

Endangered and Nongame Species Advisory Committee
Meeting Minutes
March 17, 2021
Remote meeting via GoToMeeting

Members in attendance: Rick Lathrop (Chair), Jim Applegate, Joanna Burger, Emile DeVito, Jane Morton Galetto, Howard Geduldig, Erica Miller, David Mizrahi, Howard Reinert, James Shissias.

Absent: Barbara Brummer (resigned, replacement member pending Commissioner approval)

Staff in Attendance: Director Dave Golden, Assistant Director Lisa Barno, ENSP Chief John Heilferty, Mary Monteschio, Kathy Clark, Amanda Dey, Samantha MacQuesten, Jeff Brust, Jeanette Bowers-Altman, Gretchen Fowles.

Guests and Public: Russ Furnari, Helen Trammell, Barbara Sachau.

Meeting was called to order by R. Lathrop at 9:01 am. The public notice for this meeting was confirmed by J. Heilferty.

Introductions of staff and guests were made.

Approval of minutes

There was a motion to approve the January 20 minutes made by J. Shissias, seconded by J. Applegate. One correction was noted. Minutes were approved unanimously.

Director's Report

- Director Golden reported that about half of Division staff have been in the field daily in the past full 12 months during COVID restrictions.
- Trout stocking began last Monday with restrictions to avoid close contact for staff.
- Revisions to game code are being adopted, including closing ruffed grouse and king rail seasons. Revisions also separate black bear policy from the game code, meaning the policy will be filed separately, and the FGC approved the revised black bear policy; in approx. 6 months we expect commissioner review.
- The DFW hired a contractor to revise the DFW website and hope to have it done by the fall.
- The Wildlife Habitat Supporter program is a donation program to get support from about 40% of WMA users who do contribute to land management via licenses; a marketing firm will help promote the program.
- Division facilities have been evaluated statewide by a professional, and from that we developed a master plan; energy evaluations were done, and now funding is available for energy improvements. Upgrades at nine facilities will save the DFW \$44k per year and the DFW paid a fraction of the cost due to BPU support.
- Three regional offices plus a marine resources center are the focus of the DFW office facilities: the new northern region office is being designed with input from all bureaus. The Holly Farm property is going to serve as the new southern region office and just signed a

contract with architect to design it. Habitat improvements are begin done around the offices to attract visitation.

Legislative Updates

M. Monteschio reported the NJ legislature's allocation of \$10 mill of CBT funds is awaiting action. Similarly, a \$1.5 mill appropriation for mosquito control is in Senate Ag committee. Two bills in Assembly committee would create a healthy pollinators task force and an invasive species task force.

Public Input

None at this time.

Status of Action Items

J. Heilferty will send letter from R. Lathrop to Acting Commissioner S. LaTourette to request action on the pending nominations and bylaws amendment.

New Business:

Biomedical Harvest Data for Horseshoe Crab

A. Dey reported that typically data on the harvest of crabs for biomedical use is not made available until 1.5 years after harvest. That data includes the mortality rate recorded during the course of biomedical use. In 12 of the last 13 years the mortality rate exceeded the allowable threshold of 15%. Advises seeking an earlier release of that data on harvest and mortality.

D. Golden asked if these data were available prior to 2021 season, what would be the next action? M. Dey suggested that the Management Board might be able to do something to affect the 2021 harvest actions.

J. Galetto made a motion for a letter to be drafted from ENSAC to the DFW director requesting the earlier provision of data on biomedical harvest, seconded by J. Shissias. Discussion: J. Shissias asks this letter be approved electronically to move it quickly. The letter will be drafted by R. Lathrop and reviewed by H. Geduldig and J. Burger before full Committee approval. Motion passed unanimously.

Release of Hatchery-reared Freshwater Mussels by J. Heilferty

J. Heilferty reported on a proposed project to introduce hatchery-reared mussels as part of a living shoreline project in Camden County, where the purpose of the introduced mussels is purportedly to improve water quality outside the Camden County MUA water treatment plant. The DEP has allowances for planting seed of oyster and clams under the umbrella of shellfish seeding, but that was intended for saltwater shellfish, not freshwater. This project was approved by DEP Land Resource Protection and would release >100,000 mussels in gabion baskets: alewife floater (stable species) and eastern pondmussel (state T). Stock would come from area hatcheries (unknown which hatcheries). J. Heilferty provided a [link](#) to a video that exemplifies hatchery-rearing of freshwater mussels.

Conservation concerns:

1. Direct “take” of mussels that exist in the footprint of the proposed work area;
2. Impacts associated with the release of additional animals into occupied habitats: carrying capacity; competition or effects on resident mussels; survival in an area where mussels do not currently exist in large numbers or at all.
3. Are the desired ecosystem services possible or realistic?

Biosecurity concerns: Mussels. 75% of NJ’s indigenous species are E/T/SC status.

1. What is the source of the animals to be released?
2. What is the source of any fish used for mussel propagation?
3. Genetic integrity of source stock. Delaware River or non-native areas?
4. Possibility for pathogens or disease introduction via mussels or fish.
5. Possibility of invasive species
6. This is not a novel issue. (sharing a video on the topic)

Process concerns: Release of nongame wildlife is prohibited by N.J.A.C. 7:25-4.2. The DFW has no policy or rule in place to address the release of nongame wildlife species in general, or freshwater mussels in particular.

Proposed path forward: Establish a formal policy on the release of nongame species by entities other than DFW, whom are not partnering with DFW or acting on DFW behalf. Promulgate regulations in Subchapter 4 (Endangered, Nongame and Exotic Wildlife) that address permitting for release of nongame species, and specify requirements such as biosecurity protocols.

Discussion followed.

Use of Rodenticides and Impacts on Raptors and Other Wildlife

Dr. Erica Miller presented on this topic:

First generation anticoagulant rodenticides (such as warfarin, pindone) are poisons that require multiple feedings by target (rats and mice) and are not as toxic as others, so there are fewer secondary poisonings. Second generation anticoagulant rodenticides (including brodifacoum) require just 1 feeding by target animals and are persistent in tissues. Anticoagulant Rodenticides (ARs) cause internal bleeding by preventing clotting, in both the target animal and secondary consumers (predators and scavengers).

Some studies indicate widespread exposure to second generation ARs in Raptors:

- Canada – 70% (1988-2003) and 96% (2005-2011) of owls showed exposure.
- Massachusetts (Tufts) – 86% of 161 raptors showed exposure (2006-2010).
- PennVet/NJDFW (2011) – Exposure was measured in 22% of live raptors (in blood), and 89% of GHOW livers. Liver samples are more accurate measures of exposure than circulating blood.
- Project SNOWstorm – 29 of 84 snowy owl livers (35%) had exposure (2013-2018), unusual for this mainly Arctic resident.
- A lab study of brodifacoum in American kestrels showed the exposures accumulate.

In carnivores: As with predatory birds, carnivores that consume rodents, foxes, etc. that eat poisoned bait get secondary poisoning. Symptoms may be internal bleeding, but may also feature other symptoms. They may have reduced immune response that increases susceptibility

to other diseases such as mange, makes them more prone to accidents, or causes reduced reproduction.

E. Miller tested livers of 85 bobcats in NJ that were necropsied, and exposure was found every year 2014-2020. The liver levels associated with immunosuppression or other effects are not yet known.

Discussion followed. This is a widespread problem in terms of the use of ARs in residential, commercial, and agricultural settings, and affecting both urban and rural raptors and carnivores. The non-profit, “Raptors Are The Solution” ([RATS](#)) educates the public about the dangers of rat and rodent poisons in the food web. Their website includes free outreach materials the DFW could use in its promotions and social media. K. Clark attended the recent Atlantic Flyway Council meeting where ARs in raptors was a topic, and the Nongame Technical Committee was going to recommend improved documentation of ARs using the NE and SE cooperative wildlife centers and other sources of data. In general, documenting this problem in both birds and mammals is a good first step to actions that might include regulation (e.g., recent CA prohibition of brodifacoum).

Public comment:

B. Sauchau commented on the decline of horseshoe crabs, and believes there should be action. Regarding freshwater mussels, there should be more oversight on the project to release mussels. The presentation by Dr. Miller was very good and should be provided to other organizations.

Other comments:

J. Burger reported on the “snake dig” that had good results with good numbers and good weights on snakes, and nine hatchlings. E. DeVito noted the hatchlings were observed in an area where significant effort went into site protection last year.

Motion to adjourn by J. Burger, seconded by E. DeVito. Meeting was adjourned at 11:58 AM.

Upcoming:

The May 19, 2021 meeting will be online, likely with a 9:00 AM start.

Action Items

- Letter regarding data on biomedical harvest of horseshoe crabs to be drafted by R. Lathrop and reviewed by J. Burger and H. Geduldig, then e-approved by members prior to sending.
- Updated bylaws are in review. Once approved, staff will make them available on the ENSAC portal.

Suggested agenda items

DFW forester presentation regarding forest stewardship?

Robert Somes re: ENSP insect work.

NJ Conservation Blueprint by either NJDEP or NGO partner, or John Hasse of Rowan.