



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: Michael Roche/Acting Chair/Secretary, Bonnie Booth, Ernest W. Foster IV, Dr. Joseph Larson, Dr. Brandi Van Roo, George Peterson/Commissioner/DFG, Mary-Lee King/Deputy Commissioner/DFG, Jack Buckley/Director, Mark Tisa/Deputy Director, Tom French, Assistant Director/ NHESP, Todd Richards/Assistant Director/Fisheries, Marion Larson/Assistant Director/Public Affairs, Michael Huguenin/Assistant Director/Operations-Acting Assistant Director/Wildlife, Craig MacDonnell/Chief/Wildlife Lands; John Scanlon/Chief/Habitat Program, Eve Schluter/Chief/Environmental Review, Captain Tony Abdal-Kabir/OLE, PUBLIC: John Kellstrand, Brad Miner, Rosemary Charron, Craig Cortis, Mel Crouse, Dave Morin, Charles Lewis, Michael Veloza, Michael Fleming, Marie Szaniszlo

PRESENT VIA TELECONFERENCE: Fred Winthrop

DATE: December 19, 2016

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

Acting Chair Roche opened the December meeting of the Fisheries and Wildlife Board at 10:05 A.M.

Acceptance of Minutes

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

Chairman's Comments

Acting Chair Roche stated that, for the first time in 35 years, George Darey was not part of the Board, and he had been reflecting on all the issues and problems that arose and were dealt with in the course of that time. He stated that Chairman Darey had always relied upon the best available science from the staff, and always acted for the good of the resource. He stated that licensing challenges had been dealt with where possible without raising the fees. He also stated that MassWildlife's Natural Heritage Program was a model for the nation, and that the new facility the Board was meeting in was also a national model, overseen enthusiastically by Chair Darey. Secretary Roche recalled the groups, organizations, and clubs that had stepped in to help over the years. He stated that, going forward, the Board members will be inspired by the passion and energy George Darey had put into the work of this Board. Mr. Roche stated that these things will not change, and that the only change will be the lack of George Darey's smiling face.

Commissioner's Comments

Commissioner Peterson reported that on the Thursday after the Board meeting there would be a small gathering at the McLaughlin Hatchery to open the valve at the pipeline. Stating that this was a great accomplishment, he noted that the project was nearly complete and the water will flow on Thursday.

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Deputy Director Tisa added that the hatchery's water had always come from the Swift River but that there are many issues with using surface water, and production was put in serious jeopardy a number of times when we had to depend on it. He stated that this plan was the original plan, back in 60s, but that the issue had been one of cost. Now it has been done by necessity. The Deputy Director stated that we are now able to assure trout production for the next 40 years, and at a cost savings of \$70,000 per year at the hatchery alone.

Commissioner Peterson expressed his thanks to Secretary Beaton, who had requested ideas for projects last year when he had money available, and the Commissioner was very glad the hatchery pipeline project could be put together so quickly. Director Buckley reported that MassWildlife had also put money into it, and that recreational inland fishing contributed \$21,000,000 per year to the economy, so it was a wise investment for all concerned.

Ms. Booth remarked at the rapid completion, and Deputy Director Tisa stated that the MWRA did a phenomenal job, with their fiscal people and engineers putting in hard work, every day, to meet the production schedule. He reported that there also is a generator at the head of the pipe, so the project will generate power as water passes through the pipeline. Director Buckley added that a lot of credit goes to MWRA president Fred Laskey, who was very committed to the project. Ms. Booth stated that the Board should draft a letter to the MWRA and partners to thank them for their help.

Director's Comments

Director Buckley reported that Associate Director Kris McCarthy was having an operation the day of the meeting to repair her hand after an accident at her home, and that she would be in and out of the office in the short term as she recuperates.

The Director also reported that staff was having discussions with the president of the state chapter of Trout Unlimited (TU) to improve that working relationship. He reported plans to host a gathering with TU in March, to meet our staff and talk about the types of projects both organizations are interested in.

Director Buckley recalled that MassWildlife was helping to set up a 4H shooting program at UMass. He reported that 2 weeks previously Deputy Director Tisa and Associate Director McCarthy had gone to see the Dean in charge of the program, and were waiting to hear the outcome. MassWildlife has a long relationship with UMass, and the Director hoped the program would be fully implemented. Dr. Larson noted that 4H shooting is national, but tailored to each state. He stated that Massachusetts and Connecticut are the only states that don't use it at this time; Connecticut has a program but only includes archery. Dr. Larson noted that the local legislator was also interested in the program.

The Director reported that he had been the previous week at the Recreational Boating and Fishing Foundation marketing workshop on fishing, and reported that its programs are tailored to each state. He reported that it was a good meeting and a good experience, and that Massachusetts will be participating with Rhode Island and Connecticut in a cross-marketing effort as well. He reported that one outcome of the workshop was that MassWildlife will do an audit of our R3 programs to measure whether they're meeting our goals.

Director Buckley reported that staff had participated in an excellent talk the previous week, part of MassWildlife's occasional brown-bag lunch series, this one on pollinator research and conservation efforts. The presenter, Bob Gegear of WPI, was very informative, doing a lot of interesting research, and might be able to speak to the Board at some point about targeted pollinator efforts in Massachusetts.

The Director also informed the Board that each member had received a copy of the new Field Guide to the Amphibians and Reptiles of Massachusetts in the meeting packets.

Law Enforcement Comments

Captain Tony Kabir reported that the OLE had had four officers take the early retirement incentive and that there were 85 officers in the field. He added that OLE will not be refilling those positions in 2017.

Personnel Report (Michael Huguenin)

Assistant Director for Facilities Michael Huguenin presented the following Personnel Report:

Promotion

<u>Employee</u>	<u>Position</u>	<u>Location</u>
Travis Drudi	Northeast District Wildlife Technician Wildlife Technician III	Ayer

New Hire

<u>Employee</u>	<u>Position</u>	<u>Location</u>
Elaine Brewer	Outreach Specialist Conservation Biologist II	Westborough

Dr. Larson moved the Personnel Report be accepted as presented; Mr. Foster seconded; Ms. Booth; Dr. Van Roo; and Messrs. Roche, Larson, Foster, and Winthrop all voted in approval.

Board Elections

Acting Chair Roche, as current Secretary to the Board, conducted the Board elections. He asked for nominations for Board Chair. Mr. Winthrop nominated Dr. Larson; Dr. Van Roo seconded the nomination.

Secretary Roche asked whether there were any other nominations. Ms. Booth nominated Mr. Roche; Mr. Foster seconded the nomination.

Secretary Roche asked whether there were any other nominations. Hearing none, he asked for a vote in support of the nomination of Dr. Larson; Mr. Winthrop, Dr. Van Roo, and Dr. Larson voted in support. Secretary Roche then asked for a vote in support of the nomination of Mr. Roche; Ms. Booth, Mr. Foster, and Mr. Roche voted in support.

Secretary Roche declared the vote a tie. Mr. Roche then stated that he withdrew his name from consideration and called for a vote in favor of Dr. Larson. Ms. Booth; Dr. Van Roo; and Messrs. Roche, Larson, Foster, and Winthrop all voted in approval.

Secretary Roche asked for nominations for Board Vice Chair; Dr. Larson nominated Mr. Roche; Dr. Van Roo seconded the nomination.

Secretary Roche asked whether there were any other nominations. Hearing none, he asked for a vote in support of the nomination of Mr. Roche. Ms. Booth; Dr. Van Roo; and Messrs. Roche, Larson, Foster, and Winthrop all voted in approval.

Secretary Roche asked for nominations for Board Secretary; Dr. Van Roo nominated Ms. Booth; Dr. Larson seconded the nomination.

Secretary Roche asked whether there were any other nominations. Hearing none, he asked for a vote in support of the nomination of Ms. Booth. Dr. Van Roo; Ms. Booth; and Messrs. Roche, Larson, Foster, and Winthrop all voted in approval.

Turtle Conservation in Massachusetts (Michael Jones)

State Herpetologist Michael Jones presented the Board with a comprehensive report on the current status of turtle conservation and research efforts in Massachusetts, and provided an outline of a framework being developed for the systematic conservation and study of the species of freshwater turtles in the state and regionally. He reported that recent conservation efforts include the development of conservation plans for Blanding's and Wood turtles and a turtle symposium held in the Cronin Building in the fall. Dr. Jones reported that threats to freshwater turtles include habitat loss, habitat fragmentation, and illegal collecting.

Dr. Jones reported that a network of conservation biologists from a large number of states meets regularly as a working group to discuss conservation challenges to these species. Noting that Massachusetts has the strongest protections in the region for declining turtle species, he reported that work is progressing toward a regional conservation strategy that could develop and implement cooperative management plans. Dr. Jones reported that the working group has developed standard sampling and monitoring protocols for use across the region, which would allow researchers to make direct comparisons of data.

Chair Larson stated that he was very encouraged with the presentation and the direction of the research, which is building a very strong scientific base for management. He stated that he is also encouraged that the research is being approached regionally, and he expressed the Board's thanks to Mr. Jones for an excellent presentation.

Rattlesnake Working Group Report

Chair Larson reviewed the background of the rattlesnake conservation effort in Massachusetts, over the years and in the last year and more. He reported that the Board's working group of himself, Dr. Van Roo, and Mr. Foster had met to decide how to respond to the most pressing questions that have not yet been answered to the public's satisfaction. He reported that the EEA Secretary, Commissioner Peterson, and Director Buckley had developed a proposal before the last Board meeting, including a proposed list of study participants, and that he had felt it was time for the Board to get involved directly.

Chair Larson stated that the working group was recommending a process, and was not making recommendations for any changes in the rattlesnake conservation program. He stated that he believes the way to address a problem comes from the process, and reported that the working group had two findings, and the process it developed is designed to address what the members believe are the two main issues, the adequacy of the science base (where people raise questions about the science behind the program) and of the public outreach (where people believe the public was not adequately consulted or involved in the development of the program).

Chair Larson stated that he had emailed the proposed plan to the Board members, and had given copies to Director Buckley and Commissioner Peterson at the start of the meeting. He reported that the working group had accepted the proposed list of representative people in the legislature and the Quabbin area, and recommended that that group be charged with acting as participants in a public survey process. The people listed represent organizations in the area, and their role is to present an opportunity to the given organization and its contacts to address these issues. Do the members have concerns about the science that supports the program? Are there other sources of scientific data that

MassWildlife didn't include in its design of the program? What other issues do the members and public have that were not addressed by the program team? Dr. Van Roo moved that the proposal be adopted by the Board; Mr. Foster seconded.

In the discussion that followed, Commissioner Peterson commented that, after looking at the list of proposed participants, Senator Lesser had demonstrated a strong interest in the process and the program, as had a representative of the Selectmen in Belchertown, and that both should be added to the list.

Chair Larson reported that the working group had also recommended a science advisory group to help with the science questions, and that a list was provided in the working group's report. The members of the science advisory group will be asked to comment and respond to the questions submitted by the outside groups. He then reported that the working group was proposing a series of meetings to quickly and systematically address the questions and concerns of the public.

Mr. Foster commented that the intention was to hit the reset button, and to include all the concerns that have been expressed but also to move it along, and that was the reason for the 30-day intervals between meetings. He stated that it was important to move it along, to meet as a Board, and do the best job possible to do best thing for the resource.

Director Buckley commented that January 5 is rushed; the legislators will not necessarily be able to meet on that date. Commissioner Peterson concurred. Director Buckley stated that the legislature will be reorganizing itself at the beginning of the session, so it will be a very busy time. Chair Larson asked that the Commissioner and the Director coordinate with the legislators and others in setting the proposed January meeting.

Dr. Van Roo amended the motion to say 'within the first 3 weeks of January'; Mr. Foster seconded; Ms. Booth; Dr. Van Roo; and Messrs. Roche, Larson, Foster, and Winthrop all voted in approval. The final meeting schedule as adopted is as follows:

January 2017: Public Survey Participants to meet as soon as possible in January. The members will establish working procedures and proceed to solicit outstanding questions and concerns from their organizations, contacts, and constituents.

Within 30 days: Amassing of Public Input. Public Survey Working Group members will meet and provide a bulleted list of the questions and concerns they gathered to the entire group and to the Science Advisory Group.

Within the next 30 days: Public Survey Working Group and Science Advisory Comments. Each bulleted question/concern will be addressed with written comments from both the Working Group and the Science Advisory Group.

Within the next 30 days: Finalized Report. The bulleted public concerns and the corresponding comments from both the Public Survey Working Group and the Science Advisory Group, as well as any recommendations, will be submitted to the Fisheries and Wildlife Board.

Commissioner Peterson reiterated that Senator Lesser had been part of the original hearing in Athol. The other gentleman recommended was a member of the Board of Selectmen in Belchertown, which felt it was not consulted.

Dr. Van Roo amended her motion to accept the two people the Commissioner recommended; Mr. Foster seconded; Ms. Booth; Dr. Van Roo; and Messrs. Roche, Larson, Foster, and Winthrop all voted in approval.

Natural Heritage & Endangered Species Advisory Committee Report

Chair Larson reported that the last meeting of the Natural Heritage & Endangered Species Advisory Committee (NHESAC) had been on Thursday, December 8. He stated that the bulk of the meeting had consisted of a report from the members of the NHESAC and a discussion of the siting of solar arrays to address developing a process of regulatory review. The Chair noted that Dr. Van Roo already has some experience with research on solar arrays and habitat, and might want to get involved in the discussion. Chair Larson stated that the solar evaluation process is not regulatory; rather, it's an effort to tell each person or organization coming into the regulatory process that the process is clear and everyone is being treated the same. He stated that the discussion will look at the definitions and clarify the process, which is coming soon.

Set Meeting Date

Members discussed dates for the January Fisheries and Wildlife Board meeting. Members selected January 11, 2016, at 10:00 A.M., at the Field Headquarters in Westborough.

Director Buckley then made a very sad announcement: He had just been notified that former colleague and magazine editor Peter Mirick had passed away within the previous several hours. The Board members expressed their respect and admiration and their thoughts of Mr. Mirick's family and friends.

Member's Comments

Dr. Van Roo stated that if anyone needed to get in touch with her until January they should please use her private email address, not the university one.

Secretary Booth and Mr. Roche reported no comments.

Mr. Foster commented that change is tough, and he welcomed Dr. Larson as the new Chair.

Chair Larson commented that a foundation has been set and it is going to go forward. He stated that he was recalling Chairman Darey in turn recalling former Chair Brad Gage. Both chairmen had said that the Board has as its first priority the resource. Its second priority is the general public, and its third responsibility is to the sporting community.

Mr. Winthrop expressed his congratulations to Dr. Larson and his thanks to all the Board members for including him in the meetings, which opportunity he valued very highly.

Chair Larson asked for a motion: Dr. Van Roo moved that the Board go into Executive Session for the purpose of discussing certain land acquisitions whose discussion in an open session would jeopardize the negotiating position of MassWildlife and not to return to Regular Session. The motion was seconded by Secretary Booth. The motion passed unanimously.

Executive Session

Chief of Wildlife Lands MacDonnell presented four proposed acquisitions, which were reviewed and unanimously approved by the Board.

There being no further business the meeting was adjourned at 12:05 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,

Bonnie Booth
Secretary

List of documents presented to the Board at the December meeting

December Agenda

Draft November meeting minutes for review

December Personnel Report

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

“DRAFT Board Internal policy document, not for distribution outside Board Members prior to December 19 Board Meeting: Public Survey Process and Participants, Rattlesnake Restoration Project”