



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, Steve Sears, Dr. Brandi Van Roo, Fred Winthrop, 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/Wildlife, Trina Moruzzi/ Assistant Director/Operations, Todd Richards/Assistant Director/Fisheries, Marion Larson/Assistant Director/Information and Education, Craig MacDonnell/Chief/Wildlife Lands, Sergeant Bill Woytek/OLE; PUBLIC: Dave Morin, Mel Crouse, Brad Miner, John Kellstrand, Stan Andriski, Tony Schuko.

DATE: January 10, 2018

LOCATION: Division of Fisheries and Wildlife Field Headquarters
Westborough, Massachusetts

Chair Larson opened the January meeting of the Fisheries and Wildlife Board at 1:00 p.m.

Acceptance of Minutes

A motion was made by Ms. Booth to table the minutes from the December 2017 meeting until the following month. The motion was seconded by Dr. Van Roo. Chair Larson noted that he had some minor edits to submit, and would save them until the January meeting. The motion passed unanimously.

Chair's Comments

Chair Larson shared a "Habitat Update" handout that had been put out by The Trustees about its active habitat management work, including the prescribed burning it is using for restoration of grasslands on Trustees' lands, noting its similarity to MassWildlife's grasslands work.

Commissioner's Comments

Commissioner Amidon reported that a press release on details and accomplishments of MassWildlife's Habitat Management Grants had been issued the previous week and that it had received favorable coverage statewide.

The Commissioner reported that the Governor's budget is to be filed with the Legislature by January 24 and that a report on the numbers would be given at the next meeting. He provided details on several DFG budget earmarks that had been approved, including for a boat ramp and boarding pier in Suffolk County, for implementation of MassWildlife's Piping Plover HCP on the state's beaches, and for a collaborative project with UMass Dartmouth's SMAST [School for Marine Science and Technology]. He also reported on recent appointments to other DFG boards, closing his remarks by reporting that it had been announced during the meeting that Captain Tim Brady had been appointed to the Massachusetts [Marine] Fisheries Commission.

Director's Comments

Director Buckley reported that the 2017 deer harvest numbers were almost final, and that the harvest had set a record with at least 12,857 deer taken.

The Director reported that the habitat grants program was going very well. He stated that the agency has grant criteria it follows and a group of staff that scores and ranks the applications. He wanted to single out Jim Burnham as doing a lot of work to administer the grants. The Director thinks it is a key program because it gives the agency

MASSWILDLIFE

the ability to reach out to landowners, who control 80% of the lands to be managed in the state. He reported that MassWildlife has secured an NRCS grant for \$1.5 million to do more of the same on private lands. He reported that MassWildlife had partnered with the MFA [Massachusetts Forest Alliance], which helped its application score high, and he noted that the grant monies also give MassWildlife access to foresters who can identify landowners that would be good candidates.

Director Buckley then laid out the schedule of coming meetings with their associated regulatory components, stating that the Board members would receive an email confirming the dates, times, and sequence of topics to be covered at each meeting. The Director reported that he needs a Board meeting sometime during the interval of April 9-13, to be able to hold a waterfowl hearing and meet timeline of waterfowl filings with the federal migratory bird authorities. After a brief discussion, the Board chose Tuesday, April 10, with an 11:00 a.m. meeting and a 12:00 p.m. public hearing on the 2018-2019 migratory bird hunting regulations.

Old Business

Species Management on USFWS Refuges (Jack Buckley)

Director Buckley reported that he had had a meeting the previous week with the new Chief of Refuges, and reported that Chris Dwyer was appointed to a new position, Chief of Hunting and Fishing. The Director stated that he and his staff had gone through all our properties at the meeting. Staff had built a matrix of all NWR properties, open and closed, and he and staff will continue the conversation, particularly about the Mashpee Refuge, which has been closed for 20 years while the Service has tried to work out its policy. The Northeast Directors have also set up a committee, with Director Buckley a member, with directors from West Virginia and Maine.

New Business

Personnel Report (Kris McCarthy)

Promotion

Employee

Jesse Leddick

Position

Chief of Regulatory Review
Environmental Analyst V

Location

Westborough

Dr. Van Roo moved acceptance of the personnel report as presented; Mr. Sears seconded the motion; the vote in favor was unanimous.

Review of MassWildlife's Funding Mechanisms

Director Buckley reviewed MassWildlife's major revenue sources and discussed the agency's finances in a brief presentation. In the ensuing discussion, the Director was asked what he thought the chances were of the Blue Ribbon Panel's recommendations [i.e., the Recovering America's Wildlife initiative] being passed. He said about 50%-50%, given the fact that it's a reallocation of existing leases rather than new federal revenue. In response to another Board query, the Director stated that he would create and provide an additional page showing capital funds that weren't included in his discussion since they are not revenue.

Leashing of Dogs on Wildlife Management Areas (Jason Zimmer)

Southeast District Manager Jason Zimmer presented the Board with information on the proposed regulation that would require leashing and picking up after dogs on Wildlife Management Areas (WMA). Mr. Zimmer first discussed both general and more specific conflicts and complaints the agency has increasingly heard or dealt with related to off-leash dog-walking on WMAs. Then, to properly explain how and why we ended up in this situation, he reported on how the Massachusetts landscape, and our agency's land acquisition and management program, has evolved over the past 30-40 years. Mr. Zimmer then briefly discussed the ways in which people with dogs are currently using the WMAs, including noting that those activities are not regulated and/or controlled in any organized way. He provided a review of existing regulations and policies, both in Massachusetts and across the country. He also provided an overview of how the agency has conducted extensive stakeholder outreach as part of its review process, and briefly touched on some of the feedback staff has already received. Finally, Mr. Zimmer

presented a proposed new WMA regulation that staff believes is needed to ensure the agency is able to meet our mission, continue to encourage and promote safe and responsible access to our lands by dog owners, and provide a safe and enjoyable outdoor experience to all WMA users.

In the ensuing discussion, Vice Chair Roche stated that a change in the regulations will be an educational process for WMA users, and he asked how to make it clear that 'licensed or authorized persons' are exempt, so that a differentiation can be made in the field. He suggested that some language be added to address that point. Dr. Van Roo suggested striking a sentence in the second paragraph of the regulation that she thought might be too vague. Director Buckley reported that the proposed regulations have been posted so there shouldn't be any changes made to them now, stating that the Board should wait until after the hearing to make any changes it thinks necessary.

Deputy Director Tisa asked if the outreach portion of the presentation was acceptable to the Board and addressed the members' concerns; the Board members stated that it was. Board members also raised questions about posting presentations like Mr. Zimmer's online. The Chair stated that he had looked into the question with staff and that the creation of quality content is very expensive. Given the small number of people who would access the video, the Chair stated his belief that the work would not be worth the payout.

Providing feedback on the presentation itself, the Board asked staff to include actual screenshots to show what is posted online in different formats (Facebook, Instagram, and the Website) and also photos of postings on kiosks and in WMAs for each District.

Law Enforcement Comments

Sergeant Bill Woytek gave a brief presentation, apologizing for Captain Anthony Abdal-Khabir, who had been called away. The Sergeant reported on numbers of calls received by the Massachusetts Environmental Police during 2017 for issues that directly relate to the work of MassWildlife and its staff:

CALL REASON	NUMBER OF CALLS
Assist MassWildlife	134
Bear	330
Deer	243
Moose	49
Hunter Harassment	43
Hunting Accident	8
Search-and-Rescue LAND	51
Search-and-Rescue WATER	52

Sergeant Woytek also reported on two ongoing investigations involving unlawful taking of deer and other alleged hunting and harvest-reporting offenses, and noted that Captain Khabir would keep the Board apprised of further developments and/or resolutions.

Natural Heritage and Endangered Species Advisory Committee Report

Dr. Larson reported that at the Natural Heritage and Endangered Species Advisory Committee's last meeting Heritage Outreach Coordinator Elaine Brewer gave the sole presentation. He reported that Ms. Brewer did a very good job and that the program's promotion efforts seem to be in good hands. Ms. Brewer had noted a significant increase of natural history in recent scientific journals, and the Chair stated that he was happy to hear the presentation and to know about the return to importance of natural history.

Confirm Meeting Date

Members confirmed February 6, 2018; 3:00 p.m., with a 7:00 p.m. hearing on the same day, at the Field Headquarters in Westborough. The Board also established an official snow date of February 13, in the event state offices were officially closed due to inclement weather, at the same times.

Director Buckley briefly reviewed the dates and times of other upcoming meetings, and reported that the Board would receive an email providing all the details again, so that there would be no mistake. He asked the Board members to contact him if they had any questions.

Member's Comments

Mr. Foster reported no comments.

Mr. Roche stated that he looked forward to the dog regulations going forward.

Dr. Van Roo reported that an entire journal issue in December was issue devoted to 'transactional ecology,' showing that questions of how to get information out in plain language, to make sure that dialogue is open and how data is being used, are very much being debated currently in the scientific community.

Secretary Booth reported that she would not be able to attend the next meeting.

Mr. Sears announced that he was recently reappointed to another term by the Governor and that he was glad of the fact.

Mr. Winthrop stated that he was very happy with Director's presentation on the agency's finances, and that he very much appreciated it, even after 10 years on the Board.

The Director asked for a vote to go to public hearing with the waterfowl regulations in April. Dr. Van Roo so moved; Ms. Booth seconded the motion; the vote in favor was unanimous.

Public Comment

Mr. Stanley Andriski of Petersham stated that he was submitting a proposal to MassWildlife and the Board to conduct a scientific study on using leashed dogs to recover wounded and dead deer in Massachusetts. He stated that there are 37 states that allow this practice, and provided a handout that he said would outline how the study could be done. Mr. Andriski provided details of the proposed research project, including in his written handout, and also of a similar study that was conducted previously in New Jersey.

After some questions and a brief discussion among the Board members, Vice Chair Roche made a motion to forward Mr. Andriski's report to staff for review and to instruct staff to return and report their comments. Dr. Van Roo seconded the motion; the vote in favor was unanimous. The Board members thanked Mr. Andriski for his work putting together the report.

There being no further business, a motion was made by Dr. Van Roo to move into Executive Session for the purpose of discussing certain land acquisitions and not return to open session. The motion was seconded by Secretary Booth. The motion passed unanimously.

Executive Session

Chief of Wildlife Lands Craig MacDonnell provided a schedule of the upcoming parcel meetings of the Lands Committee and invited the Board members to attend any they would like. He also provided a brief review of the land acquisition budget. He presented 2 proposed acquisitions, which were each reviewed and unanimously approved by the Board members.

The meeting was adjourned at 3:45 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Bonnie Booth
Secretary

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

January Agenda

Draft December meeting minutes for review

Habitat Grants press release

January Personnel Report

Copy of "Habitat Update" handout, page 23 in a report from the Trustees, Winter 2017

Spreadsheet of Natural Heritage Fund Taxpayer Donations (1992 to 2014)

Handout from Stanley Andriski, including: a copy of "New Jersey's Leashed Tracking Dog Program: Call to Action," by Darren Doran, from Tracks and Trails (United Bowhunters of New Jersey), Winter 2015; a list of tracking results from Maine, Vermont, and New Hampshire; and an email (?) from Darren Doran dated 12/30/2017

Documentation for the executive session