

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE
NJ FISH AND GAME COUNCIL

Central Region Office
Robbinsville, NJ
June 12, 2012

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.

The following was read aloud by Acting Chairman Burke: 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 and delivered to the designated newspapers of the Division, the Newark Star Ledger and the Atlantic City Press on May 18, 2012.

Roll call was taken. In attendance were:

Acting Chairman David Burke
Councilwoman Barbara Brummer
Councilman Agust Gudmundsson
Councilman Jeffrey Link
Councilman John Messeroll
Councilman Robert Puskas
Councilman Dan Van Mater

Absent: Councilman Philip Brodhecker

Division personnel included D. Chanda, L. Herrightly, P. Nelson, M. Chicketano, L. Barno, A. Petrongolo and A. Burnett.

Members of the public included representatives of the United States Department of Agriculture, the New Jersey Farm Bureau, the New Jersey State Federation of Sportsmen's Clubs and others.

Minutes of the May 8, 2012 meeting were reviewed. Three typographical errors were noted for correction, and **a motion was made by Councilman Gudmundsson, seconded by Councilwoman Brummer to approve the minutes as amended. A vote was taken with all in favor.**

Acting Chairman Burke reported that the Finance Committee had met this morning, and the Game Committee would be meeting this afternoon at the conclusion of the regular Council meeting.

Two recent bear sightings were noted in the Medford and Atco areas. Acting Chairman Burke reported that the Philadelphia news stations reported a school lockdown in Atco because of the bear activity.

Acting Chairman Burke commented on the Hackettstown Centennial event, and that it was a very good, positive weekend.

He also reviewed the Route 52 bridge project. This bridge goes from Somers Point to Ocean City, and has been redone and now includes fishing piers, cleaning tables and a launch area.

In Southern New Jersey, they have had a warm spring, and crops such as blueberries are two weeks early. There was some discussion on the effects of the mild winter and what has resulted from it.

Director Chanda addressed the Council, also noting the Hackettstown Centennial event. All areas of activity were continually busy, and the event was visited by four former Superintendents of the Hatchery, and three former Directors of the Division.

Also noted about the Hackettstown Hatchery was the approval last Thursday by the State House Commission of an agreement between the Division and Centenary College for them to use the education building.

Director Chanda noted the Finance Committee meeting this morning, and reported that there should be a small carry forward of monies into the next fiscal year, but there would still be challenges to face in the coming year. There will be a lot of focus on the Endangered and Non-Game Species Program (ENSP), who has had a large reduction in their Statewide funding, and staff are working to close the financial gap without having a reduction in staff.

Director Chanda noted that he would be leaving before the end of the meeting today.

Director Chanda advised of some of the activities that Assistant Commissioner Boornazian has been participating in with the staff, and that he continues to be very supportive of the Division. The Director recommended that the Assistant Commissioner may want to attend the September Joint Councils Meeting.

Councilman Messeroll inquired about funds that might be received from the pipeline project in Northern New Jersey, and if some of those monies could go to the ENSP. Director Chanda explained that the Division will get some funding, but not too much is known at this time.

Acting Chairman Burke reviewed the agenda items for today, which were the Bureau of Wildlife Management to present the River Otter Status and Recommendations for 2013-2014, and the Consideration and Vote on 2013-2013 New Jersey Waterfowl Season dates for submission to the USFWS. He asked if anyone chose to make public comment on these items.

Janet Pizar commented on the agenda format relative to public comment on days when there were non-voting items listed.

Barbara Sauchau commented that she seeks full protection of the river otter, and opposes killing wildlife.

Acting Chairman Burke noted that at the last meeting, the public was given extra time at the end of the meeting to comment, and also spoke to Assistant Director Herrighty about listing the non-voted upon items under the particular bureau they fall under or possibly just as presentations.

Committee reports began. Acting Chairman Burke showed the members a copy of the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) crop information report, noting that they might find it to be helpful.

Continuing with the Agriculture Committee, Committeeman Puskas noted a noticeable insect problem this Spring. Also, farmers are experiencing problems with turkeys, and are obtaining depredation permits for them. Farmers who grow hay are also experiencing problems, and he added that this has been a very challenging year so far for the farmers.

Councilman Link reported that he has not received too many calls from farmers in the Southern Region, but this could be due to their being so busy. Weather in his area has also been hit and miss, but most recently it has been very dry, with high winds and high temperatures since Memorial Day.

In the Northern Region it was noted that they are experiencing the opposite problem, and that it has been too wet.

Acting Chairman Burke noted that the dry weather helps with turkey poult survival and large hatches. There was some additional discussion on the weather and the impacts it may have.

Councilman Messeroll reported for the Federation. Recent events included attending the Hackettstown Centennial, a sportsmen's shoot at Red Wing in Atlantic County, and the Convention that was held this past Saturday.

Also for the Federation, Councilman Gudmundsson noted no meetings in the North this past month. Acting Chairman Burke commented that there was a lot of discussion the deer reporting system at the Cumberland County meeting.

Acting Chairman Burke noted that the Finance Committee had met this morning as reported earlier by Director Chanda, and that there was no additional information to add.

Councilman Messeroll reported for the Fisheries Committee. They have not had a meeting recently, but he was at Mohawk Pond in Monmouth County, which is requesting to be a trout stocked water. They will be in touch with Principal Biologist Crouse on this.

Acting Chairman Burke reported that the Game Committee would be meeting this afternoon.

Councilman Messeroll reported for the Legislative Committee. He noted concerns to a new Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (SPCA) law, where someone can be written a summons for not having their dog or cat restrained while in a vehicle. There was some additional discussion on this and the SPCA program.

Legislative Liaison Nelson addressed the Council. She distributed information and updated the Council on some of the past bills, including the Hooked on Fishing, Not on Drugs (HOFNOD) bill, which looks as though it may be signed in to law. Staff have worked with the sponsors of the bill to stop the illegal trade of tigers to try to improve upon it. It was noted that the forest harvest bill has had some action and may be moving through both the Senate and Assembly. New bills included topics on patrol of shellfish beds, lobster size limits, feeding of black bears, monk parakeets, licenses for disabled persons, fishing gear on artificial reefs and the agricultural farming of deer.

Council Messeroll advised that the next meeting of the Legislative Committee would be held on August 14, 2012 at 9 a.m.

Councilwoman Brummer reported for the Endangered and Non-Game Species Advisory Committee (ENSAC). Their most recent meeting was held on May 16, 2012 at the Nature Conservancy Office in South Jersey, and was followed by a tour of an aquaculture project in the area.

Presentations were given on the impact of deer on understory plants and how their population impacts moths and butterflies, and on the legal protection of rare plants in New Jersey.

Councilwoman Brummer also asked that the Council start to consider topics for the Joint Council's Meeting in September. She suggested that the ENSAC would like a presentation of the Delphi process given to this Council, and also that the Department may need to play a role in these groups working together. There was additional discussion regarding the September meeting.

A letter was sent to the Commissioner thanking him for doing Committee re-appointments before they lapsed. Councilwoman Brummer also noted that she has spoken with Assistant Commissioner Boornazian, who has agreed to meet with several members of their Committee, and she suggested that this Council do the same.

Acting Chairman Burke asked about the status of the Atlantic sturgeon. Legislative Liaison Nelson advised that it is now an endangered species, and Chief Barno added that the Bureau of Freshwater Fisheries has requested to be able to continue with the Delaware River work.

It was noted that there have been no changes to the red knot or horseshoe crab status. There was some additional discussion on the information from today.

Acting Chairman Burke reported that the Waterfowl Advisor Committee was tentatively scheduled to meet on July 10, 2012 and that the Wildlife Rehabilitators Advisory Committee had met on June 20, 2012.

Acting Chairman Burke noted that Councilman Gudmundsson would be leaving early today, and he would like to have the vote on the proposed waterfowl season dates at this time. Assistant Director Herrighty advised the Council that Supervising Biologist Nichols had met with both Ducks Unlimited and the New Jersey Waterfowlers and neither group had any concerns with the proposals as given. Additionally, whatever the Council decided to do today would then be submitted to the United States Fish and Wildlife Service. The brant season format was listed as “to be determined”, and it was explained that the format will be decided later in the summer as the various Flyway Councils meet with the USFWS. The Council will vote on brant at a later time. **A motion was made by Councilman Van Mater, seconded by Councilman Puskas to approve the season dates as provided at the last Fish and Game Council meeting. A vote was taken with all in favor, none opposed.**

Chief Barno reported for the Bureau of Freshwater Fisheries. She distributed a summary of the trout activity from the Pequest Hatchery for this year, and briefly reviewed same for the Council. Information included that there were more than 340,000 trout distributed this Spring, which was the third highest amount in the last 29 years. Chief Barno also noted that the staff are consistently able to successfully produce and distribute trout above the amount the facility was initially designed for. They have also been receiving great angler reports on the fish that are being caught.

Chief Barno briefly reviewed the Centennial activities at the Hackettstown Hatchery, noting the hard work by her staff and staff from other bureaus. She added that the lease proposal for use by Centenary College would be for a 10 year use agreement.

In the Research and Management Section staff are through with the permit season. They will now work on overhauling the database for validation of information.

Chief Sciascia was not present to report for the Bureau of Information and Education, but Director Chanda advised the Council that the proposed bundling packages for licenses and permits have been forwarded to Southwick Associates.

The Division “app” for I-phones is moving forward, and it is hoped to have information available on this in the upcoming Digest. There was some additional discussion on this matter.

Director Chanda also noted that the new sign making equipment that was purchased has been well used lately, and briefly explained how the new system works.

The Environmental Assessment for the archery park has been completed, and the project is moving forward to the next step. The new Assistant Commissioner has taken an interest in this project and has asked Chief Sciascia for an economic analysis, which Director Chanda further explained.

Councilman Gudmundsson inquired about the results of the National Archery in Schools program, and it was noted that the Oxford Middle School did quite well.

Chief Petrongolo reported for the Bureau of Land Management. He added one additional item for the Bureau of Information and Education, that the new exhibits for the Pequest Hatchery were to be installed soon, and they were being paid for with Corporate Business Tax Funds.

In the Bureau of Land Management, staff have been very active planting crops and warm season grasses for both game and non-game species.

The former Princeton Nurseries property acquisition may close by the end of the month. Staff are working with personnel from the Endangered and Non-Game Species Program to determine which fields to use for warm season grass plantings.

Chief Petrongolo noted that Statewide, warm season grass plantings have been successful. Principal Biologist Dunne does regular monitoring of the South Branch and Readington WMAs, and has seen such species as bobolink, grasshopper sparrow and savannah sparrow at those areas.

A deer enclosure has been installed at the Sparta Mountain WMA in the forest harvest site. It will be monitored for the impact of re-generation. He added that Principal Biologist Dunne has heard cerulean warblers at this site.

On the Assunpink WMA, the main road to the lake is due to be oil and chipped and will be closed for a short while until the project is completed.

A number of boat ramp projects are occurring, including Elmer Lake in Salem County. Chief Petrongolo described that this was part of the dredging program that has been done, and would be good for launching small boats. Land Management crews have put a stone ramp in at the Thundergut Pond in Alloway.

In the coming fiscal year Corporate Business Tax (CBT) monies will be used at the Reiglesville ramp on the Delaware River to refurbish and expand the existing ramp. At the Split Rock Reservoir an improved ramp is being designed, and at the Spicer's Creek WMA the marine access near the Cape May canal was damaged and is due to be repaired plus additional parking will be installed.

Acting Chief Chicketano reported for the Bureau of Law Enforcement. He reviewed some of the highlights from the Bureau's monthly report for the Council.

Acting Chairman Burke asked about the status of the newer Conservation Officers. Acting Chief Chicketano advised that four were due to graduate soon from the Somerset County Police Academy and would then be working with a field training officer for the next six months. Four additional new hires were due to complete required medical testing and would then be going to the Gloucester County Police Academy in August. It was noted that this would now fill the positions for new hires that were approved. Acting Chairman Burke also inquired if there were any pending retirements, and while none are anticipated, four officers are eligible to do so. There was some additional discussion on this matter.

Assistant Director Herrighty reported for the Bureau of Wildlife Management. Staff have been working in cooperation with the United States Department of Agriculture to remove the pigs from the White Oak Lake WMA. Recently, they caught a 200 pound boar in a trap, which the pig was able to move 10 to 15 yards.

At the Six-Mile Run Reservoir plans are being made by the Pheasants Forever group for plantings.

Summer bear research trapping begins next week.

Staff are still working with the Federal Emergency Management Administration for storm damage reimbursement at the Rockport Game Farm.

Acting Chair Burke noted that the monthly report showed that Fort Dix was opting out of the antler point restriction requirement. He noted that they were the first to use this program.

Lunch break began at 11:50 am, and the meeting resumed at 12:37 pm.

Principal Biologist Burnett gave a power point presentation and review of the river otter status and the recommendations for the 2013-2014 Game Code. The overall recommendation was to open up more areas and add additional permits. There was some discussion and questions were addressed on the information he presented today.

There was no Old Business to discuss.

New Business included a request to move or readjust the duck season dates in the North Zone, and a letter from someone in Hammonton that there were not enough permit shotgun deer hunting days in Zone 28.

Assistant Director Herrighty showed and described to the Council a photograph of a trash dumpster that had been redesigned as a bear trap.

The July 2012 Fish and Game Council meeting was discussed. With no known business to discuss, **a motion was made by Councilman Puskas, seconded by Councilwoman Brummer to cancel the July 10, 2012 Fish and Game Council meeting. A vote was taken with all in favor, none opposed.**

The public comment period was opened, with those in attendance reminded that they would each have three minutes to speak.

Janet Pizar from Essex County addressed the Council. She distributed two handouts to the Council and briefed them on same. She advised that she felt her comments from the March 13, 2012 meeting were submitted in written but inadequately reported, and requested a correction to the minutes.

Ms. Pizar also commented that she felt Division employees should answer her questions asked at Council meetings.

Barbara Sauchau also addressed the Council. She commented on having a river otter season. She also spoke about her concerns of the use of lead tackle and lead at the Split Rock Reservoir.

Jim DeStephano from Newfoundland was the last speaker. He is a member of the NJ Trappers Association, and explained their offer to process pelts that were in the Division's possession and return them to the Division for educational purposes.

With no one else wishing to address the Council, **a motion was made by Councilwoman Brummer, seconded by Councilman Link to adjourn. A vote was taken with all in favor.** The meeting adjourned at 1:28 pm.