

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE
NJ FISH AND GAME COUNCIL

Central Region Office
Robbinsville, NJ
March 3, 2015

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

The meeting was called to order at 10:06 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 on February 25, 2015 and delivered to the designated newspapers of the Division, the Newark Star Ledger and the Atlantic City Press.

Roll call was taken. In attendance were:

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

Absent: Councilman Link

Division employees included D. Chanda, L. Herrighty, P. Nelson, L. Barno, D. Golden, M. Chicketano, D. Jenkins, C. Stanko, A. Ivany, M. Madonia and B. Stoff. Assistant Commissioner R. Boornazian and members of his staff were also present.

There were numerous members of the public in attendance

Minutes of the February 10, 2015 meeting were reviewed, and a few minor changes were made. **A motion was made by Councilman Gudmundsson, seconded by Councilman VanMater to approve the minutes as corrected. A vote was taken with most in favor, none opposed, and abstentions from Councilwoman Brummer and Councilwoman Blumig.**

Acting Chairman Burke noted that there were four agenda items for today, and three of those required a vote by the Council. The agenda would be altered slightly to allow for public comment on the proposed Black Bear Management Policy after it was presented and reviewed by the Council, but before the Council's vote. He also reminded those in attendance that there would be a 60 day written comment period as well as a public meeting to make comment on this policy. The policy would also be posted on the Division's website later today.

Chief Jenkins would also be giving an update on the Wildlife Action Plan, which required no Council vote, but Acting Chairman Burke advised that there would be time for public comment and question on this. Those in

attendance were reminded that they could make written comment through the link on the Division website as well.

Director Chanda addressed the Council, noting that Assistant Commissioner Boornazian and members of his staff were in attendance today. AC Boornazian thanked the members of the Council for being here and for their professional service, and also paid compliment to the Division staff.

Director Chanda advised that he and Assistant Director Nelson attended the Teaming With Wildlife workshop in Washington, DC last week, and a gave a brief review of this for the Council.

He also thanked Councilwoman Brummer and the efforts of her and her staff at The Nature Conservancy for their efforts in moving forward on the solar electric plan for the Pequest Trout Hatchery. He added that the Commissioner's office is very interested in this project.

At this time, public comment was opened on the Bonus Broodstock and Spring Trout Stocking Program as listed on the agenda. There were no comments on this.

Public comment was next opened to the Semi-Wild Hunting Season Extension. Acting Chairman Burke noted that due to the extreme weather conditions, the Director and Council could approve to extend the semi-wild season by 20 days.

Barbara Sauchau from Whitehouse stated that she is totally opposed to this and why, feeling that there is junk science being used and that everyone here appears to be a wildlife killer. She went on to say that staff came from agriculture schools, and that agriculture wants the wildlife dead. She also shared comments and the wounding rate of animals by hunters, taxpayers putting money into open space, and farming and logging on wildlife management areas and parks. She felt that there was no protection being provided to wildlife.

Janet Pizar stated that she is opposed to the extension of the semi-wild hunting season.

Council reports began. Councilman Puskas reported for the Agriculture Committee, noting that this has been the worst winter in quite some time. The snow and ice may smother the hay and wheat crops.

Councilman Brodhecker commented on the amount of snow in his area. He also noted that the deer have been seen on the frozen river edges looking for any food source. Acting Chairman Burke and Councilwoman Blumig both noted the ice and snow in their areas. There was additional discussion on the weathers effect on the future plantings of crops. Acting Chairman Burke also noted some bird mortality that has resulted from the severe weather conditions.

Councilman Gudmundsson reported for the Federation, noting that the regional venison dinners have begun. He added further comment on the fisheries meeting at Pequest, that it was a good meeting and was well attended.

Councilwoman Blumig reported that at the State meeting, the Sunday firearm hunting bill was discussed. She also attended the Batsto fisheries forum, and shared some information from that meeting. Acting Chairman Burke and Councilman Van Mater were also in attendance at this meeting.

Councilman Van Mater had no new information to report.

Councilman DeMartino advised that he had been contacted by a vendor who raises quail who advised they will not be bidding on the next contract due to the husbandry requirements.

He also attended a meeting where the changes to turkey hunting zone 14 were discussed. It was explained today that there was language in the proposed Game Code to change this area.

Acting Chairman Burke reported that the Atlantic County venison dinner was well attended.

At the Cumberland County meeting they discussed the Sunday firearm hunting bill, and will be voting on it at a club level. The Cumberland County Federation will be holding their annual trash hunt on March 21.

There were complaints regarding deer hunting zone 42, and it was felt that too many deer were taken from one particular area. There may be a request in the future to consider possible boundary changes.

There was no report for the Finance Committee.

The Fisheries Committee met on February 10. They discussed potential fish code proposal changes. Councilman Gudmundsson indicated the Committee may hold a conference call to discuss some items further before the next Fish and Game Council meeting.

The Game Committee report would be reviewed later in the meeting today.

Assistant Director Nelson reported for the Legislative Committee. She noted that there was not too much to report on, but did note:

- A-4146 Authorizes DEP and NJ Marine Fisheries Council to regulate taking and management of striped bass; establishes interim taking restrictions.
- A-4179 Prohibits use of snares in trapping wildlife.
(companion S-2538)
- A-4203 Implements 2014 constitutional dedication of CBT revenues for
(companion S-2769) certain environmental purposes; revises State's open space, farmland, and historic preservation programs.
- S-2057 Prohibits certain possession, sale, offering for sale, trade or distribution of shark fins.

The following are to be heard this Thursday by the Agriculture and Natural Resource Committee:

- A-2780 Prohibits DEP from reducing fishing quotas established by federal or regional entities, unless authorized by law.
- A-2786 Creates striped bass license plates.
- A-3897 Allows nonprofit organizations to serve food made from wild game animals at charity and fundraising events and meetings.
- A-4025 Creates "Fishing Buddy License" (Division does support)

There was some discussion on A-3897, relative to game dinners. Also, Acting Chairman Burke noted a news release from yesterday that closed down the terrapin harvest season.

Assistant Director Nelson asked for the Legislative Committee to schedule a meeting. They will meet on April 14 at 9:00 a.m., before the start of the Fish and Game Council meeting.

Councilwoman Brummer reported for the Endangered and Nongame Species Advisory Committee. The Committee is pleased that the terrapin season has been closed. She also noted that Chief Jenkins would be giving an update on the NJ Wildlife Action Plan later in the meeting.

A review of the January 21 ENSAC meeting was given. There was an update to the Delphi review for butterflies and freshwater fish given at that meeting. There was some discussion on the Delphi process.

There was no report for the Waterfowl Stamp Advisory Committee, but it was noted that they are tentatively scheduled to meet on March 24.

There was no report for the Wildlife Rehabilitator's Advisory Committee.

At this time, Chief Golden gave a review of the work that has been done to update the Black Bear Comprehensive Management Policy, and introduced Supervising Biologist McBride who gave a power point presentation of the changes being considered.

He noted that the Committee met in December 2014 to start the five year review of the current plan. The presentation today would include data and trend analyses, and proposals for the future. Once the policy is approved by the Fish and Game Council, it needs to be endorsed by the Commissioner of the Department, and will then be published in the New Jersey Register. He added this is the same process as the plan approved in 2010.

After the power point presentation and review, the audience was given the opportunity to ask questions on the information presented today. Questions were asked by Janet Pizar and Barbara Sauchau.

The Council also reviewed, asked questions, and commented on the information given.

Acting Chairman Burke next asked if anyone wanted to make a public comment before the vote was taken, advising that there would be a three minute time limit per person. He also reminded everyone that they would also have additional opportunity to comment at the public hearing as well as submit written comment during the 60-day comment period.

Janet Pizar from Chatham read aloud from her written comments, which she left for the record. She stated that the group she represents, Public Trust Wildlife Management, is opposed to proposed amendments as well as the current policy.

Barbara Sauchau from Whitehouse felt that this was a premature vote on a 96 page document, and questioned why it was not available for review previous to the meeting. She gave additional comments regarding hunting and asked to encourage humane ways of bear control. Ms. Sauchau questioned the research that was done. She also commented why there was no public member on the Council. (Ms. Sauchau expired her time).

Mark Lanzim from the Ocean County Federation of Sportsmen commended the Committee for the report given today. He also noted he was glad to see archery included, adding that in other states archery is shown as an effective humane way to harvest bears. He felt that control of the bear population was important for all citizens, and that hunting was a viable and important wildlife management tool.

Appolonia Galie from Waretown addressed the Council. She advised that she is the President of the Federation of Sportsmen's Clubs, representing 150,000 members. She felt the time and effort to develop this policy

separate from the Game Code was commendable, and that the Federation fully supports this effort and that it receives the support it needs to be passed. She also added a personal note on bear sign seen in the Burlington County area while hunting this year.

Acting Chairman Burke reminded those in attendance that the content of the policy should be on the Divisions website by tonight. There will also be a 60-day comment period as well as the public hearing. If approved today, the policy would be forwarded to the Commissioner and then sent for publication in the New Jersey Register.

The Council was asked what their pleasure was regarding the policy as given today. Councilman Gudmundsson noted several minor typographical and grammatical errors that could be addressed, but felt it was important to release the document to the public now. **A motion was made by Councilman Puskas to move forward with and vote on the proposed Comprehensive Black Bear Management Policy. The motion was seconded by Councilman DeMartino.** Councilman Brodhecker commented on the great job done on research and data collection, and thanked the Division staff for this as well as the presentation given today.

There was some additional discussion between the members of the Council and Division representatives. Assistant Director Herrighty asked to make a clarification on the motion, explaining the schedule which would follow to have this document made legal in mid-November. The 60 day public comment period will start after the document is approved by the Commissioner.

There was some additional discussion, and Acting Chairman Burke reminded those in attendance that the Council is moving forward with two documents, the proposed Game Code changes as well as the Game Code changes relative to black bears, and that there would be two separate public comment periods for these.

Director Chanda noted that he was extremely proud of the work done by staff to produce this document, and that they were a group of highly trained professionals who were educated in the field of wildlife management, and have produced a document with more data points on black bear than any other fish and wildlife agency in the country. He congratulated them for their efforts.

After some additional comment, a roll call vote was taken. All present were in favor of approving the Comprehensive Black Bear Management Policy proposed amendments as presented.

At this time, the meeting recessed for lunch. Meeting resumed at 1:46 p.m.

Supervising Biologist McBride gave a brief review of the black bear rating and response criteria. He noted that updates are being proposed for internal operating procedures. He showed and explained several slides for the Council. There was some additional discussion regarding the information shown today.

Chief Barno reported for the Bureau of Freshwater Fisheries. Proposed spring trout stocking allocation information and bonus broodstock ponds and lakes information was distributed and reviewed.

Chief Barno shared concerns regarding that the first week of pre-season stocking may be interrupted by the amount of ice in some areas. Staff were working on adjusting the schedule as necessary.

Acting Chairman Burke questioned the striped bass program, noting the regulation changes that Pennsylvania has made for the Delaware River and why were regulations different for New Jersey. Chief Barno advised that striped bass are regulated by the ASMFC. The Division's Bureau of Marine Fisheries works closely with the ASMFC to maintain compliance with specific approved management plans. The current plan for striped bass requires states to meet a 25% reduction in harvest. Marine Fisheries staff submitted several options to the

technical committee, ultimately different regulations were approved for different states. New Jersey was approved for one fish 28 to 43 inches, and one fish 43 inches and over. The Marine Fisheries Bureau is moving forward on amending the marine regulations, and that Freshwater Fisheries will follow their proposal. Additional discussion followed

Acting Chairman Burke inquired as to the status of lake lowering permits and the requirement to refill by March 1. Chief Barno advised that due to the current conditions most permits may be extended through the end of the month. He also inquired about snapping turtle research being done by Montclair University. Chief Barno noted that she has not received their formal report yet, but expects to have the information within the next one and one-half to two months.

Councilman Gudmundsson advised that the Freshwater Fisheries Committee should try to have a meeting before the April Fish and Game Council meeting.

Chief Barno noted the recent South Jersey fisheries forum that was held at Batsto, and added that all the public fish meetings were well attended each with a number of first time attendees.

Staff are working with on round three of the Delphi review for freshwater fish. Chief Barno gave a brief review of bureau work being done.

A motion was made by Councilwoman Blumig and seconded by Councilman Puskas to approve the bonus broodstock trout stocking program and spring trout stocking allocation as presented. A vote was taken with all in favor, none opposed.

Principal Biologist Ivany reported for the Office of Information and Education. He noted that March is busy month for staff, adding that the Suffern Outdoor Sports show would begin later this week. Other future events include the Outdoor Writer's Workshop on March 26, and the Pequest Open House on March 28 and 29.

Lastly, he commented on radio station WNNJ in Newton relative to the public fisheries meetings. The morning disc jockey noted the transparency of the Division for having these meetings.

Chief Golden reported for the Bureau of Land Management. He noted that personnel and staffing were at the forefront for the Bureau. He noted the recent retirement of Habitat Planner Dunne, and the coming retirements of Regional Superintendents Pettigrew and Olsen, and explained the shortages the bureau will see.

Over the past month 2,000 acres have been added to the wildlife management area system, making the current total acreage to approximately 348,000 acres. Currently, there are 34 members on staff to manage this acreage, and three of these will be retiring in the next few months.

Chief Golden noted the Wildlife Management Area Use Survey that has been proposed. The Division has partnered with Stockton University to implement this. Staff will be meeting with the University next week and work should be starting this Summer. Survey results should help to guide the Division for the future.

He updated the Council on the pheasant stocking program. Staff met last month to develop a formula for distribution, similar to what is used for trout stocking. Wildlife management area allocations are being reviewed, and they will look to stamp buyers for input as well. A more complete update will follow for the Council to review and comment on. There was some additional discussion on this project.

A project involving the Office of Natural Resource Restoration at the Higbee Beach WMA was reviewed. This project work involves restoring the tidal flow to the 250 acre Pine Creek marsh. Chief Golden added that this project has been a long time in the making.

The Abbott's Creek WMA along the Delaware Bay was also noted. The Green Acres Program has been acquiring property in this area, and recently purchased an old salt hay farm. The dike on the property has breached, and is now impacting farmers on adjacent properties. Chief Golden gave a review of this to the Council for the issue at hand now, and possible similar issues in the future, and noted that there need to be consideration made for what responsibility the Division had regarding this type of situation..

Chief Chicketano from the Bureau of Law Enforcement reviewed several highlights from the monthly report for the Council.

Acting Chief Stanko reported for the Bureau of Wildlife Management. She noted the preliminary deer season harvest total of 52,716, which was up 2.2% from last year. Final numbers will follow at a later date.

The Game Code was to have been published in the New Jersey Register yesterday, which started the 60-day comment period. The public hearing will be held on March 31 at the State Museum, and the comment period ends on May 1. She reminded everyone that this did not include the Comprehensive Black Bear Management Program, which is a separate document and process.

The mid-winter waterfowl survey has been completed with the assistance of the United States Fish and Wildlife Service. There were 29 different species noted among the over 400,000 waterfowl that were observed.

Staff handled the largest bear ever while doing research trapping, a male which weighed in at 736 1/2 pounds. This was in Rockaway Township, Morris County.

As noted on the agenda for today, a request was being made to extend the semi-wild hunting season by 20 days. The season was due to end on March 15, but if approved, the extension would carry the season until April 4. **A motion was made by Councilman Gudmundsson, seconded by Councilman Puskas to grant a 20-day extension of the semi-wild hunting season. A vote was taken with all in favor, none opposed.**

Acting Chairman Burke advised that at the Cumberland County Federation meeting last month there were complaints about the quail that had been stocked. He and Acting Chief Stanko also briefly discussed deer hunting zone 42.

Chief Jenkins from the Endangered and Nongame Species Program gave a power point presentation update on the Wildlife Action Plan. Work continues on this plan and updates will continue to be added to the Division's website, where public comments can be made. He added the final document needs to be to the United States Fish and Wildlife Service by October 1.

There was no old or new business to discuss.

The public comment period was opened. Those wishing to speak were reminded that they would have three minutes to do so.

Barbara Sauchau commented on Chief Golden's report of losing staff, calling employees here professionals, baiting should be stopped for bear hunting, and that the level of enforcement in New Jersey is not strong enough and there should be more penalties relative to bear incidents involving trash at commercial food establishments.

Janet Pizar commented on the bear statistics and why she felt there was a lack of credibility, cited bear cases and how the State handled them and felt that statistic information was being escalated to the public.

With no one else wishing to make public comment, **a motion was made by Councilwoman Blumig, seconded by Councilman Van Mater to adjourn. All were in favor.** Meeting adjourned at 2:14 p.m.