



MASSWILDLIFE

DIVISION OF FISHERIES & WILDLIFE

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

PRESENT: Dr. Joseph Larson/Chair, Michael Roche/Vice Chair, Ernest W. Foster IV, Stephen Sears, Dr. Brandi Van Roo, Ron Amidon/Commissioner/DFG, Mary-Lee King/Deputy Commissioner/DFG, Mark Tisa/Director, Jon Regosin/Deputy Director, Kris McCarthy/Associate Director/Finance and Administration, Tom French/Assistant Director/NHESP, Michael Huguenin/Assistant Director/Wildlife, Trina Moruzzi/Assistant Director/Operations, Todd Richards/Assistant Director/Fisheries, Marion Larson/Chief/Information and Education, Elizabeth Wroblecka/Chief/Wildlife Lands, Liz Newlands/CR Stewardship Coordinator, Christine Chisholm/Fee Lands Stewardship Coordinator, Todd Olanyk/Central Wildlife District Manager, Pat Huckery/Northeast Wildlife District Manager, Josh Gahagan/Northeast Wildlife Technician, Christine Peterson/Land Agent/Conn. Valley Wildlife District, Major David Loos/OLE;
PUBLIC: Brad Miner, Dave Morin, Jim Wallace, Wendy Larson, Tina French, Stan Andriski, Ellie Horwitz

DATE: February 21, 2019

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

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

Acceptance of Minutes

A motion was made by Dr. Van Roo to accept the minutes from the January meeting as presented. The motion was seconded by Mr. Foster. The motion passed unanimously.

Chair's Comments

Chair Larson reported that the Board had materials in the meeting packets to review for discussion at a later date.

Vice Chair Roche reported briefly on a preliminary meeting he had attended with the Director and some senior staff with representatives of the USFWS regarding refuges and the extremely positive interactions that took place. He stated that he was hopeful that the differences between the federal regulations on refuges and our state regulations will be reduced as a result of more meetings, and that he's looking forward to more open communications between the agencies.

Chair Larson pointed out that the Director's efforts in this regard have been extensive and that he was also hopeful for positive results in the near future.

Commissioner's Comments

Commissioner Amidon reported to the Board on a number of activities and meetings he had attended during the previous month, including a small-bridge and culvert working group he is chairing with a representative from MassDOT. The working group had been asked by legislators to investigate and try to streamline the permitting process and get projects done more quickly. He reported that the committee invited 16 agencies and NGOs to participate and all are playing an active part in the process. The

Commissioner also reported on a meeting he had attended with Southeast Wildlife District Manager Zimmer and representatives of the Joint Base Cape Cod regarding the rollout of the deer hunt planned there again this year. He also reported participating in the Saltwater Fishing Awards at the fishing show and meeting with officials at EEA to discuss the agency's budgets. Commissioner Amidon reported attending a meeting of the Massachusetts Conservation Alliance with 18 people from 12 organizations where the members determined the issues the group would focus on this year.

The Commissioner also pointed out a copy of a letter in the Board's meeting packets that he had received from state legislative leaders from Cape Cod requesting a Board meeting on the Cape, and he stated that he believes what is wanted is a listening session regarding coyote killing contests on the Cape, as well as a Board meeting.

Director's Comments

Director Tisa reported an update for the Board on the turkey hunting regulations process that staff has been following. He stated that Wildlife staff held informational meetings where the public was invited to comment, in compliance with the Board's direction that staff should gather public input on proposals before bringing them back to the Board to recommend sending the proposed changes to a public hearing. The Director reported that the March meeting will bring an updated presentation that incorporates the feedback staff received from the public, including from the two listening sessions. Vice Chair Roche reported that he had attended the Palmer session and was impressed with the staff presentation. The Director confirmed that any possible changes to regulations would not take effect in time for the spring Turkey season.

Law Enforcement Comments

Major David Loos reported on some of the many activities of the Massachusetts Environmental Police during the month of January, citing 14 calls to Assist MassWildlife, 14 for Animal Nuisance, 5 Bear-related calls, 43 Coyote calls, 18 Injured Wildlife, and 22 Raptor calls. He also reported 3 ATV accidents; no Motorboat accidents; and 3 Search-and-Rescue operations on water, including one fatality.

Major Loos also briefed the Board on a recent case he wanted to highlight on the marine side, a case of tuna taken off Gloucester. The individual took the fish illegally and dumped it in the woods when he thought he was under suspicion. The MEP got a conviction and a large fine, and the Major commented that it is not very often that conservation law enforcement gets such a clear victory.

Finally, the Major reported that the MEP had exhibited at the fishing show the previous week and would be present at the Springfield Sportsmen's Show the following weekend, right next to MassWildlife's display, as usual, to interact with and take questions from the public that will be present.

Chair Larson thanked Major Loos for attending the meeting and for his detailed report.

Personnel Report (Kris McCarthy)

Associate Director of Administration Kris McCarthy submitted the following personnel report for the Board's consideration and vote:

New Hires

<u>Employee</u>	<u>Position</u>	<u>Location</u>
Christopher Marsden	McLaughlin Hatchery Wildlife Technician Wildlife Technician II	Belchertown

Michael Clark	Sandwich Hatchery Wildlife Technician Wildlife Technician II	Sandwich
Everose (Eve) Schlüter	Assistant Director of NHESP Program Manager VI	Westborough

Mr. Foster moved acceptance of the report, Mr. Sears seconded the motion; the vote in favor was unanimous.

Migratory Waterfowl (Michael Huguenin)

Assistant Director for Wildlife Michael Huguenin provided the Board with a detailed presentation on the staff recommendations for the 2019-2020 migratory game bird hunting seasons, including the proposals, based on the current federal frameworks, for Woodcock, Rails, and Snipe; for Waterfowl, including the recommendations for the Youth days; Falconry; Sea Ducks and Brant; Goose; and Ducks and Coot, including Mallards. He reminded the Board members that the federal regulations require that states submit their season recommendations by April 30 in order to be promulgated by the start of the season, and that states cannot create regulations that are more liberal than the federal framework, though they can be more restrictive if they choose.

After first working through the federal frameworks for each component season in detail, Assistant Director Huguenin reported the staff's recommendations for each one. For Canada Geese, he reported that last year the Central and Coastal zones were adjusted from 70 day and 3 birds to 60 day and 2 birds due to declining numbers in Labrador and Newfoundland, which has put Massachusetts into a moderate package. This year, the Berkshire Zone has been reduced from 50 days and 3 birds to 30 days and 2 birds. Assistant Director Huguenin reported that this was because Canada Goose production in northern Quebec has been poor in recent years and 2018 had the worst production in 22 years. He noted that reducing the season length and bag limit now may prevent season closures like Massachusetts had between 1995 and 1998. He also stated that, based on the results of the latest hunter survey, comments at last year's public hearing, and written comments received, staff is proposing a later duck and goose season for the coastal zone. He explained that Massachusetts limits the late season on the coast to the northern part of the coast in order to avoid taking too many migrants on the Cape, noting that the Service sets a threshold for taking migrant birds during seasons that are designed to take residents, and if a state continually exceeds that limit it runs the risk of further restrictions from the Service, and he reiterated that the most likely area where we could exceed that limit is in the southern Coastal Zone.

In his discussion of the duck and coot seasons, Assistant Director Huguenin stated that although the general frameworks are unchanged from last year, his staff is reporting one major difference from previous years regarding mallard bag limits. The bag limits for many of the ducks remain unchanged from last year with the one major exception. He reported that, in accordance with the Service's consultation, Massachusetts will be reducing our mallard bag limit by half. In previous years, hunters were allowed to take 4 mallards, 2 of which could be hens. Staff is recommending reducing the bag for mallards to 2 birds with 1 hen in accordance with the limits allowed by the USFWS. He went on to explain the reasons for the change and reported that the Atlantic Flyway Council has moved to a multi-stock management model. That is, rather than using only Mallards as the model species, the Council is now using Wood Ducks, Green-winged Teal, Ring-necked Duck, and Goldeneye to more accurately represent the duck population across the flyway.

After a brief discussion and a few questions, Vice Chair Roche moved that the proposed 2019-2020 migratory game bird hunting seasons be sent to a public hearing as presented; Dr. Van Roo seconded the motion; the vote in favor was unanimous.

Fee and CR Stewardship Update (Elizabeth Wroblicka, Liz Newlands, and Christine Chisholm)

Chief of Wildlife Lands Elizabeth Wroblicka introduced CR (conservation restriction) Stewardship Coordinator Liz Newlands and Fee Stewardship Coordinator Christine Chisholm, who each provided the Board with a report about their respective activities on behalf of the agency to care for the land MassWildlife either holds a conservation restriction on or owns and manages, and to steward the public's investment in that land.

Ms. Newlands reported that the core functions of the CR Stewardship Program are to maintain landowner relations, conduct monitoring visits, work to resolve issues that she or the District staff might identify, and to review the landowners' management plans. She described the components of the baseline documentation reports that are compiled about each property at the time they are conserved and walked the Board through a typical annual monitoring visit that is ideally conducted on every CR property every year.

Ms. Chisholm discussed her role in helping to accomplish some of the goals of MassWildlife's ecological management of the Wildlife Management Areas (WMAs) it owns and that she helps to steward. She noted that both CR and fee lands provide opportunities to broaden the agency goals and objectives across the landscape of the state, gives the agency rights to approve landowner management plans, and allows it to monitor species of conservation concern and conduct research. She reviewed the state's current WMA portfolio and explained that her role as the WMA Stewardship Coordinator is to work with District staff to assist with questions related to deed research, to maintain good abutting landowner relations, and to coordinate survey work and boundary marking on the WMAs. Ms. Chisholm enumerated the many components of the process of identifying and marking WMA boundaries and then conducted a detailed discussion of some of the many issues that can arise with MassWildlife's WMAs and ways she and other District and stewardship staff work to resolve them.

After a number of questions and some discussion, Chair Larson thanked the stewardship coordinators for their hard work and detailed report.

Natural Heritage and Endangered Species Advisory Committee Report

Dr. Larson reported that the Natural Heritage and Endangered Species Advisory Committee's February meeting was the third in a series of meetings that looked at solar panel installations and wildlife habitat. He explained that UMass was interested to develop best practices for the installation of solar panels. He also stated that Dr. Van Roo's research involved research on and analyses of the same issues, and that she participated in the second meeting. The third meeting had a representative from the DOER (Division of Ecological Restoration) to talk about the incentives program DOER is offering to solar installation developers. Dr. Van Roo reported that the DOER is reviewing the choice of values for incentives and disincentives for placement of panels that it is paying for. The literature does not contain anything on this aspect of panel placement.

The Advisory Committee meeting also discussed briefly the proposed changes to the MESA list, including a new federal endangered species that is automatically added to the Massachusetts list by statute. The members also looked at the proceeds from the state tax form line that allows people to donate to NHESP and a large bump in the past couple of years because it is not clear why the donations have increased. Chair Larson reported that the Committee members also discussed some hopeful progress on a treatment for the fungal disease that is affecting bats. They also talked about the role of forests in the planet's CO₂ cycle, with the conclusion that what is being missed is the roles forestland plays for hydrology and climate cooling. The Chair also expects some more interesting debates about the roles of forests going forward.

Set Meeting Date

Members discussed dates for the April Fisheries and Wildlife Board meeting. Members selected April 18, 2019, at 10:00 a.m., with a likely hearing on the 2019-2020 migratory game bird hunting seasons at 11:00 a.m. Members also discussed the May meeting and decided upon May 15, 2019, at 1:00 p.m., though this meeting time may be adjusted later to accommodate a possible public hearing on that date.

Member's Comments

Dr. Van Roo, Vice Chair Roche, and Mr. Sears reported no comment.

The Commissioner stated that he had just learned that May 22 has been confirmed as the 2019 DFG Day at the Statehouse, with all four divisions represented to be available to talk to legislators about the work they do.

A motion was made by Vice Chair Roche to move into Executive Session for the purpose of discussing certain land acquisitions and to not return to open session. The motion was seconded by Mr. Foster. The motion passed unanimously.

Executive Session

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

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 3:15 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Bonnie Booth
Secretary

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

February Agenda

Draft January meeting minutes for review

Letter from State Senator Julian Cyr and State Representative Sarah Peake to Ronald Amidon,
Commissioner of the Department of Fish and Game, dated January 15, 2019

Email forwarded to Attd Susan Sacco from Director Mark Tisa dated January 29, 2019, "FW: Refuge
Proposals for hunting – quick update from USFWS"

Letter from Deputy Director Jon Regosin to Graham Taylor, Refuge Supervisor, North Zone, US Fish and
Wildlife Service, dated February 1, 2019

Email from Michael J. Veloza to Attd Susan Sacco dated February 6, 2019, "Proposed MassWildlife
Turkey Hunting Regulation Change"

Personnel Report

Spreadsheet of Natural Heritage Fund Taxpayer Donations (1992 to 2019)

Documentation for the executive session