

FINAL MINUTES

**Natural Heritage & Endangered Species Advisory Committee
(NHESAC)**

May 11, 2017

DFW Field Headquarters, Southwest Meeting Room #103
1 Rabbit Hill Road, Westborough, MA 01581

MEMBERS:

Present: Mark Mello, Thomas Rawinski, Wayne Petersen, Kathleen Anderson

Absent: Gwilym Jones, Joseph Larson, Jennifer Ryan

ASSOCIATE MEMBERS:

Present: Dave Small, Kevin Powers, Timothy Flanagan

Absent: Karen Searcy, Bryan Windmiller, Andy Finton, Mark Pokras, William Brumback

AGENCY STAFF:

Present: Jon Regosin

OTHERS: Carol “Krill” Carson (New England Coastal Wildlife Alliance)

– The meeting was called to order at 1:40 p.m. –

1. Approval of March Minutes

Kevin Powers motioned that the April minutes be accepted, Mark Mello seconded, and members voted unanimously to approve.

2. Chair’s Comments

Kathleen Anderson showcased the incredible biological diversity observed at her beloved 94-acre Wolf Trap Hill in Middleborough over the past 66 years. “Longer than most of you have been alive”, she quipped! 193 of the State’s 420 birds, 36 of its 58 (inland) mammals, 25 of 51 herps, 47 of 103 butterflies, and 30 of 106 dragonflies. Yes, she documented sign of a moose on her property and hopes to see, or find evidence of, Black Bear, as they are increasing in Southeastern Massachusetts.

Kathleen spoke of recent archaeological evidence from California suggesting the presence of *Homo sapiens* in North America as long as 100,000 years ago. She also reflected on Native American culture, reminding us about the Navajo language, which was used as an unbreakable ‘code’ to help win World War 2.

3. Board Member’s Comments – (None, as Dr. Larson was not present to deliver them.)

4. NHESP Report and 5. Assistant Director's Report – Jon Regosin

Since Tom French was absent, Jon combined the NHESP Report with the Assistant Director's Report below:

- Public comments on the Priority Habitat Atlas are being received.
- A new brochure describing the Natural Heritage and Endangered Species Program has been produced.
- Invitations to the June 10 MassWildlife Open House were prepared and distributed.
- The 23rd Annual Secretary's Awards for Excellence in Energy and Environmental Education recognized award-winning projects on the Cape and Islands.
- The Board voted to suspend the Mt. Zion/Quabbin rattlesnake introduction plan.
- Jon was pleased to announce that Amanda Weiss was hired for the position of Restoration Ecologist.
- Freshwater mussel rearing at the Cronin facility is going well, with glochidia of Dwarf Wedge Mussel and Brook Floater now attached to fish's gills.
- Program botanists are having early success in the field.
- A May 7, 2017 press release announced that Massachusetts' Wildlife Climate Action Tool received a National award.
- Lastly, Jon commented on what may be a slight increase in Natural Heritage Fund taxpayer donations in recent years. He is also pursuing ways for the public to make donations to the Fund via credit cards.

6. *Using Mobile Devices for GIS and Field Data Collection* – Jon Regosin, Chief of Conservation Science

Wireless technology has opened up worlds of opportunity for natural resource managers.

Jon introduced many of us on the Committee to the power and potential of mobile devices, e.g., tablets and smartphones, when used in the field to view, collect, and download data. The technology uses ARCGIS and two apps – “Collector” and “Survey 123”.

The capabilities are truly amazing. Jon and others in the Division are experimenting with it. A mobile device can serve as a GPS, camera, and notebook, while also showing regulatory habitat polygons and rare species points.

Data forms can be called up and completed in the field. A person can also talk into such devices and have those words spelled out. A surveyor's travels across the land can be tracked to indicate the intensity of a particular search. The technology was used recently to map infestations of Hardy Kiwi in the Berkshires.

Jon did mention some minor limitations, such as reading the screen in bright sunlight and that the devices may be water resistant, but possibly not entirely water proof. Some information, such as turtle marking data, may still require good old paper in the field.

Committee members were very appreciative for this eye-opening presentation.

7. Member's and Associate Member's Comments

Tom Rawinski – Deer-impacted vegetation monitored in Andover has shown no improvement over the past five years, despite an active bow-hunting program. Tom hopes to collaborate with Dr. Walter Carson to study Blue Hills vegetation.

Dave Small – Karro Frost conducted a vernal pool workshop for the Athol Bird and Nature Club recently. They certified four vernal pools. Dave was delighted to have four Scarlet Tanagers visit his feeder, lured there by orange slices.

Kevin Powers – Kevin reported that he and his co-authors had their Greater Shearwater manuscript accepted for publication. The research tracked the movement patterns of 66 satellite-tagged birds.

Mark Mello – Mark documented early-season sightings of Buckeye butterflies (May 3) and American Ladies. He also mentioned the large tower-kill of birds in Texas that was mentioned in the Boston Globe.

Wayne Petersen – Wayne reported on a recent conference held at the Parker River National Wildlife Refuge that discussed marine ecology topics. This year, as many as 40% of the world's population of Right Whales were off the Massachusetts coast. Copepods and Sand Lance, forming a base of the marine food chain, are especially abundant this year. He also mentioned that Greater Snow Goose populations have exploded in the Arctic; hunters in much of the U.S. are allowed a liberal daily harvest of 25 birds.

– The meeting adjourned at 3:30 p.m. –

Drafted & Submitted by: Thomas J. Rawinski, Secretary