



MASSWILDLIFE

DIVISION OF FISHERIES & WILDLIFE

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Jack Buckley, *Director*

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

PRESENT: George Darey/Chairman, Michael Roche/Secretary, Bonnie Booth, Ernest W. Foster IV, Dr. Joseph Larson, Dr. Brandi Van Roo, George Peterson/Commissioner/DFG, Mary-Lee King/Deputy Commissioner/DFG, Jack Buckley/Director, Mark Tisa/Deputy Director, Tom French, Assistant Director/NHESP, Todd Richards/Assistant Director/Fisheries, Marion Larson/Assistant Director/Public Affairs, Craig MacDonnell/Chief/ Wildlife Lands, Eve Schluter/Chief/Environmental Review, Nicole McSweeney/Specialist/Outreach and Marketing, Captain Anthony Abdal-Kabir/OLE; PUBLIC: John Kellstrand.

PRESENT VIA TELECONFERENCE: Fred Winthrop

DATE: November 22, 2016

LOCATION: Division of Fisheries and Wildlife Field Headquarters, Richard Cronin Building
Westborough, Massachusetts

Chairman Darey opened the November meeting of the Fisheries and Wildlife Board at 11:20 A.M.

Acceptance of Minutes

A motion was made by Dr. Van Roo to accept the minutes from the October 2016 meeting as presented. The motion was seconded by Ms. Booth. The motion passed unanimously.

Chairman's Comments

Chairman Darey reported lots of snow in the Berkshires the morning of the meeting, and a beautiful ride down. He reported that the Western District continues to have significant bear problems, though he knows there will be no quick resolution.

Commissioner's Comments

Commissioner Peterson reported that within the previous 2 weeks the Department received its capital budget, with \$1.5 million from the Wildlands stamp and \$300,000 from EEA Secretary Beaton's office for this year's Habitat Grant Program (for which over 40 applications were received, he reported, with staff in the process of ranking them). Out of \$11 million, MassWildlife will have about \$3.4 million, on top of the Wildlands stamp monies. With this amount, the Commissioner reported that approximately 27 out of 33-34 projects currently being negotiated can be financed in this fiscal year, if all falls into place. He thanked the Secretary for allocating a significant part of the capital budget to MassWildlife's land protection program.

The Commissioner also reported that he had participated in a Quabbin Reservoir gill-netting survey for lake trout with MassWildlife staff, highlighting 44 lake trout, 2 smallmouth bass, 2 rock bass, 1 yellow horned pout, and 8 recaptures. He reported that it was a great experience, and suggested that any Board members who had not yet done so should experience the Quabbin on a similar trip.

Commissioner Peterson closed his comments by noting that he had begun to receive the sportsmen's clubs' invitations to the annual winter meetings and was looking forward to the season.

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Director's Comments

Director Buckley reported that he had a number of updates to report to the Board. Three weeks previously, the fly-tying fair that Angler Education Coordinator Jim Lagacy had organized and hosted, cosponsored by the New England Fly-tyers, drew over 200 people to the Cronin Building. He reported that he had attended for several hours and the public enjoyed it very much, participating in casting demonstrations out on the patio and moving around the building taking part in staff and vendor presentations and activities.

The Director reported that he had made a productive and enjoyable site visit to the Burrage Pond WMA with Ernie Foster, investigating ways to create additional hunter and hiker access. He also reported meeting with Dr. Van Roo, Tom French, and Andrew Vitz to work on ways to engage more birdwatchers in the state with MassWildlife and its properties.

Director Buckley reported that the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's final approval of the Massachusetts State Wildlife Action Plan, which the Board had approved a year ago, had been received. He also reported that he has been appointed by the AFWA president as the Chair of the Trusts Funds Committee, which is in charge of Pittman-Robertson, Wallop-Breaux, and other federal trust monies.

Director Buckley reported that on June 10, 2017, MassWildlife would be hosting another open house, this year with the Town of Westborough to mark its 300th anniversary. He reported that the town had a number of events planned for the day and evening, and that the Cronin Building would get the benefit of a lot of local visitation.

The Director noted that the Board members had received a separate packet with all the new brochures and flyers the Outreach staff had produced with our new MassWildlife branding upgrades, and he offered thanks to Nicole McSweeney and all the others who had worked so hard on the project.

Dr. Larson inquired about the number of staff the Director anticipated would participate in the early retirement program. Director Buckley reported that there were just two, and both were ready to retire anyway, so it was a nice added benefit for them: Barbara Bourque at Connecticut Valley and Bob Desrosiers in the Northeast.

Law Enforcement Comments

Captain Tony Kabir reported that the OLE was losing five officers to the same early-retirement program, and that the MEP currently had 86 officers in the field. He reported that OLE hopes to add five officers back from the civil service exam and has a waiting list to certify. Captain Kabir affirmed that the MEP command staff and officers are still doing quality work: Since the opening of the Archery season, officers have brought five solid cases that run the gamut of violations. He regretted having to report that statewide we are up to 14 boating fatalities, with 3 that are undetermined, and 6 fatalities from ORVs. Noting that the Blue Hills hunt starts shortly, he stated that there had been a very good partnership among all the agencies for the planning. Captain Kabir also reported that the senior staff of OLE had just met with MassWildlife staff on the update to the Bear protocol.

Chairman Darey thanked the Captain for attending the meeting and for his report.

Personnel Report (Michael Huguenin)

Assistant Director for Facilities Michael Huguenin presented the following Personnel Report:

Promotions

<u>Employee</u>	<u>Position</u>	<u>Location</u>
Jennifer Longsdorf	Program Coordinator for the Assistant Director of the NHESP Program Coordinator I	Westborough
Travis Drudy	Northeast District Wildlife Technician Wildlife Technician III	Ayer

New Hires

<u>Employee</u>	<u>Position</u>	<u>Location</u>
Cameron Young	Sandwich Hatchery Technician Wildlife Technician II	Sandwich
Michael Lachance	Conservation Data Specialist Conservation Biologist II	Westborough
Connor Fleming	Southeast District Wildlife Technician Wildlife Technician II	Buzzards Bay

Dr. Larson moved the Personnel Report be accepted as presented; Ms. Booth seconded. Ms. Booth; Dr. Van Roo; and Messrs. Darey, Roche, Larson, Foster, and Winthrop all voted in approval.

Proposed Waterfowl Regulation Changes (H Heusmann)

Waterfowl Biologist H Heusmann brought two proposed Waterfowl regulation changes to the Board, one addressing the Youth Waterfowl hunter age limits and the other proposing changes to the September Canada Goose season.

Mr. Heusmann reported that, in 2015, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service had allowed states to set Youth age limits based on state regulations for determining Youth age limits. The staff recommendation was to increase the limit from 12-15 years old to 12-17 years old, and he stated that this action will bring age uniformity for all of Massachusetts' Youth Hunts.

Mr. Heusmann then reported that, in order to increase the harvest of over-abundant resident Canada geese, the U.S.F.W.S. had relaxed its regulations for September Canada goose seasons. Those relaxed regulations included increasing the daily bag limit to 15, allowing the use of unplugged guns, allowing electronic calls when no other waterfowl season is open, and changing the closing hours from sunset to ½-hour after sunset when no other waterfowl season is open. Based on these changes, the staff recommendation for Massachusetts is to increase the daily bag from 5 to 7; keep the 3-shell, plugged gun requirement; and maintain the state prohibition on electronic calls. In addition, staff proposes a change to extend hunting hours to ½-hour after sunset during the September Canada Goose season.

In support of these proposals, Mr. Heusmann reasoned that Canada Geese are considered an overabundant species in need of extra control, and that hunters can easily understand that the September Canada Goose season is a special case of waterfowl hunting and that the sunset closure remains in effect for other waterfowl hunting and seasons. In addition, Canada Geese often stay on upland sites, like golf courses, ball fields, and parks, until sunset, then fly to roost in marshes and ponds where they are more likely to be available to waterfowlers. Also, Canada Geese are not going to be misidentified as anything else based on size, looks, and sound; they are large birds and easier to find when down; and they tend to frequent open areas where light conditions after sunset remain favorable. Mr. Heusmann stressed that the change applies only to the September Canada Goose season when no other waterfowl hunting is open, and would not apply to the Youth Waterfowl Hunt, which is Saturday, September 23, in 2017).

In summary, Mr. Heusmann stated that the proposed changes are to raise the Youth Waterfowl hunt age to 17 and to allow shooting hours to extend to ½-hour after sunset during the September goose season.

Ms. Booth moved that the proposed regulations be sent to public hearing; Secretary Roche seconded. Discussion: Dr. Van Roo asked whether any input had been requested from affected waterfowl hunters and Secretary Roche stated that he was looking forward to input from Ducks Unlimited. Deputy Director Tisa noted that the proposed new age limit was in response to a federal change to a minimum of 17 years old, and that Massachusetts would have always had the 17-year-old limit, as in all its other species regulations, if the federal government hadn't prohibited it. This change would just bring that age limit in line with the other Massachusetts species age limits.

Ms. Booth; Dr. Van Roo; and Messrs. Darey, Roche, Larson, Foster, and Winthrop all voted in approval.

Invasive Species (Jon Regosin)

Chief of Conservation Science Jon Regosin presented a comprehensive discussion of invasive species control in Massachusetts, including how MassWildlife defines an invasive species, the many interrelated reasons why invasives are a major threat and therefore why control is so important in conservation and habitat management, and a review of the agency's existing policy and regulations. Mr. Regosin discussed numerous examples of the types and effects of the invasive species Massachusetts is dealing or preparing to deal with, and outlined the agency's process toward draft guidelines and recommendations, noting that the proposed guidelines when they are ready and presented will largely reflect current agency practice.

Dr. Van Roo stated that she wants to see more specifics on land stewardship in the general sense. Having BMPs to not make things worse is good, but she also wants MassWildlife to have a way to systematically be proactive, and wants those cases codified and made explicit. She also wants to know what the protocol is for assessing priorities that staff works from, not just for MassWildlife, but also as a model for other organizations and land trusts, recognizing the big commitment these orgs and MassWildlife are making. Dr. Van Roo would like to end up with a list of 10 or 20 priority properties, so that when funds are available the parcels can be immediately treated. Mr. Regosin noted that it is easier to list criteria and protocols than to arrive at a list of priority projects, but that that would be a goal. Director Buckley noted that there is a fairly formal process already in place.

Mr. Roche added that there are three players: MassWildlife and its lands, other property owners, and the general public. He stated that MassWildlife can do the work, document it, then provide the specifics to other partners, organizations, and the public. He was interested in getting to homeowners with the information, too, so that others can also implement similar restorations.

Mr. Foster commented that it would be good if the projects include signage that explains what's happening in these parcels, adding that Website exposure is important. Mr. Regosin agreed that the agency needs more communication tools, like onsite kiosks, to get the information out to the public. Dr. Van Roo noted that, in addition to education, perhaps MassWildlife could also identify public-participation opportunities. There may be a resource of local people who may come out and pull weeds, for example. It's an opportunity to educate and then to also invite public participation.

Natural Heritage & Endangered Species Advisory Committee Report

Dr. Joseph Larson reported that he did not attend the last Natural Heritage and Endangered Species Advisory Committee's last meeting, but looked at the agenda and has some comments to offer the Board. He reported that State Herpetologist Mike Jones is focusing on a whole suite of turtles. Director Buckley had made it possible for Dr. Larson to have a one-on-one presentation from Dr. Jones on the collection of data on status of and species requirements. Dr. Larson thought this data collection would be helpful for the future to know how to manage and conserve Massachusetts' turtles.

Assistant Director French noted that Dr. Jones is doing an excellent job of casting wider to regional groups and scientists, to get ahead of conservation of these species. Dr. Larson asked that Dr. Jones give the presentation to the Board. He thought it might be a challenge because it describes a pretty scientific approach, but he thinks it very valuable, even for the NHESAC, which does have more of a scientific background than the Fisheries and Wildlife Board members.

Dr. Larson reported that he had a rattlesnake study update. After the initial hearing that Senator Gobi held, very little has happened. He noted that everyone was waiting for action from the legislature, but that didn't happen. Dr. Larson said he attended a meeting following on the Director's request that there be an overview of the rattlesnake study issue for the oversight committee, and Director Buckley, Chairman Darey, the Commissioner, and the Deputy Commissioner brought him up to speed. Dr. Larson stated that he now feels the Board needs to get back involved and consider the issues, noting that he, the Chairman, and the Director met in the morning before the Board meeting with staff from the EEA Secretary's office. Dr. Larson thought that good work had started, including beginning to identify legislators and local people in the Quabbin area who are interested in resolving the issue.

Dr. Larson stated that he was reporting to the Chairman that this is the point where the process needs Board involvement. The general proposition is to go out to the public to invite individuals and organizations to articulate what they're concerned about, to provide them with the information they need, and get feedback. He proposed that the Board needs a working group of the Board to work out the mechanics of how the study will be put together and the process that goes forward. Stating that the Board has the statutory responsibility, Dr. Larson stated that if the Board must take the heat, so be it.

Dr. Larson proposed that a working group of the Board be established; Dr. Van Roo so moved; Mr. Winthrop seconded the motion; Ms. Booth; Dr. Van Roo; and Messrs. Darey, Roche, Larson, Foster, and Winthrop all voted in approval.

Set Meeting Date

Members discussed dates for the December Fisheries and Wildlife Board meeting. Members selected December 19, 2016, at 10:00 A.M., at the Field Headquarters in Westborough.

Member's Comments

Ms. Booth reported that over 20 women had qualified for this year's BOW deer hunt, that it was a very good group, and that she was very excited about it.

Dr. Larson reported that he took a guided tour of the Quabbin with DCR staff, similar to John Scanlon's site tours, focused on problems with red pine scale, where there are old stands of red pine where scale is just decimating the pines. It was a public site walk, and he reported that there was an interesting mix of people, including people from as far as Cape Cod and Boston.

Dr. Van Roo reported reading some articles about using drones for wildlife research, stating that there are interesting things researchers are doing now, like taking aerial views of prescribed burns. She reported that she also read that the most dangerous position is igniting in the interior of fire. One article reported using a drone to drop 'dragon balls' and ignite the area that way much more safely. Another reported that managers are also using drones to drop vaccines to enormous prairie dog towns. They made bait balls that could be dropped via drones very effectively. Director Buckley noted that drones are being used widely to enhance staff safety. Dr. Van Roo asked for an update on the drafting of a MassWildlife Fire Policy. Director Buckley reported that it involves a very elaborate process, with staff working comprehensively with all MassWildlife's state, regional, and national partners in that area of expertise, and that staff would hopefully be bringing a Fire Policy to the January or February meeting.

Secretary Roche reported that a meeting was held in his District and staff received very good feedback on the new Trails Policy. He stated that it's very clear that the quality of the work put into it was high because it was very well received.

Mr. Foster reported that the Plymouth County League of Sportsmen was very happy that Director Buckley came down to inspect the access at the Burrage Pond WMA. Mr. Foster thought it was very productive and appreciated the Director's time. He stated that the League is also active in the town, is behind the effort and supports it. Also, he reported that he has received rave reviews from people who've visited the building and very impressed with it, as well as giving compliments about the quality and professionalism of MassWildlife staff.

Mr. Winthrop reported that he appreciates the Board's willingness to accommodate his inability to attend the Board meetings personally right now. He stated that he was very impressed by all he heard at the day's meeting, and very glad to be part of the Board.

Chairman Darey announced that this was his last meeting. He stated that he had only missed five meetings in 38 years, and that he always felt he couldn't have had a more fun job. He had enjoyed watching the Division grow, with all the new staff over the years. He said he will enjoy working with environmentalists and sportsmen closer to home. Noting that he served with four different directors, he stated that they were all great people who brought different things to a difficult job. He expressed his admiration that Director Buckley was working so well and so closely with his staff and on so many different projects, stating that it is truly impressive.

Chairman Darey said he was aware of all the things he has been able to accomplish, and also some things that were not accomplished. But he believes that it is important to know when to walk away. The Chairman appointed Mr. Roche as acting chair until the Board holds its elections and chooses a permanent chair.

Acting Chair Roche asked for a motion: Dr. Van Roo moved to go into Executive Session for the purpose of discussing certain land acquisitions and not to return to Regular Session. The motion was seconded by Ms. Booth. Ms. Booth; Dr. Van Roo; and Messrs. Darey, Roche, Larson, Foster, and Winthrop all voted in approval.

Executive Session

Chief of Wildlife Lands MacDonnell presented four proposed acquisitions, which were individually reviewed and approved unanimously by the Board.

There being no further business the meeting was adjourned at 1:30 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,

Michael Roche
Acting Chair and Secretary

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

November Agenda

Draft October meeting minutes for review

November Personnel Report

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

Examples of all MassWildlife publications that have been reformatted with the new branding, logo, etc.