

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE
NJ FISH AND GAME COUNCIL

Central Region Office
Robbinsville, NJ
November 9, 2010

The regular meeting of the New Jersey Fish and Game Council was held on the above date. In attendance were:

Acting Chairwoman Jeanette Vreeland
Councilman Phillip Brodhecker
Councilman Dave Burke
Councilman Ed Kertz
Councilman Robert Puskas
Councilman Dan Van Mater

Absent: Councilwoman Barbara Brummer
Councilman John Messeroll

Division employees included Director Dave Chanda, Assistant Director Larry Herrighty, Jim Sciascia, Tim Cussen, Lisa Barno, Tony Petrongolo, Carole Kandoth and Barbara Stoff.

Members of the public included representatives of the Federation of Sportsmen's Clubs, the Farm Bureau, the Star Ledger and others.

The meeting was called to order at 10:12 am.

The flag salute and Pledge of Allegiance were completed.

Minutes of the October 2010 meeting were reviewed. **A motion was made by Councilman Puskas, seconded by Councilman Burke to accept the minutes as presented. A vote was taken with all in favor.**

Acting Chairwoman Vreeland reviewed some of her activities this past month, including a trip to New Mexico, and assisting at the Rockport Game Farm. She commented on the good work done by the staff with the pheasant loading operations, and thanked them for their efforts on behalf of the Council.

Acting Chairwoman Vreeland attended the South Jersey Fur Harvesters Convention this past Sunday. She noted she had heard concerns about staff not attending meetings through the Division Representative Program and advised that she would check in to this further.

At this time, the following statement was read: In accordance with PL 1975, c.231 notice of this meeting was filed with and posted at the Office of the Secretary of State and delivered to the designated newspapers of the Division, the Newark Star Ledger and The Press (Atlantic City) on October 19, 2010.

Director Chanda addressed the Council. He welcomed and introduced the newest member of the Council, Phillip Brodhecker.

Director Chanda reported the recent ribbon cutting ceremony at the Rockport Game Farm, noting some of those who were in attendance. Among those present was Commissioner Martin, and he was proud of the fact that this was totally funded by user fees.

Staff recently sat with representatives of the Department of Agriculture and the Farm Bureau to discuss wildlife issues. Both were supportive of the Division's work, especially towards relief of the bear population.

At this time, the meeting was opened to public comment on the agenda item concerning moving the date of the Fall Trout Stocking Program. Barbara Sauchau from White House addressed the Council, noting that she opposes moving the date, as well as opposing the entire Fall Trout Stocking Program.

Supervising Biologist Stoff was in attendance to give a report of the lottery licensing system and results of the beaver, otter and bear permits. The beaver and otter permits both sold out during the lottery application period. She noted that both lotteries were oversubscribed, and that there has been an increase in these applications each year. She reviewed how the notifications for lottery winners or non-selected applications are made.

Bear permits had a total of 6,398 awarded. Zone 1 was oversubscribed, and sold out through the mail in lottery application period. Zone 2, 3 and 4 will all have permits available for the over-the-counter sale. There was additional discussion on hunters claiming their permits and on out of state hunters who may be attending the final bear education course just before the season, and how they can be accommodated to receive their permits.

Councilman Kertz inquired about the farmer permits, as a follow up to a County Federation Meeting he had attended. Some of the farmers were not in the system, and Supervising Biologist Stoff noted that farmer applicants were being re-evaluated to confirm their farmer status, and applicants with last names starting with the letter A through M had all been sent letters to renew their farmer information. Those who had not responded were no longer in the system to receive farmer permits, and once their applications were received and approved by the Bureau of Law Enforcement, they would be re-entered into the system to receive their permits. Discussion continued on farmer permits. Acting Chairwoman Vreeland also suggested that the Permit Section work with the Farm Bureau to make the farmers aware of this matter. Supervising Biologist Stoff advised that farmers with last names starting with the letter N through Z will be receiving the same recertification paperwork after the Spring turkey season permits are completed. Chief Cussen advised the Council that the Bureau of Law Enforcement checks to be sure that new applicants as well as those who have received permits previously to verify that they meet the requirements to be eligible to receive farmer permits.

Farmer representatives gave their reports. Councilman Puskas noted that farmers in the Central Region are having a terrible crop yield due to the weather conditions this year. Geese also continue to be a problem.

Councilman Brodhecker noted spotty crop yields in the Northern Region as well. Some areas are experiencing wildlife damage to crops, and there have also been reports of livestock being killed.

In the Southern Region, Councilman Kertz noted that crop yields have been bad, and they have had deer and weather damage, resulting in some areas showing zero crop yield. He also noted that farmer

depredation permits were discussed at a meeting he had attended, and he wanted to make the point that if a farmer is applying for a depredation permit, it is needed.

Councilman Kertz also noted concerns that crossbow hunters may be using lights, since farmers using depredation permits are experiencing that deer seeing lights turn and run.

Councilman Kertz also inquired about the ban on feeding deer, and thought that this may have been discussed at the meeting of the Department of Agriculture and the Farm Bureau. Assistant Director Herrightly noted that former Councilman Wolgast had mentioned this previously because a ban could be necessary to prevent the spread of disease if there were and outbreak. If there were to be a change, the Council could ask to have the authority to control baiting. It was also noted that in the past when bills have been introduced to ban baiting, the Division has always asked for an exemption for hunting purposes. Additionally, it was noted that any change would be a Legislative matter. There was some further discussion on this matter.

There was no report from the Legislative Committee or the Endangered and Non-Game Species Committee.

There was no report from the Federation Committee, but it was noted that the State meeting would be held next Friday. It was also noted that the Federation is now doing a weekly update.

Chief Barno reported for the Bureau of Freshwater Fisheries. The Fall trout stocking program is now completed. It had to be pushed back one week, which is something that has occurred in three of the last six years. Chief Barno noted that this is usually due to water levels and temperatures. This year, there was an 18 degree difference in the temperature of the water at the Hatchery compared to the stocking areas. Due to situations like this, Chief Barno noted the agenda item to push the Fall stocking program back one week so that it occurs during the second and third weeks of October, and described the request to do so for the Council. Acting Chairwoman Vreeland inquired if it could go back to the current schedule if the weather conditions allowed and Chief Barno noted that yes, but many anglers schedule their days off for Fall fishing in the Spring, and she would like to try and keep a set schedule. **A motion was made by Councilman Puskas, seconded by Councilman Van Mater to change the dates of the Fall trout stocking program by moving them back one week. A vote was taken with all in favor, none opposed.**

Chief Barno reported that the Winter trout stocking program would occur on Monday, November 22, Tuesday November 23 and Wednesday November 24 before Thanksgiving.

There will be a Fisheries Forum at the Hackettstown Hatchery on December 4, 2010 and the Winter stocking program will be discussed. They may ask to change the timing of the Winter program due to staffing shortages. Anglers will also be asked for their input on criteria for the water bodies being incorporated in to the Winter trout stocking program.

Staff are preparing for the 2012 Fish Code. Chief Barno noted that the Fisheries Committee may need to schedule a meeting early next year. Some suggestions have already been received to be reviewed, and they will also schedule an open forum for angler input.

At the Hackettstown Hatchery, the last of the fish are out and the ponds have been drained. The pipe replacement project is near completion. Staff had hoped to get two working wells from this project, but could only acquire one 250 gallon well at this time. Chief Barno described that they still have use

of the main spring system, but would not have enough backup should the spring have a problem. A project to locate a spot and dig for a second well will be re-bid in the Spring.

Also at Hackettstown, maintenance has continued on the buildings and grounds.

Chief Barno and Principal Biologist Hamilton attended the Eastern Brook Trout Joint Venture conference. There was a 17 state assessment of data, and Chief Barno gave a brief review. In 2011, a renewed assessment will be done on a finite scale. Chief Barno noted that Principal Biologist Hamilton did an excellent job of keeping the New Jersey data up-to-date.

Netting of lake trout is being done at the Round Valley Reservoir. The Star Ledger will be doing a video of this project.

Staff are also working to complete Federal Aid reports.

Councilman Puskas noted that he had been asked by fishermen at a local shop if Spooky Brook Pond could be added to the Fall stocking program. Chief Barno noted it could be considered, but the water quality was questionable.

Assistant Director Herrighty reported for the Bureau of Wildlife. Supervising Biologist Kandoth was in attendance, and noted the vote last month to move a portion of Turkey Hunting Zone 16 to Zone 22. This would result in a shift in permit quotas, a point that was not noted last month. This was informational only. Councilman Burke inquired if Deer Zones 19 and 23 would also have a permit shift. This will be looked at.

A handout was distributed to make an addendum to the proposed amendments for the 2011-2012 Game Code. The proposal would clarify or add language to maintain the take of one deer at a time, except in those zones where it is expressly permitted to take two deer at a time. This was reviewed by Supervising Biologist Kandoth for the Council. **A motion was made by Councilman Kertz, seconded by Councilman Van Mater to accept this proposal.** After some additional discussion, **a vote was taken with all in favor, none opposed.**

Assistant Director Herrighty distributed the bear activity report. While Categories I and II had both gone down compared to the same time period last year, Category III calls and total calls overall were both up.

The Comprehensive Black Bear Management Policy will be published in the November 15, 2010 Register, and will be in effect five days after publication.

Assistant Director Herrighty reported that the Division was supposed to have been in court today regarding a lawsuit filed by the BEAR Group. This would have been for arguments only. He feels that the Council should be vindicated in this matter, where the lawsuit claims that committee meetings were held that had a quorum of members. He noted that while they did have a quorum at three meetings in the last several years, a review of these meetings show evidence that there was no discussion about the bear policy.

So far this year, 25 bears have been euthanized, with two being this past weekend. Assistant Director Herrighty noted that in Blirstown, a bear was aggressively approaching a ground blind where youth

hunters were present. This bear was shot by a hunter who was nearby in a treestand. The second bear was shot by a police officer from Clark. This bear had aggressively charged a police officer.

Check station assignment information was reviewed.

It was also reported that staff have completed the Fall bear research. Over 200 bears were tagged.

A booklet prepared by the University of Delaware on quail was shown to the Council.

Assistant Director Herrighty reported that Principal Biologist Burnett is working with a South Jersey quail group on starting a Quail in the Classroom program similar to the Trout in the Classroom program. There are currently ten teachers interested in participating.

Assistant Director Herrighty reported that Supervising Biologist Predl has not received any applications so far for Community Based Deer Management Programs. It was noted that some towns may be holding off because of budget restraints.

Two coyote attacks on dogs were reported. A buck deer attack on a dog was also reported in today's newspaper.

Assistant Director Herrighty referenced the monthly report, which shows that the pre-season waterfowl banding had begun. Dove tagging has also been completed, with 364 birds caught and tagged.

Chief Petrongolo reported for the Bureau of Land Management. Twenty seven acres have been added to the wildlife management area system this month, bringing the total acreage to over 327,000. He described the new acquisition sits between the Pequest and Rockport WMAs.

The State House Commission has approved the proposal for the Turnpike widening project, which was discussed at last month's meeting.

The boat ramp project on the Hansey Creek in Cumberland County, which is part of the Egg Island WMA has been completed. The project included a ramp, floating docks, and a parking lot. Chief Petrongolo added that this is a popular area for waterfowl hunting and crabbing. The project was completed using Corporate Business Tax (CBT) monies.

Dam restoration projects will also be done using CBT monies. These include the Thundergut Pond in Salem County, and the Elmer Lake dam.

The Cumberland County Federation of Sportsmen's Clubs purchased a floating dock for Lake Audrey that will be installed next Spring.

Councilman Burke noted a news release that indicated the Department had received 20.3 million dollars and inquired about this, adding that the Mad Horse and Stowe Creek WMAs were mentioned. Chief Petrongolo noted these funds were from an oil spill that occurred on the Delaware River several years ago, and will be used for restoration projects.

Acting Chairwoman Vreeland asked for a Pinelands update. Chief Petrongolo noted a new draft of the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) has been circulated and should be approved within the next several months. A plan for the Greenwood Forest WMA has been received and is under review. This

is a prerequisite for a forest stewardship plan. Chief Petrongolo further described the new MOU and how projects should now move forward more quickly.

Acting Chairwoman Vreeland noted that sportsmen have indicated they would like to assist with removing dead wood on WMAs. They discussed this matter and Chief Petrongolo described that liability is a concern, but advised that the Division of Parks and Forestry has a program in place to cut firewood that residents can apply for.

The Zamek farm lease that had been reviewed previously was discussed. Councilman Puskas inquired as to the “prevailing wage” language in the lease, and Chief Petrongolo noted this was something he would discuss with Marci Green of the Bureau of Leases and Concessions.

The meeting recessed for lunch at 12:04 pm and resumed again at 12:52 pm.

Chief Sciascia reported for the Bureau of Information and Education. He noted he was not at last month’s meeting because he was filming an interview about the Fall trout stocking program.

Chief Sciascia reported that the first annual WILD Expo had 4,000 people in attendance during the two days it ran. Many positive comments were received during the exit interviews that were taken, and plans are already in place for next year’s event. The event location is being switched to the Colliers Mills WMA, and will take place on September 17 and 18, 2011.

The Governor’s Surf Fishing Tournament was held, and had 753 registrants. Lieutenant Governor Guadagno was in attendance to present the awards.

The Fall trout stocking promotion is underway with assistance from the Press Office. Land Management and Fisheries staff have also lent support.

Cablevision will be airing information about the Pequest Hatchery on their Neighborhood Journal show. They have previously aired segments on the WILD Expo and the Governor’s Surf Fishing Tournament.

A statewide press release was done with information for homeowner’s on ways to minimize potential black bear conflicts. Assistant Biologist (Ruggerio) Smith has also reached out to 1,200 people on black bear education. A plan to distribute 75,000 Kids Activity Books is also being developed.

Work on the black bear educational DVD is progressing. Footage for the New Jersey specific segment of the program will be filmed shortly.

The Take A Kid Hunting pheasant hunt has been completed. A total of eight wildlife management areas held mentored hunts, with 415-420 participants registered. Two other WMAs were stocked for hunting outside of the mentored program.

Hunter education graduate numbers are down by 4 ½% compared to the same time last year. Even with the number of students being down, the total number of course certificates issued has increased, which indicates students are taking more than one type of course during their class. Bear education courses were also reviewed, and Chief Sciascia reported that they expected 4,500 to 5,000 hunters to complete this course.

Approval was obtained for allocating \$100,000 in Federal Aid Grant monies for improvements to the archery ranges on WMAs, and Hunter Ed staff is working with the Bureau of Land Management on these plans.

A map showing the areas where schools that are participating in the Trout in the Classroom program were handed out to the Council. Chief Sciascia noted that the eggs have been distributed. Currently there are 103 schools participating with a total of 117 tanks. Annually, more than 10,500 New Jersey students are learning about stream ecology, conservation and trout through TIC. He commended TIC coordinator Jessica Griglak and added that the partnership with Trout Unlimited and participation from TU volunteers makes this program possible.

Chief Sciascia noted the upcoming Garden State Outdoor Sportsmen's Show and Deer Classic. The show is under new management with improved promotion of the Classic which is a featured attraction. He feels this will improve the visibility of the Classic and increase visitation by people who com the Show.

Chief Sciascia commented on Digest Editor Cindy Kuenstner's working with Law Enforcement staff and communities on hunter access issues. This year has been very active, with six communities having concerns. Chief Sciascia wanted the Council to be aware that staff are available to work with municipalities on hunting access issues. Acting Chairwoman Vreeland added that she saw the program given at Jefferson Township, and noted the very nice presentation that was given.

There was some additional discussion on matters reported by Chief Sciascia today

Chief Cussen reported for the Bureau of Law Enforcement. He reported that Conservation Officer Nestle of the Northern Region will be retiring on December 31, 2010. He is currently in his 32nd year of service.

Three Conservation Officer 3 positions have been filled. The newly hired officers include Christopher Moscatiello and Edward Klitz in the Marine Region, and Ryan Harp in the Northern Region. All will be starting on November 21, and will be going to the police academy sometime in January.

Conservation Officers reported a total of 6,411.5 hours of duty during this reporting period. They included 1,261 for marine resource patrols, 934 for deer hunting patrols, 479 for hunting patrols and 341 for fishing patrols.

A total of 3,477 field inspections were made, resulting in 218 summonses, 25 written warnings and 2 criminal arrests. The summonses included 119 for marine recreation violations, 28 freshwater fishing violations, 13 wildlife management area violations, 11 deer hunting violations and 10 waterfowl hunting violations.

Chief Cussen added that there was a large number of items given by the Marine Unit for the monthly report, which he had condensed for the monthly highlights. Most of the items regarded the illegal harvesting of tautog, for which there is currently a demand, and that recreational fisherman were harvesting them on a commercial basis.

Assistant Director Herrighty pointed out that Chief Cussen would also be retiring at the end of December. There was some additional discussion on retirements within the administrative area of the Bureau, and Chief Cussen noted that this is something that needs to be addressed.

Assistant Director Herrighty asked about the piles of deer found in Morris County that were reported in the news last week. Chief Cussen was away, but noted he could check on this matter.

At 1:30 Director Chanda had to leave the meeting.

Old and new business was discussed. The tentative 2011 meeting dates were discussed, and are tentatively scheduled to be voted on next month.

Presentations for upcoming meetings were discussed.

The Division Representative Program was also discussed. Assistant Director Herrighty noted that Principal Biologist Ivany has been made aware that there are vacancies to be filled for this program.

Councilman Kertz noted that he still has concerns on allowing youth hunters to not have to follow the earn-a-buck restrictions during the archery season. He feels the restriction should be in place for all hunters. He reviewed his concerns, and would like to see it removed from the proposed amendments to the Game Code, and asked the other Council members to think about this. Councilman Puskas added that he understands Councilman Kertz's point, but that the hunters were not breaking the rules, the rules had been changed for them. There was some additional discussion on this matter.

The public comment period was opened.

Barbara Sauchau addressed the Council. She commented on; the Rockport Game Farm; Epizootic Hemorrhagic Disease; Federal Pitman Robertson Funds; Bear Hunting; Council Minutes & Locations; staff attendance at Conferences; Quail Management and Forestry Issues.

Next to speak was Ron Deal, President of the New Jersey Fur Harvesters. He thanked Acting Chairwoman Vreeland for attending their conference.

Mr. Deal offered the Farm Bureau their organizations assistance with wildlife.

There were no other public comments.

A motion was made by Councilman Van Mater, seconded by Councilman Kertz to adjourn. A vote was taken with all in favor. Meeting adjourned at 1:56 pm.