

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE
NEW JERSEY FISH AND GAME COUNCIL

Central Region Office
Robbinsville, NJ
April 13, 2010

The regular meeting of the New Jersey Fish and Game Council was held on the above date. In attendance were:

Acting Chairwoman Jeanette Vreeland
Councilwoman Barbara Brummer
Councilman Dave Burke
Councilman Ed Kertz
Councilman John Messeroll
Councilman Dan Van Mater

Absent: Councilman Fred Hough
Councilman Robert Puskas
Councilman Len Wolgast

Division employees included: Director Dave Chanda, Assistant Director Larry Herrighty, Jim Sciascia, Lisa Barno, Tony Petrongolo, Sean Cianciulli and Ted Nichols.

Members of the public included: Representatives from the Farm Bureau, the Federation of Sportsmen's Clubs, and others.

The meeting was called to order at 1:05 pm.

The flag salute and Pledge of Allegiance were completed.

Roll call was taken.

The minutes of the March 2010 meeting were reviewed. Two minor changes were made, and **a motion was made by Councilman Messeroll, seconded by Councilman Van Mater to approve the minutes as corrected. A vote was taken with all in favor.**

All in attendance were reminded to please speak up so that their voices could be recorded.

Acting Chairwoman Vreeland advised that the Council would be going into Executive Session at some point today to discuss a lawsuit. It was also noted that there were no agenda items for public comment today, and that all public comments would be held until the end of the meeting.

Acting Chairwoman Vreeland reported that she has had a busy month, and has attended many meetings. She briefly reviewed some of her activities.

Director Chanda reported that trout season had opened this past Saturday. He noted that the winners of the children's fish art writing contest were invited to attend the awards ceremony at Pequest, and they also had the opportunity to fish in the education pond. Commissioner Martin was also in attendance, and had the opportunity to tour the hatchery and meet the staff.

Director Chanda attended many meetings during this reporting period.

Council Kertz reported for the Agriculture Committee. He noted that they are still clearing tree debris from fields as a result of damage that occurred during the storms last month, and some fields still have standing water in them which is delaying farming activities.

Acting Chairwoman Vreeland noted that conditions have been dry in the Northern Region. She also noted a brush fire that had occurred at the Stokes State Forest.

Liz Thompson from the Farm Bureau was in attendance, but had no information to report.

Councilman Messeroll reported for the Legislative Committee, noting that there were no new items to review. He asked that the Committee meeting for next month be changed to an 11 am start time, and that the Council meeting start time be changed to 1 pm, since the public hearing was to be held that evening.

Councilman Messeroll noted that the only item he has heard that is moving is the free saltwater angler registry bill.

Councilwoman Brummer reported for the Endangered and Non-Game Species Committee. She noted two letters that the Committee had sent. One letter was to the Commissioner regarding adverse comments made about the landscape plan in the report given by the Transition Team. They have not received a response yet, but hope to be able to have a meeting with him to discuss this matter.

The second letter was to the Atlantic Marine Fisheries Council regarding a debate over horseshoe crabs and shorebirds, and the "R" model to start fishing of horseshoe crabs. She noted that this issue seems to be at an impasse because of different views between the Endangered and Non-Game Species Committee and the Atlantic Marine Fisheries Council, and that they would have to try to meet in the middle.

Councilwoman Brummer noted that she had not received a formal update on the bat population, but staff estimated a 90% decrease in population at the Hibernia Mine. The bat population continues to be monitored.

Future plans are still pending for staff to give presentation on bobcats and bog turtles to this Council.

Councilman Messeroll asked if the harvest of horseshoe crabs would be limited to males only. Councilman Brummer noted that was the recommendation from the Fisheries Council but that there was still much debate on this issue.

Councilman Messeroll reported for the Federation. Things have been quite active across the State.

Plans are underway for the Convention in June.

On June 5, 2010 the New Jersey Outdoor Alliance is planning a sporting clays event at the Red Wing Sports Club in Port Republic.

In Hunterdon County, the Hunters Helping the Hungry program is sponsoring a striped bass fishing trip on May 21, 2010 leaving out of Atlantic Highlands and a sporting clays shooting event on May 8, 2010 in Lehigh Valley, PA.

The Middlesex County Federation held their dinner this past Wednesday, and Councilman Messeroll reported that it was well attended.

Councilman Messeroll was approached by an individual who was interested in performing a fish lift for herring on Lawrence Brook. The gentleman wanted to know of permitting requirements and if the Division supported such activities. Councilman Messeroll also questioned about the potential for a fish ladder to be put in the Lawrence Brook for herring. This matter will be referred to Chief Barno from the Bureau of Freshwater Fisheries for consideration and permit requirements.

Elsewhere, plans for clean-up events and fishing derbies are underway.

Chief Barno reported for the Bureau of Freshwater Fisheries. She addressed Councilman Messeroll on herring issue. She noted that permits to move the herring are not required if they are staying in the same realm. Chief Barno has spoken with someone about fish ladders at Shadow Lake and believes this is the same person who Councilman Messeroll had spoken to. She had explained the difficulties that can occur with moving herring, and the caller was advised to contact Fisheries Biologist Chris Smith information on existing fish ladders where they may be able to lend assistance.

Chief Barno noted that the Spring trout season is underway. Pre-season stocking started on March 22, 2010 and there was much shifting of the stocking days done because of high waters from the heavy rains. All pre-season stockings were completed before the opening day on April 10, 2010.

Staff have been hearing mixed results from the opening day of the trout season. Angler counts are still being received.

The trap net season at the Hackettstown Hatchery is underway. Work on the walleye has been completed, and staff expects to finish with the muskie by the end of this week. Chief Barno noted that many of the muskie eggs are not viable, which may be due to the colder weather conditions quickly followed by warm weather, but staff still had a sufficient number of eggs to meet stocking needs.

Also at the Hackettstown Hatchery, the pike are ready to move to the ponds. The walleye should be hatching today, and the muskie will be hatching next week. All will be moved to the 65 ponds throughout the Hatchery. The dredging project has fallen behind, and some ponds will be refilled for the time being.

The Research and Management staff have been busy issuing permits for fish stocking and water lowering.

Assistant Director Herrighty reported for the Bureau of Wildlife. He noted that Principal Biologist Nichols was in attendance today to review the proposed waterfowl season dates for the upcoming season.

Assistant Director Herrighty reported that the Deer Project has scheduled a series of three meetings to discuss Antler Point Restriction regulations and the effect on harvest. The South Jersey branch of the Quality Deer Management Association has requested antler point regulations for certain zones in the southern portion of the state. The third and final meeting will be this Thursday night, and all meetings are being held at the Cumberland Regional High School in Seabrook. Assistant Director Herrighty gave a brief summary of the program, which included mailing a postcard notification to 3,300 hunters who purchased permits during the 2008-2009 season. A survey will also be sent to these hunters, and results will be presented to the Council at a later time. There was some additional discussion on this matter.

Principal Biologist Nichols distributed and reviewed the proposed migratory bird seasons for this Fall. He noted that Council members would have a month to review and discuss these proposals, and he requested that they be voted on at the May meeting. Principal Biologist Nichols gave a detailed review of the coastal region where there have been suggestions that the dates be split to a two-part season, as was done in 2004, but noted concerns in doing this. After his review, there was further discussion on the information given today.

At 2:00pm, Dean Jablonsky from the Attorney General's Office arrived to meet with the Council in Executive Session. **A motion was made by Councilman Kertz, seconded by Councilman Messeroll to adjourn. Meeting adjourned at 2 pm for Executive Session.**

The regular meeting resumed at 3:05 pm.

Chief Sciascia reported for the Bureau of Information and Education. He noted the opening day of the Spring trout season and the Pequest Open House were both successful. He also commented on all the media and press coverage done for the trout season, as well as targeted e-mail notifications.

This past Monday records showed that the number of fishing licenses and trout stamps were up, compared to them being down below the 2009 sales for the same time last year just the week before. Chief Sciascia also pointed out that the non-resident licenses were up by 20%, and trout stamps for those licenses up by 16% compared to the same time last year.

Chief Sciascia reported for the Bureau of Information and Education. He noted the opening day of the spring trout season and the Pequest Open House were both successful. He also commented on all the media and press coverage received for the opening of trout season and pre-season stocking, as well as targeted e-mail promotional messages to anglers who had not yet purchased a license.

Fishing license and trout stamp sale records for the Monday following opening day showed the number of fishing licenses and trout stamps compared to the same day last year were up 9% and 8% respectively for residents and 23% and 16% respectively for nonresidents. On the Monday prior to opening day, license and trout stamp were 5% lower than the same day in 2009, most likely due to the flood conditions experienced in the previous week.

Chief Sciascia reported additional fishing promotions will be conducted as the season goes on. Chief Sciascia has proposed to the Recreational Boating and Fishing Foundation that they do a limited postcard mailing this year, and use the additional funds to develop an information brochure based on the results of the angler survey, which would give people information on places to fish.

The enrollment for the Coldwater Conservation School in June is filled. Chief Sciascia thanked all the County Sportsmen's Federations who offered scholarships.

Website Coordinator, Paul Tarlowe, coordinated the startup of the peregrine webcam at the nesting box in Jersey City and updated the webpages associated with the webcam. Tarlowe and Chief Sciascia also worked on extensive Website updates on trout fishing and trout stocking in preparation for the opening of Trout Season.

The number of students taking the Hunter Education course is down by 20% compared to this time last year. Though they are not sure of the reason why, Supervising Biologist Ritter thinks it may be due to low enrollment in the weekday classes added this year. The class schedule for the remainder of the spring will go back to the traditional weekend class schedule, and weekday classes will be added later in the season when enrollment has been historically higher for weekday offerings.

Staff are reviewing a proposal solicited from Southwick Associates to evaluate customer license and permit buying patterns and to identify if there is any potential for increasing customer satisfaction, hunting and fishing participation and revenue by offering alternative licensing and permit packaging. If the initial analysis identifies potential benefits for certain alternative license types and license and permit combinations, a subsequent phase would present the potential options to the Council, the Federation and then to license buyers to determine potential alternative licensing and permit options that may achieve the desired results.

Acting Chairwoman Vreeland noted the wonderful job done by Division staff for the opening day events.

Councilman Messeroll asked about the Outdoor Expo that was scheduled for this fall. Chief Sciascia noted that plans are moving forward, and that the Division has partnered with the Conserve Wildlife Foundation on this event. The event dates are September 25 and 26, 2010 and will be held at the Assunpink WMA, and further information should be available shortly.

Chief Petrongolo reported for the Bureau of Land Management. He noted that 274 acres were added to the wildlife management area system this past month, putting the total WMA acreage over 326,000.

One of the new additions was an 80 acre parcel added to the Hyponex portion of the Paulinskill WMA in Newton, which includes a 20 acre bass pond. In Salem County, 182 acres was added to the Salem River WMA in Salem County. Chief Petrongolo noted this area has a lot of endangered species use, including nesting pied-billed grebes, as well as being an important waterfowl migration area.

Staff from the Bureau of Land Management have been busy with trout stocking, which will continue through the end of May.

With assistance from the Bureau of Forest Fire Management, control burning was done at the Black River WMA. Councilwoman Brummer added that she witnessed the burn, and that staff did a good job with containment.

Chief Petrongolo reported that the heavy rains in March caused the South Branch to flow over the road at the Ken Lockwood Gorge, but there was only minor damage. The handicapped fishing pier was not affected.

At the Makepeace Lake WMA in Atlantic County, the heavy rains went over the dam and just missed damaging the county road.

The new maintenance facility at the Colliers Mills WMA is almost completed. Corporate Business Tax (CBT) monies were utilized for this structure.

Acting Chairwoman Vreeland asked about the new building at the Rockport Game Farm. Assistant Director Herrighty noted that construction of the new brooder house is underway, and that staff are rebuilding the outside pens where they can. For the heavily damaged pens, bids have been received for reconstruction from outside vendors.

Councilman Burke noted that the Cumberland County Federation held their annual two day clean-up last month. Chief Petrongolo added that they picked up many tons of trash, adding that their clean-up project is the biggest one done in the State each year.

Councilman Messeroll inquired about the availability of access to the new acquisition of 80 acres at the Hyponex property, and Chief Petrongolo reviewed the access for him.

Lieutenant Cianciulli reported for the Bureau of Law Enforcement. He noted that officers reported a total of 5,937.5 hours of duty during this reporting period. Those hours can be further broken down to include:

832 for fishing
930.5 for marine resources
103.5 for hunting
503.5 for wildlife management area patrols

A total of 2,092 field inspections were completed, resulting in 194 summonses, eight warnings and one criminal arrest. He noted that most of the summonses issues were for fishing violations and wildlife management area violations. An increase in the amount of illegal dumping was also noted.

Last week, final interviews of the candidates for the Conservation Officer 3 positions were held, and the six provisional officers who have been working for the Division all accepted permanent appointments.

Councilman Messeroll noted an article in the Federation newspaper by CO Martiak.

Old and new business was discussed. Councilman Burke asked if any information was available yet on the State budget appropriation, and Assistant Director Herrighty reviewed the past monies that were received, and the reductions that have been made over the last several years. He added that staff is working on their budget for the next fiscal year with these reductions in mind.

The May 11, 2010 meeting will be held at 1 pm, with the Legislative Committee meeting beforehand at 11:00am. That evening, the public hearing on the Game Code will be held at the State Museum in Trenton at 6 pm. Members of the Council were reminded that their attendance is not mandatory at the public hearing.

The June or July meeting may need to be rescheduled. Commissioner Martin would like to meet with the Game Committee after the June 18, 2010 close of the public comment period on comments to the bear policy. Possible date changes will be discussed at a later time.

Councilman Kertz asked about the status of turkey permit sales, noting some areas in the Southern region had not sold out. This matter was further discussed, and it was suggested that in the areas where permits had sold out should the Game Committee look to increase the amount of permits made available. Assistant Director Herrighty noted that safety and the number of hunters afield is a large part of how the permit quotas are developed, but added that he will talk to Supervising Biologist McBride on this matter.

The public comment period was opened.

Barbara Sauchau addressed the Council. She stated that she wanted answers from Councilman Wolgast regarding feral cats. She stated that she understood that his wife owns a kennel and, and questioned if their services could be a conflict of interest if they are involved. Acting

Chairwoman Vreeland reminded Ms. Sauchau that they were looking for public comments, not questions.

Ms. Sauchau presented letters that she said were from people who were upset about what the Division does. She added that she felt the Division only reaches out to “old men at hunting clubs”.

Ms. Sauchau noted she has concerns about the Oswego Gun Club with regard to lead deposits on their property.

Ms. Sauchau noted that she had done an analysis of the report done on black bears. She felt that more independent research needed to be done since this report was done by a former Rutgers student. Ms. Sauchau also asked what became of the bears at Six Flags that were treated with contraceptives.

Ms. Sauchau also stated that she wants more information on why plants are disappearing, and felt that it was not due only to deer damage. She noted that there were endless articles on this matter.

Ms. Sauchau noted an Environmental Protection Agency report on control burning, saying that it releases mercury fine particulates into the air and felt that the Division should re-think burning. She also asked if the participating agencies receive overtime pay for this activity. Assistant Director Herrighty tried to speak to Ms. Sauchau, but she told him not to interrupt. She added that she feels anti-environmental aspects are going on here.

Ms. Sauchau left several pieces of information today.

There were no other public comments.

A motion was made by Councilwoman Brummer, seconded by Councilman Van Mater to adjourn. All were in favor, and the meeting adjourned at 3:47 pm.