



MASSWILDLIFE

DIVISION OF FISHERIES & WILDLIFE

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COMMONWEALTH OF MASSACHUSETTS

DIVISION OF FISHERIES AND WILDLIFE

FISHERIES AND WILDLIFE BOARD

MEETING MINUTES

PRESENT: Joseph Larson/Chair; Michael Roche/Vice Chair; Bonnie Booth/Secretary, Bob Durand, Ernest W. Foster IV, Stephen Sears, Brandi Van Roo, Mark Tisa/Director, Jon Regosin/Deputy Director, Michael Huguenin/Assistant Director/Wildlife, Trina Moruzzi/Assistant Director/Operations, Eve Schlüter/Assistant Director/NHESP, Marion Larson/Assistant Director/Information and Education, Elizabeth Wroblicka/Chief/Wildlife Lands, Jim Burnham/Program Coordinator, Nicole McSweeney/Outreach and Marketing Coordinator, Brian Hawthorne/Habitat Planning Coordinator, Susan McCarthy/Wildlife Biologist, David Wattles/Black Bear and Furbearer Project Leader; Jim Cardoza/Archivist, Jason Zimmer/Southeast District Manager, Todd Olanyk/Central District Manager, Maj. Patrick Moran/OLE, Capt. Kevin Clayton/OLE; PUBLIC: John Kellstrand, Elizabeth Magner, John Fabroski, Michael Veloza

DATE: June 18, 2019

LOCATION: Massachusetts Maritime Academy in Admiral's Hall, 101 Academy Drive,
Buzzards Bay, Massachusetts

Chair Larson opened the June meeting of the Fisheries and Wildlife Board at 2:30 P.M.

Acceptance of Minutes

A motion was made by Mr. Durand to accept the minutes from the May 2019 meeting as presented. The motion was seconded by Mr. Foster. The motion passed unanimously.

Chair's Comments

Chair Larson reported that the staff has been in a process of holding a series of listening sessions to hear the public's views about coyotes. There have been four listening sessions to gather the views of the public with respect to contests for killing coyotes. He reported that the fourth and final listening session would be the evening of the meeting, in the same room, and that the session will include a presentation by the staff about coyote management, followed by anyone who wants to make a statement. Noting that the Board members would be present but wouldn't speak, he stated that the Board's job is to listen as well. The staff will then put together a proposal and bring it to the Board for consideration. He stated that the Board has not made any decisions about the coyote issue but that it will consider the issues soon.

The Chair also welcomed Mr. Durand to the Fisheries and Wildlife Board, stating that he was delighted to have Mr. Durand on the Board and that he looked forward to a lot of good dialogue. Mr. Durand thanked the Chair for his welcome and reported that he was very happy to serve.

MASSWILDLIFE

Commissioner’s Comments

Chair Larson reported that the Commissioner and Deputy Commissioner were not in attendance, but that the Commissioner had provided written comments to the Board, which were included in the meeting packets.

Director’s Comments

Director Tisa reported that he’s been very busy and he had no other comments at that time.

Law Enforcement Comments

Major Patrick Moran, Chief of Enforcement for the Coastal Bureau, provided the Law Enforcement comments. The Major provided an update on the OLE’s efforts to increase its force, stating that OLE currently has five new officers that were formerly police officers. He reported that they were in field training at the time and would be training until the end of September, at which point they will get their own districts. He also reported that there are four new recruits currently in the police academy who are due to graduate September 25, 2019. Once they graduate, they will go through specialized training to become Environmental Police officers.

Major Moran reported on a few key recent cases that the OLE wanted to share with the Board. He stated that officers were working with a Vermont game warden about deer taken during the closed season in Massachusetts. He stated that samples taken from a gut pile in Massachusetts and from deer brought to a Vermont check station. The OLE used a DNA test to find that the deer were the same deer taken out of season in Massachusetts, and charges are pending.

The Major also reported that the OLE had assisted with a bald eagle banding on Lake Quinsigamond in Shrewsbury with Lieutenant Governor Polito. Major Moran closed his comments by stating that Lt. Colonel Anthony Abdal-Khabir will be retiring soon, and that his colleagues wish him congratulations.

Personnel Report (Mark Tisa)

Director Tisa provided the Board with the Personnel Report:

Promotion

<u>Employee</u>	<u>Position</u>	<u>Location</u>
Nicole McSweeney	Outreach and Marketing Manager Aquatic Biologist IV	Westborough

The Director stated that he and his staff recommended Nicole McSweeney for promotion to Outreach and Marketing Manager. Vice-Chair Roche moved to accept the Personnel Report as presented; Secretary Booth seconded; the vote in favor was unanimous.

Public Comment Review/Vote: Proposed Turkey Regulations (Mike Huguenin)

Assistant Director for Wildlife Mike Huguenin reported that there were no changes proposed as a result of the public comments to the original Turkey regulations recommended by staff. He reiterated the staff proposal to increase the daily bag limit to 2 turkeys per day, to expand the fall season (archery equipment only) to overlap the entire archery deer season, to issue a fall permit to all turkey permit buyers (therefore, 2 in the spring; 1 in the fall), to increase the hunting hours on the Youth Day to 5 p.m., to enable 12-14-year-olds to have their own turkey permits for fall hunting, and to allow shot sizes no larger than #4 for turkey hunting.

The Assistant Director reported his analysis of the public comments that the staff and the Board received at the hearing and during the written comment period. He stated that 44 comments were received, 21 in support and 23 opposed. He reported that, of the supporting comments: all but one were fully supportive of the changes as proposed. Of the opposing comments, he reported that 15 commenters expressed opposition to hunting turkey in any form, one noted that hunting promotes violence, and another expressed concern that turkey populations would suffer drastically in the state.

In response to this last concern, Assistant Director Huguenin reported that the Wildlife staff is confident that turkey populations are robust enough to withstand the increased bag limits and that a significant increase in the harvest as a result of the changes is not expected. He noted that the purpose of these regulation changes is to increase hunting opportunities, not to increase management of the population. He closed by stating that the staff's recommendation is to ask the Board to endorse the changes as originally proposed, reminding the meeting that the proposed changes would not go into effect until 2020.

A motion was made by Vice Chair Roche to approve the regulation changes as presented; Dr. Van Roo seconded the motion; it passed unanimously.

Carbon Budgeting on MassWildlife's Forests (Brian Hawthorne)

Director Tisa introduced Habitat Planning Coordinator Brian Hawthorne, noting that Mr. Hawthorne works out of the Western District office, but works closely with Habitat Project Leader John Scanlon. He reported that he is very impressed with the amount of work Habitat staff has done on this subject, especially given that climate change is a very important current topic for the agency and the state.

Mr. Hawthorne reported that MassWildlife's habitat goals and actions are consistent with the Global Warming Solutions Act (GWSA) and the Governor's Executive Order on Climate (EO 569). The GWSA sets statewide carbon emissions targets, and Mr. Hawthorne reported that it is important to note that neither the GWSA nor EO 569 specifies that the state should simply maximize carbon stored in forests. Rather, he stated that it is important to think about MassWildlife's mission as a whole. The Board has endorsed MassWildlife's upland habitat goals, wherein the agency is trying to have 20%-25% of our lands in open habitats and 10%-15% in forest reserves (i.e., biologically mature), with the remainder in full-canopy forests.

Mr. Hawthorne explained that the first thing staff had to do was estimate how much carbon storage we have on MassWildlife-controlled lands. The first source is the 2006 forest inventory the Habitat Program conducted, which estimated volume by species and cover type, included aerial photography and field work. The second source was from the Forest Service publication, "Carbon storage and Accumulation in United States Forest Ecosystems" (1992, U.S. Forest Service General Technical Report WO-59), and the third source was the EEA's GWSA analysis. Staff found that, in general on MassWildlife's lands, the amount of carbon stocks varies greatly based on what type of forest.

Then staff had to estimate how much we are changing carbon; how much carbon are we adding to the bank? Forest inventory analysis gave growth rates by species for the above-ground portion of biomass, and this gave a calculated rate of net sequestration in biomass. Then net sequestration in soils from EEA GWSA was added. Staff calculated MassWildlife's harvest rate for removals (distinguishing between short-lived products and long-lived products), and had to make a key assumption, that new acquisitions are similar in storage and growth to already-inventoried forests. In the future, Mr. Hawthorne reported, staff would like to do a new forest inventory to validate these assumptions.

The results of the analyses were that, from 2006-2018, the average carbon storage in MassWildlife upland forests has increased from 99 to 109 tons per acre. This is the total amount of carbon on all MassWildlife lands since 2006. We've protected a lot of additional land since 2006, and we have increased carbon stored from acquisition. When forest land is developed, we lose a lot of the carbon to the atmosphere, so by protecting this land, MassWildlife is adding to the carbon we have stored in the bank. We also have growth from the forest. He reported that, in actuality, there is a very small amount of carbon we've lost from doing habitat management relative to the sequestration in our full-canopy forests.

Mr. Hawthorne pointed out that if we look at MassWildlife's progress toward its habitat goals, the agency is making progress toward our desired state of more grassland/shrubland and young-forest habitat. We've more than doubled the amount of grassland/shrubland/young forest on our lands. Some people are concerned that grassland restoration means cutting a lot of trees and that it's bad for climate change. However, the full canopy forest is the majority of habitats we have. Even with the addition of more grassland/shrubland and young forest, we haven't seen a big difference in the carbon storage because this full-canopy forest growth is making up for it with how much is stored there.

In sum, while we've doubled the amount of grassland/shrubland/young forests, MassWildlife lands have only released about 0.02 million tons of carbon since 2006 from short-lived forest products. This is only 1.7% of the 1.2 million tons sequestered by growth alone since 2006. Habitat staff believes it can help MassWildlife meet its landscape habitat goals while continuing dramatic net-positive carbon sequestration. Enhancing climate adaption and building resilience are just as important as mitigating climate change. Our habitat strategy helps to support Species of Greatest Conservation Need from the Massachusetts SWAP [State Wildlife Action Plan], which includes multiple game species, so it's not just about maximizing sequestration.

After an extended discussion, Chair Larson and the other Board members commended Mr. Hawthorne on his very informative presentation.

Natural Heritage and Endangered Species Advisory Committee Report

Dr. Larson reports the last meeting was held on June 13 in Westborough. The issue of coyotes and contests came up and it was recognized this is not just a Massachusetts question, but a national question. He also reported that the June meeting was the first with the new Assistant Director of NHESP, Eve Schlüter. Chair Larson stated his belief that the agency is fortunate to have such a highly qualified person as Dr. Schlüter rejoin the agency.

Chair Larson reported that the Advisory Committee had heard a presentation about the status of the Northern Red-bellied Cooter. He stated that the interesting part of the presentation was that the restoration of this population has been driven by head-starting, raising young turtles to the point where they're large enough to minimize predation, and it appears to be a success with important sampling and identification going on to determine how well the head-start program is doing, with many years of data to determine success. It's also a great program to involve the public, including schools, as it is important for the public to be invested in conservation and believe the work is making a difference.

Set Meeting Date

Director Tisa reported that Senator Anne Gobi has invited the Board to have a meeting at the Statehouse. After some discussion, it was decided to postpone a possible Statehouse meeting until later in the year, when the legislature is in session. Members confirmed July 17, 2019, at 1:00 p.m., at a location TBD. Director Tisa reported that he will confirm a location as quickly as possible.

Set August Meeting and Public Hearing Date

Members discussed and confirmed the date of August 28, 2019. Location and time TBD by the Director and his staff.

Member's Comments

Vice Chair Roche, Secretary Booth, and Mr. Foster reported no comments.

Dr. Van Roo reported that, two weeks previously, she had met with Chief of Wildlife Lands Wroblicka and MassWildlife land protection staff to talk about how the agency incorporates climate change into the land acquisition process, and she stated that it was a very productive meeting.

Mr. Sears thanked Mr. Hawthorne for his presentation, and welcomed Mr. Durand to the Board.

Mr. Durand said he wanted to thank the staff for the presentations, and asked staff to pass along his thanks to [Habitat Project Leader] John Scanlon for his contributions to the habitat presentation. He also wanted to say, as a new board member, that he's interested in the issue of climate change and wildlife, nature deficit disorder and getting kids outdoors, including through fishing, hunting, and biodiversity/environmental education, which he thinks is very important.

There being no further business, a motion was made by Vice Chair Roche to move into Executive Session for the purpose of discussing certain land acquisitions and not return to open session. The motion was seconded by Dr. Van Roo. The motion passed unanimously at 3:40 p.m.

Executive Session

Chief of Wildlife Lands Wroblicka presented three proposed acquisitions, which were each reviewed and unanimously approved by the Board.

The meeting was adjourned at 4:15 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Bonnie Booth
Secretary

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

Agenda
Draft May meeting minutes for review
Personnel Report
Documentation for the executive session