

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE
NJ FISH AND GAME COUNCIL

Central Region Office
Robbinsville, NJ
May 12, 2015

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

The meeting was called to order at 10:04 a.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 on May 4, 2015 and delivered to the designated newspapers of the Division, the Newark Star Ledger and the Atlantic City Press.

Roll call was taken.

In attendance were: Acting Chairman Burke
Councilwoman Blumig
Councilman Brodhecker (arrived at 10:30 a.m.)
Councilwoman Brummer
Councilman DeMartino
Councilman Gudmundsson
Councilman Van Mater

Absent: Councilman Link
Councilman Puskas

Division employees included D. Chanda, P. Nelson, L. Barno, M. Chicketano, A. Ivany, C. Stanko, P. Winkler, T. Nichols and R. Longcor.

There were numerous members of the public in attendance.

Minutes of the April 14, 2015 meeting were reviewed. Councilwoman Blumig noted one correction to the spelling of a name. **A motion was made by Councilman Van Mater, seconded by Councilman Gudmundsson to approve the minutes as corrected. A vote was taken with all in favor, none opposed and one abstention from Councilwoman Brummer.**

Acting Chairman Burke noted that the proposed migratory waterfowl hunting season dates were the only agenda item open to public comment today, and comments would be taken after the Director's remarks. He also advised of a change to the agenda, where the Council would be going into Executive Session at 11:45 a.m., and again at the end of the business meeting, after which the regular meeting would adjourn.

Acting Chairman Burke commented on the many outdoor activities occurring this time of year.

Acting Chairman Burke noted the many interruptions at the last meeting due to cell phone activity, and requested that all phones be silenced or turned off. Anyone needing to take a call was requested to do so outside of the meeting room.

Director Chanda addressed the Council. He advised that Assistant Director Herrighty would not be here today, and that he would be leaving this afternoon to attend a staff meeting at the Assistant Commissioner's Office. Assistant Director Nelson will be present through the end of the meeting.

He noted the trout season and fishing license sales have been good.

Yesterday, representatives from the Division of Economic Development and Energy (Board of Public Utilities) visited the Pequest Trout Hatchery for a meeting about the proposed solar energy project. Director Chanda advised that they also inquired about the Hackettstown Hatchery and the possibility of linking this in to the Pequest project. He gave a brief review of the meeting for the Council.

Director Chanda noted that he was in Florida during the last Council meeting, speaking with their Commission regarding black bears and New Jersey's black bear management program. He gave a brief review of his visit with them for the Council.

The public comment period regarding the proposed waterfowl hunting season dates was opened.

Barbara Sauchau stated her opposition to the entire policy. She shared additional comments regarding waterfowl.

Janet Pizar questioned if population studies had been done on swans. She was advised that swans are not hunted in New Jersey, and that the proposal was to be in agreement with the Federal language. Ms. Pizar further commented on past information from previous Council members with regard to Canada geese and what she felt was a lack of data. Ms. Pizar was advised that there is a data available regarding Canada geese populations in New Jersey.

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

Councilwoman Blumig had received information from Councilman Puskas for the Agriculture Committee. He noted that planting activities were at full speed in his area, but the lack of rain is causing problems. Acting Chairman Burke added that it is just as dry in Southern New Jersey, and that there have been several forest fires because of this. Councilwoman Blumig also noted problems from the lack of rain, but advised that bees have been pulling a lot of nectar.

Acting Chairman Burke commented on the avian influenza problem, and the update given by Dr. Reis from the Department of Agriculture last month. Dr. Reis was asked that he further update the Council today. Currently, there are 151 premises under quarantine in the country, and of those 137 are commercial facilities. Thirteen states are affected, but New Jersey is not one of them. He advised that updates are available online. There was some further discussion on this matter.

Councilwoman Blumig reported for the Federation. She has received a number of complaints that license purchasers are not able to buy their license from some of the larger stores in Union County.

There will be a sporting clays shoot at the Red Wing Sportsmen's Club on June 7. The State Deer Committee meeting is scheduled for May 20.

Councilwoman Blumig advised that Federation members are hoping that a pilot program for the sale of licenses and permits at hunter education classes can be implemented this Fall. Assistant Director Nelson noted that staff are still researching if this would be a cost effective measure. There was additional discussion on this matter and some of the areas of concern.

(Councilman Brodhecker arrived at 10:30 a.m.)

Councilman Van Mater had no new information to report from his area.

Councilman Gudmundsson advised that recommendations have been made to him for the Council to consider a 3 or 7 day resident fishing license, such as is available for non-residents. There was some additional discussion on short-term licenses, and Assistant Nelson also advised that the “fishing buddy” license proposal is moving through Legislation.

Councilman DeMartino was not at the Ocean County meeting, but did attend the Monmouth and Mercer County ones. There was not much to report, other than noting a shoot scheduled for June 7.

Acting Chairman Burke advised that the Atlantic and Cumberland County meetings are this coming Thursday. He is encouraging counties to forward copies of their meeting minutes to their Council representatives.

Councilman Van Mater advised that the replacement for his seat on the Council was approved at the last State meeting.

Councilman Brodhecker gave his report for the Agriculture Committee. In his area farmers have been busy planting, but the drought situation is expected to have an effect for additional wildlife damage to crops. Councilman Gudmundsson added that the 12-month forecast predicts below average levels of rain. There was some additional discussion.

Acting Chairman Burke advised that the Finance Committee would be meeting later today. He did note an article he saw that said New Jersey would be receiving \$11.1 million in Pitman-Robertson and Dingell-Johnson Federal funding.

There was no report from the Fish or Game Committees.

Assistant Director Nelson reported for the Legislative Committee. She noted several new bills, including:

- A 4340 Directs DEP to establish 3-year pilot program to permit for-hire vessels to fish for summer flounder in Delaware waters pursuant to Delaware regulations.
- A 4378 Allows collection of seeds from wild native plants.
- A 4361 Revises definition of all-terrain vehicle
- S 2891 “ “ “
- S 2567 Creates “Fishing Buddy License”
- S 2615 Provides diamondback terrapins protection as nongame indigenous species.
- S 2617 Allows cultivation of commercial shellfish species in certain coastal and inner harbor waters for research and educational purposes.

And not on the list presented today:

A 4380 Establishes a multi-species depredation permit. This bill is similar to the previous A 3121 introduced by the same sponsor. The Division does not support either bill.

There was some minor discussion on the information reviewed today.

Councilwoman Brummer reported for the Endangered and Nongame Species Advisory Committee. They will be meeting next week at the Delaware Bayshore Area office of the Nature Conservancy. Agenda items include looking at the impact of aquaculture practices on the shorebird population.

There was no report for the Waterfowl Stamp Advisory Committee.

Councilman Brodhecker reported for the Wildlife Rehabilitator's Advisory Committee. They last met in April, and worked on updating the transporter list, committees, and had a review of the permit application renewal process and ways to improve upon the timeline for annual renewals and when the paperwork needs to be filed. There was also discussion on pest control companies who have employees that have not had training relative to the removal of certain wildlife. The Committee is scheduled to meet again on July 22.

Chief Barno reported for the Bureau of Freshwater Fisheries. She advised that on April 14 the computer service at the Lebanon Fisheries Lab crashed and wiped out most of their files. Reinstalling backup data could take four to five months of work. This will make it difficult for staff to be able complete year-end report information.

Opening day angler surveys were done at 33 areas, and Chief Barno gave a brief review of some of the information that was taken.

Chief Barno advised that water levels in the rivers are low, and some streams are dry. Staff foresee possible problems from this in the future. She also advised that the water levels at Lake Hopatcong are still down, and gave a review of the work staff is doing there and how the low water level will be an issue.

The proposal for the Fish Code changes has been at the Office of Legal Affairs since April 23.

Chief Barno gave a brief review of the work to be done at the Paulinskill.

Tomorrow there will be a pick-up of 2,000 salmon from Massachusetts. Some of these will be stocked and the others held for next year.

Chief Ivany reported for the Office of Education and Information. There will be a staff meeting next week, where he is looking to a reorganization of the bureau. Outreach will be a large part of this project.

The Governor's Surf Fishing Tournament is this weekend. Pre-registration numbers were at 467, which were up by 64 from last year. Chief Ivany felt the change in event date from October to May was making a difference. The Lieutenant Governor and Commissioner are both anticipated to attend.

New "rack cards" promoting the WILD Outdoor Expo were distributed. Expo plans are going well. Chief Ivany advised that a donation from Bass Pro Shops for the Expo is forthcoming.

The Sedge House Education Center and Pequest Education Center are both up and running for the season.

GIS Specialist 1 Winkler reported for the Bureau of Land Management. He distributed a copy of the wildlife management area survey that the Division contracted for with Stockton University. This Thursday, staff will meet with Stockton representatives to finalize the survey design. Council members are asked to forward any suggestions for change to Chief Golden as soon as possible. The overall survey period will take one year so that data can be taken from hunters and fishermen during all the seasons.

A vendor has been selected for the upcoming quail contract.

At last month's meeting, Chief Golden distributed copies of the pheasant hunting area maps that were being developed for public use. GIS Specialist 1 Winkler is working with the Department's GIS staff to develop information that hunters can load into their cell phones for various wildlife management area and stocking information..

Several land transfers of approximately 6,000 acres were done this past month were reviewed. Properties were formerly assigned to State Parks, and are in Morris, Warren and Cumberland Counties. Final sign off is still needed from the Assistant Commissioner's office.

There was some discussion between the members on the Holly Farm property in Millville. Councilwoman Brummer asked for a future update to the Council on this matter.

There was discussion on the proposed solar panel installation project at Great Adventure, which is next to wildlife management area property.

Chief Chicketano reported for the Bureau of Law Enforcement. He reviewed several highlights as listed in the Bureau's monthly report with the Council. There was some additional discussion on the information given today.

Acting Chairman Burke inquired about the most recently hired staff. Three recruits are currently attending the Gloucester County Police Training Academy and are all doing well. They will be graduating in a few months and after completion of the field training officer program should be out on their own this Fall. Graduates from the previous class are close to completing their field training officer requirements, and should be out on their own soon.

Acting Chief Stanko reported for the Bureau of Wildlife Management. She gave a preliminary review of the survey that was sent to pheasant and quail stamp purchasers. Final information will be presented at a later date.

Council will be given an update and asked to vote on the Game Code proposals at the next meeting.

Acting Chief Stanko noted the pheasant hatching program is on schedule. Members of the Council were invited to visit the hatchery to see the program.

The Game Code comment period ends this Friday. Acting Chief Stanko briefly reviewed some of the responses being received. She hoped to present a summary of the comments at the next meeting.

The timeline for the black bear policy is on track. The public hearing scheduled for June 2.

The Federation's Deer Committee is scheduled to meet on May 20. Acting Chief Stanko and Project Leader Roberts are both planning to attend.

Acting Chief Stanko noted recent news reports of a deer in Marlboro Township, Monmouth County that has an arrow through its nose. Staff have been to the area seven times to try to tranquilize the deer and take her to have

the arrow removed. The deer seems to be doing well. Staff are hesitant to try to again any time soon because she is pregnant and they are not sure what effect the tranquilizer drugs may have on the fawns. There was some additional discussion on this matter.

Lastly, Acting Chief Stanko reported that information has been received from the USDA that they have seen a feral sow on the trail camera that they have at the White Oak WMA.

Councilman DeMartino advised Acting Chief Stanko that several waterfowl groups have met and discussed the proposed season dates, and feel that due to the current brant population, the season should be closed. They wanted to pass along their support for a season closure. This topic will be discussed again later in the meeting.

At this time the public comment period was opened.

Barbara Sauchau read from and commented on articles from the Philadelphia Enquirer about small mouth bass, from the Burlington (Vt.) Free Press on commercial urine based deer attractants, and from the Sacramento Beat regarding APHIS. Ms. Sauchau expired her allotted time.

Lou Valucchi from Mahwah commented on the 2010 and 2015 black bear policies and asked that the public opposition be considered. He also commented on the picture of a shark that he had brought today, adding that sharks are safe and bears were safe.

Milton Hutchinson from Robbinsville noted a debris pile of trash on Route 539. GIS Specialist 1 Winkler noted that staff have been there twice to remove this, and additional materials keep getting added to the pile. Director Chanda noted the lack of staff, but advised this may be an area to consider for surveillance cameras in the future.

Janet Pizar read aloud her comments on information she says is not contained in the orientation materials given to new members of the Council.

At 11:45 a.m. the Council went in to Executive Session, with an anticipated restart time of 12:45 p.m. The meeting resumed at 12:53 p.m.

Principal Biologist Nichols noted the proposed waterfowl hunting season dates that were presented for review at the last meeting, and were due to be voted on today. There was some discussion with the Council regarding the brant population and season recommendations, after which **a motion was made by Councilman Brodhecker, seconded by Councilman Councilwoman Blumig to accept the proposed waterfowl season hunting dates as presented. A vote was taken with all in favor, none opposed.**

Chief Jenkins from the Endangered and Nongame Species Program was not able to attend today's meeting, but e-mailed comments to Assistant Director Nelson. Work continues on the Wildlife Action Plan, and more information will be available at the next meeting.

Contract Administrator Longcor was in attendance to review the license bundling information that was gathered by Southwick Associates. He presented a handout of the information they were able to gather regarding license and permit buyers opinions on possible packages that might be considered in the future. There was additional discussion on this matter.

At this time, Acting Chairman Burke advised that the Council would once again go into Executive Session, followed by adjournment of the meeting.

Meeting adjourned at 1:34 p.m.