

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE
NJ FISH AND GAME COUNCIL

Central Region Office
Robbinsville, NJ
October 8, 2013

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

The meeting was called to order at 1:03 p.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 and delivered to the designated newspapers of the Division, the Newark Star Ledger and the Atlantic City Press on September 18, 2013.

Roll call was taken. In attendance were:

Acting Chairman Dave Burke
Councilwoman Blumig (arrived at 1:18 p.m.)
Councilman Brodhecker (arrived at 1:25 p.m.)
Councilman DeMartino
Councilman Gudmundsson
Councilman Puskas
Councilman Van Mater

Absent: Councilwoman Brummer
Councilman Link

Division employees included Director Chanda, Assistant Director Herrighty, L. Barno, M. Chicketano and R. Porutski.

There were several members of the public in attendance.

Acting Chairman Burke noted that there was a quorum, and the meeting would move forward. The minutes of the September 10, 2013 joint meeting of the Fish and Game Council and the Endangered and Nongame Species Advisory Committee were reviewed. Members were advised that there was a minor change to the paragraph on page 2 regarding the Holly Farm property, which was made available to them for review. Chairman Burke also noted a change on page 2, where the word "in" had been omitted. **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, and one abstention from Councilman Gudmundsson.** (These minutes still needed approval by the Endangered and Nongame Species Advisory Committee).

Acting Chairman Burke commented on the Joint Council's Meeting, noting that the information presented was informative and interesting. Due to the lack of time some topics were not covered extensively, and may be continued again at a later date.

Acting Chairman Burke also commented on the recent WILD Outdoor Expo, noting that attendance had increased again this year, with a 17 percent larger visitor base. Additionally, there were more vendors and exhibitors than in the past. Also, the 31st annual Ocean County Gunning and Decoy Show was held last month in Tuckerton.

Director Chanda addressed the Council. He noted that Assistant Director Nelson was at a Hooked On Fishing, Not On Drugs (HOFNOD) meeting with the Commissioner today.

Director Chanda also attended the WILD Expo, commenting on how good an event it is. He added that planning for continued growth needs to be taken into consideration future events.

The annual Governor's Surf Fishing Tournament was held this past weekend, and had over 600 attendees.

The Council was reminded that they were invited to attend the open house at the Rockport Game Farm on Saturday, October 19th. Past pheasant and quail stamp purchasers were also invited to attend.

The Fall trout stocking program had to be moved up on the calendar, and Director Chanda noted that Chief Barno from the Bureau of Freshwater Fisheries would be giving more information on this.

Director Chanda asked that the Finance Committee plan to meet before the start of the November 19th meeting.

Acting Chairman Burke noted to those in attendance that there would be a presentation of the Fall pheasant and quail stocking schedule later today, and described that they would be voting on this as a courtesy and it was not a statutory requirement. He then opened the public comment period to anyone wishing to speak on this matter, advising that they would be given a three minute time limit.

Barbara Sauchau addressed the Council. She objects to the pheasant stocking program. Additionally she noted the possibility of germ transmission, stated that it encourages people to hunt and was obscene and obnoxious. Ms. Sauchau made additional comments related to hunting.

Janet Pizar, Public Trust Wildlife Management (offices in Chatham, NJ) voiced her opposition to the pheasant and quail stocking program.

(Councilwoman Blumig arrived at 1:18 p.m.)

Committee reports were given. Councilman Puskas reported for the Agriculture Committee, noting that corn and soybeans were being harvested, but advised that the corn prices are down by half from what they were last year.

Councilman Puskas continues to receive complaints regarding damage by Canada geese. He noted the season dates are set by the Federal government, but suggested that they consider a season quota rather than a daily quota, since hunters are not usually able to hunt all the days of the thirty day season. Assistant Director Herrightly explained that there is a method used to determine hunting days and bag limits, and there was some additional discussion on geese and related problems.

For the Federation, Councilman VanMater noted Burlington County had a short meeting last month and he had no new information to report. They will meet again this Thursday evening.

Councilwoman Blumig reported that at the State meeting on September 20th they talked about plans for the Joint Convention and she gave a brief review to the Council.

(Councilman Brodhecker arrived at 1:25 p.m.)

Councilwoman Blumig had attended the Union County meeting last evening, where questions were raised regarding deer farms and a change in jurisdiction as to who is overlooking this program.

There was discussion at the Union County meeting regarding the automated deer check system. There were some complaints about the “on hold” wait time the first day, but things seem to be running smoothly now.

Councilwoman Blumig also noted there were questions on the Furunculosis outbreak at the Pequest Trout Hatchery, and concerns were raised as to whether the outbreak was worse than what is being reported.

Councilman Gudmundsson reported he had attended the Morris County meeting, and that the Northern Region meeting was tonight, but he would be attending the public Fish Code hearing so would not be in attendance. There was not too much to discuss at their September meeting, but rumors about the situation at Pequest were heard at that time.

Councilman DeMartino recently attended the New Jersey Waterfowler’s and the Monmouth County Federation meetings, and felt that some members should be here this evening to voice their concerns at the Fish Code public hearing. He also had a letter regarding questions on trapping turtles, which was given to Chief Barno.

Councilwoman Blumig added one last note that the Federation had made a donation to the Barrack Obama Green Charter High School for them to participate in the Trout in the Classroom program. She gave some additional information on this school and commented on their recent visit to the Pequest Trout Hatchery.

Councilman Gudmundsson added that he had just returned from a National meeting on the Trout in the Classroom program, and that New Jersey has almost as many students participating in its program as does the entire rest of the country. Many other states look to New Jersey for advice for their states’ programs.

Acting Chairman Burke attended the Atlantic County meeting last month. They are involved in the administration of the FAA Center deer hunt as well as a number of other projects, which he noted.

Councilman Brodhecker was asked if he had anything additional to report for the Agriculture Committee for his area. He noted that harvesting has going well but farmers are still finding bear damage in their corn crops. He is now hearing that there has been bear damage in the soybean crops, and the County Extension Agent is supposed to be investigating this further.

There was no report for the Finance Committee. The Committee will be meeting on Tuesday, November 19th at 9 a.m., before the start of the Fish and Game Council meeting.

The Freshwater Fisheries Committee noted the public hearing tonight.

The Game Committee may be meeting in January, 2014. All suggestions or requests for changes to the next Game Code should be forwarded to Acting Chairman Burke or Assistant Director Herrighty.

Councilwoman Blumig noted the formation of a Game Committee within the Federation, and gave a brief description to the Council.

Several known suggestions to be made for the next Game Code cycle were briefly noted.

Assistant Director Nelson's Legislative Report was distributed by Assistant Director Herrighty. He noted that there was not much new business occurring at this time.

There was no report for the Endangered and Nongame Species Advisory Committee.

The Waterfowl Stamp Committee will be meeting this evening. There was no new information to report at this time.

The last meeting of the Wildlife Rehabilitator's Committee was cancelled. Their next meeting is scheduled for October 30.

Division reports began. Chief Barno from the Bureau of Freshwater Fisheries addressed the Council on the Furunculosis outbreak at the Pequest Hatchery, describing in detail where the problem occurred and the measures taken to contain and eliminate it, as well as the long term plan for re-establishing the broodstock population at the Hatchery. Chief Barno also noted that there is no consumption risk should an angler have a fish that has been exposed to this disease. Additionally, Chief Barno is willing to meet with and review this matter with any groups who request her to.

Chief Barno distributed copies of the public comments received as of October 7, 2013 on the proposed amendments to the Fish Code.

Other Bureau activities that will be occurring soon included electrofishing at Lake Hopatcong, and presentations of preliminary seining electrofishing information to the Knee Deep Fishing Club. The Winter trout stocking program may also be occurring slightly earlier than originally planned.

There was no report for the Information and Education Section.

Assistant Director Herrighty reported for the Bureau of Wildlife Management. He updated the Council on the pheasant program, noting that it is going well. There was a problem with the chicks, and the feed that they were receiving is being checked.

The monthly report noted sick deer in Warren County and Hillsborough. Assistant Director Herrighty advised that there have been Epizootic Hemorrhagic Disease (EHD) problems at these areas in the past, and the deer have been taken to Wildlife Pathologist Stansley. The Warren County deer was not positive for EHD, and results on the Hillsborough deer are still pending. Assistant Director Herrighty also advised that EHD is down across the country.

The deer season seems to be going well so far. Some early problems were noted with the automated check in system, but they have been worked out.

Personnel from the deer, bear and turkey projects have been working on a mast survey. This effort is being led by Senior Biologist Leskie.

Wildlife Worker Sloan transferred from the Bureau of Land Management has been working with the Bureau of Wildlife Management since last Spring with the Upland Game Program. Assistant Director Herrighty commented that he has been doing a great job, and it was noted that 16 landowners with over 7,000 acres of property were contacted last month. He is developing a natural grass mix using inexpensive seed for quail habitat. Planting projects are being developed for wildlife management areas in South Jersey.

Some complaints were received regarding deer hunting dates in the more conservative zones where the deer permit season ends the week before Thanksgiving. Assistant Director Herrighty noted that this was a calendar scheduling issue with Thanksgiving arriving so late this year.

Bear calls as of September 20 were similar to the same time last year. The Fall trapping and tagging program has just been completed and Assistant Director Herrighty briefly reviewed information from this project. Staff are working with Penn State and East Stroudsburg Universities to provide population estimates.

Supervising Biologist Nichols recently completed the pre-season waterfowl banding. It was also noted that the Youth Waterfowl Hunting Day in the Northern Region was held last Saturday and hunting in the Northern Zone starts this Saturday.

Principal Biologist Predl has worked on a New Jersey version of the CWD certification program for deer farmers. This has been reviewed and approved by the Commissioner's Office. There was additional discussion on this and related matters, including information on deer ranchers attempting to get the Lacy Act amended so that captive deer would not be considered wildlife.

At this time, Janet Pizar, member of the public asked if she could pose a question to Assistant Director Herrighty. Ms. Pizar was advised that she would have time to comment later in the meeting, but she questioned the timeframe in which responses would be received if she was to put her questions in writing. Acting Chairman Burke advised Ms. Pizar that the Council has no administrative secretary, and questions sent to him would be directed to the Division. Assistant Director Herrighty advised Ms. Pizar to see him after the meeting.

Regional Superintendent Porutski reported for the Bureau of Land management. He handed out the 2014 Pheasant and Quail Distribution List to the Council, and briefly reviewed information about the current program with them.

Quail stocking at the dog training areas has started, and will continue for the next three Saturdays.

Councilman DeMartino inquired about past discussions on possibly rebalancing the pheasant distribution in the Northern Region with the Central and Southern Regions. Regional Superintendent Porutski advised that a committee is being formed, and information was just recently sent to members for their comment. Discussion continued, and it was suggested that more flexibility to reallocate distribution be considered when preparing the next Game Code.

Regional Superintendent Porutski commented on the WILD Outdoor Expo, noting that it was a big success. Land Management personnel from the Northern and Southern Regions were brought in to assist the Central Region staff for the event.

Statewide, personnel are preparing for the upcoming Youth Pheasant Hunt. Fall mowing, safety zone posting and Fall trout stocking are all being planned.

In the Central Region, road work projects are continuing.

Repairs at the Sedge Island Education Facility continue, and staff should be able to have full program schedule next year. There was some additional discussion on the work being done there.

Acting Chairman Burke noted that he had visited the Spicer's Creek Boat Ramp last Friday, and that the completed project looked good.

Acting Chairman Burke asked for a vote on the proposed Pheasant and Quail Distribution Schedule, explaining that it was not a requirement but was done as a courtesy approval. **A motion was made by Councilman Gudmundsson, seconded by Councilman DeMartino to approve the schedule as presented. A vote was taken with all in favor, none opposed.**

Acting Chief Chicketano reported for the Bureau of Law Enforcement. He reviewed some of the highlights from the Bureau's monthly report, noting that there were many deer season earn-a-buck hunting violations.

After the review of the Law Enforcement highlights, it was noted that the Council would be going in to Executive Session at the end of the meeting. Acting Chairman Burke described that this session is closed to the public, and at its conclusion the Council would resume the regular session to adjourn the meeting for today and that no additional business would be conducted.

Acting Chairman Burke inquired as to when deer hunting season harvest information might be available, based on the new system that is in place. Assistant Director Herrightly advised he would check on this, but felt it should be available anytime now.

There was some discussion on publishing the names of violators and the violations that they had committed, as had been done in the past. Acting Chief Chicketano noted that the Deputy Attorney General's Office advises that you need to be cautious on matters such as this if being done prior to someone being convicted. Assistant Director Herrightly added that the Department's Press Office is good at working with the Bureau of Law Enforcement on having information released relative to some of the larger cases that they have worked on.

Old business was noted, but there were no topics to discuss.

New business was addressed. The 2014 meeting schedule was reviewed and discussed. The December meeting was noted as falling during the six-day firearm deer hunting, and it was suggested that it be pushed back one week as was done for this calendar year. **A motion was made by Councilman Gudmundsson, seconded by Councilman DeMartino to approve the proposed 2014 tentative meeting schedule, with a change of date for the December meeting from December 9 to December 16. A vote was taken with all in favor, none opposed.**

Acting Chairman Burke reviewed that at the Joint Council's Meeting, the Endangered and Nongame Species Advisory Committee asked the Council to sign on with them to a letter being sent to the Commissioner with regarding the Holly Farm property in Cumberland County. The Fish and Game Council opted not to sign the ENSAC's letter, noting that they wanted to look further in to this matter. Acting Chairman Burke gave a review of the situation regarding this property, and noted that the Federation of Sportsmen's Clubs have also sent a letter of support. Councilman DeMartino reported that Ducks Unlimited will be sending a letter of support as well. A draft letter drawn up by Councilwoman Blumig had been distributed for review today, and was noted to be a good base to work with. After some additional discussion, it was decided that Acting Chairman Burke would prepare and send a letter to Commissioner Martin on behalf of the Council encouraging the Department to move forward to acquire this property. **A motion was made by Councilman Gudmundsson, seconded by Councilman Brodhecker for Acting Chairman Burke to prepare and send a letter to Commissioner Martin in support of the purchase of the Holly Farm property. A vote was taken with all in favor, none opposed.**

With no other new business to review today, Acting Chairman Burke opened the public comment period to anyone wishing to address the Council. Members of the audience were reminded that they would receive three minutes to speak, and he noted that simple yes or no questions may be considered, but anything else was to be submitted in writing for a response.

Janet Pizar provided a written copy of her comments for the record, and also read them aloud. She stated that she had not received a written response to her letter of June 27, 2013, and was submitting it again today and requested a response by October 15, 2013. Assistant Director Herrighty advised that her questions regarded the Game Code, and the majority had been answered in the public comment document. He will address any other concerns Ms. Pizar may have had as his schedule allows.

Barbara Sauchau was next to address the Council. She commented on prion disease and its relation to other diseases, and stated that she felt it needed to be further researched. Ms. Sauchau also left a copy of an EPA report on lead, and shared comments on same. She also commented on monofilament line and read aloud an article she had on this topic.

Mark Lanzim from Toms River was the next speaker. He stated that he is a delegate for Ocean County as a representative to the Federation of Sportsmen from the Citizen's Rifle and Pistol Club. One of their members has been trying to contact the Division regarding hunting feral hogs, and was not receiving any information. He also questioned why the Rova Farms pond in Jackson has been posted with no fishing signs on the construction fence that was erected there. Assistant Director Herrighty commented on the feral hog information, and further information will have to be obtained regarding the Rova Farms matter.

With no one else wishing to address the Council today, **a motion was made by Councilman Van Mater, seconded by Councilman Puskas to adjourn to Executive Session. A vote was taken with all in favor, none opposed.**

At the conclusion of the Executive Session, **a motion was made by Councilman Puskas and seconded by Councilman Van Mater to resume and adjourn the regular meeting of the Fish and Game Council. A vote was taken with all in favor, none opposed.**

Meeting adjourned at 3:56 p.m.