

**THE MINUTES OF
NJ FISH AND GAME MEETING
GOTOMEETING JUNE 9, 2020**

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

The meeting was called to order at 10:04 a.m. by Chairman Virgilio.

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 June 2, 2020 and delivered to the designated newspapers for the division, The Atlantic City Press and the Newark StarLedger and published on June 5, 2020.

Roll call was taken in attendance:

Chairman Frank Virgilio

Councilman Phil Brodhecker (late 10:20)

Councilman Joe DeMartino (absent)

Councilman Jim DeStephano (absent)

Councilman Agust Gudmundsson

Councilman Dr. Rick Lathrop

Councilman Ed Kertz

Councilman Rob Pollock

Councilman Loren Robinson

Councilman Ken Whildin

Division employees included: D. Golden, L. Barno, G. Kopkash, C. Stanko, A. Ivany, J. Hearon, S. Cianciulli, J. Heilferty, M. Monteschio, M. Zarate, N. Lewis, B. Stoff, and D. Bajek.

Also, in attendance was Assistant Commissioner Ray Bukowski.

There were numerous members of the public in attendance.

Chairman Virgilio asked if there were any changes or corrections to the May 12th minutes.

A motion was made by Councilman Lathrop to approve the May 12 minutes, seconded by Councilman Kertz. Vote taken, all in favor; motion carried.

Chairman Virgilio mentioned these are interesting times, and our “little engine that could” named Fish and Wildlife continues to deliver services to the citizens of New Jersey. His sincere thanks to the men and women of Fish and Wildlife. They are working tirelessly yet not without effort on behalf of the public while always protecting our natural wildlife resource. He welcomed aboard Assistant Director Ginger Kopkash. Ginger is a 29-year seasoned veteran at DEP, and she served as Assistant Commissioner for Land-Use Management, whose primary responsibility was to oversee development projects in New Jersey’s coastal zone, wetlands, and flood plains. There were three main elements associated with Land Use Management, a regulatory division, a policy division, and a planning division. She understands the interdependencies of those three divisions as they relate to environmental skill sets that are indeed transferable to wildlife conservation. In essence, our new assistant director may be green to Fish and Wildlife; however, she is a seasoned professional and has already hit the ground running. On behalf of our Fish & Game Council, we welcome you to your new post, and I assure you that Council will provide support and assistance that you may need or require.

He would also like to announce that Acting Assistant Director Lisa Barno is the recipient of the 2020 Federation’s “Jeannette A. Vreeland Award.” This award is given to a deserving woman who has achieved significant results towards conservation wildlife management or the enhancement of hunting, fishing, and trapping in the state of New Jersey.

Director Golden wanted to welcome Ginger to Fish and Wildlife and we are excited and happy that you chose to come in to fill the gap. COVID-19 related, we are on week 14 at working remotely, we may be moving back into the office in the Fall. Field work is ramping up and slowly getting back to some normalcy. The Governor talked about the 10-billion-dollar deficit over the fiscal year, some dedicated accounts are put on hold and furloughs are possible for employees. We can expect reduced appropriations on funds and are a little nervous on what this could mean for those programs. We are actively engaged in the WMA Stamp and it is an opportunity to give people the option to donate. Al will give an update in his report. We are deploying 2 artificial reefs, one at Sandy Hook and the other one will be deployed today.

Council Reports:

Agriculture:

Councilman Kertz reported he attended a virtual board meeting; most of the discussion was on farm worker safety and rules due to COVID-19. He got an email last week about signs for the farms. Things are going to change and be another burden on the farmers.

Disease Control:

Dr. Sebastian Reiss reported he came across a news article on Asian Killer Hornets with one confirmed case in Washington State but no official word if it is true. They will be setting up traps and hopefully we don't find them. Rabbit hemorrhagic disease in the last 12 months in NY, WA, and CO. In New Mexico it was found in 11 counties in domestic rabbits, 5 cottontails, and 1 jackrabbit. Minnesota rabbit owners are pressuring vets to use vaccines. Because it is a foreign animal disease, we do not want to start using vaccines because diagnosis becomes tricky with identifying it. USDA confirms first dog positive with Corona virus, another one was tested positive but through the USDA test it was not a positive. A mink farm in the Netherlands was positive as a result of people who were positive and working with the animals. On June 1, 2020 CA was declared New Castle Disease free. Asian long-horned tick confirmed to spread Rocky Mountain Fever. USDA has new video series out about impacts of female swine in the US. New sterilization technique on wild horses known as OGF as alternative for PZP which is what they have been using. OGF in wild horses will allow them to sterilize from a standoff distance.

Chairman Virgilio would like to announce that Councilman Gudmundsson has sold his house and will be moving to Colorado so this will be his last meeting.

Farmers/Sportsman Relations:

Councilman Brodhecker reported seeing lots of fawns up in North Jersey. Bears have been raiding the bird feeders and looking for food. A lot of people are installing electric fences. Everyone has been seeing all the bears on social media.

NJ State Federation of Sportsman's Club:

Councilman Gudmundsson reported no new meetings. He has been going out and doing a lot of fishing and enjoying it. Lots of compliments about how good the fishing has been. Since this is his last meeting, he would also like to thank the Division staff who care for our resources. His relationship with Fish and Wildlife started in 8th grade with his old teacher who would tell stories about F&G Council and he has been involved ever since. It has been an honor for him to work with all of you.

Councilman Robinson reported he attended virtual meeting for Central Region and no new information. People are very happy with fishing in NJ. He has not heard of any turkey reporting problems.

Councilman Whildin reported that he attended the virtual state meeting. Cumberland county had their first virtual meeting last month. He mentioned that fishing in Delaware Bay is picking up.

Chairman Virgilio reported that he attended all virtual meetings throughout the state, there were 2 regular meetings and a state meeting. We are moving forward with Tim Williamson to replace Councilman Gudmundsson and it was published in the Federation newspaper.

Finance Committee:

Councilman Robinson reported he would like to schedule a meeting after June 30 to go over the Division's finances.

Fish Committee:

Councilman Pollock reported he would like to schedule a meeting prior to the July F&G Council meeting.

Game Committee:

Chairman Virgilio reported that they met this morning and there are a couple proposals they will vote on later in today's meeting.

Endangered Non-Game:

Councilman Lathrop reported they met May 20 and talked about snakes and gave some updates on work being done on ENSP. The water temperature just started to warm up the first week of May, so the horseshoe crabs are just starting to spawn. This could be a bad year for birds and there are a lot of unanswered questions of what that will be.

Wildlife Rehabilitators:

Councilman Brodhecker reported no meetings. He has been extremely busy and lots of reports of people picking up fawns that should have never been touched.

Public Member:

Councilman Pollock wanted to welcome Ginger to the division, they had worked together for over 20 years and she knows DEP better than a lot of people. He has gotten a lot of compliments on trout fishing. He had heard from two people that were trolling 4-miles off the coast for tuna catching huge striped bass.

Legislature:

Mary Monteschio gave an update and right now there is not much going on other than COVID-19. On the Federal side there has been one new addition to RAWA.

Division Reports:**Freshwater Fisheries:**

Acting Assistant Director Barno wanted to wish Councilman Gudmundsson best of luck with his move. The last of the spring trout had been stocked with just under 50,000 distributed over a four-day period. Seventeen streams were stocked unfortunately pond temperatures were too warm to stock as originally hoped. There are plenty of trout out for anglers. With the support of Ed Mulvan's group Well 4 at Pequest was repaired at a cost of \$23,000 with CBT money. Ed's support for Division infrastructure has been invaluable in maintaining Division facilities without having to utilize federal aid funds. Hackettstown Hatchery will be getting muskies from Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission that have already been converted over to dry feed. This is a huge help as converting muskie fry from brine shrimp to dry feed is very labor intensive and also where we see considerable loss in numbers. The fish will be picked up in the next week or two. As New Jersey has moved to Phase 2 in re-opening Special Use Fishing permits and Wildlife Management Area Tournament Permits are once again being issued. On a final note, Pat Hamilton will retire officially July 1, 2020 and she has 41 years in with the division all within the Bureau of Freshwater Fisheries. We will miss her knowledge and expertise.

Information and Education:

Chief Ivany wanted to wish Councilman Gudmundsson well and we are going to miss him. We will keep him on the Bureau report list to keep him in the loop. Following up with the WMA Stamp that Director Golden mentioned, Michelle Smith is working with a group putting it together and Jon Carlucci will help with the design. He will provide the council updates on this as they come in. Education program- Pequest, HOFNOD, and Sedge Island are all on hold. He is getting a lot of requests for hunter ed classes and people wanting to know if they are going to be offered prior to this fall season. Right now, students will have to complete the on-line course

for firearms and bow, which includes lots of questions and in order to minimize contact on site and protect staff. Once completed online, the student must print out the completion form and then register for the live-fire test and bring the completion form with them along with their own safety glasses. We are also working on a plan to offer the hunter education course for free as soon as possible and spending a lot of time on hunter education and protecting the safety of students, staff and volunteers.

Director Golden wanted to mention that there is a fee with hunter education online by the company Huntercourse.com.

Land Management:

Chief Hearon reported that there are more than normal amounts of people on the WMAs right now, so there is a high influx of people on the boat ramps. Across the state they planted on 750 acres. Next week we will have the crossbow range at Colliers Mills range and they worked with local Boy Scouts. The shooting range at Millville is moving along. Flatbrook is up and running and the finish date should be early August.

Law Enforcement:

Chief Cianciulli reported the WMAs are crowded with additional people and large groups. Our inspections and violations are up approximately 500%. ATV use and off-road motor vehicles account for the majority of violations. Swimming and the possession of alcohol are also up dramatically. He also wanted to thank Councilman Gudmundsson for his support and input to the law enforcement committee.

Wildlife Management:

Chief Stanko wanted to welcome Assistant Director Kopkash and congratulations to Councilman Gudmundsson and thank you for your services on the council. Canada Geese banding would have been June 20-July 10 when they would be molting, we could have done it by driving and using fewer volunteers, but it would be less efficient and take more time, so we decided not to do it this year. Wildlife are active, there was a deer in the Hudson River and bear are being seen throughout the state. We finished the 1st segment of spring research trapping today and traps are being pulled, two staff not participating due to COVID. We got 43 bears as of yesterday and we are down from the average of 55 bears and we plan on trapping more Category 2 bears and extending trapping for two more weeks to tag sufficient numbers of bears. Updates on USDA, feral swine always on our radar. There was a pig carcass found in South Jersey by a veterinarian. USDA investigated two locations and think it was a pot-bellied pig. USDA hired a wildlife biologist and we are looking forward to working with him over the next few years.

Endangered and Nongame Species:

Chief Heilferty wanted to wish Councilman Gudmundsson luck and welcome Assistant Director Kopkash to the division. Chief Heilferty and Assistant Director Kopkash started in the same office 30 years ago and maybe they can end their careers together in the same office. It has been a challenging Spring; we spent a lot of time mobilizing staff. Restrictions on people in theory was good for some species. Migratory birds were not as successful as it could have been. We counted only half as many birds as last year. Atlantic beaches with fewer people had a good season with the nesting birds. With beaches now open we are having difficulty protecting some of the species. He would like to thank Law with their help. We are continuing to make headway with wind energy. We have a stakeholder meeting this week. July ENSAC meeting will probably be virtual one.

Assistant Director Kopkash is looking forward to working with everyone in the Division. Her first job was as a seasonal with Fish and Wildlife at Nacote Creek and with mosquito. She is looking forward to a great partnership.

Old Business:

Black Bear Management:

Director Golden wanted to discuss the Game Committee meeting that was held before this meeting and that they talked about separating Black Bear Management from the Game Code.

Chief Stanko worked on the 2020 amendments for two years now and last July the Council voted on them. It is now in the Governor's office since November 2019 and hasn't moved from there. The first change that is to be proposed is to a Chronic Wasting Disease-related proposal which give the Director and Council authority to amend season parameters during a wildlife disease emergency which requires public notice; new language states it will be effective once public notice is filed, rather than published.

Chairman Virgilio asked for a motion to accept these changes.

A motion was made by Councilman Robinson to accept the Game Code changes as proposed, seconded by Councilman Whildin. All in favor; motion carries.

Black Bear Management:

The second change will be in order to help move Game Code through for 2020 amendments so that we can readopt in 2021 without change. All rules sunset after 7-years. DFW's subchapter, every rule that governs Fish and Wildlife, are all part of this subchapter. Separating out the Comprehensive Black Bear Management Policy from the rest of the Game Code will enable a

smoother transition for amendments to the Code which might be held up by bear issues, because the Fish and Game Council has authority over the Game Code, but the Policy must be signed off by the DEP Commissioner.

Chairman Virgilio asked for a motion to accept these changes.

A motion was made by Councilman Robinson to accept the changes as proposed, seconded by Councilman Kertz. All in favor; motion carries.

Hunters Helping the Hungry:

Larry Herrighty talked about the non-profit organization that was started in 1997. They received \$100,000 grant to enhance the number of deer donated to the Hunters Helping the Hungry. Senator Myers included a purchase of a refrigerated truck to transport to butchers, and that part of the bill got cut out. With this grant, they will include the purchase of a refrigerated truck and will contact farmers to have it put on their properties during the hunt. During the culling activity, hunters can place 12-15 deer into the truck to be moved to the butcher. Any deer killed more than 2 hours in field will not be accepted. The deer cannot be taken during temperatures higher than 80 degrees to donate.

Amended in 2000, CBDMP adopted to allow inclusion of deer from that. We will make every attempt to donate deer to Hunters Helping the Hungry.

Chairman Virgilio asked for a motion to accept the proposal.

A motion was made to accept the proposal as proposed by Councilman Robinson, seconded by Councilman Whildin. All in favor; motion carries.

Hunting Digest Updates:

Chief Ivany gave a quick update on the Hunting Digest and we have had solid changes that were mentioned at the May meeting. He will keep the Council in the loop as we move forward.

Lunch: 11:51 – 12:32

New Business:

Property Transfers:

Chief Hearon reported the division would like to do 23:8A-1 and the Council needs to vote.

Matts Landing- the division owns actual land and not the marinas prior to transfer to Morris River Township. Would like to transfer to marinas.

Chairman Virgilio asked for a motion to accept the proposal.

A motion was made by Councilman Gudmundsson to accept the proposal for the transfer of Matts Landing as proposed, seconded by Councilman Lathrop. Vote taken, 1 abstention; motion carries.

Colliers Mills WMA:

Chief Hearon reported that the lead outfall falls on the Divisions properties. Land exchange of 46 acres within lead fall out range for 88 acres in Pleasant Run, due to nothing available in Colliers Mills at the present time.

Chairman Virgilio asked for a motion to accept the proposal.

A motion was made by Councilman Robinson to accept the proposal for Colliers Mills as proposed, seconded by Councilman Whildin. Vote taken, all in favor; motion carries.

Harmful Algae Bloom:

Acting Assistant Director Barno gave a brief update on HABs, Algae and the large blooms of Cyanobacteria, which is not a true alga, but a form of bacteria capable of photosynthesis.

If you suspect cyanobacteria report it to the DEP Hotline or through the new HAB info map when it becomes available.

Red Bellied Turtles:

Brain Zorotti and Dr. Nicole Lewis gave a brief presentation on Red Bellied Turtles and how some are showing up with abrasions and lesions on their underbellies.

Wildlife Management Mapping:

Chief Stanko gave a brief presentation on the Deer Hunter Location Viewer and other interactive game species management zone maps that are in the works, and South Dakota has one that we are looking at as an example.

Public Comment:

Barbara Sachau wanted to express that she was unhappy and feels that the minutes are being held up and kept from the public. She also mentioned that she could not find the monthly reports on the Division's website. The public deserves the right to know who the Council's replacements are and all documents should be available to the public.

A motion was made by Councilman Kertz to adjourn the meeting at 2:20 p.m., seconded by Councilman Robinson. Vote taken; all approve, motion carries.

Next meeting will be on July 14, 2020 at 10:00 a.m. telephonically.