

THE MINUTES OF
NJ FISH AND GAME COUNCIL MEETING
GOTO MEETING January 12, 2021

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

The meeting was called to order at 10:00 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 January 5, 2021 and delivered to the designated newspapers for the division, The Atlantic City Press and The Newark StarLedger and published on January 8, 2021.

Roll call was taken in accordance:

Chairman Virgilio
Councilman Phil Brodhecker –(absent)
Councilman Joe DeMartino –(absent)
Councilman Jim DeStephano
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, J. Hearon, S. Cianciulli, M. Monteschio, A. Ivany, T. McBride, and D. Bajek.

Also present was Assistant Commissioner for Natural and Historic Resources, Ray Bukowski.

There were numerous members of the public in attendance.

Chairman Virgilio asked if there were any changes or corrections to the December 15 minutes.

A motion was made by Councilman Robinson to approve the December 15, 2020 minutes, seconded by Councilman DeStephano. Vote taken; motion carried.

Chairman Virgilio wished everyone a Happy New Year, 2021! On behalf of the entire Fish and Game Council, we wish you a year free from COVID and filled with new adventures.

Additionally, he wanted to thank Sergeant George Miragliulo from the information and technology section that has provided this new platform to deliver easy access to our council meetings. Finally, a special thanks to Barbara Sachau for highlighting our shortcomings in the virtual meeting platform. We strive for continuous improvement to make the virtual meeting a pleasant experience.

Director Golden mentioned in addition to a more organized listing where the public can connect to meetings, they can get all handouts and the monthly reports. The Wildlife Habitat Supporter Program rollout received approval from the Governor's office and we are waiting on a marketing firm to revamp the entire website.

Council Reports:

Agriculture:

Councilman Kertz reported there are plenty of deer out as we can tell from the ones killed on the side of the road. He suggested to open bag limits a little more.

Dr. Reist reported the USDA is trying to educate on Lumpy Skin Disease, which is raging across Asia where animals get lumpy lesions on their skin and is usually found in cattle.

NJ State Federation of sportsmen's Club:

Councilman Robinson reported he attended the virtual State Federation meeting where they discussed coyote harvest reporting problems. He also attended the virtual game meeting and Hunterdon County meeting is Thursday night.

Chairman Virgilio attended Cumberland County meeting, which was held outside and practiced safe social distance. We put together three regional meetings about the Digest, with 30 members statewide. The wish list right now includes larger print in Digest, laws according to game species colored coated, clear regulations for juveniles, horse regulations during hunting season, predator hunters want straight forward regulations and female hunters want non-ambiguous regulations. This is being overseen by Chief Stanko and Acting Assistant Director Barno.

Finance Committee: No report

Fish Committee: No report

Game Committee:

Chairman Virgilio reported that Game Committee met and will have a presentation later in the meeting.

Endangered and Non-Game Species:

Councilman Lathrop reported they have a meeting next week. He also mentioned the comeback of the Bald Eagle in all 21 counties.

Law Enforcement: No report

Public Member: No report

Legislative:

Mary Monteschio gave a brief update on the legislation. S441/A4810 - was established and reviewed by Senate Thursday. A5114/S3229 - all CBT laws passed and on their way to the Governor.

Division Reports:**Freshwater Fisheries:**

Acting Assistant Director Barno reported the Freshwater Fishing Digest is out on shelves now. There is one article in the Digest "Where to go fishing" with the updated web page Places to Fish to include a Google map link for each water. Spring Freshwater Forum will be virtual, and there will be only one meeting on February 27 at 10:00 a.m. You can visit the website to see how to link in.

Information and Education:

Chief Ivany reported the final piece of hunter education is moving forward, the online class will be free for students and it is good to go for the next four years. He would like to thank all the volunteers who stepped up to help. There was an increase in numbers, Archery was up by 7%, Firearm was up by 8%, and female hunters were up by 2%. On the social media side, we are doing a WMA Wednesday, which features a WMA and tells what you can/can't do on them with a picture and the acreage, waterbodies, what it is stocked with and shooting ranges. The goal is to increase the relevancy of DFW by increasing public awareness of lands under the protection and management of the Division.

Land Management:

Chief Hearon reported they are wrapping up stocking season. He wanted to highlight the Habitat projects, Seabreeze beach front removing rubble, Stockton got funding to do beach renovations for horseshoe crab and shore birds. Office buildings and boat ramps at Tuckahoe and Point

Pleasant. Range projects are 2-4 weeks behind schedule due to COVID and the contractor's truck was broken into and their supplies were stolen.

Law Enforcement:

Chief Cianciulli reported they are using involvement with hunter education as an early recruitment opportunity. The fall was very busy with the increase in use of the WMA. A couple major updates, outside of the division from the Attorney General we talked about the use of force and the changes we are seeing in society and what's becoming the new normal. The Attorney General has updated the use of force policy. The only deviation is basically reporting, some things we didn't have to report before we do now. There is a new online program that goes right to the Attorney General's office with anything governed by the use of force doctrine. Also, legislation has been passed that all officers will be required to wear body cameras. We are trying to look into technology that allows us to look into data for vehicles to review footage of both audio and visual whenever we would need it. The legislation takes effect June 1, 2021. We are working with Treasury to decide which product will work best for our officers.

Wildlife Management:

Chief Stanko thanked Chairman Virgilio on his positive feedback on deer check-in and will be looking into the coyote reporting issues. She reported that before our last delivery of pheasants from the supplier who mentioned they were heavy on males, so most of the birds that were put out for the last stocking were cock birds and was to the benefit of our hunters. We heard a lot of positive feedback on the pheasants. As we do every year, we will be meeting with the Bureau of Land Management staff and Wildlife Management staff to go over the previous season to review reports of dead birds, review both positive and negative comments and tweak what we can to make the following year better than the last. Thanks go out to the Bureau of Lands Management staff for all their stocking efforts. We are in the process of working on a new contract for quail stocking for 2022 and will keep you updated on that. Deer season is going well, and the weather has been cooperative, we hope that holds up for the remainder of the season. Numbers up to the last day of 2020 were 44,189 deer, which is 22.4% up over last year's end of year number of 36,114 deer.

Endangered and Non-Game Species:

Chief Heilferty reported it was a busy year and we are hoping to do a rule adoption this year to update the Conservation Species for our State listed and non-game species. We are also working on updating the Alaska project mapping, which is a modeling tool that the department uses to depict the habitat for those species. He is also looking forward in assisting the Division in getting all residents fully engaged in our WMAs as well as all their resources. Winter is usually a slow period this time of year. COVID has had a slight impact on bats, we weren't sure about zoonotic transfer of disease to or from either direction. We got a little bit of information recently from

people studying Big Brown Bats, that it might not be that big of a concern. We had put a hold on some rehabbers working with bats and we are starting to release some of those concerns and let rehabbers manage and rehabilitate the bats as needed. The Division is still not actively netting bats or banding for other purposes, but we are starting to loosen up a bit. We released some of our annual reports and later in the meeting Kathy Clark will be giving a presentation on Bald Eagles and Peregrine Falcons. Follow-up on some of our beach nesting birds from 2020, we monitor a few species of birds, Piping Plover, Black Skimmer, and American Oystercatcher. You can review the reports on the Division's website.

Old Business:

Comprehensive Black Bear Management Policy Update:

Chairman Virgilio reported that the Game Committee met and went over all the recommendations and the newly revised updated comprehensive black bear management policy. The Game committee voted unanimously to move forward with the proposals that will be made here today.

Tony McBride gave a brief presentation on Comprehensive Black Bear Management Policy and its recommendations.

Chairman Virgilio asked for a motion to accept the CBBMP and its recommendations.

Councilman Robinson made a motion to accept the CBBMP and its recommendations, seconded by Councilman DeStephano. Vote taken. All in favor; motion passed.

Update on 2020-2021 Game Code:

Chief Stanko reported that we are a little behind due to COVID and a delay in the mail. As of late last week, we are still receiving comments in the mail postmarked prior to the closure of the comment period. We hope to have the document completed by the end of this month.

New Business:

Land Acquisition Tiers:

Tyler Kinney gave a brief presentation on the Land acquisition Tiers.

New Circle Hook Requirements:

Brandon Harrison gave a brief presentation on the new circle hook requirement and as of January 1, 2020 all anglers fishing for striped bass with natural bait will be required to use the non-offset circle hook.

Raptor Update:

Kathy Clark gave a brief presentation on the Bald Eagle and Peregrine Falcons in New Jersey. She reported that for the first time in 2020, eagle nests were documented in all 21 counties.

Public Comment:

Janet Pizar- thanked the Division for having the meeting documents available for the public. She stated that non-lethal bear management is effective in population reduction. If the sows have human-provided food, then their birth rate will be higher. She reviewed the last 5 years of the bear feeding ban violations, and there were six violations written in six years. About 12 years ago she did the same 5-year review of the feeding ban and there were four, with three of them written on the same exact day. Not only is this not aggressive management, it is not adequate management. While you are speaking of legislation that may pass to strengthen the feeding ban, if you can write four violations, you can write 40-400. It is an opportunity to force compliance. It is what is or isn't done in the field that will have an impact.

Barbara Sachau- The people should have an opportunity to speak before you vote on anything, not wait till the end after voting is over. She feels the public is being kept out of what is being voted on. She had some complaints about what is going on at the Wildlife Management Areas.

William Crane- Bears are living beings, they are very protective mothers, they have a wide range of emotions they share with us. Each bear has an individual personality and each bear wants to live. It is time to stop treating bears and other non-human species as a number.

Hector Acevedo- had concerns on deer drives. In December during six-day firearm season while hunting with his son and friends, their hunt was disturbed by a group of 25-30 men walking through the woods with loaded guns. During the six-day firearm season maybe deer drives shouldn't be done.

Nancy Piwovar- she is upset about the lack of notification to the public on the deer management program in her neighborhood. Are there any regulations on deer management near public schools and highly densely residential areas? Her concern is an accident waiting to happen with the lack of notification to the public.

Ice Fishing Opportunities/Safety:

Keith Griglak gave a brief presentation on the opportunities and safety of ice fishing.

Chairman Virgilio asked for a motion to adjourn the meeting.

Councilman DeStephano made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 1:02 p.m. seconded by Councilman Lathrop. Vote taken, motion carries.

Next meeting: February 9, 2021 at 10:00 a.m. Location to be determined.