

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

**Central Region Office
Robbinsville, New Jersey
May 10, 2022**

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 Frank 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 and posted at the Office of the Secretary of State on May 4, 2022, and delivered to the designated newspapers for Fish and Wildlife, the Newark Star Ledger and the Atlantic City Press.

Roll call was taken in attendance:

Chairman Frank Virgilio
Councilman Joe DeMartino - Absent
Councilman James DeStephano
Councilman Mitchell Jones
Councilman Ed Kertz
Councilman Rick Lathrop - Absent
Councilman Rob Pollock
Councilman Bob Puskas - Absent
Councilman Loren Robinson
Councilman Ken Whildin

Fish and Game employees included: D. Golden, L. Barno, G. Kopkash, C. Stanko, A. Quirk, A. Ivany, S. Crouse, J. Hearon, K. Springer, and D. Bajek.

There were several members of the public in attendance.

Chairman Virgilio asked for a motion to approve the April 12 F&G Council minutes.

Councilman Robinson made a motion to approve the April 12 F&G minutes, seconded by Councilman Kertz. vote taken, all approved. motion carries.

Chairman Virgilio opened the meeting with welcoming everyone back to the Assunpink Central Region Office on this second Tuesday in May for our first in-person Council meeting since the Covid lockdown. He would also like to thank Fish and Wildlife staff for returning us back to our regular trout stocking with full preseason closures and stocked waters. New Jersey Fish and Wildlife and Council are committed to providing the residents of the State with safe, legal, and enjoyable fishing experiences. The Council also wishes to commend Governor Murphy and the entire Legislature for the passage of single-use plastic carryout bag legislation. New Jersey is now doing its part to minimize plastic pollution in our oceans, rivers, and streams. New Jersey Fish and Wildlife and Council invite you to pick up a free reusable tote bag before leaving today.

Assistant Commissioner Golden wanted to welcome everyone back and this is the first in-person/hybrid meeting where we are trying to give the public as much access as possible. The virtual part of the meeting is for listening only, you will not be able to comment. We did receive written comments and they were handed out to all Council members. RAWA now has 175 co-sponsors and has moved out of the House and Senate. Work on the new website continues and our staff are working hard getting everything together.

Council Reports:

Agriculture:

Councilman Jones reported he attended the Warren County Board of Agriculture meeting. They are planning a project to put solar panels 17 feet tall with the ability of farming underneath them. He also had a Zoom meeting with Senator Mike Doherty where they discussed agriculture issues and proper management of wildlife.

Councilman Kertz reported he attended a legislators' picnic at a local farm in Atlantic County. It had a light turnout but was good and the legislators were able to speak freely with individual farmers. He attended the board of agriculture meeting last night, which was the last one for the summer. He also attended the Farm Bureau Directors meeting.

Dr. Reist reported Avian Influenza continues to cause issues. There are no positive cases as of now in NJ domestic fowl. Two weeks ago, China announced its first human infection with bird flu. A week ago, the United States announced its first case of Bird Flu in Colorado where a worker tested positive and in PA there have been outbreaks in duck farms.

Farmer/Sportsman Relations: No report

NJ State Federation of Sportsman's Clubs:

Councilman Robinson reported he attended an in-person meeting at Hunterdon County where they discussed the Delaware Water Gap. Hunters Helping the Hungry has passed the 2 million meals mark. He also attended a virtual meeting at Union County where they discussed the new Fluke regulations, the Central Region meeting, and the Tractor Decoy Show.

Councilman Whildin reported he attended the Cumberland County meeting where they discussed the WMA closings and there were 13 clubs in attendance who all oppose the closing and are not happy with the new Fluke regulations.

Chairman Virgilio reported he attended the Cumberland, Camden, and Gloucester County meetings where they discussed the WMA closings, the trash cleanup, and May 7th was the Club Reactivation Dinner. He attended the Southern Region meeting where they finalized the Federation Convention. We are seeking legislative amendments to expand the Buddy Fishing License to allow more anglers a chance to use that license. NJ State Federation Sportsmen's Clubs 63rd annual convention was held in Ocean City. He attended the NJ Governor's Surf Fishing Tournament meeting where the event will take place this Sunday May 15th at Island Beach State Park. A small group including himself, met to access and repair the easy roll beach chairs. As of yesterday, the 11 chairs were repaired and ready for deployment on Sunday. The NJ Federation and Sportsmen's Clubs donated \$1000 for the maintenance and repair of the chairs. We will be developing a protocol, up until now the beach chairs were just stuck up in a room where people would grab them and take them out. There was no sign out for them or cleanup after they were used. It cost NJOA, the Federation, and NJ Beach Buggy Association \$3000 apiece for 11 chairs. Together with Parks, we are going to come up with a procedure for using the chairs. He also attended Senator Smith's NJ Forest Task Force kickoff meeting which was well attended. Finally, he attended an Operation Game Thief meeting, our coordinator Captain Quirk proposed to establish an annual Operation Game Thief Award for Officer of the Year and our Law Enforcement Committee unanimously approved that. We will have the first recipient given an annual award in June at the in-person State Federation meeting and each following award we will have it presented at the convention.

Finance Committee: No report

Fish Committee: No report

Game Committee: No report

Wildlife Rehabilitators Committee: No report. Next meeting in September.

Law Committee:

Councilman Whildin reported they met yesterday virtually and will discuss later during license restoration hearings.

Public Member:

Councilman Pollock reported Eric Stiles retired from NJ Audubon and we want to wish him well.

Legislative Report:

Assistant Commissioner Golden reported that RAWA is now at 175 co-sponsors.

Division Reports:

Office of Business Administration:

Chief Springer gave an update on the license and permit sales. We had 206,346 in license/permit sales, which is down 11.8% compared to 2019. Sales for 2022 are slightly up by .4%. Fishing License and Trout Stamps are down compared to the same time last year. There was 14.13 % decrease in Fishing sales and 11.66% decrease in Trout Stamp sales. Fishing sales compared to 2019, which is a pre-Covid year there was 3.8% decrease in Fishing License sales and a slight increase in Trout Stamp sales of .27%. Since the launch of the Habitat Supporter Program at the end of November 2021 through April 29, 2022, we have received \$23,215 in donations.

Freshwater Fisheries:

Chief Crouse reported we are currently in week 5 of 7 for our trout stocking. Clinton WMA there's a small 5-acre pond where in recent months, the earth and dam have begun to fail on the downstream slope and DEP Dam Safety has mandated us to lower it. Due to this mandated lowering, fishery staff are out doing a fish salvage and they are being repurposed in Spotswood Lake. There is a list on the Delaware River boating access and staff are updating it to get all 52

access points. Fish and Wildlife was rewarded a grant by Mid-Atlantic Panel Aquatic Invasive Species for \$15,000 and a seat at the table for NJ Aquatic management plan. This will enable us to draw more federal money to NJ on an annual basis. As of 24-hours ago there was an issue on Trout Brook, the stream that flows through Hackettstown Hatchery. There is a development upstream from the hatchery and with all the rain construction crews ended up draining all water and sediment into our water. No reported dead fish as of now.

Information and Education:

Chief Ivany reported that the Marine Digest is completed and out now and is also available on digital form on our website. Since Cindy K. retired, Al and Linda DiPiano have been working as digest editors. Linda will officially be taking over this position. The Hunting Digest is moving forward and looking to get it out by August 1st. before the Deer Classics on Aug 11. We recently had the Educational Trailer out at NEAFWA, and DEP 50+2 in April. We had 286 people walk through the trailer with many more at the front of the trailer to see the fur and skulls. Commissioner LaTourette stopped by. We attended the Atlantic County Utilities Authority Earth Day event where we had 953 people walk through the trailer and we will also be at the Governor's Surf Tournament this Sunday, and we already have over 400 registered with more to come the day of event. Everyone is fully engaged working on the new website, which should be up in late June.

Land Management:

Chief Hearon reported his staff are still stocking trout. Natural habitat projects are in full swing. In the northern region, Columbia WMA is set to reopen May 16th which is posted on the website. Also, in the northern region at Wildcat Ridge, someone painted some of the rocks and we are cleaning them up. We are still working on our farm leases. Southern region's Holly Farm is progressing and starting to speed up. Higbee beach is still on schedule, Makepeace Range is about to go to bid to reclaim lead hopefully by the end of summer. We continue to work with the township to keep the light house from falling down into the Delaware Bay. Point Pleasant boat ramp is out for bid and new construction is ready to begin and Tuckahoe will be starting in the Fall.

Law Enforcement:

Chief Applegate reported that all Conservation Police officers have successfully completed ICAT training, which is use of force and de-escalating methods. Officer Jordan Holmes has been promoted to lieutenant of the second district in our northern region. He began his career with Fish and Wildlife in September 2008. The Marine and Inland Conservation Offices have been busy conducting patrols and with turkey hunting and trout. The bureau is in the process of hiring seven police officer recruits, we are currently in the background phase of the hiring process. All applicants that successfully complete that phase will get an interview and we hope to onboard the new recruits in July with them attending Cape May Police Academy in late August.

Wildlife Management:

Chief Stanko reported an internal meeting with staff on avian influenzas and our pheasant stocking program. Four pheasant facilities have recently been shut down, but they all have ducks and our suppliers do not have ducks. Spring turkey preliminary data, in the first 13-days we have taken 1,563 birds, which is down 2.6% from last year's harvest of 1,604 making it a difference of 41 birds so far. Deer harvest binders were given out to all Council members. We recently had a bear in Sussex County that had part of a feeder stuck around its neck and it has finally been captured. We removed the feeder, and the bear was released on site. We did capture 3 non-target bears in that effort as well, all 4 bears were untagged. Last month we had 11 Category 1 bear incidents, 2 in Morris County, 4 in Warren County, and 5 in Sussex. The Morris County we had protected livestock and an aggressive bear situation. In Warren County we had 1 protected livestock and aggressive bear. In Sussex we had property damage, protected livestock, and vehicle entry. We set multiple traps and caught 3 targeted animals and euthanized them.

Old Business:

Greenwood Lake Update: no new report.

Black Bear Education Marketing Campaign (non-lethal measures):

Chief Ivany reported the campaign commenced on April 1 and will continue through July to run on multiple platforms. We are on track and moving along.

New Business:

WMA Closures 2022:

Officer Doug Applegate gave a brief presentation on the 6 sites on five Wildlife Management Areas that will temporarily close May 27 to September 5. These sites include sections of Cedar Lake, Greenwood Forest, Menantico Ponds, Wildcat Ridge, and Winslow WMAs.

Power of Partnerships:

Assistant Director Barno gave a brief presentation on the Power of Partnerships to acknowledge all the partners Fish and Wildlife have worked with on projects.

Lunch: 12:04 – 12:45

License Restorations:

Christopher Farkas- Not Present

Captain Quirk read aloud the statement for the revocation appeal for Mr. Farkas who was not present. Mr. Farkas was convicted of a violation on January 11,2017, for **NJSA 23:2B-6** possession of 1 summer flounder during closed season. A second violation on August 18,2021, for **NJSA 23:2B-6** possession of 1 black sea bass over the daily limit.

Chairman Virgilio asked for a motion to open the floor for discussion.

A motion was made by Councilman Robinson to open the floor for discussion and seconded by Councilman DeStephano. Vote taken, all in favor; motion approved.

After the council discussed Mr. Farkas's violations, Chairman Virgilio asked for a motion to close the floor for discussion.

A motion was made by Councilman Robinson to close the floor for discussion, seconded by Councilman DeStephano. Vote taken, all in favor; motion carried.

Chairman Virgilio stated that the council has three options, reinstate, continue with the revocation, or delay for additional information. If there is a motion to reinstate, for the record justification is needed.

Councilman Kertz made a motion Not to reinstate Mr. Farkas's license, seconded by Councilman Robinson. Vote taken, all in favor; motion carried.

Hui Yang- Not Present

Captain Quirk read aloud the statement for the revocation appeal for Yang who was not present. Mr. Yang was convicted of a violation on January 7,2019, for **NJAC 7:25-5.13(L)** Hunt migratory birds with a shotgun capable of holding more than 3 shells. A second violation on November 3,2021, for **NJAC 7:25-18.1(C)2t** possess 2 illegal tautog, and **NJAC 7:25-18.1(C)**It possesses one illegal tautog.

Chairman Virgilio asked for a motion to open the floor for discussion.

A motion was made by Councilman Robinson to open the floor for discussion and seconded by Councilman Jones. Vote taken, all in favor; motion approved.

After the council discussed Mr. Yang's violations, Chairman Virgilio asked for a motion to close the floor for discussion.

A motion was made by Councilman Robinson to close the floor for discussion, seconded by Councilman DeStephano. Vote taken, all in favor; motion carried.

Chairman Virgilio stated that the council has three options, reinstate, continue with the revocation, or delay for additional information. If there is a motion to reinstate, for the record justification is needed.

Councilman Whildin made a motion Not to reinstate Mr. Yang's license, seconded by Councilman DeStephano. Vote taken, all in favor; motion carried.

Richard Mroz- Present

Captain Quirk read aloud the statement for the revocation appeal for Mr. Mroz who was not present. Mr. Mroz was convicted of a violation on January 13,2021, for **NJSA 23:4-42** hunt deer with firearm in closed season. A second violation on January 6,2022, for **NJSA 23:4-45(a)** Hunt permit muzzle season after legal hours.

Chairman Virgilio asked for a motion to open the floor for discussion.

A motion was made by Councilman Robinson to open the floor for discussion and seconded by Councilman Jones. Vote taken, all in favor; motion approved.

After the council discussed Mr. Mroz's violations, Chairman Virgilio asked for a motion to close the floor for discussion.

A motion was made by Councilman Whildin to close the floor for discussion, seconded by Councilman Robinson. Vote taken, all in favor; motion carried.

Chairman Virgilio stated that the council has three options, reinstate, continue with the revocation, or delay for additional information. If there is a motion to reinstate, for the record justification is needed.

Councilman Whildin made a motion Not to reinstate Mr. Mroz's license, seconded by Councilman Robinson. Vote taken, 3 in favor (Whildin, Robinson, Virgilio); 4- opposed (Kertz, Jones, Pollock, DeStephano), Mr. Mroz's license will be reinstated.

Public Comment:

Barbara Sachau submitted written comments that were distributed to all Council members.

A motion was made by Councilman Kertz to adjourn the meeting at 1:18 p.m. and was seconded by Councilman Robinson. Vote taken, all approve, motion carries.

Next meeting will be June 14, 2022, at 10:00 a.m. at the Central Region Office in Robbinsville.

