

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE
NJ FISH AND GAME COUNCIL

Central Region Office
Robbinsville, NJ
March 12, 2013

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

The meeting was called to order at 10:13 a.m. by Acting Chairman Burke.

The flag salute and Pledge of Allegiance were completed.

Roll call was taken. In attendance were:

Acting Chairman David Burke
Councilwoman Cathy Blumig
Councilwoman Barbara Brummer (arrived at 10:14 a.m.)
Councilman Joseph DeMartino
Councilman Jeffrey Link (arrived at 10:14 a.m.)
Councilman Robert Puskas (arrived at 10:45 a.m.)
Councilman Dan Van Mater

Absent: Councilman Phil Brodhecker
Councilman Agust Gudmundsson

Division personnel included D. Chanda, L. Herrighty, P. Nelson, L. Barno, M. Chicketano, A. Petrongolo and T. Nichols.

Members of the public included former Councilman Messeroll, representatives from the Department of Agriculture, the Farm Bureau and others.

Review and vote on the minutes of the February 12, 2013 meeting were postponed until enough members arrived to have a quorum.

Acting Chairman Burke commented on the Fisheries Forum that was held at Batsto. He noted that there were about the same amount of participants as attended last year, and reviewed some of the information from that meeting.

(Councilman Link and Councilwoman Brummer arrived at 10:14 a.m.)

Tonight at the Gloucester County Federation Meeting Supervising Biologist Carr and Principal Biologist Burnett will be in attendance to present a program on pheasants.

Minutes of the February 12, 2013 meeting were noted, and it was decided to hold the vote for approval until after lunch for those who had just received them for review.

Other topics reviewed included the March 1, 2013 opening of the striped bass season and upcoming fishing flea markets.

Director Chanda addressed the Council. He noted that he has held three region meetings for staff recently to bring everyone up to speed on budget and staff changes, and projects within the Division.

Last Monday there was a release of a rehabilitated bald eagle at the Berkshire Valley area in the Morris County Parks System. This received good coverage in the press, and showed the benefit of rehabilitator work and the tax check off program.

Director Chanda advised that the budget is tight, and staff has been advised to hold off on any spending other than for critical items. The \$700,000 fringe benefit adjustment caused an impact for the year, but it is hoped that the Division will end with a balanced budget. All time spent for Hurricane Sandy related activities will be tracked and submitted for reimbursement.

Progress continues on the proposed archery park. Environmental assessments are being done at several areas, and preliminary drawings are being developed.

An architectural contract has been awarded for the new Pequest Education Center. The new building will be located near the fishing education pond, and Director Chanda reviewed the design plan that is proposed. The current Pequest auditorium will be made into office space and other Region offices will be relocated into that area.

Invitations for the April 6 opening day trout season events at the Pequest Hatchery will be going out to all Council members. Members were also reminded of the upcoming open house on March 23 and 24.

Last week Director Chanda and Assistant Director Nelson along with representatives from the Audubon Society and Conserve Wildlife Foundation were in Washington, D.C. for the Teaming with Wildlife fly in days. Director Chanda explained that they were able to meet with our Congressional representatives and explain how our allocated state wildlife grant funds are being utilized.

Director Chanda commented that February, March and April are very busy months for the Division.

Lastly, Director Chanda noted recent staff reductions due to various reasons, and advised that the Bureau of Law Enforcement may be down by three or four persons by the end of the year.

There was some additional discussion regarding the Archery Park, and archery programs Statewide. Director Chanda added that he would also like to have a second archery park in Southern New Jersey sometime in the future.

At 10:30 a.m. Acting Chairman Burke noted that there was now a quorum. He 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 and delivered to the designated newspapers of the Division, the Newark Star Ledger and the Atlantic City Press on February 25, 2013.

Assistant Director Herrightly explained the need for a vote today on the reconsideration of a Game Code proposed amendment regarding the farmer deer permit deadline for filing of applications. He gave a review of the history of the farmer deer permit program, and noted that they were asked by the Administration to rescind this amendment and strike the language that permits would not be received if applications were not received by a certain time. Farmers will be advised that if they apply late, they may not receive their permits in time for the start of the season.

Public comment was opened on this topic. Barbara Sauchau addressed the Council, stating that the public should have information in advance to review, that the proposed amendment should stay as is.

There were no other commenters.

Committee reports were given. Councilman Link of the Agriculture Committee reported that he had attended the Quality Deer Management (QDM) Association banquet. He was able to speak with some hunters on their success or lack of success during this past season. There were concerns regarding the Earn-A-Buck Program and whether or not it would continue.

Councilwoman Blumig reported for the Federation. They are working with the New Jersey Waterfowlers and the Bergen County Waterfowlers to finalize a letter to the Commissioner asking that staff who are representatives be allowed to attend the Atlantic Flyway meeting in Canada. Currently, international travel is not allowed.

The Federation is also teaming with the Conserve Wildlife Foundation, the Delaware Bay Leadership Project and the Shorebird Recovery Project for shorebird habitat restoration projects on private lands for properties adjacent to wildlife management areas from Salem to Cape May Counties.

The Federation extended an invitation to all Council members to attend the New Jersey Wildlife and Conservation Conference in April. Councilwoman Blumig distributed fliers for this event.

Councilwoman Blumig noted that there is interest in the Division's response plan for Chronic Wasting Disease (CWD), concerns on the EAB requirement and buck stub usage for this upcoming season. Additionally, there is a concern regarding what impact the Federal sequester may have on the Division.

Councilman DeMartino has attended several meeting recently, where there was discussion on having an all-around license for seniors. It was also suggested that a boat ramp permit print along with the fishing license for those ramps that require this permit.

The Monmouth County Federation will be sending a letter requesting that their volunteers be allowed to assist the Bureau of Land Management. Director Chanda noted that they may be able to use their assistance in some aspects, and could be part of the newly revamped Division Volunteer Program. This will be addressed when their letter is received.

Assistant Director Nelson reported for the Finance Committee. The Federal sequester could have as much as a seven percent reduction effect on Federal Aid grants, but it is hoped that this money could be reclaimed again after the sequester is lifted.

Assistant Director Nelson commented on the budget and noted that things are tight right now, but that the upcoming trout fishing season should contribute some additional funds.

Acting Chairman Burke reported for the Freshwater Fisheries Committee. They met on February 21, and had a long meeting. More information will be given during Chief Barno's report.

(Councilman Puskas arrived at 10:45 a.m.)

Acting Chairman Burke reported for the Game Committee. The Earn-A-Buck (EAB) program and possible change to make the early season antlerless only were discussed. This will be open to comment at the public hearing on the Game Code. Assistant Director Herrighty advised that the legal document on proposed Game Code changes was at the Division of Law, and should be published in the Register around the 16th April. There will then be a 60 day written comment period, with the public comment period not being scheduled before the 15th day after it is published. There was additional lengthy discussion on the EAB program.

Acting Chairman Burke asked Assistant Director Herrighty to again review the item to be voted on today, which would rescind the sentence on bow, shotgun and muzzleloader farmer deer permit application period. He again explained this for the Council, and added that they will be working with the Farm Bureau to have them help to get the word out about on applying on time. **A motion was made by Councilman Van Mater, seconded by Councilman Puskas to withdraw the sentence in the proposed Game Code changes that would prohibit farmers from securing their farmer deer permits if they did not apply before the application deadline. A vote was taken with all in favor, none opposed.**

Assistant Director Nelson reported for the Legislative Committee. Councilman DeMartino inquired about a bill which would not allow the use of firearms within 1,000 feet of a school or state building, and was looking for clarification. Assistant Director Nelson was not familiar with this bill, but will look into it. Assistant Director Herrighty added that it would allow municipalities to adopt certain ordinances. There was further discussion on this matter, and it was noted that it will have to be looked into further and that language may need to be cleaned up.

Acting Chairman Burke noted bills A 3250, A 3902, A 3904 and A 3905, which address animal welfare, and felt that they could affect those with hunting dogs.

One new bill was reviewed by Assistant Director Nelson:

A 3840 Prohibits DEP from reducing fishing quotas established
by Federal or regional entities, unless authorized by law.

This is a marine fishing bill, and will be followed for the
Marine Fisheries Council.

Councilwoman Brummer reported for the Endangered and Nongame Species Advisory Committee (ENSAC) who will meet week. They will have a review of the mammal Delphi report. One item for review is that all bat species in New Jersey are now listed as either a species of concern or endangered. The bobcat is proposed to be changed from endangered to threatened. There was no consensus from the Delphi process on two major mammal species, the Southern pond lemming or the meadow jumping mouse. In total, 39 species will be reviewed.

Shorebird population data will be reviewed for relativity to the horseshoe crab populations.

There was some discussion between members of this Council on the impacts of Hurricane Sandy to the Delaware Bay, and Councilwoman Brummer advised that there is a growing coalition of non-government organizations (NGO's) looking for funding for debris clean up on the beaches where horseshoe crabs come to lay eggs. Acting Chairman Burke commented that the Department will be doing a Delaware River clean up.

There was no report for the Waterfowl Stamp Committee, who is tentatively scheduled to meet in April.

Assistant Director Nelson noted that the Wildlife Rehabilitator's Committee would be meeting again on March 27.

Chief Barno reported for the Freshwater Fisheries Committee. A power point presentation of the proposal of changes for the 2014 Fish Code, as well as handouts, was given to the members of the Council and reviewed by Chief Barno. There was additional discussion regarding the information given today. A final vote on these proposals will be held at the April 9, 2013 Fish and Game Council Meeting.

The meeting stopped for lunch at 12:09 p.m., and resumed at 1:59 p.m.

Minutes of the February 12, 2013 meeting were reviewed. Acting Chairman Burke and Councilwoman Blumig noted two corrections to be made, after which **a motion was made by Councilman Van Mater, seconded by Councilman DeMartino to approve the minutes as corrected. A vote was taken with all in favor.**

Chief Petrongolo reported for the Bureau of Land Management. He advised that staff have been very busy with Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) reports and continued storm clean up this past month.

Staff are scheduled to do aerial surveys for debris review with assistance from the Forest Fire Service utilizing their helicopter. Chief Petrongolo described how this will enable staff to view areas that are not accessible by vehicle, and that there are many miles of area to be observed.

A contractor has been hired to make permanent repairs to the Tuckahoe Wildlife Management Area dikes. A grant request has also been submitted to obtain funding to make additional improvements to these dikes.

Staff have developed forest stewardship plans on roughly 40,000 acres within the wildlife management areas system. Chief Petrongolo added that they are making good progress with this program, and that Corporate Business Tax (CBT) funding for forest stewardship plan development is helping this along.

Prescribed burning projects are being completed with assistance from Forest Fire staff.

Acting Chairman Burke inquired about the Lenape Farms acquisition, noting that he has seen signage stating that the roads will be open in March. Chief Petrongolo explained that a management plan for the Western section has been developed and it would be opening first, but the Eastern section has some areas of concern and progress there is moving more slowly.

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

Councilwoman Blumig inquired as to the case previously noted at the Sparta Mountain Wildlife Management Area, where the equipment of the contractor hired to do a forestry project had been damaged. Acting Chief Chicketano had no further information to report.

Principal Biologist Nichols was in attendance to present results of the Waterfowl Hunter Survey. Acting Chairman Burke gave a review of the background information for this project, and Director Chanda shared additional comments as well.

Principal Biologist Nichols reviewed the Council's role in setting annual migratory bird season dates was to establish language in the Game Code to set the seasons in the frameworks of the Federal guidelines, but noted that the Federal Government has the ultimate management authority of migratory bird regulations.

A power point presentation of the survey information was given. It was noted that the survey was done for the North, South and Coastal zones and was sent to 1,080 hunters who were registered with a Hunter Information Program number and had previously hunted ducks. A 40% return rate was received from those surveyed.

Upon completion of the presentation, Principal Biologist Nichols noted that the survey results could weigh heavily on the 2013 season. This information will also be posted on the Division's website in the future.

Chief Sciascia was not in attendance to report for the Bureau of Information and Education. Assistant Director Nelson noted several upcoming events for the Bureau, including the Outdoor Writer's Workshop on March 21, the Pequest Open House on March 23 and 24, the opening day of trout season activities on April 6 and the WILD Expo on September 14 and 15.

Old and new business was discussed. Staff from Green Acres assigned to the Waterfowl Stamp Committee had just confirmed that there would be no property offerings to review next month. This would mean the meeting would most likely be cancelled, and that the start time for the Fish and Game Council meeting could be moved from 1 p.m. to 10 a.m. **A motion was made by Councilman DeMartino, seconded by Councilwoman Blumig to adjust the start time of the April 9, 2013 Fish and Game Council meeting to 10 a.m. from 1 p.m. A vote was taken with all in favor.**

The public comment period was opened, with members of the audience advised that they would have three minutes to speak. Barbara Sauchau again addressed the Council. She shared comments on the number of waterfowl hunters in New Jersey relative to the total population, a report from the University of Colorado at Denver on Chronic Wasting Disease, a report on the use of lead bullets used at gun ranges that was part of the opposition for an approved range to be built in South Jordan, Utah. Ms. Sauchau was reading text from this report when her three minute time allotment expired.

John Messeroll from Middlesex County was next to address the Council. He commented that he has been working on the Farrington Lake trout stocking program and that it should go well. He also noted that the waterfowl hunters have put \$3 million plus into the Waterfowl Stamp Program over the past 25 to 30 years and noted the uses of those monies for properties and habitat improvements, and the additional local economic benefits these hunters bring in.

With no one else wishing to make public comment, **a motion was made by Councilman Puskas, seconded by Councilwoman Blumig to adjourn. A vote was taken with all in favor.** Meeting adjourned at 2 p.m.