

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE
NJ FISH AND GAME COUNCIL

Central Region Office
Robbinsville, NJ
June 9, 2015

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

The meeting was called to order at 10:09 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 May 27, 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 (arrived late 11:20 am)
Councilman Brodhecker (Absent)
Councilwoman Brummer
Councilman DeMartino
Councilman Gudmundsson
Councilman Van Mater
Councilman Link
Councilman Puskas

Absent: Councilman Brummer

Division employees included D. Chanda, P. Nelson, L. Herrighty, M. Chicketano, A. Ivany, C. Stanko, J. Matthews, D. Golden, C. Smith

There were numerous members of the public in attendance.

Minutes of the May 12, 2015 meeting were reviewed. **A motion was made by Councilman Puskas, seconded by Councilman Gudmundsson to approve the minutes. A vote was taken with all in favor, none opposed and Councilwoman Blumig was not present at time of vote.**

Acting Chairman Burke noted that the Game Code Amendment will be discussed after lunch as they wanted additional time to review comments. Tuesday, June 2, 2015 was the Public Hearing at the New Jersey State Museum and there were a light number of attendees with 21 speakers. There is still an additional 20 days for the comment period.

Acting Chairman Burke commented on the Saltwater Fishing Tournament on Saturday/Sunday. He also talked about the Atlantic City Youth Fishing Tournament this Saturday, June 13, 2015, and that Atlantic City fired the Recreation Department and how Bass Pro Shop stepped up to help out. This year's tournament is honor of Fallen Police Officers.

Director Chanda addressed the Council. Governor's Surf Tournament was held on May 17, 2015 and that Al Ivany would report on it later. He reported that there were only a few people at the Game Code/Bear hearing and there had been a slight reorganization within the Division. The hatcheries were split from the Bureau of Freshwater Fisheries and is now the Bureau of Fish Production managed by Jeff Matthews. Jeff Matthews will work with the Bureau of Wildlife Management and determine if the Rockport Game Farm should be reassigned to this Bureau so that staff from the three facilities can be reallocated as necessary and work more efficiently.

The public comment period was opened.

Barbara Sauchau stated her opposition to the entire policy. She shared additional comments and read from an editorial.

Janet Pizar questioned if the date for the Game Code Public Hearing was thought about as it was held on June 2, 2015 which is the general election date in New Jersey. Date will be taken into consideration in the future when holding public hearings.

Paul Jones – NJ State Federation of Sportsmen's Clubs and Commission – fully supports the encapsulating foothold trap.

Charles Hendrickson (Jackson, NJ) – supports the Game Code as written

Tom Mulay (Oxford, NJ) – Trappers Association – Thanked the Council and is in full support of the foothold trap as it is the best tool in New Jersey – mention necessary tool. Asked that the Council think about the Coyote Problem.

There was no one else wishing to make public comment at this time.

Agriculture Committee Report – Councilman Brodhecker advised things rolling along. Mentioned the need for rain for the corn, beans, hay and grain crops. Councilman Puskas indicated that there are a lot of deer in his area. There seems to be a lot of geese in the bean fields. In addition, he indicated that there were a lot of deer and geese in Mercer County. Info regarding crops – 60% down on hay; soy beans – not good; Corn – 12"; wheat – Fair to Poor; Stray and hay – short supply due to a lot of wildlife damage. Acting Chairman Burke indicated that at the Game Code Meeting, comment made was that bear are eating the corn and causing a lot of damage. Councilwoman Blumig also noted problems from the lack of rain, but advised that bees have been pulling a lot of honey.

Acting Chairman Burke asked Dr. Reist from the Department of Agriculture to provide an update on avian influenza problem. Dr. Reist advised that the disease is in 21 states and has affected 46 million chickens (80% laying hens) and that the prices are up. There are 151 premises under quarantine in the country. The turkey flock will also be impacted, and the virus may be here to stay for a while. He stated in the past that he works with the local food bank who received 1500 turkeys in the past. This year they may only receive 150 at best. Both PA and NY, have stopped their poultry fair activities. Dr. Reist indicated that the temperature needed to tone this influenza problem down would be 80 degrees or higher for a sustained period of time. There was some further discussion on this matter.

State Federation Reports: Councilman VanMater – nothing to report. Councilman Agust Gudmundsson – nothing to report. Councilman DeMartino attended 2 meetings, but nothing to report from the first. Waterfowl – suspend the fees for 3 days up front – brought kids/youth. Fin, Fur and Feather – Game Dinner this was their discussion. There are no Federation meetings in July and August.

The Cumberland County Federation - Trash Hunt in wildlife management areas was on 3/21/15. 250 volunteers – gathered 20 tons of trash and 5 tons of tires. It is a nice program and makes a difference.

(Councilwoman Blumig arrived at 11:20 a.m.)

Acting Chairman Burke advised that the Finance Committee met earlier that morning. FY15 resources in Hunter and Anglers – covered expenses and fringe deficit will be covered. Assistant Director Nelson indicated that H&A is right on target with revenue.

There was no report from the Fish or Game Committees.

Assistant Director Nelson reported for the Legislative Committee. Notes from meeting below:

S 2567 Creates “Fishing Buddy License” – Supported – to the Assembly without referendum; does not have to be heard by committee; – Current Fish brings new fisherman or 2 can buy at ½ price; after you bring in ½ price return of residents and non-residents. **A motion was made by Councilman DeMartino, seconded by Councilman Gudmundsson to support the bill. A vote was taken with all in favor, none opposed to supporting the bill. Division also supports this bill**

Supported in the past and continue to support:

- A 112 Clarifies Fish and Game Council has sole authority to regulate freshwater fishing, hunting and trapping.
- A 394 Authorizes Sunday bow hunting on federal military installations.
- S1683 Authorizes Sunday bow hunting on federal military installations.
- A761 Authorizes free hunting, fishing and trapping licenses and free admission to State parks and forests for individuals with certain types of military service. State residents only ~ reimbursement from Treasury;
- S 2285 Authorizes free hunting, fishing and trapping licenses and free admission to State parks and forests for individuals with certain types of military service.
- A 2410 Removes statutory limitation on number of permits that may be issued by Division of Fish and Wildlife for the taking of beaver.
- A3897 Allows non-profit to serve food made from wildlife at charity and fundraising events and meetings as long as public is aware of what is being served.

A motion was made by Councilman Gudmundsson and seconded by Councilman DeMartino to write letters in support of Bill Nos: A112; A394; A761; S2285; A2410; S1683 and A3897. A vote was taken all in favor, none opposed to supporting the bills. Division also supports these bills.

Assistant Director Nelson provided an update on legislation that was recently introduced.

A550 / S 2886 – Establishes program authorizing lease of historic buildings and structures on State parks, forests and wildlife management areas.

S 2892 – Requires annual review of law enforcement officer's motor vehicle records.

A 4378 – Allows collection of seeds from wild native plants; recently introduced native seed on plants.

SCR 169 Opposes Fish & Game Council's proposal to allow use of enclosed foothold traps;

A 4340 - Directs DEP to establish 3 year pilot program to permit for-hire vessels to fish for summer flounder in Delaware waters pursuant to Delaware regulations.

A 112 -- Clarifies that Fish and Game Council has sole authority and power to regulate freshwater fishing, hunting and trapping;

There was some minor discussion on the new legislation.

Councilwoman Brummer reported for the Endangered and Nongame Species Advisory Committee. Field Trip - Oyster Culture – some concerns; feeding migratory shore birds; using ATV on shores – doing field research on migratory shore birds; Wildlife Action Plan – moving along nicely. Councilwomen Blumig spoke on red knots – more on coast and bayside – not in their usual place.

There was no report for the Waterfowl Stamp Advisory Committee – No meeting.

Wildlife Rehabilitator's Advisory Committee – Councilman Brodhecker not in attendance – nothing to report. The Committee is scheduled to meet again on July 22.

Acting Chairman Burk stated that Hurricane Sandy related cleanup efforts on Forsythe National Wildlife Refuge have concluded. More than \$1 million was spent.

Christopher Smith reported for the Bureau of Freshwater Fisheries. Advised that the 2016/2017 Fish Code was sent to the Office of Legal Affairs on April 23 and is under review. Commissioner's Meeting canceled twice – will delay the proposal being sent out will need to update the schedule. Advised due to lack of rain – lake levels are down. Staff foresees possible problems from this in the future. He also advised that the water levels at Lake Hopatcong are still down, and gave a review of the work staff is doing there and how the low water level will be an issue. Mr. Smith spoke on many of the research projects that are on-going, including a lake inventory at Union Lake, cool water assessment at Swartswood Lake and the installation of temperature loggers at 9 trout production streams.

Chief Jeff Matthews spoke on behalf of the Bureau of Fish Production. Trout stocking concluded on May 22, 2015. Pequest made a big comeback with Rainbow trout – 614,000 fish for a total of 331,000 lbs. produced – and most fish exceeded 11.4". Few complaints about stocking fish were received. Rainbow Trout will be stocked in the fall for the next few years. Trout are expected to be 15 to 16 inches in size. Currently staff at Pequest Trout Hatchery are sterilizing equipment and cleaning raceways to be ready for Spring, 2016 season. There is no sign of diseases at the Pequest Trout Hatchery. Hackettstown – Salmon projected – 1300 stock of 14". Staff stocked about 50 fish for the Trenton Derby and brought the Touch Tank and information about the Hooked On Fishing Not Drugs Program. Both the DEP Commissioner and Trenton Mayor attended and all had a good time. License sales for the year were up 3%.

Councilman Puskas indicated that he has spoken to fisherman and they were happy with the stocking.

Councilman Gudmundsson indicated that in general all are pleased with the fish; fish are gorgeous and full of life. People are happy. He also indicated how responsive the Conservation Officers were to a call made by him regarding someone fishing without a license.

Chief Al Ivany reported for the Bureau of Information and Education. The Governor's Surf Fishing Tournament was held on May 17, 2015 with 639 participants. Attendance is up by 100 people since the tournament was moved to May. Only 13 fish were caught, but participants still enjoyed a great day on the beach. The Lieutenant Governor and DEP Commissioner both attended the event. Rich Bergman of Atco, NJ took the grand prize and NJ Governor's Cup by catching a 32" striped bass. Mr. Bergman generously donated his rod and reel combination prize to Island Beach State Park's surf fishing cart, which is used through the summer and fall for surf fishing clinics.

On display at the tournament were 15 wheelchairs used for beach access which were purchased with funds raised by the tournament. More than \$130,000 has been raised for marine conservation projects and improving beach access since the tournaments inception. Next year will be the 25th Anniversary of the Surf Tournament and additional events will be planned.

Chief Ivany indicated that there are some additional staffing changes to Information and Education – Linda DiPiano will be joining his staff and will be overseeing the educational programming. Interviews are being held for the vacant position in the National Archery in the Schools Program (NASP). An additional position is also under recruitment to provide an administrator for the hunter education unit. Director Chanda advised that while there is some recruiting going on in Bureau of Information and Education the Division of Fish and Wildlife's full-time employee count is at the lowest level ever and that the agency is not growing.

Planning for this year's WILD Outdoor Expo is going well.

Chief David Golden reported for the Bureau of Land Management. He spoke on 3 main topics – Restoration Project/ Acquisition and Major Initiative. Restoration Project: for the Paulinskill – WMA Ducks Unlimited and the Division received a small grant to restore the dikes and impoundments. A new larger scale, initiative is also moving forward for this WMA that would involve restoring the nature flow regime and river contours of the Paulinskill River through the WMA. This would be a very large project and is in the very initial stages of discussion on feasibility and wildlife value. Acquisition: A unique property – Elsinboro Township (Salem County) is close to closing with the Green Acres Program and management would be assigned to the Division of Fish and Wildlife. This 100-acre parcel is the old Salem County Country Club and would provide excellent access to the Delaware Bay for anglers.

Wildlife Management Area (WMA) Use Survey. Updated copies of the draft survey questions, developed in cooperation with Stockton University, were provided to Council members. Phase 1 of the project is to complete interviews with 1,800 visitors over the course of one (1) year, by region/season/time of day. The goal of this project is to characterize who visits the Division's WMAs, what they are doing while at the WMAs and determine what percentage of visitors are license holders. The Division's goal is to start these intercept surveys on January 1, 2016 and have it completed over a calendar year. Councilman Gudmundsson commented that the survey should ask about the license first in the order of questioning.

Chief Golden spoke about the Holly Farms and Durand Glass properties in Millville. Councilman DiMartino commented that the Holly Farm is a semi-wild area and a pine-snake habitat. Acting Chairman Burke expressed concerns regarding the building on the property and that the owner maintain them.

Chief Mark Chicketano reported for the Bureau of Law Enforcement. He reviewed several highlights as listed in the Bureau's monthly report with the Council. There was some additional discussion on the information presented.

Acting Chief Stanko reported for the Bureau of Wildlife Management. She briefly spoke about the Bear Policy Meeting held on June 2, 2015 ~ attendance was light – only 29 people w/21 speakers. Acting Chief Stanko advised that staff is working with Stockton regarding research being done by drones and looking into this further. Dan Roberts will be attending the Sportsman Federation Convention on June 12th and he will present the information at a later date.

Bear Calls received 256 (April to May); 3.1% increase - turkey harvest (2972 in 2015 and 2783 in 2014); There is a 85% hatch rate at Rockport Game Farm;

Nongame and Endangered Species Program – Chief Dave Jenkins unable to attend so the report was given by Assistant Director Larry Herrighty. He briefly went over the information presented in the Wildlife Action Plan Update that was given to Council members and advised them that there are 107 “Focal Species”. Assistant Director Herrighty indicated that a RFP has been released to contract with someone for the oversight of the SWAP and associated meetings. He briefly spoke about the travel arrangements and the all-day workshops that are to be scheduled in August. Councilman Gudmundsson requested that he be provided with a listing of dates as he would like to attend. Assistant Director Herrighty will request that Chief Dave Jenkins provide the information.

At 12:03 p.m. the Council broke for lunch; asked everyone to remove their belongings from the public hearing room. The meeting resumed at 1:05 p.m.

Acting Chief Stanko provided copies of the results of the comment period on Game Code amendments to Council. This document totaled up all comments received from the 60-day comment period from the public meeting in March, 2015. The comment period ended on May 15th and 1623 comments were received. Each amendment receiving comments was reviewed especially the following:

Foothold Traps – lengthy comments – people believe that leghold traps are the same as foothold traps – legal advised – these are not the same; Councilwomen Blumig read comments and is abstaining due to family concerns;

Migratory birds – 161 request division to withdraw proposal on floating waterfowl blinds – due diligence not done prior to proposal; **Motion made by Councilwomen Cathy Blumig to withdraw the proposal ; seconded by Councilman Link – All were in favor;**

Wanton waste proposal for game mammals and birds – reviewed language with Law Enforcement exclude quartering of deer in field – no technical changes

Motion made by Councilwomen Blumig; seconded by Councilman DeMartino to withdraw 5.8; 5.9; 5.10 and 5.11 to open the trapping season earlier for semi-aquatic species on WMA's; Vote Taken – 8 – in favor; no opposition; Motion made by Councilman Gudmundsson to approve the proposal with the 2 withdraws; Councilman Puskas seconded the motion – All in favor and No opposition;

New Business:

Councilman DeMartino brought up the credit card situation for individuals to purchase license at Hunter Education classes electronically. It would make it easier to buy. Much discussion ensued and Assistant Director Herrighty advised he will pass the information on;

Councilwoman Blumig spoke to Paul Ritter regarding using the credit card from cellphones. Mr. Ritter has his own business. She wanted to invite Mr. Ritter to August's meeting to discuss this option. Assistant Director Nelson is looking at all possibilities.

Acting Chairman Burke advised that there will be a Joint meeting in September. Proposed date is September 9th; Staff will research the availability of the Eco-Complex.

Black bear public comment period will close on July 16, 2015; vote to be taken at the September meeting.

Councilman Link made a motion to cancel the July meeting and Councilman VanMater seconded. All in favor. No opposition.

At this time the public comment period was opened to 3 minutes per person (1:47 pm.)

Tom Muley – Trapper – thanked the Council for the vote and requested that when making decisions on seasons to consider the trappers as they use the wildlife management areas and there are times that the brush hog goes over their traps.

Barbara Sauchau commented on Game Code and other issues regarding the killing of animals. Ms. Sauchau expired her allotted time.

Janet Pizar commented on the Game Code and indicated that every resident is a stakeholder of the wildlife and no one can own wildlife.

Councilwoman Blumig made a motion to adjourn the meeting and Councilman DeMartino seconded – All in favor. No opposition.

Meeting adjourned at 1:53 p.m.