

The Berkshire Eagle

Berkshire Woods and Waters: Durand named to Fisheries and Wildlife Board

*BY GENE C HAGUE, Eagle correspondent
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Robert Durand is sworn in as a member of the state's Fisheries and Wildlife Board of Directors by Lt. Gov. Karyn Polito, right, as his wife Nancy watches on.

Governor Charlie Baker has named Robert A. Durand, president of Durand & Anastas Environmental Strategies, an environmental consulting and lobbying firm, to the Massachusetts Fisheries and Wildlife Board. Lieutenant Governor Karyn Polito conducted the swearing-in ceremony for the five-year term last Wednesday.

State Rep. William “Smitty” Pignatelli, D-Lenox, Chairman of the Joint Committee on Environment, Natural Resources and Agriculture, was one of about 10 Representatives and Senators who attended the swearing in.

Smitty said some nice words and reminded everyone of how close Bob was to the late George (Gige) Darey.

“I am so pleased and honored to receive this nomination to the board, which has been a part of my life in one way or another for most of my life,” Durand said.

“I’m thankful to Gov. Baker and Lt. Gov. Polito for their confidence in me to carry out this vital mission to protect many critical aspects of our natural world, and with it, our quality of life in Massachusetts.”

As one of the seven-member board, Durand will represent the Northeast Region, Middlesex and Essex counties, and replaces Fred Winthrop, who resigned from the board last fall. The board has various duties, including writing and overseeing all hunting and fishing regulations, Natural Resources and Endangered Species Act regulations, and is the appointing authority for the director of MassWildlife.

I would bet that most Massachusetts outdoor sportsmen and conservationists are extremely happy with Durand’s appointment.

Why?

Durand has been an avid outdoorsman and conservationist his entire life, and in 2011 was recognized as such by the board when it awarded him the Francis W. Sargent Conservation Award.

Prior to forming Durand & Anastas Environmental Strategies, he served four terms as state representative for Berlin and Marlborough, where he lives. He followed that with four terms as a state senator for the Middlesex and Worcester District, during which he chaired the Environment, Natural Resources and Agriculture Committee, and four years as Secretary of Environmental Affairs, under two former governors, the late Paul Cellucci and Jane Swift.

During his career as a public servant, Durand forged new bonds between the outdoor and sporting communities and environmentalists, bringing these advocates together to support initiatives that strengthened both. As a legislator, he wrote the Rivers Protection Act and the Community Preservation Act. As Secretary, he protected 150,000 acres of open space, including major bioreserves open to hunting and fishing; helped usher in the nation’s first state regulations on coal burning power plant emissions; and oversaw a vigorous campaign to reduce mercury emissions that bioaccumulate in wildlife and people. He also created Biodiversity Days, an annual event that saw tens of thousands of school children from more than 500 schools fan out across the state to learn about and catalogue plant and animal species, and championed environmental justice and environmental education.

Bob has served as the President of the Massachusetts Outdoor Heritage Foundation and served on the board of trustees for both The Nature Conservancy/Massachusetts Chapter and the Massachusetts Environmental Trust.

He has received many wildlife and conservation-related awards from various organizations, including Mahar Fish ‘N Game Club, Massachusetts Bowhunters Association, Essex and Middlesex County Leagues of Sportsmen, Massachusetts Wildlife Federation, Environmental League of Massachusetts, Ducks Unlimited, Trout Unlimited, Massachusetts Audubon Society, Gun Owner’s Action League and The Nature Conservancy.

Durand is no stranger to the Berkshires. For many years he has come out here to hunt. Ron Smith taught him how to turkey hunt back in the day and Bob frequently hunted turkeys with Gige. He also hunted woodcock, grouse and whitetail with Phil Hiser, Gige and Ginny Acabani and did some carp fishing and trout fishing on the Housatonic with Jay Baver.