

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE
NJ FISH AND GAME COUNCIL**

ROBBINSVILLE, NJ

NOVEMBER 12, 2019

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

The meeting was called to order at 10:05 a.m. by Chairman Frank Virgilio.

The flag salute and the Pledge of Allegiance were completed.

Chairman Virgilio read aloud the following notice: In accordance with P.L. 1975, c. 231 notice of this meeting was filed with the Office of the Secretary of State on November 1, 2019 and delivered to the designated newspapers for the Division, The Newark Star Ledger and The Atlantic City Press; published on November 8, 2019.

Roll call was take in attendance:

Chairman Frank Virgilio

Councilman Phil Brodhecker (late 10:09)

Councilman Joe DeMartino (absent)

Councilman Jim DeStephano

Councilman Agust Gudmundsson

Councilman Dr. Rick Lathrop

Councilman Jeff Link

Councilman Bob Pollock

Councilman Loren Robinson

Councilman Ken Whildin (absent)

Division employees included: D. Golden, P. Nelson, C. Stanko, L. Barno, A. Ivany, L. DiPiano, M. Monteschio, J. Hearon, S. Cianciulli, N. Figley, and D. Bajek.

There were numerous members of the public in attendance.

Chairman Virgilio asked if there were any changes or additions to the October minutes.

A motion was made by Councilman Robinson and seconded by Councilman Gudmundsson to approve the October 8 minutes. Vote taken, all in favor; motion carried.

Chairman Virgilio started with talking about Veterans Day and reminiscing about the 1960s and defending our freedom of speech and what America is all about.

Director Golden discussed the Northeast Directors meeting and the importance of agency relevancy. Our agencies collectively need to work on relevancy and our staff is working on a strategic plan on how we can advance our agency in New Jersey. The next meeting will be in the Spring at the NEAFWA meeting in April in Long Branch, NJ.

There will be a weekend that we will bring together the F&G members and ENSAC members for a non-lead alternative demonstration at the range. Since the last meeting there is a lot going on at the Division with pheasant hunting, this is the first year we purchased all the birds from two suppliers, one for the North and one for the South. The birds from both vendors looked really good and was a smooth transition that went well.

We also started our new licensing system and it is up and running. It was unfortunate that shortly after we went live, there was a nationwide shutdown. It was out of our control. We are still working with some of our license vendors having issues with getting their systems up and running. The only way for a person trying to get a permit or license and avoid fees would be to go to a vendor, and unfortunately, they are having limited options, but with time we should have that sorted out.

Bear segment A opened, and protest numbers were low. Compared to previous seasons, everything went smoothly. There was a report released recently on Americans' Attitudes on Hunting and Trapping. They asked around 3000 Americans about their attitude towards hunting, fishing and trapping and what came out was positive. A majority of people approved of hunting (82%) and fishing (97%).

Chairman Virgilio asked for a vote on the 2020 NJ Fish and Game Council meeting schedule.

A motion was made by Councilman Robinson and seconded by Councilman Lathrop to approve the 2020 NJ Fish and Game Council meeting schedule. Vote taken, all approved; motion carried.

Council Reports:

Agriculture:

Councilman Link reported the place he works at part time uses the new license system and there were a few issues at the start but not at the fault of the Division. From the operator end, he likes it and says it is pretty easy and most people are happy with it.

Councilman Brodhecker reported on deer, he is doing the second cut of hay, right before dark he saw a beautiful deer almost all white except for a few spots on his body and head. In the annual crops he sees damage, but in hay there is no way to see what the loss is. Years ago, farms with a lot of damage would plant oats because they are less costly. He has had two farms in the past 3-years that were planted in oats that were getting a lot of losses. Crop damage is real no matter what is planted. He showed a picture that was taken by a hunter on his property with his cell phone of a bobcat going into a corn field. The hunter reported seeing one bobcat for the last three years continuously and now there are three of them. On bear, a person had a 6 ft. fence that a bear breached and got into a chicken coop. In September chickens were killed, so the homeowner put an electric fence up and a fenced run and a bear ended up ripping the wall and door off the coop. In October another homeowner had lost a few chickens over a couple nights, so she sent her chickens to her neighbors with an electric fence until her fence was put up. Another homeowner back in September had bee traps with no bees in them and the bear knocked them over and damaged them.

Dr Sebastian Reist, NJ Department of Agriculture, reported that the President is to sign the PACT Act, which makes animal cruelty a federal penalty. We talked about African Swine, in Indonesia they have Classical Swine which is much more insidious. There is a lot of movement with the USAG and ID. Every animal, goat or sheep have to have ID if moved inside the State. Natural animal ID which is mostly for cattle and the USDA made an announcement that by 2021 the little metal tags on livestock will be illegal and will need to go to button tags.

Farmer/Sportsman Representative:

Councilman Brodhecker reported they had a great meeting last week and the new farmer reps came. The agenda had a couple of topics, but they covered a lot of information. How to gain access on un-hunted lands and why are they un-hunted, address access to wildlife off of that land, the no hunting lands and the landowners that are not allowing hunters. They also talked about deer management, and the population density survey that the Farm Bureau did that clearly show some isolated pockets of deer that haven't been controlled or managed.

Chairman Virgilio commented that access is the same old problem that we had for a hundred years. What we are looking at now is instead of the word access as it applies statewide, we are

looking at site specific access per each farm to try to solve problems one by one. We are working to develop a plan and the NJ Farm Bureau is going to get together with our committee and the Federation. We have a couple of things we are working on and we are making progress.

Regional Sportsman Representative:

Councilman Robinson reported that he went to Hunterdon, Union, Middlesex and both Central Region meetings. There was a lot of discussion on the new license system. At the Middlesex meeting a sportsman had complaints about a big box store, so he went online and discovered there was a mailing charge for each permit, and they all came in one envelope, so he was upset. Monmouth had the same issue, couldn't find a license system that was up and running. Tractor Supply Co. is opening new stores in NJ, we should try to get our new system in their stores. Hunterdon County talked about gun laws and the youth pheasant hunt. There was a breakfast for the kids and their parents. The staff from Hunter Education were there and a great help. CO Jordan Holmes gave a great speech to the kids. Union County mentioned their county parks hunt is going smoothly with 45 hunters this year through November 4 and took 61 deer, it's been 2-12-1 does to buck ratio. They added new properties this season. He also added that he needs more deer management brochures, the sportsmen were very interested in them. A sportsman mentioned that on page 55 of the Digest that there is an error on the stocking dates, Quail has the correct date but wrong day. It should read Tuesday, November 26. We are working on a NJ Predator Hunters Convention attentively scheduled for Saturday, February 29 in Flemington.

Director Golden mentioned that Land Management crew put small map kiosks in Greenwood quail field to know your location.

Chairman Virgilio wanted to thank the Division, Land Management, Law, Hunter Ed and Wildlife Management for running 100%, there has been an uptick in morale. Gloucester County has a few concerns over PSE&G electric lines with ATVs. There were concerns with Winslow WMA mowing too short but are happy with the fields being put in and they are all starting to work together. We are seeing a lot of families, starting to do things right. Camden County has potential road closure concerns and Digest simplification, we let them know it something we are going to work on after the deer season. Flemington Gun Club is doing a redesign for women since there are more and more women getting into hunting. Atlantic County Board of Agriculture targeting farmers for access and change and thought the division could help. Atlantic County started getting upset and wanted the CPOs to shoot the deer on a shoot to kill permit and thought the deer were owned by the state. The wildlife of NJ is a public trust and the people of NJ own the wildlife, not the State of NJ. Chairman Virgilio told them to look into the gun club to let them come in and reduce the herd. They did like the idea of combining zones, where you get one or two permits that are good for the entire zone.

Finance Committee: next meeting in January.

Fish Committee: next meeting in January.

Legislative Committee:

Assistant Director Nelson reported that there has been no activity this month.

Endangered and Nongame Species Committee:

Councilman Lathrop mentioned the Delaware Shore birds Biologist Clive passed away last week. He helped train some of the NJ Biologists

Waterfowl Stamp Advisory Committee:

Chairman Virgilio mentioned the possibility of a duck stamp increase.

Wildlife Rehabilitators Advisory Committee: have a meeting November 20

Public Member:

Councilman Pollock reported that there was a complaint to the Marine Committee and is glad to see the CPOs showing their presence.

Chairman Virgilio would like to open up discussion for the December 10 meeting to be rescheduled or canceled.

A motion was made by Councilman Gudmundsson and seconded by Councilman Brodhecker to cancel the December 10 meeting. Vote taken, all in favor; motion carried.

New Business:

Seafood Gleaning- NJ's Pilot Project:

Marty McHugh, former Director of NJ Fish and Wildlife, Kim Guadagno, CEO of Fulfill Food Bank, and Brick Wenzel, Captain Commercial Fisherman, gave a presentation on Seafood Gleaning,

which is a project to take the bycatch from commercial fishing boats and to turn that into healthy meals. The main goal is to reduce hunger in our nation by facilitating use of seafood harvested by the fishing industry that's typically discarded as "by-catch" or is otherwise unused and coordinating with partners to provide a nutritious year-round source of protein to feed hungry families.

LUNCH: 12:18 – 1:00

Division Reports:

Freshwater Fisheries:

Chief Barno reported that we just completed the fall trout stocking. 20,090 trout and overall it has been quiet. We had two waters that had HABs, if cleared then they will get stocked for winter. Rosedale is questionable for winter trout stocking. We also did our landlocked salmon stocking, this was a little bit more spread out than we typically do because we added Merrill Creek Reservoir to the additional stocking of landlocks. Because they do fall gillnetting, we do hold off till that's done before we do our salmon stocking., The upcoming winter stocking will be November 25-26, which will be the final stocking for the year with 4,860 trout into 20 waters. Mountain Lake in Warren County will get four crib habitat structures in the lake and hatchery staff will help deploy them. There will be 20 over the next two years. On the solar project, there was one protest against the contract, and we are still waiting for a resolution. There is progress at Round Valley on the dam project. The boat ramp will remain open to anglers, but we are reminding anglers that the reservoir is lowered by 24 feet and will go on till mid-December.

Information and Education:

Chief Ivany reported that we have been focusing on assisting with the new license system and have been very busy. We produced a couple of videos on how to use the new license system and put them up on social media. There will be a site visit to the hotel where the 2020 NEAFWA conference will be held on Thursday. Staff are working on updating the bear education camper cards which are distributed primarily to parks and campgrounds, as well as a year-end bear education report.

Linda DiPiano talked about the HOFNOD program and how they had their jamboree at Pequest. Twenty-six youths from four teams out of Belvidere, Paterson, Linden and Sussex attended. They had fishing, archery and team building challenges. They all came together and camped out and cooked up the trout they caught. The kids were split into groups and worked together. They also visited Jenny Jump State Forest, to the observatory. The weather was great and it was

a good time. Liz Jackson received the Jersey Coast Anglers Association Youth Education Award, as well as a Certificate of Congressional Recognition from Congressman Andy Kim from the Third District. Perhaps this will lead to additional support for the HOFNOD program.

Land Management:

Chief Hearon reported that in the recent months dog training went well. The youth hunts went off without a hitch and had a lot of participants. This past weekend was opening day for pheasant. As for our car count numbers, overall it had been a downhill trend, North was down 142 from last year, Central was slightly below last years with 55, and South was up 100 from last year. Land Management has completed the field curation in Winslow, next on the list is East Point Lighthouse. Bureau of Coastal Engineering to do a beach replenishment project to keep the light out of the bay. Range update, Millville both up north are in motion and will probably be closed through December. There have been a few snags but expect to be open beginning of the new year. Makepeace Lake is delayed, most likely to be the last to be managed. Lead management will be starting at Stafford range and the law enforcement range at Colliers Mills.

Law Enforcement:

Chief Cianciulli reported there was a productive meeting last week with the Farmer Relations Committee. We had a safe and successful bear season with great compliance from sportsmen. We had one individual report that he shot a bear on private property that went onto state property. We were able to locate his stand and the evidence supported his account and he followed the proper procedures. We are in the hiring process and are down to 18 applicants. We hope to hire five new officers with a February 1 start date.

Wildlife Management:

Chief Stanko reported on the turkey issue in Ocean County that has been all over the news. Tony McBride was there this morning with staff working with the management agency of the retirement community and we are in the process of rectifying the situation. We had a great Segment A bear season, we took 254 bears during the six days compared to 140 last year. This year we had a 12% harvest rate at the end of the segment compared to the 9.2% last year. So, we are getting geared up for our Segment B in December which coincides with our Six-day Firearm Deer Season. As far as permits go, we sold more this year as compared to last year. Last year we sold 5,196 total permits and this year we sold 5,273. Last year we totaled 4,213 individual hunters and this year we had 4,259 hunters. No surprise harvest was up as hunters had more time this year to plan their hunt as opposed to last year.

Endangered and Nongame Species Committee: meeting tomorrow.

Hunter Education Update:

Nate Figley gave a brief update on hunter education with student numbers from 2003 to 2019, and on the Division Rep program and how to structure the program.

Black Bear Research Trapping and Tagging:

Mike Madonia, Bear Project Leader, gave a brief presentation on black bear research trapping and tagging, as well as some capture techniques that they are currently using.

Public Comment:

Barbara Sachau, Whitehouse Station, NJ, would like to see all deer urine to stop being sold. Also, believes the bear hunts should be stopped and deer and bear hunting numbers are going down whereas wildlife watching is growing.

A motion was made by Councilman Link and seconded by Councilman Brodhecker to adjourn the meeting at 2:18 p.m. Vote taken, all in favor; motion carried.

The next meeting will be held on January 14, 2020 at 10:00 at the Central Region Office.