



MASSWILDLIFE

DIVISION OF  
**FISHERIES & WILDLIFE**

1 Rabbit Hill Road | Westborough, MA 01581  
**MASS.GOV/MASSWILDLIFE**

Director: Jack Buckley

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COMMONWEALTH OF MASSACHUSETTS  
MASSACHUSETTS DIVISION OF FISHERIES AND WILDLIFE  
FISHERIES AND WILDLIFE BOARD  
MEETING MINUTES

PRESENT: George Darey/Chairman, Michael Roche/Secretary, Bonita Booth, Ernest W. Foster IV, Dr. Brandi Van Roo, Mary-Lee King/Deputy Commissioner/DFG, Jack Buckley/Director, Marion Larson/Assistant Director/Public Affairs, John Scanlon/Habitat Program Leader, Brian Hawthorne/Habitat Planning Coordinator, John O'Leary/Climate Change Coordinator, Peter Melanesi/Western District Land Agent, Capt. Anthony Abdal-Kabir/OLE.

ABSENT: Dr. Joseph Larson, Fred Winthrop

DATE: October 18, 2016

LOCATION: Western Wildlife District  
88 Old Windsor Road, Dalton, Massachusetts

Chairman Darey opened the October meeting of the Fisheries and Wildlife Board at 1:15 P.M.

Acceptance of Minutes

A motion was made by Dr. Van Roo to accept the minutes from the September 2016 meeting as presented. The motion was seconded by Ms. Booth. The motion passed unanimously.

Chairman's Comments

The Chairman welcomed the visitors to the meeting. He thanked the Berkshire County League of Sportsmen for stepping up and helping him the past several months, saying that he enjoys their monthly meetings and that the members work extremely well as local conservation partners.

Chairman Darey reported his continuing concerns about the Laurel Lake fishing access in Lee. He lamented that there is no money for OFBA to build an apron around the fishing area. The Chairman also expressed his concerns about the planned drawdown at Stockbridge Bowl, and stated that the agency has to keep a close eye on the effects. The Chairman also stated that there is a problem with more bears becoming habituated and causing property damage in Berkshire County. Director Buckley stated that the former Assistant Director and former Bear Project Leader Ms. Conlee has left state service to move to Missouri, and it will take some time for the new bear biologist to study the evolving situation and offer strategies.

Commissioner's Comments

Deputy Commissioner King reported that the Department has received its budget cut of \$1.1 million, noting that DFW is totally exempt. Deputy Commissioner King reported that, depending on whether and how the earmarks are funded, and so late in the year, EEA may have to have layoffs.

Director's Comments

Director Buckley reported that there was an article from the *Boston Globe* in the Board's packets on Mike Jones, the State Herpetologist. He also reported that Mike Jones had coordinated a Blandings' and Wood Turtle Symposium at the Field Headquarters that gathered about 80 biologists from 18 states and 4 provinces in a very successful 2-day event.

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The Director reported that the Youth Deer Hunt preliminary results were in, with 128 deer taken. He noted that the pollinator garden was coming in at the Field Headquarters, behind and alongside the Cronin Building and the new storage facility. He also reported that Massachusetts has a new record White Perch, taken from the Wachusett Reservoir in West Boylston. Director Buckley stated that the Northeast Trackers' conference had been held the previous weekend at the Field Headquarters and was very well-attended. Turning to personnel news, the Director reported that EEA was offering an early retirement and voluntary separation program, noting that it does appear to apply to MassWildlife and may result in some personnel loss. He stated that he would keep the Board advised.

Director Buckley reported that he had been nominated for the President's Council on Wildlife Trafficking by AWFA. He stated that he may not be appointed, but that it was a nice honor to be nominated.

The Director reported that he had one request for the Board to consider at this or a subsequent meeting. He reported that if a state public body wants to be able to have its members participate remotely in a meeting, it must by vote adopt remote participation first, and then it can use it as needed going forward.

Secretary Roche moved to adopt remote participation, Dr. Van Roo seconded the motion, and after a brief discussion the vote in favor was unanimous.

#### Law Enforcement Comments

Captain Anthony Abdal-Kabir attended the meeting representing the OLE. Captain Abdal-Kabir reported that the MEP exam had been given in Worcester, with 750 test-takers taking the exam on September 17. He stated that OLE was hoping to get a lot of good candidates. Relative to the early retirement program mention by Director Buckley, Captain Abdal-Kabir reported that OLE has five officers that may take advantage, and he stated that the OLE will be lucky to encompass that rate of attrition from its new hires; OLE is hoping for seven new officers.

The captain reported that after a successful prosecution of an endangered-species violation for which restitution was required, the Natural Heritage Fund had received \$835 fine.

Captain Abdal-Kabir also reported that fatalities were running high for the time of year, with good weather and the accompanying extension of warm-weather activities; 12 of the fatalities were in boating accidents and six had occurred on ORVs.

The captain reported that the OLE was involved in a tribal hunting and gathering issue with the Mashpee Wampanoag tribe, and that the OLE is working cooperatively to get agreements for Massachusetts.

#### Personnel Report (Jack Buckley)

Director Buckley reported that staff had one promotion to recommend to the Board:

<u>Employee</u>	<u>Position</u>	<u>Location</u>
Joseph Kendall	Montague Hatchery Wildlife Technician Wildlife Technician III	Montague

Secretary Roche moved acceptance of the Personnel Report as presented; Dr. Van Roo seconded the motion; the vote in favor was unanimous.

#### VOTE: Adoption of Board Resolution and Letter of Support to the Massachusetts Delegation for the Blue Ribbon Panel's Recommendations (Board Subcommittee)

Ms. Booth moved acceptance of the letter of support; Dr. Van Roo seconded. In the discussion that followed, Secretary Roche stated that obviously a great deal of work went into the resolution and he asked the Director for a synopsis of the effects and benefits. Director Buckley stated that the fund, if established, would provide over \$2 billion annually, with \$19 million possible from the total for Massachusetts. Noting that MassWildlife's current annual budget is about \$17

million, he reported that the agency would direct the monies toward benefitting those species named in the SWAP. He stated that the fund would be very much like Federal Aid, and it would be consistent, not a balloon payment, and that it would change everything in terms of the agency's capacity. It will be a challenge to get the \$5-6 million match that may be required, but it translates to \$25 million per year. The Director also reported that the Board will be in good company; many other states' boards and commissions had already passed similar resolutions. Ms. Booth reported that she had wanted to be satisfied that there would be no unintended consequences, and that after researching the issue she is convinced the fund will be in addition to and will not impact Massachusetts' Federal Aid apportionment. Dr. Van Roo confirmed that it will be a subaccount within Federal Aid.

After the discussion, the vote was unanimous in approval, and Director Buckley stated that he would forward the resolution to AFWA.

#### Young Forest Component of MassWildlife Habitat Management Goals (John Scanlon and Brian Hawthorne)

Habitat Project Leader John Scanlon provided an initial overview, in which he reviewed the Fisheries and Wildlife Board's landscape habitat goals that were set in 2000, 2006, and 2010; he provided an update on the 2014—2016 Key Sites results for Grassland and Scrub Oak Shrubland habitat; and he stated that Habitat Planning Coordinator Brian Hawthorne would discuss the agency's emerging focus on establishing more Young Forest habitat.

Grasslands: forbs, grasses; need to be mowed every 4 years to keep shrubs and trees out. Shrublands, composed mostly of shrubs, need treatment every 4-10 years to keep tree species from taking over. For Young Forest, the parcel is left to grow for up to 30 years, and 20-30 years is also useful.

Mr. Hawthorne presented the following analysis of the Young Forest habitat acres needed and how the program can accomplish its goals:

- There are 80,000 upland forest acres available on WMAs for management of young forest habitats out of a total of 162,000 forested WMA acres as of 2016, 113,000 of which are upland habitat acres
- 25,000—50,000 acres are needed for a shifting mosaic of Young Forest habitat. This implies the agency wants 11,300—16,950 acres [10%-15% of upland forest acres] in Young Forest at any time
- Goal: Establish at least 375 acres per year of Young Forest habitat. At 375 acres per year, MassWildlife will reach 10% in Young Forest in 30 years; at 1,125 acres per year, the agency can reach 10% Young Forest in 10 years.

Mr. Hawthorne noted that, because of the data that were available to him for his analysis, the acreages he was using did not include the 3,500 acres of Young Forest created by MassWildlife since 2011.

Director Buckley commented that this is really a shift: Staff did the research, did the work, and analyzed the result, so that now the program can see the need and is making the argument for Young Forest. He reported that MassWildlife is hiring a new forester to help accomplish the goals. The Director complimented Habitat Program Leader Scanlon and his staff for building an intellectual framework for what the agency is doing. It's not enough to build a program, he said; MassWildlife must also create an intellectual framework for it.

Secretary Roche applauded the work and said he wanted to get these messages out to sportsmen and then to the general public. MassWildlife is doing good things for a whole spectrum of wildlife, doing it with science, and then testing it with science. He noted that staff is creating properties where the agency can bring the public to show what is possible toward these goals.

Chairman Darey stated that a beautiful place was created on top of October Mountain, and counseled staff to meet with Mass Audubon staff and make a push for this type of proactive management.

Director Buckley stated that MassWildlife had received \$25,000 for habitat management from AFWA. The plan is to manage the Wayne MacCallum WMA in Westborough for Young Forest and then use it as a demonstration forest and

create an app to allow visitors to go through on their own. He also reported that the agency is advertising a new social-media position for the Heritage Program, to free Outreach Specialist McSweeney to focus on crafting the appropriate messages in appropriate forms for Facebook. Dr. Van Roo advised to find a way to make habitat management a sound bite for Facebook as that's the only way you'll reach some people.

Mr. Hawthorne observed that Mass Audubon's new breeding bird atlas shows a decline of species that depend on Young Forest, and that now for first time Mass Audubon is considering and looking at ways to do habitat management on their own lands.

Dr. Van Roo asked about the development of Invasive Species Control Guidelines. Director Buckley reported that Deputy Director Tisa is organizing a presentation for the November meeting.

Ms. Booth reported that, at the last meeting of the Worcester County League of Sportsmen, Mr. Roche gave an excellent presentation on these issues and, at the end, the board of the League voted unanimously to support MassWildlife's work on Young Forest. The Chairman thanked Messrs. Scanlon and Hawthorne for their work and their excellent presentation.

#### Western Wildlife District Activities (Andrew Madden)

Western Wildlife District Supervisor Madden reported that June showed this was a really bad year for eagles in the Western District: nests blew down or otherwise failed on the Housatonic and at Tekoa in Westfield, including one lost chick in Lenox and one adult in Pittsfield. The Great Barrington pair built an awful nest and it failed. At Lake Buel the nest was very high nest, 120 feet in the air. The one success he could report was at Tekoa, where a chick fell out of the nest and sustained two broken legs. The chick was delivered to licensed rehabilitator Tom Richardi, who kept it for a few weeks to recover, then the Western Wildlife District staff released the bird onsite at Tekoa.

Mr. Madden also reported lots of large-animal response incidents, especially with bear, and he further reported that he had had a lot of cooperation from local law enforcement and OLE in dealing with these issues.

The district made strong efforts in fish surveys over the summer, visiting over 60 sites. Staff spent time on the Deerfield, where it is hard to get surveys due to varying depths, variable flows, and poor conductivity. Mr. Madden reported that staff even did some snorkel surveys.

Mr. Madden reported on work at the Jug End Fens work with Herpetologist Mike Jones. He noted that there are many unique habitats at that location, and his staff spent a lot of time there this summer. He also reported that training of new staff in District tasks and duties is ongoing. He stated that fall is stocking time for the districts; he staff finished stocking trout the previous week. He noted that his district didn't stock the usual area on the Westfield because of the very low flows; other than that, this was a typical year. Pheasant are being stocked now, and there is a very good spread of opportunities for bird hunters in the Western Wildlife District.

He also reported that he was gearing up for the Paraplegic hunt, noting that every hunter saw a deer last year and staff was hoping for similar experiences next year. Mr. Madden closed his report by stating that we are swinging into the major hunting seasons, which keep all staff very busy.

After a brief discussion, the Board and Chairman Darey thanked Mr. Madden for his informative presentation.

#### Natural Heritage and Endangered Species Advisory Committee Report

Director Buckley reported that since Dr. Larson was not in attendance there is no NHESAC report this month.

Set Meeting Date

Members discussed dates for the November Fisheries and Wildlife Board meeting. Members selected November 22, 2016, at 11:00 A.M., at the Field Headquarters in Westborough.

Member's Comments

Ms. Booth reported that she and over 100 people attended the Wildlife Trackers conference at the Field Headquarters on October 15. She stated that Pam Landry did an excellent job, that this was her first time going, and that she visited all the presentations and was very impressed.

Secretary Roche reported no comment.

Dr. Van Roo reported that on October 1 she participated as a coach's instructor at the Wildlife table for the coaches' Envirothon workshop because Coordinator Pam Landry could not attend. Dr. Van Roo reported that she was impressed by the dedication and interest shown by the coaches and she felt it was important because the coaches were very grateful for the opportunity to ask questions and get information for their students.

Mr. Foster commended the two excellent presentations the Board heard at the meeting.

There being no further business, a motion was made by Dr. Van Roo to adjourn the meeting at 2:40 P.M.; Mr. Foster seconded; the motion carried unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,

Michael Roche  
Secretary

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

October Agenda

Draft September meeting minutes for review

*Boston Sunday Globe* article, "Herpetologist Speaks for the State's Snakes (September 18, 2016)

"Resolution of the Massachusetts Fisheries And Wildlife Board Supporting the Recommendations of the Blue Ribbon Panel on Sustaining America's Diverse Fish and Wildlife Resources in Recommending Congress Dedicate 1.3 Billion Dollars Annually in Existing Revenue to the Wildlife Conservation Restoration Program to Diversify Funding and Management of All Wildlife"

Constituent email regarding prevention of wanton waste for game species and proposing an extension of squirrel-hunting season

Constituent letter to the Chairman proposing requirement of identification information on tree stands left in the woods

Personnel Report

Spreadsheet of Natural Heritage Fund Taxpayer Donations (1992 to 2016)