



MASSWILDLIFE

DIVISION OF
FISHERIES & WILDLIFE

1 Rabbit Hill Road | Westborough, MA 01581
MASS.GOV/MASSWILDLIFE

Director: Jack Buckley

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

PRESENT: George Darey/Chairman, Michael Roche/Secretary, Bonita Booth, Ernest W. Foster IV, Dr. Joseph Larson, Dr. Brandi Van Roo, Fred Winthrop, George Peterson/Commissioner/DFG, MaryLee King/Deputy Commissioner/DFG, Jack Buckley/Director, Kris McCarthy/Associate Director/Finance and Administration, Laura Conlee/Assistant Director/Wildlife, Michael Huguenin/Assistant Director/Operations, Marion Larson/Assistant Director/Public Affairs, Craig MacDonnell/Chief/Wildlife Lands, Peter Hazelton/Aquatic Ecologist, James Burnham/Regulations Specialist, Capt. Anthony Abdal-Kabir/OLE; PUBLIC: David Perkins, Allison Roy, Elaine Decoulos, Frederick Errington, Mike Masciadrelli.

DATE: September 6, 2016

LOCATION: Sunderland Town Hall
12 School Street, Sunderland, Massachusetts

Chairman Darey opened the September meeting of the Fisheries and Wildlife Board at 1:25 P.M.

Acceptance of Minutes

A motion was made by Secretary Roche to accept the minutes from the August 2016 meeting as presented. The motion was seconded by Ms. Booth. The motion passed unanimously.

Chairman's Comments

The Chairman welcomed the visitors to the meeting. He reported that he had taken a back route to the meeting, and saw areas he hadn't seen in years. The Chairman marveled at the very diverse state we live in, in terms of the habitat and land-form types.

Chairman Darey reported that he had visited the Maple Hill WMA in West Stockbridge, to see it before a planned habitat restoration project. He noted that north of there is Crane Lake and the Flat Brook WMA, which has very different habitats and species, including song birds, from those at Maple Hill. Between these two WMAs is a beautiful, very diverse area, he said, and he's looking forward to seeing the results of the habitat restoration work at Maple Hill.

Commissioner's Comments

Commissioner Peterson thanked Deputy Commissioner King for attending the last meeting in his stead; he reported that he was at Lake Onota for a MassWildlife fishing event. Talked to Sec. during previous week, has confirmed at least \$300,000 for habitat grant program this year. Could be more; finalizing. Great program for orgs and Los who will take part.

Director's Comments

Director Buckley reported that AFWA annual meeting was being held the following week in Philadelphia and that he would be attending to represent Massachusetts' interests. He also outlined his schedule in general for the coming month, including a vacation he was planning September 22 until October 7, and he advised the Board that he was naming Deputy Director Tisa as Acting Director in his absence. The Director advised the Board that if an issue arising where it needs to contact the Director, members should contact Deputy Director Tisa.

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Director Buckley reported a \$500,000 five-state Brook Floater Competitive State Wildlife Grant that had been awarded to conduct surveys and habitat assessments throughout the range and develop propagation methods for the endangered Brook Floater mussel, and noted that Aquatic Ecologist Peter Hazelton, from whom the Board would be hearing a presentation later in the meeting, had played an important role in securing the grant, 75% of which will stay in Massachusetts.

The Director also reported that the Districts had already or would shortly begin putting out 60,000 trout for fall stocking, noting that the majority were 12-inch+ fish.

He reported that MassWildlife had participated in a great pollinator event in Plymouth, and that the project was using a seed mix the agency had provided. Along with the many benefits of the project to native pollinators, he stated that using the plant mix saves mowing, which is of long-term benefit to project partner MassDOT. Director Buckley also added that there will be another pollinator area planted with the same seed mix behind the new storage at the Field Headquarters.

Director Buckley reminded the Board that October 1, 2016, was the date of the Youth Deer Hunt this year.

He also reminded all present that the Massachusetts Outdoor Expo, or Big MOE, was scheduled to be held on Sunday, September 25. He encouraged everyone to go, noting that it is a very good event put on by the FAWNS Society with support from many local and regional partners, including MassWildlife and the Hamilton Road and Gun Club in Sturbridge, which hosts the event every year.

The Director also noted that the Board members had already received invitations to the McLaughlin Hatchery pipeline event on September 22, and reported that staff is putting in a new kiosk at the location to highlight the pipeline and the history of the hatchery. He also called the Board's attention to the habitat site walks listed in the agency newsletter for September.

Director Buckley closed his comments by thanking the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service for the tour it had accommodated in the morning at the Cronin Aquatic Resources Center, stating that the center was a great reuse of the facility, with many partners both contributing to and benefiting from it.

Law Enforcement Comments

Captain Anthony Abdal-Kabir attended the meeting representing the OLE. He stated that the Labor Day long weekend had seen a number of weather-related activities and there were no major incidents to report. He also noted that opening day for early Bear season was the day of the meeting, September 6. He stated that the OLE was hoping for good accountability from all the hunters in the field on that day.

Captain Abdal-Kabir also reported that the EPO entry exam was scheduled for September 17. He stated that the OLE had over 500 applicants and was hoping for an excellent turn-out and many potential candidates.

Personnel Report (Kris McCarthy)

Assistant Director McCarthy reported that staff had two promotions to recommend to the Board:

<u>Employee</u>	<u>Position</u>	<u>Location</u>
Daniel Fortier	Southeast District Wildlife Technician Wildlife Technician III	Buzzards Bay
Trina Moruzzi	Supervisory Biologist – Wildlife Game Biologist IV	Westborough

Ms. Booth moved acceptance of the Personnel Report as presented; Dr. Van Roo seconded the motion; the vote in favor was unanimous.

State-listed Mussel Conservation in Cooperation with the Richard Cronin Aquatic Resources Center (Peter Hazelton)

Aquatic Ecologist Peter Hazelton thanked the Board members for taking a tour of the Richard Cronin Aquatic Resources Center before the meeting and for their questions and comments about the facility. He stated that his presentation had three objectives: to explain the importance of mussel conservation and restoration, to detail the mussel projects currently at the Cronin, and to highlight some of the benefits of the collaboration.

Noting that the Cronin is a multi-partner, multi-agency effort, Dr. Hazelton listed some of the many partners involved, including MassWildlife's Heritage Program, the USGS, UMass/Amherst, the Connecticut River Watershed Council, and The Nature Conservancy. He reintroduced Cronin Center director and USFWS biologist David Perkins and Allison Roy, Assistant Unit Leader of Fisheries with the USGS Massachusetts Cooperative Fish and Wildlife Research Unit and UMass Amherst Research Assistant Professor of Environmental Conservation, who had helped conduct the morning's tour.

In addition to the State Wildlife Grant reported by the Director, Dr. Hazelton reported that the Massachusetts Environmental Trust awarded \$40,000 to the Connecticut River Watershed Council for a Brook Floater project in which the UMass Coop Research Unit, the USFWS, and Masswildlife are technical partners. The project goals are to identify habitat for reintroduction, develop culture methods, and engage and educate the public through a citizen-science approach. He reported that the Brook Floater is Endangered under the U.S. ESA and the MESA.

Dr. Hazelton also detailed other cooperative projects currently being worked on from the Cronin Center, including a Dwarf Wedgemussel cooperative recovery initiative; a Connecticut River Yellow Lampmussel restoration; and an opportunity to salvage mussels after a dam failure in Bachelor Brook in Amherst, habitat for two MESA and one Swap species of mussel and containing one of only four populations of Brook Floater in the state. There, 39 mussels were translocated to raceways at the Cronin as a refuge. He listed the accomplishments of the collaboration since 2014: four collaborative freshwater mussel projects funded, 3 mussel propagation experiments with surrogate species, and research initiated on propagation of listed species and detailed the many benefits of the collaborative model.

Chairman and Secretary Roche asked about research into the impact of drawdowns. Dr. Hazelton reported that that work is ongoing. He noted that there is a graduate research student working on researching those effects, and that he and Watershed Project Leader Jason Stolarski are on the committee. The Chairman spoke about Stockbridge Bowl and drawdowns that are conducted there, expressing his concerns about the effects on resources.

The Chairman thanked Dr. Hazelton for his excellent presentation and his part in the very interesting tour the Board enjoyed that morning.

Director Buckley reported that he had forgotten to discuss during his comments that the Blue Ribbon Panel's recommendations would mean \$19,000,000 per year be appropriated to Massachusetts for just this type of work, and that he had included in the Board packets sample letters from other state boards and commissions in support of the Blue Ribbon Panel recommendations. Director Buckley advised the Board that many state boards and commissions around the country were writing letters of support, and he requested to work with the Board as wanted or needed to develop its own letter of support. The Chairman stated that he wanted to establish a working committee from the Board to work on the Blue Ribbon draft letter, appointing Dr. Larson, Dr. Van Roo, and Ms. Booth to work with the Director and develop a draft to bring to the next meeting. Ms. Booth moved that the committee bring a draft to the next meeting; Dr. Van Roo seconded; the vote in favor was unanimous.

Connecticut Valley Wildlife District Activities (Ralph Taylor)

Connecticut Valley Wildlife District Supervisor Ralph Taylor set up the meeting room and attended the Board meeting, providing the Board with a brief update on district activities. He reported great satisfaction with the three new employees that joined the Valley District this year. He also detailed some recent equipment purchases, including a Crestliner boat for the District's work in larger water bodies, including the Connecticut River, a dump-body pickup truck, and two mowers for maintaining the open areas at the Herm Covey WMA behind the District office. He reported that the wing mower, in particular, cuts man-time mowing by two-thirds, mowing a swath 15 feet wide instead of the

previous 5 feet at a time. Mr. Taylor also discussed the District's work at the Southwick WMA, including the grassland restoration his District has been conducting that featured a controlled burn. He also detailed some of the challenges at Southwick, most of which stem from illegal use by ORVs, and the District's efforts to monitor and prevent unauthorized access, whether for motorcycle or ORV riding or dumping, as is sometimes the case. He also gave examples of some of the species found in the 2016 bird survey at Southwick, many of them grassland-dependent. The District has also been working on habitat at the Montague Plains WMA, as well as cleaning up more encroaching dump sites. Mr. Taylor's staff installed a large gate at one access point and hidden cameras at several spots on roads in the WMA, and he's hopeful that these measures will detect or prevent future encroachments.

Mr. Taylor also reported on the new District Stewardship Biologist's activities, and expressed appreciation for this recent addition to District staff. The Stewardship Biologists are responsible for boundary-marking, WCE monitoring, and encroachments, with each District finding its own balance among competing priorities.

Mr. Taylor also provided information on the District's bear dean work, its barrel-trapping efforts to find new female bears for collaring, a moose response in the Amherst Woods, large-river electro-fishing, trout stocking, eagle banding and monitoring, improvements to fishing access at the Deerfield River, and a project to create a vernal pool in cooperation with the Kestrel Trust.

After a brief discussion, Chairman Darey thanked Mr. Taylor for his informative presentation.

Natural Heritage and Endangered Species Advisory Committee Report

Dr. Larson reported that the NHESAC did not meet before the September Board meeting; its next meeting date was September 8, 2016.

Set Meeting Date

Members discussed dates for the October Fisheries and Wildlife Board meeting. Members selected October 18, 2016, at 1:00 P.M., at the Western Wildlife District office in Dalton.

Member's Comments

Secretary Roche, Dr. Van Roo, Ms. Booth, Mr. Winthrop, and Mr. Foster had no comments.

Dr. Larson reported that he had asked the Secretary after the last meeting about the status of the rattlesnake review working group and the advancement of the MESA regulations. He stated that the Secretary said his office was trying to set up a meeting with Senator Gobi, and Deputy Commissioner King reported that they were looking at mid-September, having agreed to a meeting the day after the previous Board meeting. The Board was told that the Secretary said if the process can't get moving, we may have to do it ourselves. Regarding the MESA regulation updates, the Secretary hadn't been up to date with what was going on. Dr. Larson reported that he told the Secretary it had been well over a year. Commissioner Peterson impressed upon the Secretary the last time they discussed it that it's been hanging for over 2 years, and that the agency can't do anything until this gets passed. The Board expressed its frustration in the ensuing brief discussion, saying that the lack of those regulations was preventing the Board from meeting its obligations and stating that it is imperative that the MESA changes get out. Ms. Booth asked whether there had been any response to the Board's letter regarding the MESA regulations. The Commissioner said there hadn't been; the Secretary had it, but had not read it as of the last Board meeting.

Chairman Darey then asked the Commissioner for another meeting of Board members with DCR Commissioner Roy. DCR lands being effectively closed during the winter is still an issue; 10 of them were opened last winter, but the Chairman felt the Board needs to move forward and do more. Director Buckley said we were in talks, led by Assistant Director for Facilities Mike Huguenin, but those talks have ceased.

The Chairman also reported that he not going to be able to participate in efforts to protect the Housatonic River. He stated that where the major clean-up will be is our WMA, which is a beautiful area. He reported that there have been

meetings of our partners in the area, including the BNRC, Mass Audubon, Green Berkshires, and the sportsmen. All agree there should be no dump in Massachusetts, but the Chairman reported that, because of his role on the Board, he won't be working on trying to stop it.

Public Comment

Ms. Elaine Decoulos of Boxford stated that she drove for 2 hours to talk about two beavers in Stiles Pond in Boxford. She said she was somewhat familiar with Western Massachusetts, and had attended Williams College but had to leave because she became very ill when she contracted giardia (which she found out later).

She reported that she first saw the beaver last year, and was horrified by the size of it. Ms. Decoulos said people swim until dusk in Stiles Pond, and they swim and kayak until late in the fall. She began researching after she saw the first one, and spoke to Assistant Director for Wildlife Conlee last year, when Ms. Decoulos' concern was still with giardia. Ms. Decoulos stated that Assistant Director Conlee did a site visit, and sent a letter to the Board of Health. But Ms. Decoulos stated that she thinks the issue is not with the town, because Stiles Pond is a state pond at over 14 acres.

Ms. Decoulos stated that then she found out that swimmers were attacked by beaver in Connecticut, and she stated that one woman will need surgery on her thumb. No one talks about the dangers of beavers, said Ms. Decoulos, and she stated that her doctor said he wouldn't swim with beavers, and that the CDC says don't swim with beavers. As swimmers or paddle-boarders, people are disadvantaged, she said.

Ms. Decoulos reported that she was asking the Board to look at the dangers, including bites, giardia, and rabies. She stated that we need to start a national conversation. She is afraid to swim there; though she has for 30 years, she doesn't think she will anymore. If people swim alone, she said, they could be bitten and injured and not get help.

When she had finished speaking, the Chairman thanked Ms. Decoulos.

The Director reported that there would not be the need for an executive session. There being no further business, a motion was made by Dr. Larson to adjourn the meeting; Secretary Roche seconded; the motion carried unanimously. The meeting was immediately adjourned at 2:30 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,

Michael Roche
Secretary

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

September Agenda

Draft August meeting minutes for review

"Resolution #2016-1 of the Nevada Board of Wildlife Commissioners Supporting the Recommendations of the Blue Ribbon Panel on Sustaining America's Diverse Fish and Wildlife Resources in Recommending Congress Dedicate \$1.3 Billion Dollars Annually in Existing Revenue to Diversify Funding and Management of All Wildlife,"
Nevada Board of Wildlife Commissioners, June 25, 2016

"Resolution on the Blue Ribbon Panel Recommendations," *Pennsylvania Game Commission Board of Commissioners, July 19, 2016*

"A Resolution Supporting Annual Funding for the Wildlife Conservation Restoration Program," *North Carolina Wildlife Resources Commission, August 25, 2016*

Personnel Report

Spreadsheet of Natural Heritage Fund Taxpayer Donations (1992 to 2016)

Two emails from Elaine Decoulos RE "Beavers in Stiles Pond," August 23, 2016