

FINAL MINUTES

Natural Heritage & Endangered Species Advisory Committee (NHESAC)

Thursday, January 11, 2024
DFW Field Headquarters, Southwest Meeting Room #103
1 Rabbit Hill Road, Westborough, MA 01581
Meeting held virtually via Zoom webinar

MEMBERS:

Present: Bill Brumback, Matthew Sisk, David Small, Mark Mello

Absent: Tim Flanagan, Wayne Petersen

ASSOCIATE MEMBERS:

Present: Andy Finton, Russ Hopping

Absent:

AGENCY STAFF:

Present: Jesse Leddick

OTHERS:

Present: Vivian Kimball (VHB), Jim MacDougall

– The meeting was called to order at 1:38 P.M. –

1. Approval of the October 2023 Minutes

Kevin Powers motioned that the October draft minutes be accepted, Bill Brumback seconded, and members voted to approve. Russ Hopping abstained.

2. Chair's Comments – Mark Mello

Mark noted that the *Check List of the Lepidoptera of North America North of Mexico* (Ed. Hodges et al., 1983) has been updated by Pohl and Nanz (Ed.) 2023, and reflects the additions to, and current taxonomy of the moths and butterflies of the United States and Canada. It includes the original 1983 catalog numbers. However, the new numbers system for each species includes a letter for some Families that will complicate matters when sorting by number on spreadsheets.

The 1983 edition by Hodges can be downloaded with the original catalog numbers using this link (<https://images.peabody.yale.edu/mona/checklist.pdf>).

An updated list for Canada and Alaska (2018) can be found using this link
<<https://www.researchgate.net/publication/322964117> Annotated checklist of the moths and butterflies Lepidoptera of Canada and Alaska>

Mark also noted during the Member's Comments section that the recent winter storms have changed beaches at Horseneck Beach State Reservation in that vast amounts of cobble were moved building a 3' high x 10' wide barrier in the intertidal area. The area affects 33 – 50% of the beach. This change may impact piper plover nesting.

3. Board Member's Comments – Matthew Sisk

Matt introduced Jesse Leddick as the Assistant Director of MassWildlife's Natural Heritage and Endangered Species Program (NHESP) to the committee. He discussed highlights of Jesse's background as applicable to Natural Heritage. His education includes UC San Diego (BS) and Duke (Masters of Environmental Management, Masters of Forestry). He was an Endangered Species Review Biologist (2012 – 2018) for NHESP, Chief of Regulatory Review at NHESP from 2018 – 2022, and became Landscape Conservation Program Manager in 2022.

Matt discussed highlights of applicable business of Mass DFW Board.

- Gov Healey and Lt Gov Driscoll have set an aggressive agenda for Mass DFW, which presents new challenges to the FW staff. The administration noted four strategic areas of interest to be addressed: (1) Biodiversity, (2) Climate Change, (3) Environmental Justice, and (4) Relevance, Capacity and Resilience.
- New goals for Board members will be discussed at the next Board meeting. Matt noted that he is open to feedback on any proposed actions/topics that members on this committee would like to have brought to the attention of the Board.

4. NHESP Report & Assistant Director's Report – Jesse Leddick

Jesse discussed recent staff changes.

- Sarah Wasserman has left MDFW. She was primarily involved with BioMap3.
- Sarah Maier, Information Manager for the past 10 years, has transferred to another position within the State. She is being replaced by a new hire, Micah Jasny.
- Conservation Science Program Manager position, which has been open for several years, is now taking applications. (<https://massanf.taleo.net/careersection/ex/jobdetail.ftl?job=23000DZT>)

Resource changes in October/November

- MESA list changes went to the Board (public hearing hopefully scheduled for Feb meeting)
- Advisory Committee to be updated and invited.

DFW received another grant from the America the Beautiful Challenge for river restoration projects to benefit native fish, mussels, reptiles, and invertebrates. Project involves riverine habitats and partnerships with several organizations and Towns.

Environmental agenda by Executive Order

- Biodiversity goal development – working group formed and making progress.
- Eve Schluter is leading the effort, and it will involve outreach and significant coordination.

Northeast Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies

- Annual conference will be hosted this year by MDFW in Hyannis April 21 – 24, 2024 (<https://www.neafwa.org/conference.html>)
- Participation is encouraged.

Forest As Climate Solutions Initiative from Governor's office for forest management relative to climate change

- The report, press release, and information about how to provide comment is available at <https://www.mass.gov/info-details/forests-as-climate-solutions>.
- Recommendations in public comment period now.
- Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs (EEA) will develop response involving all state lands.

5. Presentation or Discussion Topic – No presentation was made at this meeting.

6. Member's and Associate Member's Comments

Wayne Petersen – Not present

Bill Brumback – No comment

Tim Flanagan – Not present

Dave Small – Noted a current project is underway and lead by Jennifer Forman Orth (Mass Dept of Agriculture) involving a compilation of county records of Massachusetts beetles.

Kevin Powers – Noted that the first Right Whales of 2024 in the Gulf of Maine have been located east of Portland ME in the shipping channel in January. He also noted that only 5 Right Whale calves for 2024 have been found to date (calving season is mid-Nov to mid-Apr).

Andy Finton – No comment

Russ Hopping – Noted recent bobcat sightings and movements in Ipswich have been documented.

– The meeting adjourned at 2:31 P.M. –

Drafted & Submitted by: Kevin Powers