

**Environmental Management Commission
Building 1805
October 17, 2024
9:30 a.m.**

Meeting Minutes

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Commissioner Bonnie Heiple
Commissioner Brian Arrigo

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Attendees:

Matthew Porter
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COL John Bagaglio
Joel Carlson
Kathleen Kolva
Jake McCumber
Mike Ciaranca
Emily Kelly
Heather McElroy

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Handouts Distributed at Meeting:

1. EMC Draft Meeting Minutes: May 30, 2024
2. Letter, US Fish and Wildlife Service re: Camp Edwards Recognized with 2024 Northeast Region Military Conservation Partner Award, September 10, 2024
3. Environmental Management Commission Environmental Officer Update, October 2024
4. Camp Edwards Update, 17 October 2024
5. Camp Edwards Natural Resources Update
6. Camp Edwards/MassWildlife Conservation through Partnership
7. Wildland Fire Discussion, Burning Questions from the Spring Meeting

Agenda Item #1. Welcome/Agenda Review – Commissioner Tom O’Shea, Environmental Management Commission Chair

Commissioner O’Shea welcomed everyone to the Environmental Management Commission (EMC) meeting.

Agenda Item #2. Review of EMC Minutes and Approval – Commissioner Tom O’Shea, Environmental Management Commission Chair

The May 30, 2024, EMC minutes were reviewed. Commissioner Arrigo made a motion to accept the minutes; Commissioner Heiple seconded the motion. The minutes were approved unanimously.

Agenda Item #3. Community and Science Advisory Council Membership Vacancies– Ms. Heather McElroy, Community Advisory Council Chair

Ms. McElroy discussed vacancies on the Community Advisory Council (CAC) and the Science Advisory Council (SAC).

- The CAC is down several members; attaining a quorum has become increasingly difficult. Positions are open due to resignations and one member’s passing. Ms. McElroy highlighted the absences on the CAC: some members have not been present at any meeting from many years. She and Mr. Pinaud have made attempts to contact those members with no response. Per the guidelines she and Mr. Pinaud recommend that the EMC make recommendation to the Governor that these vacancies should be filled.
- Ms. McElroy has begun exploring potential appointments for the CAC and SAC. Advertising the vacancies would be appropriate so the community at large is aware of the opportunity.
- Mr. Pinaud forwarded a list of potential members for the SAC; they have not yet been contacted and their interest in serving will need to be gauged. It would be worthwhile for the public to know that people who are qualified and interested to serve are being sought for the advisory councils. There are many ways to get that message out: professional organizations could be contacted along with the press and placing an advertisement on the EMC’s website and the MAARNG’s website.

Commissioner Heiple said it is her preference to advertise the vacancies so there is equal opportunity for people to volunteer to be considered. She asked that for the slots that are currently technically filled, with no attendance, is anything required to closeout their formal appointments, such as a letter. Commissioner O’Shea said that is typical to work through the Governor’s Boards and Commissions to make that final determination and sent those letters. He believes it would send a strong signal of interest of the Commission in energizing and engaging the public, if the positions are advertised. He noted there seems like there is much public interest based on the tours that Camp Edwards has conducted and the response to the machine gun range. He said the recommendations will be taken forward.

Agenda Item #4. Environmental Officer Update – Mr. Leonard Pinaud, Environmental Management Commission Acting Environmental Officer

Mr. Pinaud provided an update on the activities related to the Upper Cape Water Supply Reserve (the Reserve).

- The EMC and Camp Edwards Environmental & Readiness Center conducted 15 range inspections between May and October 2024.
- Nine non-standard training requests were reviewed and approved for pyrotechnics for training, removal and detonation of munitions items and other maintenance activities in the Camp Edwards Training Area/the Reserve.
- Range Operations and Control Area (ROCA): on India, Sierra, and Tango ranges, support buildings will be replaced or added; there is no significant change in use at these ranges.
- The EMC continues to work with Camp Edwards to revise the Operations, Maintenance and Monitoring Plans. They are required to be update at least every three years and are reviewed

annually and are enforceable under the Environmental Performance Standards. The Science Advisory Council Ad Hoc Committee discussed recommendations for determining the frequency and degree of range maintenance, primarily to comply with the EPS requirement for prevention of ricochets and fragmentation.

- The frequency and degree of range maintenance and projectile removal from the ranges is determined in part considering each range's specific environmental impact, safety hazards and intended use, lease requirements, quantities and types of ammunition expended on the range. The focus is on proactive contaminant avoidance, i.e. recovering metal and minimizing debris at the ranges to the maximum extent practicable using an adaptive management approach. There is a continuing process of environmental monitoring and data review: are metals or other constituents detected in soil or are they mobile, assessing human health and environmental risk, evaluating advances in range monitoring, design and technology and responding with timely management actions dictated by the resulting information and environmental protection.
- A petroleum-based cleaner, lubricant and preservative, CLP, used for cleaning weapons is being replaced with a 33% bio-based CLP. The US Army was the lead on this replacement and all service branches are now required to use it.
- The M213 fuse used on M-69 practice grenade, which is sometimes used at Camp Edwards with prior approval, is being replaced with a "green" fuse.
- In May, US EPA Region 1 requested information from the Office of the Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Environmental Management and Restoration on the occurrence and content of PFAS and fluorinated polymers in munitions items including propellants, explosives, pyrotechnics, and other components of munitions, used or potentially used at Camp Edwards by the military or government contractors. US EPA requested this information to assist in identifying PFAS present in munitions used at camp Edwards to determine if there are areas of PFAS release that would need to be addressed by state or federal regulation.
 - The Office of the Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense responded to the US EPA's request on June 24. The response indicated that the Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense does not have documents concerning munitions used or potentially used at Otis Air National Guard Base or Army National Guard Camp Edwards. They noted that the Office of the Secretary of Defense is researching DoD wide for PFAS presence in certain explosives in the binding materials and whether PFAS are destroyed during normal use.
 - The Impact Area Groundwater Study Program is completing its PFAS report that will summarize all the Army's investigative work into PFAS at Camp Edwards. The draft report is currently in internal review and is scheduled to be submitted to the US EPA and MassDEP next month. It is Mr. Pinaud's understanding that the report confirms that there is no PFAS in groundwater issue in the Reserve. Mr. Pinaud will share the report with the EMC when he receives it.

Commissioner O'Shea asked what did the PFAS testing include for the assessment? Mr. Pinaud said they tested groundwater wells; it was found in a few wells of Gibbs Road, close to the Upper Cape Water Supply Cooperative municipal water supply wells. Those wells have been sampled for PFAS and they do not have PFAS. A few monitoring wells do have PFAS and they are trying to determine the source of that.

Agenda Item #5. Camp Edwards Update/Natural Resources Update – *COL John Bagaglio, Camp Edwards Commander; Mr. Jake McCumber, Natural Resources and Training Lands Manager*

COL Bagaglio presented an update on activities at Camp Edwards.

- Administrative changes include the return of CW4 Justin Smith, training operations, from deployment. In addition, a new, GS-12 range operations manager was hired to help manage the range complex.

- Camp Edwards Natural Resources Program was awarded the 2024 Northeast Region Military Conservation Partner Award from the US Fish and Wildlife Service.
- The National Academy of Sciences: a panel of selected experts will meet on October 30 to discuss technical issues surrounding the proposed Multi-Purpose Machine Gun Range and copper.
- Fourteen units were projected to be trained at Camp Edwards, however because of priority conflicts at Ethan Allen Training Site in Vermont, units were bumped to Camp Edwards upping the number of units trained to 22. The next training year will be busy with an OPTEMPO nearly equivalent to the surge during the Global War on Terror. In October and November around 2,000 soldiers per month will be utilizing the ranges.
- Range Operations and Control Area (ROCA) are training support facilities, such as a covered mess shelter, classrooms, storage buildings and ammunition breakdown buildings.
- Range sampling continues and the results are pending.

Mr. McCumber provided an update on the Natural Resources Program:

- Outreach efforts continue and include the Cape Cod Natural History Conference, tours and speaking engagements.
- Flora projects include annual vegetation surveys, forest stand surveys including the pine beetle risk assessment, surveys and an updated protocol for the Few-flowered Nutsedge, invasive plant mapping and partner survey assistance for endangered plants.
- Wildlife surveys and monitoring are being conducted for the Spotted Turtle and Eastern Box Turtle, bird surveys are being conducted for Woodcock and grouse. The program is going through Endangered Species Act consultations for bats including formal consultation for growing season prescribed fire.
- The program continues reporting and annual plan submission for Agassiz's Clam Shrimp. Two major puddle repairs were completed; Clam shrimp were found back in the puddles within a week of repair. A new puddle complex was added at the Unit Training Equipment Site facility.
- There has been a dramatic increase in the Whip-poor-will population on Camp Edwards; the per point count has been doubled through management.
- Frosted Elfin butterfly has been confirmed at 11 of 15 survey sites from the last three years, comparing to 1 of 14 sites in 2017. Skid roads, fire breaks, roadsides, and other openings are essential within the barrens habitat.
- The Fall deer hunt runs over a number of dates September through December, ending with the muzzleloader deer hunt December 18-19.
- The Integrated Wildland Fire Management Plan is being finalized. The program is preparing for the fall fire training and the spring burn season, targeting 1,200 acres.
- Upcoming restoration projects include the Battle Position 14/16 Landing Zone, collaborative habitat restoration and aviation support, a 16-acre harvest with sandplain grassland/heartland species, and continuing efforts to build resilience for species and habitat off powerline rights of way.

Commissioner Heiple noted that highlighting that prescribed burns and restoration projects provide different types of habitat for certain species and are not a net loss. Mr. McCumber said that a core focus of his outreach is trying to educate people on that topic. He said climate change discussion often focuses on easy answers, but most things do not have easy answers, and conservation management, like

prescribed fire and restoration projects, highlights opportunities to improve climate resilience and improve long term carbon storage while providing biodiversity by restoring a health pine barrens.

Agenda Item #6. Camp Edwards/MassWildlife Conservation through Partnership – Mr. Jason Zimmer, Southeast District Supervisor

- MassWildlife is responsible for the conservation of freshwater fish and wildlife in the Commonwealth, including endangered plants and animals, and restores, protects, and manages land for wildlife.
- There are five districts including the Southeast District, which Mr. Zimmer manages. Fifty-thousand acres are managed in the Southeast District and includes fish and wildlife research, habitat management, hunting, fishing and trapping oversight, public service and outreach and education. Fifteen thousand of those acres are Camp Edwards.
- Chapter 47 of the Acts of 2002 established the Upper Cape Water Supply Reserve and gave DFW underlying care, custody and control of that 15,000 acres, subject to various licenses and leases to the Department of Defense. MassWildlife has a tie in overseeing the Environmental Performance Standards. The Sykes Act, a tri-party agreement among DoD, USFWS and MassWildlife, formally ties them together in formally reviewing natural resource issues on military installations. MassWildlife was heavily involved in the development of the first INRMP and continues being engaged in the INRMP annual review process. There is constant coordination and consultation with National Guard staff on Camp Edwards.
- The habitat at Camp Edwards along with Myles Standish and Francis Crane Wildlife Management Area represents a critical natural landscape important to the state's biodiversity goals and the agencies' missions and MassWildlife and Camp Edwards cooperate and coordinate management. Strong partnership is key to achieving conservation goals.
- The controlled hunting program (deer and turkey hunts) on Camp Edwards dates back to the mid-1950s and supports conservation, public safety and public access for recreation.
- Fish and wildlife research activities are conducted on Camp Edwards as part of MassWildlife's statewide index and research project, including rough grouse surveys, turkey surveys, and deer surveys.
- MassWildlife partnered with the EMC and the base in 2019 to mark the boundary of the entire Training Area/Reserve. Boundary marking signage helps with trespassing and encroachment enforcement.
- MassWildlife's Hunters Share the Harvest program, which allows hunters to donated harvest deer meat, has donated more than 20,000 meals to individuals in need; a large proportion of the donations go to veterans in need.

Commissioner O'Shea asked how many meals are coming from donations from deer harvested at Camp Edwards. Mr. Zimmer replied that he suspects it is a low percentage as most of the donations likely come from areas that have a greater opportunity to harvest more deer.

Agenda Item #7. Prescribed Fire at Camp Edwards – Mr. Jake McCumber, Natural Resources and Training Lands Manager

Mr. McCumber provided a presentation on prescribed fire at Camp Edwards.

- Fire is essential to a healthy system, including the forests; it is shown in the monitoring data. The prescribed fire program has complex planning on a variety of scales: looking regionally at fire hazard, smoke shed, conservation and managing specific areas, scaling down to the burn operation and understanding fuels and vegetation within a unit, the weather conditions, and the smoke from that specific operation and how that fits into the bigger picture context.

- Planning is the key element of the prescribed burn program. Prescribed burning requires complex programmatic planning and program management as well as extensive interdisciplinary training, education and experience.
- Modeling is used to strategically place treatments on the landscape and actively see the reduction in hazards and actively see the protection of the surrounding communities. Modeling is important to facilitate sound planning; smoke modeling is completed for every prescribed burn. During a burn, a trained fire effects monitor actively tracks weather conditions to evaluate relative humidity and winds and how it relates to putting fire on the landscape and what the smoke will be doing compared to sensitive receptors.
- There are national standards for prescribed fire fighters at every level from training level through burn boss and higher. Training is a key element and the MAARNG has hosted training at Camp Edwards for almost 30 years.
- Climate resilience is a key focus for Camp Edwards and is important that defenses and resilience are built in to fight against threats like the Southern Pine Beetle, gypsy moth and drought and seasonal extremes. Wildland fire is a natural process, just like decomposition. Decomposition happening in the woods also produces carbon, carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases. Fire is doing the same, on a different time scale. While fire consumes leaf litter and small debris, fire opens up the stand and is refreshing the understory vegetation. Young growth has high rates of carbon sequestration that much more rapidly pulls carbon out of the atmosphere to be stored in roots and woody material. Fire plays that role reinvigorating the understory vegetation, providing healthier trees and better density so that carbon may be drawn out of the atmosphere at the highest rate possible, and also provides a healthy ecosystem that is going to withstand threats and store carbon for generations. Fire is a natural tool that provides major carbon benefits over the short and long term. Research in the New Jersey pine barrens show that after just two years, the carbon lost from a prescribed burn is recouped and carbon sequestration and storage are improved.

Agenda Item #8. Public Comment – *Commissioner Tom O'Shea, Environmental Management Commission Chair*

There was no public comment.

Agenda Item #6. Adjourn – *Commissioner Tom O'Shea, Environmental Management Commission Chair*

The meeting adjourned at 11:13 a.m.