



MASSWILDLIFE

DIVISION OF FISHERIES & WILDLIFE

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Jack Buckley, *Director*

COMMONWEALTH OF MASSACHUSETTS
DIVISION OF FISHERIES & WILDLIFE
BOARD MEETING MINUTES

Present: Dr. Joseph Larson/Chair, Michael Roche/Vice Chair, Bonnie Booth/Secretary, Ernest Foster, Stephen Sears, Dr. Brandi Van Roo, Fred Winthrop, George Peterson/Commissioner/DFG, Mary-Lee King/Deputy Commissioner, Jack Buckley/Director, Mark Tisa/Deputy Director, Kris McCarthy/Associate Director/Administration and Finance, Todd Richards/Assistant Director/Fisheries, Michael Huguenin/Assistant Director/Operations/Acting Assistant Director/Wildlife, Craig MacDonnell/Chief/Wildlife Lands, Marion Larson/Assistant Director/Public Affairs; Eve Schlüter/Chief/Regulatory Review, Nicole McSweeney/Marketing Specialist, Sergeant Bill Woytych/OLE; Public: Mel Crouse, John Kellstrand, Dave Morin, Chris Craigue, Sarah Fleming, Deanne Drouillard, Wendy Larson.

Date: June 28, 2017

Location: Cronin Building, MassWildlife Field Headquarters
Westborough, Massachusetts

Chair Larson opened the June meeting at 10:05 A.M., and welcomed the guest speakers from Ducks Unlimited to Massachusetts.

Acceptance of Minutes

A motion was made by Secretary Booth to approve the minutes from the May Fisheries and Wildlife Board meeting. The Chair asked that the minutes be amended to reflect the detail that the reason he did not attend the May meeting was that he was ill with a tick-borne disease. The motion was seconded by Mr. Winthrop, who offered wishes for a speedy recovery; the motion passed unanimously.

Chair's Comments

Chair Larson reported that he wanted to address the motion to form a working group to examine the way policies are rolled out to the public. Noting that the Senior Staff had expressed concern that the charge given to the group lacked specificity as to objective and scope, the Chair asked that the working group use its first meeting to draft an objective and a scope for the work it would be doing. He stated that Mr. Sears and Mr. Foster had agreed to join Dr. Van Roo and the Director and Deputy and their staff. Chair Larson asked that the working group come back to the Board at the next meeting and report on how it would move forward.

The Vice Chair noted that MassWildlife's communication and outreach have improved tremendously over the past several years, and that he was very glad to see it.

Commissioner's Comments

Commissioner Peterson reported that the Secretary's office had moved the dog regulation to ANF for sign-off. He also reported that the state budget is moving slowly through, and that the Department's numbers are good, particularly MassWildlife's. He stated that the conference committee would reportedly be ready to announce its budget on Friday the week of the meeting, but that he thought that highly unlikely.

Director's Comments

Director Buckley reported that with the dog regulation ready to move, the Board and staff need to revisit the public-hearing presentation and the roll-out of the regulation.

The Director also reported that the MassWildlife Open House, held on June 10, was a great success, with over 2,000 people attending. After reporting about the various agency constituencies present and some of the

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demographics of the attendees, he provided a brief presentation using attendee data gathered at the event that showed that Massachusetts residents from 142 towns and citizens of seven other states had attended, and also showed the mix of media that attendees reported they had heard about the event through, which indicated that over 52% of those who attended heard about the event directly from MassWildlife and its employees. Secretary Roche moved that the Chair pen a letter to the staff, congratulating them on a great event; Mr. Winthrop seconded; the vote in approval was unanimous.

Old Business

USFWS Refuge Issues

Director Buckley reported that he had heard from Regional Refuge Director Scott Kahan and sent recommendations but hasn't heard back. He stated that he will be contacting Mr. Kahan during the next few weeks, adding that Regional Director Wendi Weber was looking at the application of the MESA to refuge lands.

Status of Regulations

1. Dogs on WMAs

Director Buckley reported that the proposed dog regulation had moved from the Secretary's office to ANF, and that he is hoping it get approved for a public hearing soon.

Draft Invasive Species Policy

After a brief discussion with Deputy Director Tisa, the Board agreed that it should table a discussion of the draft policy until the July meeting.

New Business

Personnel Report (Kris McCarthy)

New Hire:

<u>Employee</u>	<u>Position</u>	<u>Location</u>
Joshua Gahagan	Northeast District Wildlife Technician Wildlife Technician II	Ayer
Alex Krofta	CT Valley District Stewardship Specialist Game Biologist I	Belchertown

Ms. Booth moved that the Personnel Report be accepted as submitted; Dr. Van Roo seconded. The vote was unanimous in favor.

Ducks Unlimited Accomplishments in the Duck Stamp Program (Sarah Fleming and Deanne Drouillard)

DU Manager of Conservation Programs Sarah Fleming opened the presentation by stating Ducks Unlimited's mission: Ducks Unlimited conserves, restores and manages wetlands and associated habitats for North America's waterfowl. She reported that these habitats also benefit other wildlife and people, and pointed out that, as is true for MassWildlife, science provides the foundation for all of DU's conservation work. Ms. Fleming reported that, through this focus on science, DU gains information on species, refines its landscape priorities, develops biologically based habitat objectives, evaluates the success of its work, and supports public-policy efforts.

Ms. Fleming reported that, in the 80 years of its conservation work, DU has protected over 14 million acres, with 900 species benefitting from marsh conservation. She noted that this work is economically important because 2.6 million migratory bird hunters generate \$3.40 billion in revenue per year, and Massachusetts counts more than 538,000 hunters and anglers who spend \$626 million annually and support 9,101 jobs. She then showed total acres and number of projects for the Eastern Seaboard, New England, and Massachusetts, respectively, detailing three protection and three restoration projects in Massachusetts as examples.

Ms. Fleming then reported on DU's conservation goals for Massachusetts, stating that the organization continues to develop cost-share programs to fund its projects. Those habitat goals include enhancing wetlands on public waterfowl areas; enhancing coastal wetlands; restoration of lost freshwater wetlands, and reduction of nutrient and sedimentation loads to rivers and bays to improving submerged aquatic vegetation; protection of key parcels with habitat adjacent to protected lands; and protection of key parcels to buffer tidal marsh from development.

Ms. Fleming then introduced her colleague, Deanne Drouillard, who is the Manager of Eastern Region Partnerships for Ducks Unlimited Canada (DUC). Ms. Drouillard reported that DUC is celebrating Canada's 150th anniversary by conserving 150,000 acres of some of the country's most important natural habitat, stating that it's a gift for all Canadians and DUC partners in the USA.

Ms. Drouillard showed a map of the Eastern Habitat Joint Venture (EHJV) Target Areas, and stated that the 'Atlantic' Provinces actually consists of four of the six provinces. She reported that the Target Areas support 31 species of waterfowl, of which 13 are priority waterfowl species identified in the EHJV Implementation Plan, and provide key habitat for production, molting, and staging of these 13 species as well as other NAWMP priority species. She detailed the diversity of the landscapes in the areas, and talked about the threats to each. Using maps to demonstrate her points, Ms. Drouillard reported on DUC's Conservation Priority Areas and on birds that were banded in Atlantic Canada and recovered in Massachusetts. She then detailed the species of ducks and other waterfowl that DUC works to conserve and studies in the Atlantic Provinces, and went into its work with Common Eider in detail.

Ms. Drouillard then focused on the partnerships that she said had a leveraging effect on DUC's work. She reported that DUC received a total of \$3,500,308 from 40 states in Fiscal Year (FY) 2017, which was an increase of 22% over the previous year (FY 2016: \$2,863,140 from 37 states), and showed a map of the states indicating those that had contributed a significant increase, held steady, or saw a significant decrease in their funding over the previous year. She also explained the effect of DU, NAWCA, and Canadian matching funds for each American dollar, where one dollar translates to almost \$10 in final investment. Applauding 40 years of partnership, Ms. Drouillard reported that the over \$1.7 million contributed by the Massachusetts Division of Fisheries and Wildlife since 1975 has resulted in over \$15 million leveraged by DU, Inc.; other states; and the Canadian contributors, and that over 18,307 acres of habitat have been secured and/or restored across New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, Prince Edward Island and Newfoundland, and Labrador as a result.

Ms. Drouillard then showed a map with the locations of Massachusetts' project contributions around the Bay of Fundy, between New Brunswick and Nova Scotia, and introduced the Estabrooks project, which was recently dedicated to Massachusetts in tribute to its contributions. She closed by showing the meeting a flyover video taken of the beautiful agricultural land-wetland property, and noted that the agricultural land had lain fallow for 40 years and was now back in stewardship with local agricultural partners.

After questions from the Board and some discussion, Secretary Booth moved that the Board investigate a spring trip to Canada to see the properties that have been dedicated to Massachusetts; Vice Chair Roche seconded the motion; in the discussion that followed, Mr. Foster stipulated that the trip be scheduled after turkey-hunting season; the vote in favor was unanimous. The Chair and Board members thanked the DU and DUC officials for travelling to the meeting and for their very informative presentations.

Update on Priority Habitat Maps (Eve Schlüter)

Chief of Regulatory Review Eve Schlüter reported that the 60-day public-comment period had ended June 3. She reported that the agency had received 191 comments, with 42% of the comments questioning removals of parcels from Priority Habitat. Dr. Schlüter also reported that staff was in the process of finalizing the review and perhaps amending some areas based on the comments, and finalizing the maps. She reminded the Board that staff would be printing and sending three maps to each town, as usual. In the ensuing discussion that idea was raised to also give copies of the maps to schools. Director Buckley stated that the agency would message the information differently for schools, and that maybe photos of priority areas in the town might also be used.

Deer Review (Michael Huguenin and David Stainbrook)

Deer and Moose Project Leader David Stainbrook presented the annual Deer Review to the Board. He briefly explained how MassWildlife manages deer in the state, and presented the data on the 2016 deer harvest, by season:

Archery	4,377	4,656
Shotgun	4,470	4,867
Primitive	1,988	2,535
Youth/Paraplegic	146	138
Total	10,981	12,196

He stated that he cautions against using the total harvest as a direct index to deer abundance. It does not take into account harvest trends by zone and how antlerless deer permits influence total harvest, and he noted that there is also annual variability, in food availability, in hunter effort, in the weather, snow cover, etc., that can greatly influence the total harvest for the entire season. He explained that this is why he would go into more detail for each zone and discuss trends later in the presentation.

Mr. Stainbrook discussed the emerging trends in the Western and Central regions (Zones 1-9) and in the Eastern Region (Zones 10-14). He explained that it is helpful to break the state into two areas when looking at deer management issues and trends. In zones 1-9, the deer numbers have been kept relatively stable over the past 30 years, but in the eastern zones, deer numbers have gone from very low (rare to see a deer in some areas), to quite abundant. In areas where there has been adequate hunting access, deer numbers have likely been kept stable, but in areas with limited to no hunting access, deer numbers have been steadily growing. Mr. Stainbrook presented a map of the state by management zone, and reported that we are on average within the Management Range in WMZs 1-9, but there is always variability within each zone, with some areas having lower deer numbers and some with higher deer numbers. The variability typically comes down to hunting access.

He also reported that one major part of MassWildlife's goal is to maintain a healthy, balanced deer population. The data staff collects in Zones 1-9, which come only from huntable areas, to investigate physical health of deer indicate that deer are in good physical condition. The strong yearling male antler beam diameters we are recording indicate that the deer are healthy enough to devote more resources into antler growth, and also that their mothers were healthy enough to give them a good head start. He also showed his analysis of the age structure the harvest data revealed, in WMZs 1-4 and WMZs 5-9, and demonstrated that those zones are exhibiting a balanced age structure.

In conclusion, and based on the deer density to management range of 12-18 deer per square mile, Mr. Stainbrook reported that staff recommended no change to the antlerless deer permit (ADP) allocation in WMZs 1-9. He also recommended that MassWildlife conduct pellet count surveys and deer browse surveys in Western and Central Massachusetts, stating that these will add to our understanding of current deer densities, so we know when we are reaching the upper end of our management range. Repeating his analysis for Eastern Massachusetts, Mr. Stainbrook again reported good deer health and condition, and a very well-balanced age structure. He reported that staff recommended no change to the ADP allocation in WMZs 10-14, and recommended that we continue to conduct pellet count surveys and deer browse surveys to add to our understanding of current deer densities and impacts at a finer scale.

Mr. Stainbrook then gave the Board a Blue Hills Controlled Hunt summary, reviewed a request from Martha's Vineyard towns for information on reducing deer densities on the island, and reviewed the Archery Deer Season Extension request the Board had received from a citizen at a prior Board meeting. This request was to start the archery season earlier, similar to neighboring states, in eastern zones where deer numbers are high, which, he pointed out, requires a regulation change, and he provided a graph showing the archery-only season lengths in the northeastern states as part of his analysis of the proposal.

Mr. Stainbrook then provided the Board with staff recommendations and reviewed each one:

- 1) The proposed 2017 Antlerless Deer Permit Allocations are unchanged from 2016:

WMZ	2016 Allocation	2017 Allocation	Change
1	400	400	-
2	175	175	-
3	1,100	1,100	-
4N	375	375	-
4S	275	275	-
5	1,250	1,250	-
6	300	300	-
7	2,250	2,250	-
8	2,500	2,500	-
9	4,100	4,100	-
10	12,000	12,000	-
11	11,000	11,000	-
12	800	800	-
13	2,700	2,700	-
14	2,700	2,700	-

- 2) Set the Youth Deer Hunt Day on September 30, 2017; continue to allow youth to take EITHER an antlered deer in any zone OR an antlerless deer in any zone
- 3) Allow youth 12-17 to obtain their free youth deer hunt permit online
- 4) Allow online harvest reporting during second week of shotgun season, starting the second Monday of the shotgun season. This is more convenient for hunters, and staff has not seen any drop in reporting with online reporting, nor is it a concern for biological data collection.
- 5) Extend the Archery deer season, starting the season two weeks earlier in WMZs 10-14. This will give hunters eight weeks instead of six weeks, it will start after the Youth Deer Hunt Day, on the eighth Monday prior to Thanksgiving, which is October 2 in 2017, but noting that hunting access restrictions will limit the ability to reduce deer numbers.

Vice Chair Roche moved to adopt the first four recommendations; Dr. Van Roo seconded the motion; the vote in favor was unanimous.

Vice Chair Roche then moved that the Board go to a public hearing on the fifth recommendation, as required. Dr. Van Roo seconded; after an extended discussion, the vote in favor was unanimous.

Law Enforcement Comments

Sergeant Bill Woytek reported that so far this boating season there had been four fatalities and two serious injuries. He also reported four serious ATV accidents. The Sergeant reported that the OLE has only 80 officers currently in the field, with another three retirements projected in the next three months, with Captains Wolski,

Bilotta, and Ziemba all retiring, so the corps will be down to about 75. He also reported that OLE saw 2,000 boating visits with the tall ships visit in Boston Harbor, and that patrols resulted in two DUIs. Sergeant Woytek reported that a Shortnose Sturgeon was found illegally kept in Longmeadow, and was confiscated and released. He reported many LART immobilizations recently, a total of 11 animals, and that a LART team had just immobilized and moved a sow and cub. He also stated that agency cooperation is great with MassWildlife. In closing, he noted that an officer had come across an incident of dumping in Northampton Meadows; an investigation found evidence in the dumped material and the officer made an arrest; the result was a clean-up done and some charges will be filed.

Natural Heritage and Endangered Species Advisory Committee Report (Dr. Joseph Larson)

Chair Larson reported that he was not able to attend due to his recent illness. He stated that he was given some highlights of the meeting, and a new Natural Heritage brochure had been included in the Board's packets. A May 7 press release was distributed mentioning that the Regional Climate Center at UMass would close March 6, 2018, if proposed reductions in federal funding are adopted. Chief of Conservation Science Jon Regosin had reported that there has been a slight increase in Natural Heritage fund donations in recent years; the Chair stated that there had been a lot of concern about the declining donations, but that they have gone up in the last several years. Dr. Regosin had also made a presentation on mobile devices used in the field; the secretary of the Advisory Committee had reported that the applications available are amazing, with a lot of detail, and very beneficial to staff in the field.

Confirm July Meeting Date

Members confirmed that the July meeting would be held on July 18, 2017, at 10:00 A.M. Director Buckley stated that the meeting will be held in the Southeast Wildlife District, at Wildlands Fund property on Long Pond Road in Plymouth.

Members' Comments

Mr. Foster reported he's looking forward with SEWD manager Jason Zimmer to welcoming the Board to the Southeast.

Mr. Winthrop reported that he was very glad to see the Chairman and that he's feeling better. Any advice for dealing with ticks? Chair said that he had adapted his clothing and taken other precautions.

Secretary Booth reported that North Brookfield Sportsmen's Club had a very successful Women on Target event with GOAL.

Chair Larson reported that former state Senator George Bachrach was stepping down as president of the Environmental League of Massachusetts (ELM) and was to be succeeded by Elizabeth Turnbull Henry, and he reviewed some of her resume, noting that Ms. Henry has dual graduate degrees from Yale: a Master's in Business Administration and a Master's in Environmental Management.

Vice Chair Roche reported that the Birch Hill initiative has strong commitment from the staff and is going forward, stating his belief that other districts will get benefits from this initiative. He stated that the next step will be tours and identifying additional sites.

Dr. Van Roo reported that she was glad to see enough rain to curb the gypsy moth caterpillars. She stated that she had been banding birds for the MAPS program, looking at cuckoos, which are having a field day with caterpillars, and seeing vireos that seem to be migrating though without stopping because there is no vegetation. She also noted that the hairs of caterpillars have high toxicity and will impact people on their skin and even on inhalation.

Mr. Sears apologized to staff and stated he was sorry he hadn't made it on June 10 to the Open House. He reported that he has been working on a conservation restriction for 2 years and had an important board meeting relating to that, so he could not attend.

Chair Larson stated that the Board needed to go into executive session for the purpose of discussing proposed land acquisitions whose negotiations would be compromised by discussion in open session. Dr. Van Roo moved that the

Board go into executive session for this purpose and not return to open session but adjourn immediately afterward; Mr. Sears seconded the motion; the vote in favor was unanimous.

After the Executive Session, there being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 1:00 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,

Bonnie Booth
Secretary

List of documents presented to the Board at the April meeting

June Agenda

Draft May meeting minutes for review

Letter to Chair from Representative Angelo Puppola Jr. "RE Suggested Amendment to 321 CMR 3.01(3) – regarding Crossbow Hunting"

Copy of representative letter to the Director from the Chair of the Select Board of Edgartown, one of five Martha's Vineyard towns requesting assistance from MassWildlife with the island's deer population

Copies of letters from the Director to the Chairs of the Select Boards of the five Martha's Vineyard towns that had requested assistance from MassWildlife with the island's deer population

Personnel Report

Conservator magazine from DU

DU New England/Great Lakes/Atlantic Region 2017 Conservation Report

Deer Review Handout

Copies of MassWildlife's brochure, "Natural Heritage and Endangered Species Program"

Spreadsheet of Natural Heritage Fund Taxpayer Donations (1992 to 2017)

Land-acquisition documentation for the Executive Session