

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE
NJ FISH AND GAME COUNCIL

Central Region Office
Robbinsville, NJ
August 12, 2014

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

The meeting was called to order at 10:14 a.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 delivered to the designated newspapers of the Division, the Newark Star Ledger and the Atlantic City Press on July 29, 2014.

Roll call was taken. In attendance were:

Acting Chairman Burke
Councilwoman Blumig
Councilman Brodhecker
Councilwoman Brummer
Councilman Gudmundsson
Councilman Puskas
Councilman Van Mater

Absent: Councilman DeMartino
Councilman Link

Division employees included D. Chanda, L. Herrightly, P. Nelson, M. Chicketano, A. Petrongolo, D. Golden, J. Lovy, C. Stanko, A. Ivany and C. Smith.

There were numerous members of the public in attendance.

Acting Chairman Burke advised that the minutes from the June 10, 2014 meeting had not been voted on last month, and asked for a vote on them at this time. **A motion was made by Councilman Gudmundsson, seconded by Councilman Brodhecker to approve the minutes as presented. A vote was taken with all in favor.**

Acting Chairman Burke deferred the review and vote of the July 8, 2014 minutes until after lunch to give time to those members who had not received them for review.

Several recent events were mentioned by Acting Chairman Burke, including the Bass Masters Elite Series Tournament that was held last week on the Delaware River. He gave a brief review of the event, noting that the winner was from Pittsgrove, NJ. Additionally, it was noted that this event had a good economic impact for the area as well as showcasing the Delaware River for bass fishing opportunities.

A new program in New York State called IFISHNY (I Fish New York) was noted. Acting Chairman Burke gave a quick overview of this program.

Members were advised that Director Chanda was here today, but currently involved with another meeting. Assistant Director Herrightly advised that staff are preparing for the Fall season. Additionally, J. Mathews from the Bureau of Freshwater Fisheries would not be in attendance today due to emergency repairs being done at the Pequest Fish Hatchery.

Acting Chairman Burke advised there would be no public comment period until later in the meeting.

Councilman Brodhecker reported for the Agriculture Committee. Farmers have seen a good crop yield of small grains so far. They continue to watch for bear damage in the corn crops, and will apply for depredation permits as needed.

Near the end of July, there were reports of four cases of chickens being killed by bears within a five day period. It was felt that the damage may have been done by the same bear, and when Councilman Brodhecker inquired if the owners had called the 800 number for reporting this damage, they were told that the policy is that no help will be given unless the area is fenced with electric fencing. Councilman Brodhecker asked about Category One bears and the aspect of treating chickens the same as a dog, cow or pony with regard to bear attacks, and felt the message being given by the Division was not a good one. Acting Chairman Burke asked Assistant Director Herrightly that this be addressed during the Bureau of Wildlife Management report.

Councilman Puskas noted crops in his area, including corn and soybeans were doing well so far. Farmers have estimated a \$75 to \$100 per acre loss for grain sales and straw sales to due to goose damage. The hay crop is also doing well, despite some farmers getting their crop in late, but noted that some problems with the quality of the hay were noticed.

Acting Chairman Burke commented that the corn crops in Southern New Jersey also seemed to be doing well.

There was some additional discussion on the crops and the hay crop production.

Councilwoman Blumig noted that she had been contacted by someone regarding a farm in the Allendale area having deer control issues, but they were having problem with their local town on control efforts. Also, residents in Central New Jersey who have bees or chickens are experiencing bear problems. She had information on a new electric fence design that she forwarded to Bear Education Biologist Smith.

Councilman VanMater had no new Federation information to report since they have not met over the summer. He did note reports of many turkey poults and deer in his area.

Councilwoman Blumig reported that the Hunterdon County Federation is pleased with the Raritan Valley boat ramp repair. Middlesex County asked that she remind the Council of the requests that were made in their letter that was introduced at the July meeting. She was also contact by someone in Southern New Jersey on Freshwater Fisheries developing a bass fishery in the Delaware River and individual lakes.

Councilman Gudmundsson advised that he would be attending a meeting this evening, and did not have anything to report at this time. He did comment that bass fishing on the Delaware has been world class for some time. He reviewed several other areas and recent fishing opportunities, and noted that fishing continues to be good on the Raritan River. A recent clean-up at that area generated over 500 tires as well as an old car.

Acting Chairman Burke reported that there have been no meetings in Southern New Jersey, but several activities have occurred including fishing tournaments and the “Field of Dreams” event sponsored by the South Jersey Sportsmen Club in Absecon.

Acting Chairman Burke commented on the Finance Committee held earlier today, and advised that they would be meeting again in October at 10 a.m., before the start of the regular Fish and Game Council meeting at 1 p.m. Staff is still closing out bills from Fiscal Year 2014, but a small amount of carry forward monies remain. Financial updates are expected to be given on a more frequent basis. It was also noted that the Division had 300 employees just 10 years ago, but currently there are less than 200, and the Agency may be smaller in the future.

The Freshwater Fisheries Committee advised that a report would be given by Fisheries Pathologist Dr. Lovy later in the meeting today.

There was no new information to report for the Game Committee. Acting Chairman Burke noted that he has been working with Supervising Biologist Stanko on the Game Code. It should be finalized by August, 2015.

Assistant Director Nelson reported for the Legislative Committee. She distributed information only on the most recent activity, but added that a number of bills are expected to be introduced soon.

Reviewed and discussed today were:

A 1871 Establishes Office of River Maintenance in DEP; repeals P.L. 1993, c.376
S 2322 concerning stream cleaning activities.

Assistant Director Nelson has concerns with this bill.

A 3598 Provides discounted hunting and trapping license, permit and stamp fees
for Senior Citizens.

A 3609 Provides sales and use tax exemption for sales of certain game birds to certain
persons to operate semi-wild shooting preserves.

S 2346 Authorizes free fishing licenses for persons with disabilities.

SCR 84 Amends Constitution to dedicate four percent of CBT revenues to open space,
farmland, and historic preservation, water programs, public and private site
remediation, and underground storage tank programs, ends current dedication of
four percent of CBT revenues for various environmental programs, and increases
dedication to six percent of CBT revenues in 2019; and dedicates revenue from
leases and conveyances of State-owned open space, farmland, and historic
preservation.

This bill could have an impact on the future projects in the Division if the
Corporate Business Tax (CBT) monies are transferred elsewhere.

There was some minor discussion on the bills reviewed today.

Acting Chairman Burke noted that the Governor had also signed the bill restricting the sale of rhinoceros horns. Assistant Director Nelson advised that the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is responsible for the import, export and transfer of ivory and ivory products.

Acting Chairman Burke reported for the Waterfowl Stamp Advisory Committee, who last met on July 8. The Committee discussed two properties, a request from Ducks Unlimited for funding, and a habitat improvement project in Commercial Township. He added that the Committee earns \$65,000 to \$70,000 per year, and has considered partial funding for purchases where monies from other sources might also be available.

Councilwoman Brummer had no new information to report for the Endangered and Nongame Species Advisory Committee, but did ask that topics for the September 17 Joint Council's Meeting be considered.

Councilman Brodhecker had no new information to report for the Wildlife Rehabilitator's Advisory Committee, which will meet again on August 27.

Director Chanda was now present at the meeting, and reported that he, the Assistant Directors and the Bureau Chiefs continue to move forward on structural re-alignments for the Division. They are still in the process of working on this, and noted that it could mean the consolidation of some Bureaus. He added that the Division continues to lose staff members to retirement.

Principal Biologist Smith reported for the Bureau of Freshwater Fisheries. He gave a brief review of the 44 fisheries surveys that staff had completed, and noted that more information will be listed in next month's Bureau report.

A handout of the 2014 proposed Fall Trout Stocking Schedule was distributed. He noted that due to the furunculosis outbreak, they would be stocking 25,000 smaller yearling fish, and the three year old broodstock would be distributed in Central and Southern Region ponds. There was additional discussion on this matter.

Principal Biologist Smith also commented on the recent Delaware River Bass Tournament, adding that it was one of the best attended events that he had seen. There was some additional discussion on this event.

Director Chanda commented that Assistant Commissioner Boornazian had visited Lake Hopatcong while staff were stocking striped bass hybrids and walleye, and was able to see firsthand the impact of staff and volunteers on such projects. Director Chanda added that he has invited him to the Joint Council's Meeting if his schedule allows.

Director Chanda noted that he had another meeting today in Trenton and would be leaving shortly.

Fisheries Pathologist Dr. Lovy gave a power point presentation and update on furunculosis to the Council, covering outbreaks, survey information, test results, comparison of different strains of the disease and noted that there were some recommendations to be made if there were going to be any regulatory changes regarding fish health.

Principal Biologist Ivany reported for the Information and Education Section. Staff had recently worked at the Sussex County Fair manning the Division's display. He added that the early release of the hunting edition of the Fish and Wildlife Digest was very popular with the attendees.

The Division's Facebook page should be available soon. Proposals for content are being reviewed, and Principal Biologist Ivany noted that the Division would like to focus on the day to day work that is done as well as larger events.

The annual WILD Outdoor Expo is scheduled for September 13 and 14 at the Colliers Mills WMA. There are 120 organizations committed to participating so far.

The National Archery in Schools Program (NASP) received two awards at the National Conference. The first was for having more than 100 schools enrolled in NASP, and the second was for the largest percentage of growth in a two year period.

The Digest also received National awards recently. The *New Jersey Freshwater Fishing Digest* and the *New Jersey Hunting & Trapping Digest* received first and second place awards respectively at the Association for Conservation and Information Conference.

Principal Biologist Ivany noted recent media reports regarding the bi-pedal bear in Northern New Jersey. Staff felt that the bear had injured its front paws, and had been monitoring this bear previously, but received many calls once the video of the bear walking upright on its back legs went viral. The bear seems to be doing fine.

Staff is readying for the many Fall activities that are forthcoming, and news releases on these will follow.

There was some minor discussion on the information reviewed today.

Chief Petrongolo reported for the Bureau of Land Management. He noted that currently there are close to 345,000 acres in the wildlife management area system and it does continue to grow, but added that this could change in the future with the lack of Green Acres funds.

The Reigelsville boat ramp on the Delaware River in Warren County officially opened this week.

The demolition project to remove the old buildings at the Belvidere boat launch on the Pequest River has been completed, and this has allowed for more parking at that area.

The Division is considering expanding the amount of wildlife management areas where horseback riding would be allowed. Those being considered for addition include the South Branch, Wildcat Ridge, Paulinskill and Great Egg Harbor WMAs. There was additional discussion on this, as well as on the amount of permits sold and the amount of revenue they generated over the past several years.

Acting Chief Chicketano reported for the Bureau of Law Enforcement. He gave a brief review of the Bureau's highlights from this past month.

One recent item that was not listed in the highlights involved a report of a 10 foot alligator that was being transported from Florida to a hotel in Vernon. Chief Chicketano further described the situation, noting that it was actually and 11 foot alligator that was intended to be sold for display.

The meeting recessed for lunch at 12:02 p.m. and resumed again at 12:40 p.m.

Acting Chairman Burke noted to those in attendance today that after the public comment session at the end of the meeting the Council would be going in to Executive Session, followed by resuming the regular meeting only to adjourn, and no additional business would be discussed.

At this time, the July Fish and Game Council minutes were reviewed. **A motion was made by Councilman Brodhecker, seconded by Councilman Van Mater to approve the minutes as presented. A vote was taken with all in favor, and abstentions from Councilwoman Brummer and Councilman Gudmundsson who were not present at that meeting.**

There was no one from the staff of the Endangered and Nongame Species Program present to give a report today. Councilwoman Brummer asked about topics for the Joint Council's Meeting next month, and several suggestions were given. Final agenda topics are still pending.

At this time, the public was invited to make comment and were advised that they would have three minutes to do so. Barbara Sauchau from Whitehouse addressed the Council, commenting on news reports that hunters had caused wildfires, the ENSP monthly report and specifically the Northern pine snake recovery plan, shooting into homes and that a horse had been hit on a Hunterdon farm, the distance that bowhunters are allowed to be from occupied dwellings, and previous comments from earlier in the meeting on monies spent to enhance fishing on the Delaware River and why so when there is so much sewage in the river. (Ms. Sauchau expired her three minutes of time).

Janet Pizar, who gave an office address of Chatham, thanked Councilwoman Blumig for seeing that the Division's financial report was given. She additionally commented on other costs and funding sources she would like to see reported.

Chief Golden reported for the Bureau of Wildlife Management. He noted that bear complaints are at a higher point than this time last year, and that the rough winter and a late frost may have something to do with this since some of the natural food sources were less available. Staff has also seen an increased number of calls, even in areas where the population is declining.

Chief Golden noted that this is the fifth year of the Comprehensive Black Bear Management Policy. Staff has been asked to concentrate their efforts on working to complete and summary document of the five year program. There was additional discussion on bears, with much of it being on fencing and nuisance bears.

Chief Golden updated the Council on the Rockport Pheasant Farm. Over 82,000 chicks have been hatched so far, and the mortality rate has been low. The old catch building has been demolished, and it is hoped that the new one will be completed prior to the stocking season.

The Union Sportsmen Alliance has once again offered to construct pheasant transport boxes for the Division.

A stakeholders meeting was held in July on the Quail Recovery Project. There were 30-35 people in attendance, and many good suggestions were received. Chief Golden added that New Jersey Audubon has an agreement with the State of Georgia to transfer 240 wild birds to a private 20,000-acre area in Burlington County, and the Division is looking to tie its' Cumberland County project in with this.

A large Hurricane Sandy recovery project grant was received for marsh restoration in the Stone Harbor, Avalon and Fortescue WMAs, and work at Stone Harbor began today. This is a high profile project that is a combined agency venture. There was extensive additional discussion on this project.

Lastly, Chief Golden complemented his staff and the I&E staff on their contributions to the 2014 *NJ Hunting & Trapping Digest*. He also noted that the new Digest contains QR codes which have supplemental information available that can be downloaded by "smart phone" users. Staff can monitor the number of views of these QR codes, and so far they seem to be very popular.

Supervising Biologist Stanko noted to Councilwoman Blumig, who commented earlier on a problem a deer farmer in Allendale was having, that she has been working extensively with Allendale and several other towns in Bergen County regarding deer. She suggested that this farmer contact the local administration.

Supervising Biologist Stanko presented a summary of the Stakeholder’s Meeting where the Game Code proposed changes were reviewed. A handout of the information being reviewed was also distributed. The meeting was held on July 30, and of the 21 organizations invited, 7 people attended.

The first comment came from a trapper regarding the requirement for trappers using cable restraints to use relaxing locks. The proposal definition would include “relaxing lock – a snare lock that allows the snare loop to release constriction pressure on the captured animal when the cable is not taut (e.g., when the animal stops pulling)”.

The second comment was on the proposal to legalize foot encapsulating traps as an alternate to snares. Recommended language remain as previously written.

The third comment was on the proposal to amend the language to provide for the physical tagging of unattended deer. The commenter questioned whether gun clubs were excluded, and felt the proposed language should be reconsidered to include those unattended deer hanging outside of gun clubs. The Bureau of Law Enforcement recommended the proposed language be amended to read “any deer reduced to possession by a hunter shall immediately have a tag affixed bearing the following information: CID #, date of harvest, zone of harvest, antler points if applicable, and confirmation number if registered. This tag shall remain attached until such time as the deer is processed for consumption.”

The last comment regarding the proposal to mandate the wearing of a hunter orange hat by all those engaged in hunting for small game on stocked WMAs. A falconer in attendance said he doesn’t want to wear an orange hat because his birds would not come back when working them. The proposal language was changed to read “any person subject to this section shall, while engaged in hunting for small game **with firearms** on Wildlife Management Areas enumerated in this section shall wear a cap of fluorescent hunter’s orange meeting the specification set forth in N.J.S.A. 23:4-13.1”.

Other comments made, but not requiring a vote include the proposal of the ability to trap on stocked WMAs, and how one would know if the Director chose to stock additional areas. The answer was the Digest or the Division’s website, and further noted that no property will be stocked without sufficient public notice. Lastly, there were complaints about the limited availability of “hunter orange” and what the definition of “hunter orange” was. Chief Chicketano provided a swatch of “hunter orange” as a sample for this person.

Additionally, Supervising Biologist Stanko advised that the Division would respectfully request to withdraw the proposal (5.8) on open trapping for satellite non-stocked areas of WMAs. Work involved to follow through with this proposal involves the development of many detailed maps, and staff would not be able to have these ready in time for the proposal to be implemented in the next Game Code.

At this time, Acting Chairman Burke allowed for any additional public comment on the Game Code proposal changes as suggested at the Stakeholder’s Meeting.

Barbara Sauchau commented again, asking why only stakeholders were invited to this meeting and not the public. She also made some additional comments to the Council on hunting, hunters and wildlife.

With no one else wishing to make public comment, **a motion was made by Councilman Brodhecker, seconded by Councilman Van Mater to move forward with the changes as presented today. A vote was taken with all in favor, none opposed.** Acting Chairman Burke reminded those in attendance that there would still be additional opportunity for public comment in the future.

With no other business to discuss today, **a motion was made by Councilman Brodhecker, seconded by Councilman Puskas to adjourn to Executive Session. A vote was taken with all in favor.** Meeting adjourned to Executive Session at 1:40 p.m.

At 2:40 p.m. Executive Session concluded, and **a motion was made by Councilman Gudmundsson, seconded by Councilwoman Blumig to adjourn. A vote was taken with all in favor, none opposed.**

Meeting adjourned at 2:40 p.m.