manager, Joe Rogers/Connecticut Valley Wildlife District Manager, Jason Zimmer/Southeast Wildlife District Manager, Martin Feehan/Deer and Moose Project Leader, Jennifer Sulla/General Counsel/DFG; PUBLIC: Susan Murray

DATE: September 13, 2023

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

Chair Sears opened the September meeting at 1:00 p.m.

Acceptance of Minutes

A motion was made by Vice Chair Durand to approve the minutes from the August business meeting. The motion was seconded by Ms. Dyer; the vote in favor was unanimous.

Chair's Comments

Chair Sears reported on the information and listening session held the previous evening by EEA about its climate and forest management initiative. He stated that he had provided comments and advised the other members to review the material and provide their own comments. He stated that it was very well attended, and the perspectives expressed were thoughtful and respectful.

Director's Comments

Director Tisa reported he would have more to say in the governance meeting, but that he had also found the information session the previous evening very interesting.

Commissioner's Comments

Commissioner Tom O'Shea reported that he thought the EEA outreach session followed a very good process and that it was a very good session. There was a broad range of perspectives on forest management and reserves. The Commissioner reported that there were two major themes to the comments, climate and biodiversity, whether the participants agreed or not. He also reported that it was an excellent opportunity to hear from individuals, organizations, and the wood products industry and related professionals. Commissioner O'Shea thanked the Board members who had attended and offered comments, stating that it was good to hear their perspectives and also their broad range of interests.

Commissioner O'Shea reported that the very soggy summer had been disastrous for some communities in the Commonwealth. He stated that the Department the previous month had awarded \$6.4 million for

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road and culvert repair and restoration. The grants were made possible with capital monies from the Healey-Driscoll Administration to help communities repair infrastructure and be more adaptable to future weather events. The Commissioner stated that such projects are an important part of what the Department and MassWildlife are doing to address climate change impacts.

Commissioner O'Shea also reported that he had been working on securing grants in the previous month, targeting federal funding to help the Department and MassWildlife. He worked with EEA and CZM [the Office of Coastal Zone Management] to put together a Massachusetts resilient coast grant with Assistant Director Schlüter and others at MassWildlife leading the effort.

He also took an opportunity to go out with the Division of Marine Fisheries on a striped bass survey where he was introduced to the GOT ONE app, which allows biologists to compare their survey results to sightings and catches by users of the app, an example of a collaborative, citizen-scientist effort. Commissioner O'Shea then invited the members of the Board to join him as DFG opens a new handicapped access fishing pier. He reported that details would be provided to the members at a later date.

Law Enforcement Comments

An officer from Law Enforcement not being present, the Chair deferred this agenda item, in case an officer should join the meeting later.

Extended Archery Deer Season Regulations: Comment Review and Vote

Deer and Moose Project Leader Martin Feehan briefly reviewed the original proposed regulations to extend the Archery deer season in Zones 1-9 to match Zones 10-14 and make the season uniform across the state. He presented a summary of the public comments received and addressed the themes of the few comments (less than 10%) in opposition. At his conclusion, Dr. Feehan reported that staff recommended no changes to the proposals based on the comments.

Mr. Durand moved acceptance of the regulations as proposed. Mr. Foster seconded the motion. After a brief discussion, including possible benefits of the enhanced season for the Hunters Share the Harvest program and a 2023 update on that program, the vote in favor was unanimous.

Hunter Education Working Group Update

Mr. Foster reported that the working group had just finished its most recent meeting an hour previously. He reported that the working group plans to finish its effort in October or November and will develop a presentation of its recommendations to bring to the Board at its November meeting.

Confirm October Meeting Date

The members confirmed the date and time of the October business meeting, which is October 24, 2023, at 11:00 a.m., at the Stationery Factory in Dalton.

Members discussed the November business meeting and settled on November 15, 2023. It was decided that the governance meeting will begin at noon and the business meeting will begin at 1:15 p.m. *[Secretary's note: changed from 1:00 to 1:15 at the subsequent governance meeting]*

Members' Comments

Mr. Sisk stated that the Natural Heritage and Endangered Species Advisory Committee would be meeting the following day and will begin discussion of the proposals for changes to the MESA list.

Ms. Dyer reminded the Board that she had held an evening at a local pub for a discussion of issues for women in the outdoors earlier in the fall. She reported that she has since heard from someone who was inspired by the night and has purchased a bow and begun practicing, which she found very gratifying.

Ms. Dyer also flagged Technician and nature photographer Josh Gahagan as a MassWildlife staff person for Board members to follow on Instagram.

Mr. Foster reported no further comments.

Mr. Durand thanked Fisheries Coldwater Project Leader Adam Kautza for his assistance with a project that would have impacted two coldwater streams, reporting that Dr. Kautza had spoken at a public hearing on the issue. Mr. Durand also reported that he would be speaking at a Deerfield Trout Unlimited meeting that evening about the Massachusetts Outdoor Heritage Foundation.

Ms. Ellsworth reported that she had attended the Land Trust Alliance conference the previous week, stating that it was inspiring and climate themed. She reported being proud to be in a state where cooperation between NGOs and state agencies is so strong, as well as where BioMap was developed. Another theme of the conference was the cultivation of indigenous partnerships and the development of co-management strategies.

Dr. Organ reported that he is on the board of Orion Hunters, which had had a meeting on the previous Monday. A new member of the board is Alex Baird, the new president of the IHEA [International Hunter Education Association]. He reported that when Mr. Baird found out Dr. Organ was from Massachusetts, he shared high praise for Hunter Education Administrator Susan Langlois. Dr. Organ also reported that his Hadley Hunter Education team had run a trapper education course the previous week, noting that it was an excellent group of students. He also reported that the Ashfield Rod and Gun Club was working to get a NASP program at the Mohawk Trail Regional High School. Dr. Organ reported that he had also listened in on the forest information session the previous evening and he complimented the other Board members for their excellent comments. He stated that he plans to comment in writing and wanted to hear the oral comments first.

Public Comment: Susan Murray

Susan Murray stated that SEMAP, the Southeastern Massachusetts Agricultural Partnership, operates in Norfolk, Bristol and Plymouth counties; she is its executive director. Her comments centered on the economic impact of deer in Southeastern Massachusetts, both from damage to crops that are eaten and from contamination by feces. She reported that fences are advocated by MassWildlife and SEMAP agrees with the effectiveness of some kinds of fencing, but she also provided examples of the vast expense for individual farmers and the difficulty of erecting fences in large acreages. Ms. Murray also included a number of comments by and specifics from farmers about their situations.

Ms. Murray asked for recognition of the natural disaster that is happening for Southeastern farmers. She stated that it is a silent environmental crisis and farmers are suffering. Her remarks included a brief analysis of the different kinds of permits that are available in other states.

Ms. Murray ended her comments by reporting that SEMAP is asking for a number of specific actions:

- Work with farmers to create a depredation permit that works for farmers.
- Collaborate with SEMAP to identify large landowners and work with them to open their land to hunting.
- Review existing and develop additional regulations that could be used even temporarily.
- Consider grants to help farmers pay for fencing.

Chair Sears thanked Ms. Murray for her comments and asked for a copy of her remarks, which she said she would provide to staff.

There being no further business, a motion was made by Mr. Durand to adjourn. The motion was seconded by Mr. Foster. The vote in favor was unanimous, and the meeting was adjourned at 2:15 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Ernie Foster
Secretary

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

September agenda
Draft August business meeting minutes
Public hearing package