

THE MINUTES OF THE
NJ FISH AND GAME COUNCIL
ROBBINSVILLE, NJ
FEBRUARY 11, 2020

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

The meeting was called to order at 10:11 a.m. by Chairman Virgilio.

The flag salute and 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 February 5, 2020 and delivered to the designated newspapers for the division, The Atlantic City Press and The Newark Star Ledger and published on February 7, 2020.

Roll call was taken in accordance:

- Chairman Frank Virgilio
- Councilman Phil Brodhecker
- Councilman Joe DeMartino
- Councilman Jim DeStephano
- Councilman Agust Gudmundsson
- Councilman Dr. Rick Lathrop
- Councilman Ed Kertz
- Councilman Rob Pollock (absent)
- Councilman Loren Robinson
- Councilman Ken Whildin

Division employees included: D. Golden, P. Nelson, C. Stanko, A. Ivany, L. Barno, J. Hearon, J. Heilferty, M. Monteschio, S. Cianciulli, J. Brust, S. Tesar, J. Saintvil, T. Nichols, and D. Bajek.

There were numerous members of the public in attendance.

Chairman Virgilio asked if there were any changes or corrections to the January 14 minutes.

A motion was made to approve the January 14 minutes by Councilman Robinson, seconded by Councilman DeMartino. Vote taken, 2 abstentions; motion carried.

Chairman Virgilio wanted to address the issue that sometimes early morning committee meetings will run over in time, so moving forward these meetings will take place in another room. In 1937 there was a publication called the Outdoor Heritage of NJ. It was written in old English, and in which the Governor of NJ, Harold Hoffman who served from 1935-1939, says "your workings will receive little recognition while things are being done or remembered after you work is finished. Your work for wildlife in NJ will have no monetary reward, applause or glory. You will see the task which is after your own hearts and you will force your own interests in your work to take the place of money." This basically is a thank you to the Fish and Game Council because back then that was how the Council was viewed and it is no different today. Thank you to all the members of the NJ Fish and Game Council.

Director Golden reported that the new Manager 4 contract within DEP for our bureau chiefs has been ratified. We will need to consider things in the future, such as identifying challenges and future sources of revenue. There are a couple updates with facilities: we will be expanding the parking lot at the Central Region Office. Up north, approval and funding for a brand-new northern office, off Van Syckels Road, near the current Clinton office and should go out to bid for design within the next few weeks. Pond beach restoration project at Higbee Beach Wildlife Management Area, where we will be restoring tidal flow into the pond creek wetlands. This should go out for bid for construction by this April.

As a request from the Chairman, we will be ordering business cards for the Council members.

Council Reports:

Agriculture:

Councilman Brodhecker reported that the weather has been cold then warm and rainy and wet. We are seeing geese. There has no reports of bears or damage yet. He does have a concern about the electric fence issue with insurance companies.

Councilman Kertz reported hardly any field activity. He attended the Atlantic County Board of Agriculture meeting last night where Chief Stanko gave a presentation on the deer problem and Atlantic County will be the pilot for the farmer deer management program.

Councilman Brodhecker wanted to mention that they had their State Agriculture Convention and they have two names, Mitchel Jones, who is a replacement for him, and Bob Puskas for Central Region.

Farmer/Sportsman Representative:

Councilman Brodhecker reported that there were no meetings since fall but would like to schedule to discuss updates.

Regional Sportsman Representative:

Councilman DeMartino reported he attended the Ocean County meeting.

Councilman DeStephano attended Sussex, Morris, and Warren County Federation meetings and the Trappers Association meeting. Bergen County will have their dinner next Saturday.

Councilman Robinson attended Union County meeting where they discussed their archery and shotgun hunt. They will be expanding the hunt to new properties next year. Middlesex County had a big discussion about the new striper and bluefish regulations coming up.

Councilman Whildin attended the southern region meeting for the Predator Hunters, they are getting ready for their banquet.

Chairman Virgilio attended the Cumberland County meeting and they have a lot of problems with deer tagging and reporting. The Digest problems were discussed. He attended a wind farm meeting. Gloucester County has a meeting tonight.

Finance Committee:

Councilman Brodhecker reported that they had a meeting this morning and reviewed the 2020 finances and looked at a breakdown of the revenue. Our biggest increase in our expenses has been the salaries and assessments and the fringe benefits. When we look at our carryover dollars, we anticipate that those salaries and fringe benefits will consume it. We are still projected to be in the positive this year, but at a great reduction from what it was in the past. In fiscal year 2021 we expect to be in negative numbers because of those additional expenses.

Fish Committee: meeting to be scheduled

Game Committee: No meetings. Meeting to be scheduled.

Legislative Committee:

Assistant Director Nelson reported on the current legislature.

S-1250 Prohibits baiting of black bears for hunting purposes.

On the federal side: RAWA is now up to 172 cosponsors with a goal of 200.

Endangered and Nongame Species Committee:

Councilman Lathrop would like to thank the Division Fish and Wildlife for their help this past fall with a coyote issue on the Rutgers University campus.

Law Committee:

Councilman Whildin reported that the law enforcement committee has a recommendation to put a half -page ad in the Digest in bold letters stating the “Two Fish and Game violations within a five-year period will result in license revocation, this includes hunting, fresh and saltwater fishing, trapping violations, and wildlife management areas violations or any combination thereof will also affect your ability to fish in other states.” This is already in the Digest but if we consolidate and put it both the hunting, fishing and marine Digests, we could do away with a lot of the ones who say they didn’t know about the loss of license.

Division Reports:

License and Permits:

Barbara Stoff reported that she pulled some comparison reports and sales are up across the board. There are some tweaks needed but it is going smoothly.

Information & Education:

Chief Ivany gave an update on the NEAFWA conference, which will be April 19-21 in Long Branch, NJ. Planning is moving forward very quickly. Registration is open and we are expecting between 400-500 to attend. We have a Division meeting on February 24, 2020 and are actively involved in the planning with that. The Division will have a booth at the sportsman’s show on February 27- March 1 in Suffern, New York. Chief Ivany is in the early stages of planning an Outdoor Writer’s Workshop, which was postponed last year due to the construction going on at the building. Looking ahead, the Governors Surf Fishing Tournament is May 17, 2020. We did get approval for a Division YouTube channel and we are looking into how to set it up and move forward with it.

Freshwater Fisheries:

Chief Barno reported that we are moving into trout season. She reviewed with the Council members changes for the upcoming 2020 Spring Trout Stocking season. Hooks Creek Lake, which has been a part of the trout stocking program for a number of years continues to be off the stocking list due to the saltwater intrusion that continues to occur within the lake. When we do our next Fish Code change we will remove it permanently from the list. West Hudson County Park Pond, in Hudson County that we added as a result of the last Fish Code change, has been very popular among the anglers and is currently being stocked preseason only. We would like to move it to a full allotment of trout so it will get four in-season stockings in addition to the preseason stocking. This pond is in an urban area close to other opportunities and seems to be the location of choice for anglers in that area. The change would add 1,000 more fish for 2020. There are a couple of adjustments on stream mileage; Neldon's Brook lost several stocking points and only have one remaining due to the poor behavior of anglers. Pascack Brook gained a stocking point on Kinderkamack Road, it gained a ¼ mile upstream and a ¼ mile downstream. This will increase 180 trout for 2020 allocations. HABs are ongoing but we dropped from 8 to 6 so we are making progress. We could really use a freeze. Two of the waters that we currently have HABs, Pemberton Lake and Mountain Lake, are trout stocked so we are monitoring them. Through the Governors HAB initiative, there have been 22 projects submitted through the Department for funding. We had our first Fisheries Forum in the North, we had 46 anglers there. February 22 will be our South Jersey Fisheries Forum at Batsto. February 29 will be our annual trout meeting. At the upcoming NEAFWA Conference there will be Wild Trout and Aquatic Connectivity symposiums held.

Land Management:

Chief Hearon reported that there is a lot going on. On the facility side, we are doing a program to update to LED lights to move to a greener footprint. We are preparing for trout stocking. Farm leasing information has already been mailed out to farmers. We are in full swing with habitat projects. We have met with Forestry to establish our burn plans for Spring. We have finished our Spring planting plans. Staff continue to break down Rockport netting. Rifle range update, Clinton opened up a month ago and Millville is in progress. We are on a hold with the Flatbrook range, but we are working through it.

Law Enforcement:

Chief Cianciulli reported that there were six recruits that started February 2. Five of them start the police academy March 9 and one recruit just graduated Gloucester County police academy. He will start working with a field training officer while the other recruits are in the academy.

Weapon mounted lights and light holsters were received from another department and the officers have been training with them. New title to Conservation Police Officer is official.

Wildlife Management:

Chief Stanko reported that over the last month the Director and herself met with Forsythe National Wildlife Refuge staff on furbearer management. We are not sure what changes in regulations yet if any. Chief Stanko gave a CWD presentation at the last WRAC meeting, there is a veterinarian on that committee, and she was in full agreement along with the Chairwoman, who was very eager to get involved in our planning to keep CWD out of this state, and respond to any outbreaks. Chief Stanko met with Drs. Lewis and Lovy and plan to continue to update the CWD response plan, this was the second meeting and went over all our edits and we do have our first internal meeting with staff scheduled to be held in March. We continue to work on quail. We had a Skype meeting with Tall Timbers Research Station, NJ Audubon Society, and PA biologists on funding for Mid-Atlantic Translocation model. We are scheduling some hunting forums, which will be in the fall on a Saturday prior to deer season with one in the North at Pequest and one in the South at Batsto. The Atlantic County Board of Agriculture meeting was last night, and Atlantic county will be our trial for the Farmer County Deer Management program.

Endangered and Nongame:

Chief Heilferty reported the last ENSAC meeting in January, the main topic was Relevancy roadmap. He recently attended a Wildlife Diversity Program Manager meeting, where managers of the different state diversity programs got together, and agency relevancy was also on the agenda. We had a member of our staff attend a black rail management meeting run by the Atlantic Coast Joint Venture. The Division continues to plan for the NEAFWA Conference in April. We will have five ENSP staff and presenting and two assisting with a bird walk. Almost half of the symposiums have a nongame or endangered species aspect to them. We are trying to coordinate with habitat management throughout the state.

Ignite Talk: Offshore Wind

Colleen Brust, Shellfisheries, gave a brief presentation on Offshore Wind and NJ. NJ DEP has been looking into Offshore Wind since 2008. Governor Murphy set a goal of 100% renewable energy by 2050 and 7.5 GW of offshore wind energy by 2035.

Marine Fisheries:

Chief Brust gave an update from last month, Marine Fisheries is looking to change striped bass and bluefish due to being over fished. We need to take some management efforts to rebuild the stock. Bluefish, the stock is over fished and we had to take steps to make sure we remain below the recreational harvest limit. This year that will require a 28% reduction on a coastwide level. Mid-Atlantic Council passed a coastwide regulation for recreational of three fish for private anglers and five fish for charter boats.

Striped bass stock is over fished and is requiring a harvest reduction from both commercial and recreational fisheries. There are a handful of options, and council recommends 28-38 inch slot limit. Our bonus program will allow most of our fish to be 24-28 inches. The Committee's recommendation as of now does not recommend the trophy fish. This Thursday there will be a council meeting and the people can come out and have public comment on the issues to be approved.

Old Business:

Non-Lethal Bear Control:

Chief Ivany reported that we are close to having a rough draft with our bear education video.

Hunting and Trapping Digest:

Chief Ivany reported that we recently met internally and formed working groups. The upcoming Hunting Digest will not have drastic changes. There are things we can do to improve readability such as reduce volume, cutting back on articles and simplify charts. We are setting up a survey to send out to all Fish and Wildlife agencies to ask how they handle their digest production.

New Business:

2020 Outreach Calendar:

Director Golden wanted to mention that he sent an e-mail to Council that this year we will not be holding the Pequest Open House. Also, we will not be holding the Outdoor Expo, due to hosting three major conferences and adding new programs the staff is extremely busy. We would like to rotate the Expo throughout the state and we are planning in 2021 to hold it in South Jersey and in 2022 to hold it in North Jersey and have it in combination with Hackettstown Hatchery's 110th anniversary. Then in 2023 we will have it back at Colliers Mills. One of the things we have scheduled to replace the Expo this year and to look at it as a pilot is an Urban Outdoor Event.

Chief Ivany reported that this Outdoor Event is a good opportunity to reach a new audience. We are looking at new branding and a new name for this event. There are at least 12 events scheduled with the Mobile Conservation Outreach Trailer this year. We are looking to take our Outreach Trailer into communities. We will be attending the Cherry Blossom Festival in Branch Brook Park in Newark where they do a family day and a fishing derby.

Waterfowl Stamp Program:

Ted Nichols, Biologist, along with Sarah Fleming of Ducks Unlimited, gave a brief presentation on NJ Waterfowl Stamp Act. They went over the rise and fall of duck stamps and how the money has been spent. They also went over a 5-year commitment proposal for 2021.

Public Comment:

Sue, Jackson NJ, just wanted to give praise to Councilman Link's daughter Grayson, who recently won Equestrian of the Year Award.

Barbara Sachau, Whitehouse Station, NJ, talked about Environmental Justice, and wanted to talk about where the money is coming from to save a lot of land in NJ, called the Corporation Business Tax. You can see that the bird population is dropping.

Mark L., Toms River, NJ, had an issue with the child support online with the new license system and questioned the boat ramp fee of \$15 when a license would cost \$12.50, he doesn't think that makes sense. Greenwood WMA should still have a dog training area. He would like to see the Shotgun Range at Colliers Mills brought back.

A motion was made by Councilman Brodhecker and seconded by Councilman DeStephano to adjourn the meeting at 3:12 p.m. Vote taken, all in favor; motion carried.

Next meeting will be held on March 10, 2020 at 10:00 a.m. at the Central Region Office.