

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE
NJ FISH AND GAME COUNCIL

Central Region Office
Robbinsville, NJ
April 8, 2014

The regular meeting of the Fish and Game Council was held on the above date.

The meeting was called to order at 1:00 p.m. by Acting Chairman Burke.

The flag salute and Pledge of Allegiance were completed.

Acting Chairman Burke read aloud the following notice: In accordance with P.L. 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 Atlantic City Press on April 1, 2014.

Roll call was taken. In attendance were:

Acting Chairman Dave Burke
Councilwoman Brummer
Councilman DeMartino (arrived at 1:04 p.m.)
Councilman Gudmundsson
Councilman Link (arrived at 1:24 p.m.)
Councilman Puskas
Councilman Van Mater

Absent: Councilwoman Blumig
Councilman Brodhecker

Division employees included D. Chanda, L. Herrighty, P. Nelson, T. Petrongolo, L. Barno, M. Chicketano, D. Golden, A. Ivany, T. Nichols and C. Stanko.

There were several members of the public in attendance.

Minutes of the March 11, 2014 meeting were reviewed. **A motion was made by Councilman Gudmundsson, seconded by Councilman Puskas to approve the minutes as presented. A vote was taken with all in favor.**

Acting Chairman Burke commented that the weather was improving, noting that there had been 16 snowstorms and many days where the temperatures were below zero.

The trout season opened this past Saturday, and he had been hearing mixed reviews on success rates. The turkey season will open on April 21, and the youth turkey hunt will be April 19. In Southern New Jersey there has been a lot of bass, perch and striper fishing.

Acting Chairman Burke also commented on turkeys that were being found and reported to be headless. He noted that this is caused by owls, which are known to attack turkeys and only take off their heads.

Director Chanda addressed the Council. He and Assistant Director Nelson, representatives from NJ Audubon, the Nature Conservancy and Conserve Wildlife recently were in Washington, D.C. regarding the state wildlife grant program. He gave a brief review of their activities and meetings with our Congressional representatives.

(Councilman DeMartino arrived at 1:04 p.m.)

Director Chanda also noted he appreciated Council's efforts last month and the resulting fish policy.

Director Chanda held three region meetings last month with all Division staff to present a program review, address any agency issues and give an update on the current work being done.

He noted that information on the opening day of trout season and the Pequest open house would follow, but did comment that there were concerns about participation on the opening day of trout season due to the Furunculosis outbreak at the Pequest Trout Hatchery. License and trout stamp sales were only down by 5% the day before the season opened, and this was mostly attributed to the poor weather conditions. Director Chanda also distributed a postcard that had been designed and sent to past trout stamp purchasers. There was some additional discussion regarding the trout season.

At this time, Chief Chicketano from the Bureau of Law Enforcement began the presentation of the 2013 Wild Turkey Federation Award to Officer Wesley Kille. Officer Kille has been with the Division of Fish and Wildlife since 2012, and covers the Gloucester County area. A brief review of his work with the Bureau was given, and fellow members of the Bureau were introduced. Also in attendance to present the award to Officer Kille was Lou Gambale of the National Wildlife Turkey Federation.

Acting Chairman Burke noted that there were no agenda items which would require a vote today, so the public comment period would be held at the end of the meeting.

Councilman Puskas reported for the Agriculture Committee. He commented on the long Winter, and that the resulting thaw and recent rains have made things very muddy. Geese continue to be a problem, and he noted information from the United States Department of Agriculture where their data shows damage in excess of \$300,000 to crops in New Jersey over the last several years. They also noted that the resident goose population was 70,000, but should be closer to 40,000. He added that the loss to the agricultural community needs to be looked at.

Assistant Director Herrighty advised that he took information from Councilman Puskas and the Farm Bureau to the Atlantic Flyway Technical Committee. The Virginia representative also noted problems. The Technical Committee will look in to this issue again, but this is made more difficult because of the resident geese merging with the migratory ones. Councilman Puskas commented further on the severe amount of damage he is seeing.

Councilmen Brodhecker and Link were not in attendance to report for their areas. Acting Chairman Burke commented that planting began late in Southern New Jersey, and farmers had concern about the severe cold and the effect it might have on the blueberry crops.

Acting Chairman Burke reported for the Federation. He noted that hunters are upset about the question on the deer survey regarding driving deer, and there is a meeting tomorrow evening at the Clementon Gun Club to discuss this matter. Assistant Director Herrighty advised the Council that the Division has received questions regarding this survey question, and additional data will be provided to the Council. He further noted that Bureau Chief Golden and Supervising Biologist Stanko also offered to attend this meeting and address any concerns, but did not receive a response.

In Atlantic County, fishing tournaments and Hooked on Fishing Not on Drugs (HOFNOD) events have been occurring. Last month a shooting clays event was held.

Councilman Gudmundsson noted that the annual dinners have occurred, and gave a brief review of those he was able to attend.

He also noted the opening day of trout season, and that the non-stocked area of the South Branch had more people fishing there than expected. His club also had a good turnout of participants on opening day. Councilman Gudmundsson commented that the Musconetcong Valley parking areas were all full.

(Councilman Link arrived at 1:25 p.m.)

Councilman Van Mater has heard a number of complaints about the quota of turkey permits allotted in Zone 14. Hunters feel that there are not enough permits offered, and that the zone area is too big.

Councilman Van Mater was not able to attend the last State meeting, but will be attending his County's meeting this Thursday night.

Chief Golden commented on the turkey permit quotas for Zone 14. Staff have been reviewing that zone, and had considered dividing it in half. Supervising Biologist McBride feels that the turkey population has risen enough that the amount of permits can be increased without splitting the zone. This would be a consideration for the 2015 Game Code.

Councilman DeMartino reported that the Monmouth and Ocean County Federations are opposed to any deer hunting changes. Councilman Van Mater added that his area is opposed too.

Councilman Link was asked to give his Agriculture Committee report. Those in his area are opposed to any changes in the deer hunting regulations as well. They are also experiencing problems related to geese, but most recently have been affected by the rain.

There was no report from the Finance Committee. Director Chanda commented that the Division should be good to close out the year, but would have more details toward June.

There was no report from the Freshwater Fisheries Committee.

There was no report from the Game Committee, but it was noted that they needed to schedule a meeting. At this time, the agenda item regarding whether or not to have a Fish and Game Council meeting in May was addressed, and consideration given to cancelling the meeting and instead having the Game Committee meet on that date. **A motion was made by Councilman Gudmundsson, seconded by Councilman Puskas to cancel the regular meeting of the Fish and Game Council scheduled for May 13. A vote was taken with all in favor, none opposed.** This in turn opened up that date for the Game Committee to meet. They will meet on May 13 at 10 a.m.

Assistant Director Nelson reported for the Legislative Committee, noting that they had met earlier today. She gave a brief review of bills that they discussed, adding that some of them have been seen in previous Legislative cycles. They were:

A 394 Authorizes Sunday bow hunting on federal military installations

A 1008 Provides totally disabled persons with discount on hunting license fees

A 1882 Authorizes deer hunting with firearms on Sunday on private property

Also noted were several bills that were quite similar, all relating to free hunting, fishing and trapping licenses for military personnel, with a variety of privileges. Those bills were: A 761, A 2285, S 193, S 240, S 325 and S 326. The Division recommends that the Council support the bills noted today.

On S 356, it was recommended that the Council take no position. This proposal would require voter registration forms be available and accepted at all license selling sights, and there were concerns on the personal information listed on those forms.

A motion was made by Councilman Puskas, seconded by Councilman Gudmundsson that the Council take a position on the bills noted today as recommended. A vote was taken with all in favor, none opposed.

Assistant Director Nelson further noted that the Legislature is now working on the budget, and she did not expect any movement on pending bills for approximately a month. Those that have moved previous to the meeting today were:

- A 548 Designates bison as agricultural livestock
- A 1755 Establishes forest harvest program on State-owned land
- A 2777 Defines reasonable deviations in the course of transporting firearms
- S 356 Requires voter registration forms be available when applying for hunting, fishing, or trapping license; requires display and collection of completed application if the applicant wishes to register at a public agency

Acting Chairman Burke inquired about the bill addressing the sale of wild venison. Assistant Director Nelson noted this as A 3039 Commercial Harvest License. She added that there are many problems with this proposal and Acting Chairman Burke advised that it was important that this bill be tracked. There was additional discussion on this proposal, with members noting comments on the internet and news articles being done on it.

Councilwoman Brummer had no new information to report for the Endangered and Nongame Species Advisory Committee, adding that they would be meeting next week.

Acting Chairman Burke advised that the Waterfowl Stamp Advisory Committee meeting that had been tentatively scheduled for this evening was cancelled.

With the absence of Councilman Brodhecker, there was no report for the Wildlife Rehabilitator's Advisory Committee.

Chief Barno reported for the Bureau of Freshwater Fisheries. Copies of the completed Fish Code were distributed, along with preliminary results from the opening day of the trout season. In some areas, poor weather and cold water temperatures affected angler success. Areas that received the bonus broodstock fish seemed to have the majority of angler interest, and had better catch results overall. Chief Barno gave a brief summary of the information distributed today, including results to the survey questions that were asked during the angler count.

Staff from the Hackettstown Hatchery set trap nets on Farrington Lake, but progress was slow. At Budd Lake, ice coverage prohibited the trapping of Northern pike, but Chief Barno noted that there were enough fish held over in the Hatchery pond to meet their egg quota.

Chief Barno also reviewed the trap net success for walleye. A total of 581 fish were caught, and so many eggs were harvested that staff will be able to offer some to New York for their hatchery to use since their waters are frozen over as well.

There was some additional discussion on the Bureau's current trap netting program. Also noted was that the Research and Management staff had set nets this morning at Pompton Lake, and will later move on to Lake Hoptatcong.

Principal Biologist Ivany reported for the Bureau of Information and Education. He noted the recent open house held at the Pequest Trout Hatchery and Education Center. The poor weather conditions caused problems for parking, and he expressed thanks to the Land Management staff for providing extra manpower to assist. The car count done at the gate estimates that 3,000 to 3,500 visitors were in attendance.

The dedication of the donated State record black bear to the Pequest Education Center occurred prior to the open house. There was some additional discussion, and Principal Biologist Ivany described the mount and the display area where it is being shown.

The Lieutenant Governor as well as representatives from the Commissioner's Office attended the opening day of trout season events at the Pequest Education Center. Director Chanda also commented on the Lieutenant Governor's visit.

Principal Biologist Ivany noted that members of the Warren County Board of Chosen Freeholders have expressed an interest in partnering with Fish and Wildlife to help promote the Pequest facility. He reminded the Council that Pequest is now open most weekends from 10 to 4.

Plans are on track for the Governor's Surf Fishing Tournament on May 18. A news release with additional information, as well as invitations to staff in the Governor's Office will be completed soon. Director Chanda added that the Lieutenant Governor meets with and hosts the conservation groups at the bay house as part of the event.

Radio station WNNJ 103.7 has been in touch with I & E staff regarding the "outdoor minute" segment they first started with former Chief Sciascia. This program has started again, and the first message was broadcast last week.

The Principal Public Information Assistant position at Pequest has been filled. John Carlucci, who transferred from Parks and Forestry, came highly recommended to the Division.

Principal Biologist Ivany commented that Hurricane Sandy removed many of the boat pump-out stations, and the Clean Vessel Act Program is working with marinas to get stations replaced. He noted the progress that is being made, adding that he has been involved with the program since 1998 and what a good program it is.

Acting Chairman Burke asked if there were any fishing line disposal drop programs. Principal Biologist Ivany noted that there is at Pequest, but he was not aware of any major campaign for this and offered to look into it further.

Acting Chairman Burke also inquired as to the current condition of the Sedge Island Education Facility. Principal Biologist Ivany advised that things were up and running and programs have been scheduled.

Chief Petrongolo reported for the Bureau of Land Management. During this past month, 247 acres were added to the wildlife management area system, and the current total acreage of the system is 343,198.

Chief Petrongolo expressed his gratitude and appreciation to the Cumberland County Federation of Sportsmen for holding their 23rd annual trash hunt. Over 200 participants picked up 16 ½ tons of trash, plus 846 tires on wildlife management area properties. He noted that since the original program in 1992, they have picked up a total of 942 tons of trash and 20,867 tires.

Acting Chairman Burke inquired about a program that the Division of Parks and Forestry has where individuals can be awarded for reporting illegal dumping occurrences. Assistant Director Nelson advised that the Division is involved with this as well.

Chief Petrongolo distributed copies of a lease for the Council to review. He noted that by law, Council needs the chance to review and comment on any land disposals. The paperwork today is for the renewal of a 50 year lease that had expired in 2008 for a right-of-way access to the Jersey Central Power and Light Company for access through the Colliers Mills WMA. The original lease from 1958 allowed for a one-time payment of somewhere between \$10,000 and \$13,000. This new lease payment is based on \$.15 per square foot of land, and will result in \$11,774,000 (plus) in payment over the next 20 years, with the initial payment being \$460,000 (plus) the first year, and will increase by 2.5% per year thereafter. This lease has already been approved by the State House Commission. Chief Petrongolo noted that these monies should be put into a special account for Hunter and Angler monies, since the property was purchased originally with Hunter and Anglers funds in 1941. He also noted that the original lease required that the power company manage the property on their own, but the new lease requires the Division to have input on how the property is managed. The power company will develop a plan, and the Division can comment on it before written approval to proceed is given.

Acting Chairman Burke asked if something should be sent to the Commissioner's Office suggesting a special account be established to receive these funds. Director Chanda advised that the Division can put this into a separate distinguishable account. Acting Chairman Burke also inquired if a memorandum from the Council noting their approval was needed, and was advised that something should be sent to Assistant Commissioner Boornazian. There was some additional discussion on the lease program. Council was in agreement that Acting Chairman Burke would send a memo suggesting where to deposit these funds.

At last month's meeting, Chief Petrongolo noted an acquisition which would increase the size of the Millville WMA. After the purchase was completed, the City of Millville indicated that they too had been interested in acquiring this property for developing and industrial park. Now, they would like to purchase the property in question. Through the Ogden-Rooney process and a mandatory public hearing is required, and one is scheduled on May 7th. Chief Petrongolo reviewed the property in question, which is 81 acres in size and was first acquired in July 2013 by the Green Acres Program. He distributed copies of a report to the Council, advising that this was for their review and if they chose to, comments to the Commissioner. There was further comment and discussion on this and its ties to the Holly Farms acquisition. Councilwoman Brummer shared her concerns on this proposal.

Acting Chief Chicketano reported for the Bureau of Law Enforcement. He reviewed some of the highlights from last month's bureau report for the Council.

Chief Golden reported for the Bureau of Wildlife Management, advising that the first pheasant eggs were set at the Rockport Game Farm and are due to hatch at the end of April. Staff has a goal of 50,000 birds for this coming season. He added that improvements continue at the Rockport facilities, but plans for the indoor catch building will have to be put off until next year due to a funding shortfall for the building as it was designed.

Modifications were made to the building design to make it affordable, which further pushed back the bid process.

Chief Golden met with the Regional Superintendents from the Bureau of Land Management earlier this month to discuss a new pheasant allocation formula. Division Geographic Information Specialists are also assisting by calculating percentages of birds stocked on wildlife management areas, which Chief Golden noted will help with hunter safety and satisfaction.

Genetic data collected from black bears has been sent to East Stroudsburg University to develop a current population estimate. Additional information on age data will be provided by Penn State University who are analyzing data collected from 10 years of tooth samples.

Staff working on the Quail Recovery Plan met with contractors on habitat management. Farm services contracts have been written for outside farmers to do work and are pending approval, but a separate contract is already in place for work at the Dix WMA. Chief Golden gave a brief review of this project. He plans to present the Quail Recovery Plan to the Council at the June meeting, which will be followed by a stakeholder meeting later in the month.

Supervising Biologist Stanko was in attendance to present the harvest results from the deer season. Information was distributed to the Council, and a power point program was given. Information included that the harvest totals were increased to 51,596 deer, compared to 49,942 from last year. There was an expected increase due to Superstorm Sandy the year before, but even so harvest totals in the Northern Region were down due to poor weather conditions this past season. The Central and Southern Regions had increased harvest totals.

A detailed review was given by season, as well as a comparison by weapon type and trends from the 2000 to 2013 calendar year seasons. Also noted was that results from the Community Based Deer Management Program showed harvest numbers were down this past season.

Principal Biologist Nichols presented the Division's recommendations for the Migratory Bird Regulations for the upcoming season, explaining that there are regulations set by the United States and Canada Fish and Wildlife Services, and individual states are able to make their own recommendations from these. Part of the process also includes a public comment period, and the Council sets the dates annually as noted in the Game Code.

Principal Biologist Nichols distributed information to the Council, as well as reviewing information during a power point presentation. Included was review of the North, South and Coastal zones, and information from a survey done last year. Acting Chairman Burke noted that the Cumberland County Federation asked for a reduction of the Virginia rail and sora rail from 25 to 15 per day, and felt that this should be given serious consideration for the upcoming year. Principal Biologist Nichols did not know of any states that set their limits below what the Federal limits will allow, but advised it can be considered. There was some additional discussion on the information presented today, and it was noted that the final dates will be voted on at the June meeting.

Old and new business was discussed. Members were reminded to present any suggestions for topics to be included at the September Joint Council's Meeting. Councilman Van Mater advised that he will not be able to attend the September meeting.

The public comment period was opened, and those wishing to address the Council were reminded that they would have three minutes to do so.

Bill Hartrum from Ocean County addressed the Council regarding turkey permits. He had concerns about permit purchases on the first day of the over the counter sale, and felt there should be a limit of one permit per person. Mr. Hartrum also felt the need to increase the quota of permits in zones 14, 16-and 12. Lastly, he shared his concerns about field trial events being held too close to the turkey hunting season, specifically noting the Greenwood Forest WMA.

Doug Ramsure from Bridgeton was next to address the Council. He commented that he is working with the South Jersey Quail Project, and wanted to thank the Division for the work being done by employee J. Sloan. Mr. Ramsure also noted a scheduled field project working with 800 youth participants to establish hedgerows and feed plots. Mr. Ramsure also shared suggestions for seed that could be purchased for establishing feed plots. He spoke of his attendance at a Cumberland County 4-H event, where he took several quail in a cage for display, and his disappointment that participants did not even know what a bobwhite quail was.

Mr. Ramsure commented on cats roaming on public lands, and that they were a problem.

Lastly, Mr. Ramsure commented on field trial events, noting the economic boost they provide when held in New Jersey.

Janet Pizar from Millburn advised that she was the founder of Public Trust Wildlife Management. She stated that she had reviewed the deer harvest reports for the past several years, and that there was a change in the designation of the zone strategies with no legend to follow, and felt this could be difficult for a lay person to determine. Acting Chairman Burke inquired as to what report Ms. Pizar was referring, and she indicated the deer season graphs from today. Acting Chairman Burke advised Ms. Pizar that all information is noted in the Game Code; she again stated that this may be difficult for some people to determine if acquiring this information through an OPRA (Open Public Records Act) request. Acting Chairman Burke advised Ms. Pizar that it should not be a problem to have a legend included.

Barbara Sauchau from Whitehouse was next to address the Council today. She read from a newspaper article related to Baldpate Mountain. She also commented on another article on water quality for the Highlands to the Delaware Bay, and felt the timber harvest plans for Whiting, Weldon Brook and the Sparta Mountain Wildlife Management Areas were wrong and that trees helped with water quality. Additionally, Ms. Sauchau commented on the Wildlife Action Plan and felt it did not reach out to a broad range of public participation. She noted another news article about a person who cares for bears. Ms. Sauchau expressed her feelings on wildlife and hunting.

Mark Lanzim from Toms River was last to address the Council today. He noted that he is a member of the Ocean County Federation, and hoped that some of the right-of-way lease monies for the Colliers Mills area could be used to have some work done there. The Federation also is sending a letter to the Council on turkey permit allocations. Lastly, Mr. Lanzim commented on the opening day of the trout season, and that there was talk that the fish were not safe to eat, and suggested the Division act on this. He also noted hearing rumors of the Division possibly purchasing additional trout for distribution.

With no one else wishing to address the Council today, **a motion was made by Councilman Van Mater, seconded by Councilman Link to adjourn. A vote was taken with all in favor.**

Meeting adjourned at 4:00 p.m.