

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE
NJ FISH AND GAME COUNCIL

Central Region Office
Robbinsville, NJ
January 14, 2014

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

The meeting was called to order at 1:12 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 December 12, 2013.

Roll call was taken. In attendance were:

Acting Chairman Dave Burke
Councilwoman Blumig
Councilman Brodhecker
Councilman Gudmundsson
Councilman Link
Councilman Van Mater

Absent: Councilwoman Brummer
Councilman DeMartino
Councilman Puskas

Division employees included Director Chanda, Assistant Director Herrighty, Assistant Director Nelson, L. Barno, M. Chicketano, T. Petrongolo, D. Golden, S. Predl and K. Griglak.

There were several members of the public in attendance.

Roll call was taken.

Minutes of the November 19, 2013 meeting were reviewed. **A motion was made by Councilman Gudmundsson, seconded by Councilman Brodhecker to approve the minutes as presented. A vote was taken with all in favor, none opposed, and abstentions from Councilwoman Blumig and Councilman Van Mater.**

Acting Chairman Burke noted that the Fisheries Committee met earlier today, and the Executive Session to hear license restoration appeals that would occur at the end of the meeting. He also advised that the regular meeting would adjourn after the Executive Session, and no other business would be discussed.

Acting Chairman Burke has heard from waterfowl hunters that they are pleased with the late season opportunities. Also, deer hunters in the Southern part of the State did well despite the weather conditions.

He noted correspondence received from a Pennsylvania resident asking for the disabled veteran license privileges that are granted to New Jersey residents. They were advised that this is not in the Council's purview. Additional correspondence was received suggesting a year-round coyote season. There was some minor discussion on the correspondence received today.

Acting Chairman Burke added that the hunting season is winding down. He noted that the application period for turkey permits is coming up, and outdoor sport shows have begun.

Director Chanda addressed the Council. He commented that the Division had a good 2013, and in review noted that the black bear hunting season went well despite the poor weather conditions, and that the black bear management plan is working.

The public comment period was opened for the three Community Based Deer Management Permit applications that were to be reviewed today.

Barbara Sauchau addressed the Council, noting information on the Division's website regarding these permits and that some of the facts seemed to be lies and it was confusing. She also commented on the application period and that it was to be 120 days prior to the implementation of the program, information provided in past applications, and that information was being kept private from the public.

Janet Pizar also addressed the Council. She noted a point of order for the meeting today, and felt that the proposals should be presented and heard before the public comments on them.

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

Councilman Link reported for the Agriculture Committee. He noted the inclement weather conditions in his area on the Monday and Tuesday of the six-day firearm deer season. He was also questioned on the bear non-feeding and the effects it might have on baiting for deer.

There was some discussion on photographs of a two-headed deer that had been on the internet that was claimed to have been taken in New Jersey, but further review of these photographs proved that the picture appeared to have had been photo-shopped.

Councilman Brodhecker commented that he had been approached by a hunter asking if the Division would consider a one-price "super permit" that would cover a multitude of hunting opportunities. Councilman Brodhecker noted the license bundling plan that is being considered, but this person was asking for a master license that would be more extensive in its coverage.

Many geese and goose hunters have been noticed in the Northern area, and Councilman Brodhecker reported that he had been contacted by Councilman Puskas and asked to report the continued goose problems in the Central area. There was some additional discussion regarding waterfowl.

Councilman Van Mater had no new information to report for the Federation.

Councilwoman Blumig noted that the State meeting was held on December 20, 2013, and a presentation had been given by a representative of the Mid-Atlantic Fisheries Council on Summer flounder management in New York and the effects it will have on New Jersey.

Also noted was the change of date for the Governor's Surf Fishing Tournament, which will now occur in May, and there was further discussion on this matter.

The next State Federation meeting is scheduled for this Friday evening.

Councilman Gudmundsson will attend the Northern Region meeting this evening, as well as several venison dinners that are scheduled.

He has been approached by a number of sportsmen regarding the bear season dates being late this year and the possibility to use bows for bear hunting. These items will be noted for the Game Code proposals. Councilman Brodhecker added he too had received a comment on the bear season, where hunters with trail cameras saw activity the week before the season, and little or no activity once the season began. Assistant Director Herrighty advised that the current Policy calls for one more year of the existing format, after which the season dates could be re-evaluated with the Council and Commissioner. Councilwoman Blumig reported on hearing of interest by some farmers to have the season extend into the Central and Southern portions of the State.

Acting Chairman Burke attended the Cumberland County meeting last Thursday, and members reported average to better success during the deer hunting season. There were some complaints regarding the change in the length of the muzzleloader season. Councilman Van Mater noted he had heard similar concerns.

Councilman Gudmundsson commented that the small game hunters were pleased with the pheasant stocking program this year, as were hunters in Acting Chairman Burke's area.

There was no report for the Finance Committee. Director Chanda noted he is working with the Office of Management and Budget on the fringe benefit assessment and will pass on any updates that he gets.

The Freshwater Fisheries Committee met this morning. Councilman Gudmundsson noted that they had a re-cap of the Furunculosis outbreak that occurred at the Pequest Trout Hatchery, and that some hard decisions will have to be made over the next several months. The February public meeting date has been changed to March 1. Additional changes may be forthcoming, but Councilman Gudmundsson noted that they are just speculative at this time. He also commented that the staff has been doing a phenomenal job.

Acting Chairman Burke reported that the Game Committee will be meeting later this month, and any 2015 suggestions for changes should be forwarded to him. Staff will be meeting internally this week to start this process.

Assistant Director Nelson reported for the Legislative Committee. She noted that they are at the end of the current Legislative session, and only expected there to be one more day of voting. All bills that are not heard before the session ends can be introduced again in two weeks. There was limited activity over the holiday period, and the only item noted on the handout today was A 3944, which has gone through the Senate Committee, but still needs to be heard by the Senate before it goes to the Governor. It is hoped this will happen before the session ends.

A 3944 Removes statutory limitation on number of permits that may be issued by Division of Fish and Wildlife for the taking of beaver.

Also noted was S 3061 (listed on handout) and the companion bill A 4573 (not on listed on handout), and that these will have to be watched.

S 3061 Provides payment to small municipalities, in certain cases, of certain penalty monies assessed for violations of fish and game laws.

There was further discussion on this proposal.

There was no report for the Endangered and Nongame Species Advisory Committee. They are scheduled to meet again on January 29. There was some discussion by members of the Council on snowy owls, and on the proposed gas pipeline that was to have been constructed through the Pine Barrens.

The Waterfowl Stamp Committee will be meeting this evening, and Acting Chairman Burke noted that there was no new business to report at this time.

Councilman Brodhecker reported for the Wildlife Rehabilitator's Advisory Committee. They will meet again in February, and at that time will discuss plans for the two positions of members with terms that are expiring.

Division reports began. Chief Barno reported for the Bureau of Freshwater Fisheries, advising that the Fish Code will be published in the Register on February 3. At this time, changes that have been made will become enacted.

Chief Barno noted that the landlocked salmon that are scheduled for release at Tilcon Lake will be released, but it may be closer to March before the weather allows. They are currently 16" long, and could be close to 18" when they go out.

The Freshwater Fisheries Digest has also been delayed, and is not expected to be available until later this month or early February.

Over 30 anglers attended the Freshwater Fisheries Forum at the Hackettstown Hatchery on December 7. Dr. J. Lovy spoke about the Furunculosis outbreak and treatments.

Members were reminded again that the public trout meeting date has been changed to March 1.

Trout season opens on April 5, but Chief Barno noted that staff began preparing for this in December.

There was some minor discussion on the topics reviewed today.

Senior Biologist Griglak was in attendance to report for the Office of Information and Education. Assistant Director Nelson first addressed the Council on the National Archery in School Program. Traditionally, the program has had an in person tournament, but this year funding for travel for some schools has been difficult. Plans are in place to have both an in person and virtual tournament, and this was described for the Council.

An informative power point presentation was given by Senior Biologist Griglak on changes to the hunter education firearms classes and past course attendance and certificate information. This Spring, the program will combine the shotgun and muzzleloading rifle courses into one firearms course. It was noted that the 49 other states do not have separate courses. There was additional review and discussion on this change in the course format and the benefits to the program.

Chief Petrongolo reported for the Bureau of Land Management. He reviewed some of the properties that were part of the 178 acres added to the wildlife management area system during the last reporting period, including a small house lot at Ken Lockwood Gorge. He added that the Division is working toward acquiring a significant amount of additional acreage near the Ken Lockwood Gorge. Additionally, he noted most of the restoration activities required for the seller to perform at the former Princeton Nurseries property have been completed, and the property should soon be opened to the public.

Several forestry projects were also noted. A five acre timber harvest is planned for the Sparta Mountain WMA, which is being coordinated with staff from NJ Audubon and should be starting within a week. Staff are still waiting for bids from potential vendors for the project at the Weldon Brook WMA.

This years' pheasant season was a success, with many positive comments being received. Stocking numbers for birds were able to be met. Currently, staff are working with the Bureau of Wildlife Management on a quail habitat project for the lower portion of the State. The Division is hoping to maintain native population of quail in this area.

Councilman Van Mater inquired as to why property in the Brendan Byrne State Forest was posted no hunting during the deer season. There was some discussion on this, but also noted that this was Parks and Forestry property. Director Chanda advised that matters such as this should be reported immediately so that Fish and Wildlife staff can make inquiry, but had no answer at this time. Staff will ask Parks about this.

Director Chanda commented on a recent meeting he and Chief Petrongolo had with the Executive Director of the New Jersey Conservation Foundation regarding them possibly turning some of their property over to the Division. Chief Petrongolo noted that he is working on redoing the management and use agreement for NJCF's Forked River Mountain property.

Chief Chicketano reported for the Bureau of Law Enforcement. He reviewed several of the highlights from the monthly report for the Council.

One of the highlights reviewed concerned the use of leghold traps. Councilman Gudmundsson inquired about leghold traps, asking if "simple possession" such as having one hanging on the wall was illegal, and was advised that yes it was.

There was additional discussion that cases are being made from information obtained through the social media outlet. Councilman Gudmundsson inquired about the Division having a Facebook or Twitter account, but it was noted that the Department is restrictive on these types of things, but hoped that a Facebook page might be approved since the Division of Parks and Forestry now has one.

Inquiries were made regarding the pocket style cameras that were tested recently. Chief Chicketano noted that to purchase the administrative rights for the software equipment necessary for these cameras was quite costly. He did note the benefit to staff of having the laptop computers in their patrol vehicles.

Councilwoman Blumig inquired about the status of the case at the Sparta Mountain WMA where a vendor working on a forestry project had damage done to their equipment. No additional information was available at this time.

Director Chanda commended Chief Chicketano and his staff for providing security at the bear check stations during the hunting season, and for gathering support from other agencies to assist as well.

Chief Golden reported for the Bureau of Wildlife Management. He reported on the success of the pheasant season, noting that the Division was able to produce an excess of 2,300 birds for distribution, for a total of 56,320 birds for the season. He also talked about the program, noting that there are both production and distribution aspects that are involved and these are currently being reviewed. Consideration is being given to the time period, days of stocking, wildlife management areas being utilized and distribution. A formula similar to what is used for trout stocking is being considered.

Last week a road killed deer in Pennsylvania tested positive for chronic wasting disease (CWD). Chief Golden noted that a number of New Jersey deer are tested each year, and in 16 years of sampling all have tested negative. An emergency response strategy is in place should the need arise, and additional precautions are also being discussed.

Within the next month and a half the bi-annual firearm hunter survey will be sent. This year staff will utilize both hard copy and electronic mail for distribution, and questions will include both big and small game hunting, as well as opinions on driving deer. There was additional discussion on this.

The Division had partnered with Ducks Unlimited (DU) on a grant proposal for the impoundments at the Tuckahoe WMA. Chief Golden gave a brief review, noting that a one million dollar grant had been applied for and in December DU was advised that it had been awarded. Staff will be meeting with DU in late January on moving forward with this project. The scope of work to be done was also noted, and will include replacing the water control structures, dredging a re-circulatory ditch around the impoundments and micro-topography work to the surface. Additional grant applications from Hurricane Sandy funds are being applied for.

Results of the deer season were not available today, but Chief Golden will be forwarding that information to the Council.

Councilman Brodhecker inquired if there was any information on effects to local businesses due to the new automated deer check system, and had heard that some states utilize both the automated and in-person systems. Assistant Director Herrighty pointed out that cost is a factor for the in-person system, but license agents could offer check in as a service to their customers by entering the information into the computer system for them. There was additional discussion regarding this.

Principal Biologist Predl was in attendance to review Community Based Deer Management Permit (CBDMP) applications for Bernards Township, Princeton Township and the Essex County Department of Parks, Recreation and Cultural Affairs. Chief Golden noted that he had reviewed the information being presented today, and commented on the great amount of work involved and the thorough job that Principal Biologist Predl does with this program.

The first application for consideration was from the Essex County Department of Parks, Recreation and Cultural Affairs. The original application was received on September 19, 2013, and she remarked that

there had been a lot of back and forth correspondence with the applicant since that time. Details were reviewed for the Council, and she noted that one of the concerns was a possible denial of their application due to the ability to harvest deer during the regular season. The applicant felt that the phone-in deer check system would slow down the hunters who would be limited to how many deer they could take at one time. Additional information was noted, and Principal Biologist Predl advised that she recommended that Council approve this application based on the significant amount of damage that the deer have done to the vegetation at this area. Game Code exemptions were also noted, and there was some discussion on further considerations for next year if they were to apply for a permit again. **A motion was made by Councilman Gudmundsson, seconded by Councilman Brodhecker to approve the application for a CBDMP for the Essex County Department of Parks, Recreation and Cultural Affairs as recommended by Principal Biologist Predl. A vote was taken with all in favor, none opposed.**

Princeton Township's application was next to be reviewed. Principal Biologist Predl noted that Princeton has received CBDMP's since 2000. At that time, they had 342 deer/vehicle collisions reported, and in 2010 that number had been reduced to 69. They had no program in 2010, but did contract with White Buffalo in 2011 and 2012 to help reduce the deer population. The most recent reported deer/vehicle collisions were 108, and the goal is to bring that number down to between 60 and 70. The application, which was submitted on October 30, 2013 asks for exceptions to the Game Code, and those too were reviewed for the Council. Principal Biologist Predl recommended that the Council approve this application based on the number of deer/vehicle collisions that have been reported. **A motion was made by Councilman Brodhecker, seconded by Councilman Link to approve the application for a CBDMP for Princeton Township the application as recommended by Principal Biologist Predl. A vote was taken with all in favor, none opposed.**

The Bernards Township application was also submitted in October, and in November Principal Biologist Predl wrote to them and advised that the application would not be approved as written. She reviewed that last year the Council had concerns that Bernards was limiting access to only two hunting clubs on the Township owned properties. Principal Biologist Predl suggested that they do a lottery, but they resisted this idea. Instead, the clubs agreed to increase membership by 12%. Additional information from the application was reviewed, including exceptions to the Game Code and based on the amount of deer/vehicle accidents they are experiencing, Principal Biologist Predl recommended that the Council approve the application. **A motion was made by Councilman Gudmundsson, seconded by Councilman Brodhecker to approve the application for a CBDMP for Bernards Township as recommended by Principal Biologist Predl. A vote was taken with all in favor, none opposed.**

The public comment period was opened. Speakers were reminded that they would have three minutes each.

Richard Latza from Wilmington, Delaware addressed the Council. He noted that he grew up in New Jersey, and currently hunts on his friends' property in Alexandria Township, Hunterdon County. The property is not in any of the four approved black bear hunting zones, but with bear complaints being reported Statewide, he wanted to express his concerns that a Statewide hunt be considered. Mr. Latza also questioned if the moratorium on river herring would change.

Howard Miller from Blackwood, Camden County noted that he had come to a meeting last year, and at that time suggested that the fees for utilizing State lands be increased. He also asked that Council consider a split season for hunting small game hunting, as well as considering the use of chukkers instead of pheasants. He also noted concerns on trash that was dumped in State lands, but had spoken to Chief

Chicketano on this earlier today. Lastly, he noted that last year he spoke about the conditions of the quail being stocked, and that this year they were much healthier further into the season.

Janet Pizar from Millburn felt that Acting Chairman Burke did not accommodate her point of order request earlier in the meeting. He reminded Ms. Pizar that the meeting format resulted from her previous discussions on this topic, and that the Council was following the Deputy Attorney Generals' Office advisement. Additionally, she expressed that it was unfair practice for Acting Chairman Burke tell the Council to bring any comments from hunters to him for the meetings on the Game Code, and was an unfair practice to the non-consumptive public. Acting Chairman Burke noted to Ms. Pizar that anyone is welcome to comment on the Game Code. There was further discussion on this among the Council with Ms. Pizar.

Ms. Pizar next stated that for the second time in two years she had submitted an OPRA request for all materials given to new Council members.

Lastly, she noted the Bureau of Wildlife Management's December 2013 report, where it indicated that at a meeting in Camden County Sr. Wildlife Biologist J. Leskie had answered inquiries. She stated she felt this was an unfair practice and why.

Last to address the Council was Barbara Sauchau. She inquired as to why reports of complaints are not kept and brought up to the Council, that they were doing prejudiced work, and that animals belonged to all residents of New Jersey.

Ms. Sauchau also read from a Harvard University study on vegetation and the problem with ammonia from accidental fertilization. She left this information for those who wished to review it.

Ms. Sauchau also expressed concerns on the bear hunt and on the presentation given by Principal Biologist Predl.

No one else wished to make comment today.

A motion was made by Councilman Brodhecker, seconded by Councilman Van Mater to move to Executive Session. A vote was taken with all in favor, and the public meeting paused at 3:32 p.m.

At 4:04, the meeting resumed, and a motion was made by Councilman Gudmundsson, seconded by Councilwoman Blumig to adjourn. A vote was taken with all in favor.