

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE
NJ FISH AND GAME COUNCIL

Central Region Office
Robbinsville, NJ
December 16, 2014

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

The meeting was called to order at 10:23 a.m. by Acting Chairman Burke of the Council.

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 the state and delivered to the designated newspapers of the Division, the Newark Star Ledger and the Atlantic City Press on December 10, 2014.

Roll call was taken. In attendance were:

Acting Chairman Burke
Councilwoman Blumig (late)
Councilman Brodhecker
Councilwoman Brummer
Councilman DeMartino
Councilman Gudmundsson
Councilman Link
Councilman Puskas
Councilman Van Mater

Absent: none

Division employees included L. Herrighty, P. Nelson, M. Chicketano, A. Petrongolo, A. Ivany, L. Barno, D. Golden, T. McBride, K. Burguess, and M. Madonia.

There were numerous members of the public in attendance.

Acting Chairman Burke deferred the vote of the October 14, 2014 meeting minutes until after lunch to give time to Councilmembers to review them.

Several recent events were mentioned by Acting Chairman Burke. The red knot was listed as a threatened species, and a bald eagle was seen in his area. He noted that later in the meeting there would be a discussion on the deer harvest. Due to mixed weather, clubs and individuals started off slowly but did better toward the end of the week. He heard from the southern region that there is a club getting other clubs together as a group to defend hunting traditions such as deer drives. Bear season is a non-issue down south.

Members were advised that Director Chanda was on vacation. Assistant Director Herrightly reported that weather on Tuesday and Wednesday kept hunters down but that there was a safe hunt. Many reporters and protesters were present at the Whittingham bear check station on Monday. The protesters did not sign a permit and therefore had to stay across the road. About 35 protesters were present on Saturday, but there was no interest in media that day. An anthropologist came to the check station to do research on hunting culture, and students from Millersville University and East Stroudsburg University also came to collect data. Television crews were present from Germany, the Netherlands, and France. The biggest bear harvested weighed 693 pounds dressed, and 272 bears were harvested in total. That is 21 more bears than last year.

Acting Chairman Burke advised that the public comment period would take place at the end of the meeting as there were no agenda items to vote on.

Councilman Brodhecker reported for the Agriculture Committee. Most crops were already harvested in his area, and there was a lot of bear damage. Deer were noted to be moving a lot at night due to the full moons but are not being seen during the day on farms surrounded by un-hunted properties.

Councilman Puskas noted that hunters in his area were complaining that deer are not moving. The hunting season went well. Bears are starting to be reported in Mercer County on a regular basis, although no notable damage has been reported. Geese are the biggest issue for farmers in his area currently. Councilman Puskas has spoken to farmers in Pennsylvania and other states, all of whom are frustrated by geese issues.

Councilman Link reported that the harvest was done, and that there was very little corn. Hunters are keeping the geese moving. More fields are open to hunting presently so geese in his area are not expected to be seen until January. Deer hunters seem to be happy and are keeping deer numbers down. Coyotes seemed to be an issue in his area about a month ago but seem fine now, and bears have not presented an issue.

Councilman Brodhecker added that three sheep had been attacked by a bear on Thanksgiving night. The sheep producer had not reported the incident until the following Monday, when she was advised that as bear season was approaching there was nothing to be done at the time.

Councilman Van Mater reported from the Federation that deer numbers were down. Coyotes are active at night in his area and are presenting a problem.

Councilman Gudmundsson reported that he did not attend any Federation meetings this month. He had been contacted by hunters in Morris and Sussex Counties who had been part of a club tracking 20 bears on their property leading up to the season but then did not see a bear all through the season. A consistent message from individuals and from the Federation is that they would like to see the bear season be earlier and separate from the deer season. He added that he did not attend the meeting in Montvale that he had mentioned in the October Fish and Game Council meeting.

Councilman DeMartino reported that duck hunting is good in Ocean County, and that the deer club he belongs to reported the same numbers as last year (13 deer harvested each year).

Acting Chairman Burke reported for Atlantic County and noted that in the November meeting, the bill S-2538 that would ban snares was a major concern. There was a lot of discussion over the bill and there will be another meeting again on this Thursday. A lot of clubs postponed meetings to get away from the 6-day hunting season. He will also attend Cumberland County's meeting this week. Cumberland County has been very supportive of youth days and is planning for the annual trash hunt for wildlife management areas to take place on March 21, 2015. The Fish and Game Council schedule meeting needs to be approved for next year.

Councilman Gudmundsson had nothing to report for the Fish Committee.

[Councilwoman Blumig arrived at 10:33 a.m.]

Councilwoman Blumig reported that the credit card issue mentioned at the previous meeting is still an issue from her area. She has not attended any Federation meetings.

The Game Committee had a meeting this morning, and a discussion on the next 5-year bear plan policy will take place at the end of the meeting.

Assistant Director Nelson reported for the Legislative Committee. The Legislature had quite a bit of recent activity. Bills noted today included:

- | | |
|--------|--|
| A-394 | Authorizes Sunday bow hunting on federal military installments. (This bill has been moving through the Assembly.) |
| A-3588 | Clarifies that piercing or tattooing animals constitutes needless mutilation and animal cruelty. |
| S-2500 | Clarifies that piercing or tattooing animals constitutes needless mutilation and animal cruelty. (Assistant Director Nelson noted that this bill is related to piercing and tattooing animals for aesthetics rather than for identification.) |
| S-2399 | Requires law enforcement officers to wear body cameras. |
| S-2649 | Establishes "Police Body Camera Implementation Task Force" to study and make recommendations concerning use of body cameras by law enforcement agencies in this State. (Assistant Director Nelson noted that S-2399 and S-2649 are slightly different but that Law Enforcement will be looking at these to determine if they need to be tracked. S-2399 would be paid for by fines.) |
| S-2492 | Removes statutory limitations on number of permits that may be issued by Division of Fish & Wildlife for the taking of beaver. (Assistant Director |

Nelson noted that this has been trying to get through Legislature for years.)

- S-2538 Prohibits use of snares in trapping of wildlife.
- S-2567 Creates "Fishing Buddy License." (Councilman Gudmundsson commented that the first time you buy either a resident or nonresident license in Wisconsin that you pay the price of a 1-week license. Assistant Director Nelson explained that both parties would get the reduced fee under this program and that this would happen each year that an angler brings someone new.)
- A-2903 Establishes licensing program in Department of Agriculture for farmed deer and other cervids. (The Division is opposed to this bill.)
- A-2913 Designates Black Swallowtail butterfly as State Butterfly.
- A-3133 Requires DEP to establish "private wildlife habitat certification program"; creates affirmative defense against municipal nuisance ordinances for properties certified under the program. (Councilwoman Blumig commented that Cape May County had an issue related to this certified program.)
- A-3897 Allows nonprofit organizations to serve food made from wild game animals at charity and fundraising events and meetings.
- S-2580 Allows nonprofit organizations to serve food made from wild game animals at charity and fundraising events and meetings.
- A-3932 Provides diamondback terrapins protection as nongame indigenous species.
- S-2615 Provides diamondback terrapins protection as nongame indigenous species.
- A-3944 Allows cultivation of commercial shellfish species in certain coastal and inner harbor waters for research and educational purposes.
- S-2617 Allows cultivation of commercial shellfish species in certain coastal and inner harbor waters for research and educational purposes. (Assistant Director Nelson noted that this is more relevant to the Marine Fish Council.)
- S-2638 Regulates sale of arrowhead ammunition. (Councilman Brodhecker asked for clarification in regards to use of arrowheads and possession of

arrowheads. Use of arrowheads for hunting is illegal in the Game Code, but sale or possession of arrowheads is not currently illegal.)

ACR210 Proposes constitutional amendment to preserve right of people to fish, hunt, trap and harvest fish and wildlife.

Councilman Gudmundsson asked if these bills would carry into next year, and Assistant Director Nelson confirmed that they would.

Councilwoman Brummer reported for the Endangered & Non-Game Species Advisory Committee. The State has about 420 osprey nests, and about 339 fledged last year. The total population is estimated to be 567 pairs, so ospreys are doing well. Bald eagles now have 156 nests in the State, up from just one in Bear Swamp back in 1970. Two hundred one fledged this year, so the bald eagle population is rebounding. A new species of frog called the Atlantic Coast Leopard Frog has been identified, and the original investigation was conducted by a group of people from Rutgers who were just published. The red knot is a shore bird that feeds on horseshoe crab eggs and is very influential on the horseshoe crab population. The red knot has now been listed as a threatened species. Councilman Puskas asked if there are any updates on the pink-footed goose. At least two have been sighted in New Jersey in recent years. Councilwoman Brummer has not heard anything. Acting Chairman Burke says that the pink-footed goose received a lot of press in his area, which may be good for tourism. These geese are hunted in some of the islands they stop in during migration. He also commented that there have already been some snowy owls down south.

Acting Chairman Burke attended the Waterfowl Stamp Advisory Committee meetings. There are no land offerings to go over but the State did agree to participate in a cooperative program in Quebec. New Jersey's contribution will be \$25,000 for the next five years. The program will provide habitat maintenance in the St. Lawrence area. Other states involved in the program are Virginia, West Virginia, Georgia, New Hampshire, and Vermont, and the North American Wetlands Conservation Act is also involved. The project will cost \$4.4 million over the next five years. New Jersey contributed \$449,500 to habitat conservation projects in Canada from 1989 to 2009. Over 22,000 acres of land have been purchased under this program. Acting Chairman Burke has a copy of the proposal if anyone would like copies, and also has a copy of the document showing contribution dates and amounts. The Waterfowl Stamp Advisory Committee only has two meetings scheduled so far for next year. Councilwoman Blumig saw that there was legislation to increase the Federal Duck Stamp.

Councilman Brodhecker reported for the Wildlife Rehabilitator Advisory Committee. The last meeting was cancelled, but there is a schedule proposed for next year. His term on that council expires in February, and he is willing to serve again. **A motion was made by Councilwoman Brummer, seconded by Councilman Puskas, for Councilman Puskas to serve on WRAC again. A vote was taken with all in favor, none opposed.**

Chief Barno reported for the Bureau of Freshwater Fisheries. She passed around a photograph of a muskie that came out of Greenwood Lake on Sunday. It was 51.5 inches long and 40.76 pounds, just 2 pounds shy of the State record. The Freshwater Digest came out last week, and Chief Barno commended

the editor Cindy Kuenster for doing a great job working with the publisher. Assistant Director Nelson commented that the Hunting Digest won two awards last year. Chief Barno advised that the fall and winter trout stocking is completed and the year is closed. Field work for the year is also finished. The Round Valley population is still a problem. This was the first year that no lake trout over 30 inches or over 10 pounds were taken. The largest trout was a female weighing about 9 pounds. The Division still supports the harvest of trout from 15-20 inches long, and the fish of all sizes appear to be healthy. All of the fieldwork done for inventory of Lake Hopatcong is completed, and the draft should be done in mid-January. Last year's activity reports are expected to be ready for the February Council meeting. The North Jersey Fisheries Forum was rescheduled this year for January 24 at Hackettstown. The South Jersey Form will be on February 21. The trout Meeting will take place at Pequest on February 28. All three meetings will be at 10:00AM. The Open House at Pequest is scheduled for March 28 and March 29. The opening day of trout season is April 4. A Fish Committee meeting will also be scheduled for February. Councilman Gudmundsson advised that normally the Fish and Game Council meeting would be on February 10, so the Fish Committee meeting could be before or after that. Chief Barno advised that the Fish Committee meeting will take longer than an hour so cannot take place on the day of the Fish and Game Council meeting, so it will be scheduled for after. She also warned that there will be conflicts with striped bass regulations due to upcoming changes.

Principal Biologist Ivany reported for the Office of Information & Education. He announced that approximately 700 people attended the Rockport Open House on October 25. Nearly \$1,000 of licenses and stamps were sold there for the first time using a wireless system. The Division Facebook page has been up for 6 or 7 weeks and already has 1750 likes. The page is being handled by Jon Carlucci. The highest viewing of a post so far was a bobcat post that reached 6,500 views. Councilman Gudmundsson suggested setting up the page to be capable of being followed in addition to just being liked as an organization. Principal Biologist Ivany discussed the Facebook page on a radio station that he reports on every week, and the DJ shared the page. There are still plans to update the black bear brochure and additional copies of the current brochure were recently printed. Going forward, the Governor's Surf Fishing Tournament will take place in May of each year, with a date of May 17 for 2015. A logo is being designed for the Governor's Surf Fishing Tournament Committee. The Garden State Outdoor Sports Show (www.gsoss.com) will take place from January 8-11 in Edison, with 58 entries so far. Acting Chairman Burke commented that this date may conflict with fluke season.

Chief Petrongolo delivered his last report for the Bureau of Land Management as he will be retiring this month. He handed out a map of a proposed land transfer taking place this month in which the Jersey City Split Rock Reservoir property will close and become a party of Wildcat Ridge. The transfer is awaiting approval from the Assistant Commissioner. Green Acres is winding down and the number of employees is decreasing. In 30 years, the acreage has increased from 150,000 to 350,000.

Chief Chicketano reported for the Bureau of Law Enforcement. He gave a brief review of various summons issued recently by conservation officers, including some for hunter harassment and possession of potentially dangerous species. Two conservation officer recruits will be graduating from Gloucester County Police Academy this week, one of which will be assigned to the southern region and

one to the Monmouth County/central region. The Bureau is in the process of attempting to hire another three officers and is currently in the middle of conducting background investigations for these positions.

Acting Chairman Burke asked to go over the 2015 meeting schedule. Normally meetings are held on the second Tuesday of the month, although for December the proposed date is the third Tuesday. Two meeting cancellations are anticipated. Councilman Gudmundsson asked about moving the September meeting and advised that he cannot attend if it is on the 16h and can also not attend the July meeting. Councilmembers Puskas, Brodhecker, and Brummer are currently unable to attend the January meeting. Councilman Puskas commented that he may also have a conflict for February's meeting. **A motion was made by Councilman Gudmundsson, seconded by Councilwoman Blumig, to approve the 2015 meeting schedule as presented. A vote was taken with all in favor, none opposed.**

The meeting recessed for lunch at 11:58AM and resumed at 12:51PM.

At this time, the minutes from the October 14, 2014 meeting were reviewed. Councilwoman Blumig corrected the spelling of Pola Galie's last name. **A motion was made by Councilman Gudmundsson, seconded by Councilman Brodhecker, to approve the minutes as amended. A vote was taken with all in favor, none opposed.**

Chief Golden reported for the Bureau of Wildlife Management. He distributed the Bobwhite Almanac to Councilmembers and advised that New Jersey is in this nationwide report. The Division will be hosting the National Bobwhite Technical Committee meeting in August 2015. He also handed out two different packets on black bears – the Northeast Black Bear Technical Committee Guidance and the Comprehensive Black Bear Management Policy. The final handout distributed was a single sheet summarizing the deer harvest information in tabular form. It is notable that compared to the same time last year, 110 additional deer have been harvested in 2014. The 6-day firearm numbers have decreased, but harvest numbers are expected to rise again due to better hunting conditions for the remainder of the year.

Chief Golden reported on the Rockport Pheasant Farm to notify the Council that there is a question regarding whether the operation should be self-sufficient. The Rockport Pheasant Farm costs about \$1,000,000 to operate annually. Approximately \$750,000 of that amount comes from stamps and licenses. The operation is not eligible for any federal funds, so funds need to come from the Hunter and Angler Fund, which has been declining. So far this year, 855 surplus pheasants have been sold or have pending sales to individuals and clubs. There was a lengthy discussion on whether the Rockport operation should be self-sustaining. The main options are to produce fewer birds, increase the cost of stamps, or sell or lease the farm. This issue will be open to further discussion in the future.

Chief Golden advised that from January through March, staff will be working on the development of the pheasant formula model. The presentation on the model will occur sometime in April or May, followed by the stakeholders' meetings. The final model on the pheasant formula is anticipated to be ready in September. Acting Chairman Burke requested a paper copy of the Game Code proposal document, and Councilman Gudmundsson asked that copies be emailed to the Council.

Assistant Director Herrightly advised that bonus fish stocking will occur soon. The fish average about 17 inches long, and the fry from the spring are 10 inches. This information is posted on the Division web site.

Chief Jenkins reported on the status of the comprehensive review and revision of the New Jersey Wildlife Action Plan. As required by congress for continued eligibility for State Wildlife Grants funding, DFW has been working on updating the 2005 Wildlife Action Plan, which is a document meant to guide conservation of species of greatest conservation need in the state – not only for DFW, but also for all involved in wildlife and habitat conservation in New Jersey. The revised plan will be more focused and user-friendly than the current version, focusing more on geographic specificity and specific species in the greatest need of conservation. The Fish and Game Council and the Endangered and Nongame Species Advisory Committee will be regularly updated on progress and the public meetings of these bodies will help to keep the public informed on our progress and provide a venue for public input. Chief Jenkins distributed a handout showing the Wildlife Action Plan page that is about to go live on the Division web site. The Division is seeking comments on the web page to determine if the correct methods are being used to narrow species in need. Councilman Gudmundsson suggested requiring registration to make a comment on the web site. Chief Jenkins responded that the web site purposely does not require registration so that the public can comment (using only name and location). The Division is not required to respond to all comments, and additionally, there is a safeguard against users commenting on other users' comments. The Wildlife Action Plan will remain a standing agenda item until it is submitted and reviewed.

After a brief discussion, it was decided that the Councilmembers will be emailed links for all five different listserves so that they can sign up for whichever ones they want to stay informed about.

Acting Chairman Burke announced that the public comment period would take place after the bear presentation.

Chief Golden gave a presentation on the bear policy, advising that it is being reevaluated. The current policy is an appendix to the Game Code and has been interpreted as a five-year policy. It is a compilation of the Council's black bear preservation and management goals. Its integrated approach includes ideas and management strategies such as public education, lethal and non-lethal control, research and monitoring, law enforcement to reduce human-bear conflicts, and a controlled hunt. The Division would like to readopt the policy on a five-year cycle based on the data received up to this point, and would like to have this done by November 2015. To meet this goal, staff will be summarizing data from the last five years and working with the Game Committee on a draft of the new policy. This process was initiated with the Game Committee meeting held earlier this morning.

A summary of available data was presented, which included statistics on Division responses to Category I and II bears and population estimates. Potential revisions to the policy were discussed and include expanding on education, assessing lethal control on high-risk dangerous bears, and expanding the hunting season. A lengthy discussion ensued, including recommendations for additional changes to both the policy itself and to the hunting season specifically. Assistant Director Herrightly advised that any

changes made to the policy now will have a date to align with the Game Code, which will more easily facilitate any necessary changes in the future.

Councilwoman Blumig referenced an Eastern Black Bear Workshop that was held in 2003. She has a copy of a speech from the workshop and would like to make copies to send to the other Councilmembers.

Acting Chairman Burke advised that a Game Committee meeting needed to be set. The Game Committee meeting will be on January 16, 2015 at 10:00AM.

(Councilwoman Blumig left at 3:08 p.m.)

Public comment was opened.

Barbara Sauchau from Whitehouse expressed her belief that there should be more descriptive categories for bears and her disagreement with the percentage of nuisance bears killed. She is against selective hunting of bears. She also expressed the belief that further bear research is not necessary. She opposes the Wildlife Action Plan and believes that it should be open to the public and not just stakeholders. Councilmembers Brummer and Gudmundsson clarified that it is open to the public.

Janet Pizar from Millburn, founder of Public Trust Wildlife Management, advised that she has been following the bear management policy since the hunt was cancelled and the categories were put into place. She discussed instances of bear home entry cases where bears were killed and expressed the belief that human behavior should be taken into account for Category I bears. She is against having a bowhunting season for bears.

There was no one else wishing to make comment, and **a motion was made by Councilman Van Mater, seconded by Councilman Brodhecker, to adjourn. A vote was taken with all in favor.** Meeting adjourned at 3:19 p.m.