



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: Dr. Joseph Larson/Chair; Michael Roche/Vice Chair; Bonnie Booth/Secretary, Ernest W. Foster IV, Stephen Sears, Dr. Brandi Van Roo, Ron Amidon/Commissioner/DFG, Mary-Lee King/ Deputy Commissioner/DFG, Jack Buckley/Director, Mark Tisa/Deputy Director, Kris McCarthy/Associate Director/Finance and Administration, Michael Huguenin/Assistant Director/Operations//Acting Assistant Director/Wildlife, Marion Larson/Assistant Director/Information and Education, Jason Zimmer/ Supervisor/Southeast Wildlife District, Joan Pierce/Southeast Land Agent/DFG, Tony Kabir/OLE;

PUBLIC: Karen Grey, Mike Veloza, Emily Anderson, Stan Bazycki, Chuck McCoy, Jack Jezard, Bill Zuzerich, John Fabroski, Lance Lambros, Ryan Krapp, Conor Michaud, Frank Mann, Mike Moss, John Kellstrand.

DATE: July 18, 2017

LOCATION: Wildlands Trust Headquarters, Community Conservation Barn,
675 Long Pond Road, Plymouth, Massachusetts

Chair Larson opened the July meeting of the Fisheries and Wildlife Board at 10:10 A.M.

Wildlands Trust Executive Director Karen Grey welcomed the meeting to the Trust's Community Conservation Barn. She provided background on the history of the barn and of the Trust, which is the largest in the state with an operational area of approximately 1500 square miles. Ms. Grey noted that when she joined the organization, in 2007, the board and staff were concerned that the Trust didn't have a policy on hunting, while it was clear that in practice it didn't allow hunting. In 2008, Ms. Grey and the board organized to begin to address the kind of organization the Trust wanted to be, and how staff represented the organization to its constituents, many of whom had a hunting heritage and lifestyle. Ms. Grey reported that the Trust now does allow hunting on its properties. Where the gift specifically restricts against hunting, the Trust has accepted that, but after the hunting policy was adopted, it could look at each property acquisition strategically to define how the Trust could work with the hunting community, wherever appropriate. Ms. Grey closed by stating that the staff and the Trust's community had spent a long time putting the barn together, and that the process changed the organization for the better.

Acceptance of Minutes

A motion was made by Mr. Sears to accept the minutes from the June 2017 meeting as presented. The motion was seconded by Dr. Van Roo. The Chair offered several factual amendments, two to his comments related to the Staff-Board working group and two to the Natural Heritage and Endangered Species Advisory Committee report where he reported about the possible closing of the Regional Science Center at UMass, and he provided staff with written notes to make the corrections. Vice Chair Roche moved that the minutes be approved as amended; Ms. Booth seconded; the vote in favor was unanimous.

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Chair's Comments

Chair Larson stated that, at the last meeting, the Board had charged him to write a letter to staff thanking them for and congratulating them on a successful Open House at the Westborough FHQ, where over 2,000 people participated, in cooperation with Westborough's 300th anniversary on June 10. He reported that he had mentioned in the letter that he didn't think MassWildlife ever had assembled 2,000 people at one time in one place to learn about the work and all the plants and animals under MassWildlife's care, and had also mentioned that though all staff wasn't actually present at the Open House, he thought that all do a great job working with the public.

Commissioner's Comments

Chair Larson introduced Ron Amidon, the new Commissioner of the Department of Fish and Game, and welcomed him on behalf of the Board. He reported that Mr. Amidon is the president of G.O.A.L. and a former president of the Worcester County League. Chair Larson stated that former Chair George Darey had started the tradition of inviting the commissioner to attend the Board meetings and make comments.

Commissioner Amidon thanked the Chair, and stated that he was honored and thrilled to take the position and work with the agencies he has admired for so long. He stated that he was excited to join the work, and thanked the Board for its welcome.

Deputy Commissioner King reported that the Governor has sent back his budget and she was glad to say that MassWildlife's budget is intact, with no line items or vetoes.

Director's Comments

Director Buckley reported that on July 6 MassWildlife had hosted an R3 (recruitment, retention, and reactivation) meeting with R3 coordinators and other agency staff from around the Northeast. He explained that the Northeast Directors of the Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies had discussed the issue of declining license sales and decided to explore establishing an R3 subcommittee of the Northeast Directors to share R3 challenges, strategies, and outcomes among all the members. The specific goal of the July 6 meeting was to decide whether to recommend establishing an R3 committee and in what form. The Director stated that 12 agencies participated, with only Delaware, Vermont, and D.C. not attending, as well as industry and NGO representatives that are doing research and developing programs specifically to aid states in R3 efforts.

Director Buckley stated that it was a good discussion, that the recommendation will be to create a subcommittee, and that he believes that R3 will be lifesaving for state fish and wildlife agencies and will change how we work. He also stated that R3 means a big adjustment for fish and wildlife agencies; states are good at management and regulation, but marketing is different. He stated that agencies need to look at the things they've always done and, if they're not working, change; they also need to be nimble in response to changes in constituents and society as a whole. Director Buckley explained that MassWildlife has 1,000+ emails gathered through the Bass Pro donation to the Open House: Now staff has a cohort of people to track and keep in touch with, and find out whether an annual Open House is a good idea, in light of objectives. He added that it's always best to analyze the data and decide based on what the data says and not just what sounds good.

The Director reported that a person previously unknown to the agency had left \$338,000 to the Inland Fish and Game Fund in his will, and that the gentleman was Antimo DeFilippo, lately of Melrose and Revere. Not a lot is known about Mr. DeFilippo by MassWildlife, but Director Buckley stated that he had

apparently enjoyed spending time outside and was a hunter and angler, including coastal angling, and an avid gardener of fruits and vegetables. Director Buckley reported that the estate was divided between MassWildlife, the National Rifle Association, and the New Hampshire Department of Fish and Game.

Director Buckley also stated that he had not been able to speak about it at the last Board meeting, but that he wanted to note that former Commissioner George Paterson had been a pleasure to work with, had been highly supportive of the agency, and had really worked together with the agency and staff to accomplish their shared goals.

Old Business

USFWS Refuge Issues (Jack Buckley)

Director Buckley reported that Acting Assistant Director for Wildlife Huguenin and Chief of Regulatory Review Schlüter are setting up a meeting with the USFWS. The Director reported that Director Zinke had indicated that President Roosevelt started the refuge system for people to have access to the land, so they should have access. The Director noted that both recreation and rare-species management are important and need to be addressed in the negotiation.

Status of regulations (Jack Buckley/Mark Tisa)

1. Dogs on WMAs

Director Buckley reported that the regulation was still being reviewed by ANF.

Draft Invasive Species Policy Update (Mark Tisa)

Deputy Director Tisa reported that Chief of Conservation Science Regosin was on vacation; when he returns, Dr. Van Roo will meet with him and Assistant Director for Fisheries Richards. Chair Larson asked for a copy of the draft, and Deputy Director Tisa reported that he had sent it to the Board in the spring, and that the same draft was currently under discussion.

Bird-banders Meeting Update (Brandi Van Roo)

Dr. Van Roo reported that State Ornithologist Drew Vitz had met with her to talk about organizing bird-banders across state as MassWildlife has been doing with bird clubs. She reported that currently there is no shared data, no ability to study trends, etc., so she thought it would be great to invite all the permitted banders to a meeting. Dr. Van Roo noted that MassWildlife gives permits to the banders, so staff knows who they are, making it efficient to contact them. She stated that MassWildlife is reaching out to gauge interest and will take it from there, noting that the banders would possibly meet in November on a Saturday. She said the initial goal is to reach out and facilitate the coordination between the banders, but also hopefully to share some data.

Staff-Board Working Group Update (Brandi Van Roo)

Dr. Van Roo reported that she, Mr. Foster, and Mr. Sears had met with the Director, the Deputy Director, the Assistant Director of Operations, and the Assistant Director of Fisheries. She reported that the group talked about the process staff uses to develop regulations and policies. She reported that it was a good dialogue with staff, and a learning session for all. Dr. Van Roo stated that the Board members had left it to staff to chew on it and come up with ways to reach out to the Board. She anticipated hearing back in future from the staff about any new changes that could be made or requesting further inputs from the Board. Mark Tisa reported that he thought it was a very productive meeting. Steve Sears commented that, as the newest Board member, the exchange with staff makes

him better at taking information back to the public and bringing the public's concerns to the staff and the Board.

Chair Larson asked Deputy Director Tisa if the scope and charge were clearer. The Deputy stated that he believes so, but hadn't debriefed with other staff yet. The Chair asked staff to report back to the Board and confirm whether there was clarity on the scope and charge. Chair Larson thanked the three Board members for their participation.

New Business

Southeast Wildlife District Activities (Jason Zimmer)

Southeast Wildlife District Manager Jason Zimmer reviewed recent staff activities in his district. He reported that his presentation illustrates more broadly how each district helps to further the agency's mission of conservation. He reported in detail on recent land acquisition projects, including several that were accomplished in partnership with the Wildlands Trust. He reported on research and management projects, notably with eiders and sea ducks. Mr. Zimmer also reported on public assistance and wildlife-conflict calls, which have recently been dominated by aggressive hawks and problem turkeys in neighborhoods. He stated that the District staff gives numerous presentations throughout the year, so targeted at particular issues, and others that are purely outreach and education events.

As part of the agency's overall effort to better document negative the impacts of deer over-browsing, Mr. Zimmer reported that his staff is working with Westborough staff to complete deer browse surveys throughout the District, and that they intend to complete deer pellet counts in the spring of 2018. This past winter, District staff conducted targeted trapping of New England Cottontails (NEC) to provide additional specimens to captive breeding programs aimed at helping to restore or enhance NEC populations throughout their range in New England. District staff also worked with numerous private, state, and tribal partners on projects to benefit native eastern brook trout in the Santuit River, herring runs in areas that also contain native wild brook trout, and salter trout in Red Brook.

Mr. Zimmer reported on projects involving state-listed species, including Blanding's turtles, rare plants, bald eagle banding, and rare shorebird monitoring. Showing a photo of American Oystercatcher and Piping Plover nests, he reported that, following the unfortunate passing of Scott Melvin, the Southeast District has taken a much more active role in rare shorebird monitoring and management. Noting that his staff has always assisted the tern project heavily, he reported that now they actively monitor a number of shorebird nesting sites in the District, including the placement and maintenance of signage and symbolic fencing, to protect the birds and their habitat. He reported on the habitat maintenance and restoration work his staff performs, and reported that the habitat restoration areas that the Board inspected last year at Frances Crane WMA has gone from being complained about, despite public-outreach efforts, to being lauded for its beauty and increased habitat. He showed before and after photos of work at Burrage Pond WMA to restore the old bog areas, and discussed prescribed burns at Frances Crane North. Mr. Zimmer also detailed the District's stewardship responsibilities, and discussed monitoring on more than 10,000 acres of WCEs, boulder and gate work designed to protect WMAs from encroachments, the trail cameras employed to control illegal dumping and unauthorized OHV use on wildlife lands, and the 27 miles of boundary-marking the Stewardship Biologist has accomplished, including with contractors, work that involves a lot of deed research, plan and specification prep, and field assistance.

Mr. Zimmer closed by expressing his enjoyment of his participation in the Open House, and with a beautiful Rob MacDonald photograph of a pair of nesting Sandhill Cranes at Burrage Pond.

After a number of questions from and some discussion with the Board, Chair Larson and the Board members thanked Mr. Zimmer for his very interesting and thorough presentation.

Law Enforcement Comments

Captain Tony Kabir reported that Massachusetts had had another boating fatality the previous evening, and another OHV fatality since the last meeting. He also reported that he wanted to brief the Board on two noteworthy recent cases. OLE had successfully recovered a deceased bald eagle, and had brought it to Tufts for a necropsy. Also, a timber rattlesnake discovered in Springfield was safely captured and successfully relocated. He reported that this was a large, healthy snake that likely didn't originate in downtown Springfield. He stated that a local police officer had confidently and expertly handled the animal and OLE officers were able to successfully relocate it to good habitat.

The Captain stated that he also wanted to report that the MassWildlife regulation and statute teamwork with the OLE is going along very well.

Natural Heritage and Endangered Species Advisory Committee Report

Dr. Joseph Larson reported that the Natural Heritage and Endangered Species Advisory Committee's last meeting was cancelled because of an expected lack of a quorum.

Set Meeting Date

Members discussed dates for the August Fisheries and Wildlife Board meeting. Members selected August 22, 2017, at 11:00 A.M., in Newburyport at the Parker River National Wildlife Refuge, Northeast District. [Secretary's note: the August meeting location was subsequently changed because of a scheduling issue to the Stationery Factory in Dalton. The time was changed to 1:00 P.M.]

At Director's request, Board also discussed the September meeting date. After some discussion, the Board chose September 19, 2017, 1:00 P.M., at the Stationery Factory in Dalton, Western District. [Secretary's note: the September meeting location was subsequently changed because of a scheduling issue to the Lawrence Library in Pepperell. The time was changed to 11:00 A.M.]

Member's Comments

Vice Chair Roche commented that after the DU presentations the previous month, he really wanted to emphasize the importance of doing an extended visit to the Canadian provinces where DU is going so much work, hopefully in June of 2018. He reported that DUC will host the party, including others in sportsmen's groups, to see all the great work that Massachusetts has paid for.

Secretary Booth reported that the Northeast Wildlife Trackers are having another conference at the FHQ, on October 21. She stated that she had gone to last year's conference and highly recommended that others attend this year. She also reported that on July 12 she had visited Birch Hill with a group including Habitat Project Leader Scanlon and Vice Chair Roche. She reported that Birch Hill is 7,500 acres total, and that staff is planning giant cooperative habitat restoration projects that will include burning, cutting, and habitat restoration. The group reviewed a 50-acre+ young forest habitat project, and also viewed a barrens inventory for potential restoration. In total, they viewed six areas throughout the day, and she took photos of the areas to aid further staff discussion. Many NGOs have indicated support, she noted, and all are wildlife-related activities. Ms. Booth reported that the projects were in part a result of work by the new Commissioner over a long time, and that there was much to be excited about in the projects.

Mr. Foster reported that the July meeting was his 1-year anniversary meeting. He reported that he still feels like a new member, and sympathizes with Mr. Sears and Commissioner Amidon. He stated that Jason Zimmer is a great District Manager, and that Land Agent Joan Pierce is outgoing and great with people. He was happy to report that all the Southeast county leagues are very active with MassWildlife and Mr. Zimmer, especially for the National Archery in the Schools Program (NASP).

Mr. Sears thanked the Wildlands Trust again and stated that he appreciates the partnership, noting that people who don't know MassWildlife don't understand all the non-sporting work the agency does. He also thanked Mr. Zimmer for his detailed presentation. He also expressed his thanks to former Commissioner George Peterson, with whom he's been friends for 20 years, and welcomed Commissioner Amidon, saying that if he needed any help from the Berkshires to let him know. Mr. Sears also offered thanks to Mr. Zimmer and the Southeast leagues for the donations to the Mass Outdoor Heritage Foundation that support the NASP.

Dr. Van Roo reported no comment.

Chair Larson stated that he also thanked George Peterson, remembering his support for funding for the pollution control program when he was a legislator.

Vice Chair Roche stated that he was looking ahead to the Sargent Award and the new George Darey Award for staff, and asked the Director to start lining up candidates for both.

There being no other business, a motion was made by Secretary Booth to adjourn. The motion was seconded by Mr. Sears. The motion passed unanimously and the meeting was adjourned at 11:55 A.M.

Respectfully submitted,

Bonnie Booth
Secretary

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

Agenda

Draft June meeting minutes for review

Letter from Chair Larson to MassWildlife staff *RE* the 2017 Open House

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