

FINAL MINUTES

**Natural Heritage & Endangered Species Advisory Committee
(NHESAC)**

13 February 2020

DFW Field Headquarters, Southwest Meeting Room #103
1 Rabbit Hill Road, Westborough, MA 01581

MEMBERS:

Present: Mark Mello, Joseph Larson, Tim Flanagan, Kevin Powers, Wayne Petersen, Bill Brumback, Dave Small

Absent: N/A

ASSOCIATE MEMBERS:

Present: Andy Finton, Russ Hopping

Absent: Bryan Windmiller

AGENCY STAFF:

Present: Eve Schlüter, Marion Larson, Caitlin Sawicki

OTHERS:

Present: Michael Clark (citizen interested in conservation)

– The meeting was called to order at 1:30P.M. –

1. Approval of the January 2020 Minutes

Dave Small motioned that the January 2020 minutes be accepted, Joe Larson seconded, and members voted unanimously to approve.

2. Chair's Comments – Mark Mello

No comments

3. Board Member's Comments – Joseph Larson

Joe explained the history of the MA Cooperative Fish and Wildlife Research Unit and how it has been placed under the US Geological Survey since all members received copies of the Biennial Report 2018-2019.

Joe also commented on the 2019 Board-approved Furbearer and Wanton Waste Regulations and the Summary of Public Comments document. The focus was on how important these regulations are to keep the MA hunting regulations ethical.

Finally, Joe commented on several of the shared articles including how climate change is contributing to the decline of bumble bees and "Why Ecology Needs Natural History."

4. NHESP Report & Assistant Director's Report – Eve Schlüter

- Distributed several articles in member's packet and described some of them.
- The Massachusetts Endangered Species Act (MESA) turns 30 this year (2020) and Eve expanded on efforts to celebrate the anniversary over the coming year. Specific components of the program include:
 - A "Run for Wildlife," including a 5K and 10K trail run and a 1-mile kid's fun run, will be held at the Westborough WMA on 5/17/20. More details can be found at mass.gov/wildlife-run
 - A new way to make [online donations](#) in support of rare species conservation in MA.
 - The MassWildlife monthly e-newsletter will feature a "species spotlight" each month.
 - The fall 2020 issue of the Massachusetts Wildlife magazine will be dedicated to MESA and conservation of rare species.
 - Presentation and outreach materials are being developed for use by partners.
 - NHESP is interested in coordinating with partners to get the word out and share stories and events associated with rare species conservation.
 - A website that notes conservation success stories and tells the stories of some of the rare animals and plants on the MESA list is up and running. [This webpage](#) also notes upcoming events to celebrate the 30th anniversary of MESA.
- NHESP sponsored a week-long workshop on Structured Decision Making held at the Westborough FHQ during the first week of February. In addition to MassWildlife staff, many partners participated in three focus groups on Salt Marsh Restoration and Saltmarsh Sparrows in the Great Marsh, Brook Floater Restoration, and Conservation Priorities of Coldwater Streams.
- Heritage was successful in securing a \$350,000 grant from the Massachusetts Natural Resource Damages Program (NRD) for restoration work on calcareous fens in the Housatonic Watershed thanks to the leadership effort of Chris Buelow.
- Recovering America's Wildlife Act now has 173 sponsors, four of which are from Massachusetts
- NHESP and EOEEA are reviewing the "Ocean Management Plan" for impacts to rare species (e.g. placement of wind turbines).
- NHESP is reviewing proposed changes to the Migratory Bird Treaty Act by the current administration in Washington DC and will provide comment as Massachusetts has joined others states in challenging the proposed rule changes.
- NHESP has initiated planning for BioMap III with MA TNC. The revisions will need funding to implement proposed changes that include information on species management and anticipated impacts of climate change.
- Finally, Eve asked the committee for ideas on future presentations to the committee and members suggested the following:
 - How does NHESP look at and develop plans for specific species recovery beyond federal recovery plans?
 - The Housatonic Mitigation Plan
 - DFW's fire program and critical habitat restoration and management
 - Barn swallow conservation and the decision by USFWS to raise a building where a large colony of swallows was nesting
 - Federal and state cooperation, especially on NWR lands and state-listed species
 - The success at Crane WMA for expanding native grasslands and wildlife response

- Status of salt marsh habitat in MA and what is being done to combat the impacts of climate change

5. There was no presentation to the committee

6. Member's and Associate Member's Comments

Dave Small – Asked if there was any news from DOER regarding changes to regulations for sighting ground-mounted solar panels. Members of the Committee responded that they had not heard of any decisions yet. Dave also reported he had 5 male red-winged blackbirds at his feeders.

Kevin Powers – Noted that as a result of being involved in tagging greater shearwaters in the Gulf of Maine that an individual adult bird was tracked to Tristan Island in the south Atlantic and to Patagonia. The bird was nesting on Tristan Island (approximately halfway between South Africa and Argentina) and travelling to Patagonia to feed!

Andy Finton – TNC is welcoming Deborah Markowitz (former Vermont Secretary of State) as the new State Director as Wayne Klockner steps down this year.

Russ Hopping – Commented on his participation at the 2020 Atlantic Coast Plover Conference in West Virginia in January at the National Conservation Training Center (NCTC) and how awesome it was to be part of the Massachusetts contingency and the recovery story in Massachusetts. MA has outperformed all other states due to the statewide efforts of beach managers and the state guidelines and has led the recovery effort nationally.

– The meeting adjourned at 3:34 P.M. –

Drafted by: Russ Hopping
Submitted by: Kevin Powers