

FINAL MINUTES

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

December 14, 2017

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

**MEMBERS:**

Present: Kathleen Anderson, Joseph Larson, Thomas Rawinski, Wayne Petersen

Absent: Mark Mello, Gwilym Jones, Jennifer Ryan

**ASSOCIATE MEMBERS:**

Present: Dave Small, Kevin Powers, Bryan Windmiller, William Brumback

Absent: Mark Pokras, Andy Finton, Timothy Flanagan

**AGENCY STAFF:**

Present: Jon Regosin, Tom French, Marion Larson, Elaine Brewer

**OTHERS:**

Wendy Larson

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

**1. Approval of October Minutes**

Joe Larson motioned that the October minutes be accepted, Kevin Powers seconded, and members voted unanimously to approve.

**2. Chair's Comments – Kathleen Anderson**

Betty is amazed that moose are expanding their range into southeastern Massachusetts! She described her excitement at discovering moose droppings at her property in Middleborough. She also mentioned that her father was one of the last people to see a caribou in Maine, at Mount Katahdin.

**3. Board Member's Comments – Joseph Larson**

- The Fisheries and Wildlife Board met on November 9. DFW and USFWS will address public access inconsistencies between the two agencies and improve cooperation on state-listed species issues.
- A working group consisting of staff and Board will explore ways of enhancing notifications of Board meetings and public hearings.

- There was some bad press concerning public access and the new trails policy.
- Director Buckley invited representatives of the state bird clubs and bird banders to meet together.
- The Board was treated to a presentation about the Division's successful introduction of the Eastern Spadefoot Toad to the Southwick WMA.
- And in the news, Dr. Larson shared the newspaper story of Tom Rawinski's study of cottontail rabbits - <http://www.telegram.com/news/20171207/mark-blazis-oakham-mans-cottontail-study-leads-to-childrens-book>

#### 4. **NHESP Report** – Jon Regosin

- Jon reported that Eve Schluter has left Natural Heritage for a position in the MEPA office. She will be missed.
- A strong candidate has emerged for the position formerly held by Brent Powers, but a hiring cap has left the position unfilled.
- Caren Caljouw has become the prescribed fire program manager, transferring into the Natural Heritage Program.
- Carolyn Mostello authored a paper recently about Roseate Tern conservation, identifying tolerable thresholds of mortality for the species.
- Staff will meet in January to begin discussions of potential list changes.
- A \$10K cost-share grant was received to further conservation efforts of Eastern Spadefoot Toads.

#### 5. **Assistant Director's Report** – Tom French & Marion Larson

- Marion mentioned that the Division's dog policy will be discussed at the December 19 Board meeting. The policy would require that dogs be leashed, except when used for hunting or training by hunting/fishing licensed individuals. Dog waste must be picked up. These measures should help reduce dog-related conflicts among the visiting public. The main message is that dogs are still welcome on WMAs.
- Tom distributed and discussed the AG's Revisions to the Open Meeting Law Regulation, which became effective on October 6, 2017.
- Special license plates will provide funding to the Atlantic White Shark Conservancy. A November 6, 2017 news story described research findings from 120 sharks tagged off the Massachusetts coast. A promotional video for this new license plate was shown.
- Massachusetts has a new website design for all government programs and agencies.
- A newspaper article featured Clinton High School students partnering with MassWildlife to headstart young Northern Red-bellied Cooters.
- An article appeared in the *Milford Daily News* about a wildlife conservation success story, the repatriation of the Wild Turkey to Massachusetts.
- An article in *The Berkshire Eagle* listed 1,100 acres of conservation land protected in the Western District by MassWildlife during the past year.
- Members received copies of the attractive 2018 Massachusetts guide to hunting, fishing, and trapping laws.

**6. *NHESP Outreach: Where we are and where we're headed*** – Elaine Brewer, Outreach Specialist

Elaine has been with the Division for 10 months. A marine biologist by training, Elaine worked previously for the Division of Marine Fisheries where she developed their outreach program. She has immersed herself in all that is MassWildlife, helping at Bird Island, completing basic fire training, helping with bird-banding, assisting with the June open house, and producing informational materials such as the *Create a Bird-friendly Area* pamphlet.

Outreach touches all aspects of MassWildlife activities, but Elaine will be working primarily on Natural Heritage topics.

As expected, social media is a major outlet for Division information. Elaine writes the monthly E-newsletter. A Facebook page exists. Use of Instagram will be expanded to reach a different group of people.

Outreach includes so much – press releases, responding to inquiries from the press, event coordination, promotion of the tax checkoff, brochures, illustrations, signage, materials for children, video production, and myriad other things.

The future will see, among other things, a thought-out communications strategy for Natural Heritage.

**7. Member's and Associate Member's Comments**

**Bill Brumback** – Bill shared the very sad news of Elizabeth Farnsworth's passing.

**Tom Rawinski** – Former State Botanist Bryan Connolly wrote to say that white-tailed deer tissue samples from Long Island (provided by Tom) did not match anything else, genetically, that he and his colleagues have seen thus far in New England. Tom also mentioned his recently published children's book, *A Cottontail Chronicle*.

**Joe Larson** – Joe clarified the distinction between the Board's involvement with regulations, which require a public hearing, and policy, which does not.

**Bryan Windmiller** – Climate data from the Blue Hills Observatory showed September, October, and November of this year to be the warmest on record. Bryan is exploring new satellite telemetry technology from none other than MIT to advance his studies of Massachusetts turtles. He anticipates having funding and an intern to test the new technology on Painted Turtles.

**Kevin Powers** – Kevin updated us on his Great Shearwater research. Telemetry is revealing fascinating migration patterns across vast areas of the Atlantic. Ten birds were fitted with tracking devices this year. Kevin is also involved in a cooperative research effort to better understand the ecology of the Sand Lance, a species of critical importance in marine ecosystems.

**Wayne Petersen** – Wayne reminded folks that Christmas bird counts begin on December 15. He also shared a proof of an article he authored, scheduled to appear in the next issue of *Massachusetts Wildlife* magazine. It is a biographical piece about former State Ornithologist, Joseph (Archie) Hagar, who served from 1934-1959. Hagar was an authority on the American Black Duck and many other bird species. To Wayne, Archie was a friend and a mentor.

**Dave Small** – Dave is mobilizing folks to conduct field work next year to update Odonate records.

– The meeting adjourned at 4:45 P.M. –

Drafted & Submitted by: Thomas J. Rawinski, Secretary