

Approved 9/16/09

NJ Endangered and Nongame Species Advisory Committee

Meeting Minutes

May 20, 2009

Assunpink Wildlife Management Area

ATTENDEES

COMMITTEE: Barbara Brummer (Chair), Joanna Burger, David Mizrahi, Emile DeVito, Howard Geduldig, Erica Miller, Jane Morton-Galetto, Dale Schweitzer, James Shissias.

STAFF: Dave Jenkins, Dave Chanda, Mike Davenport, Gretchen Fowles, Dave Golden, Larry Herrighty, Tony Petrongolo, Mick Valent, Amy Wells.

GUESTS: Rick Dutko (NJDEP-DPF), John Sacco (NJDEP-NRDP), Annette Scherer (USFWS)

The meeting was called to order at 10:10 am. Notice of the meeting date and location were filed with and posted at the Office of the Secretary of State on March 20th, 2009.

Minutes

A motion was made by J. Burger, seconded by E. Miller and approved by the Committee to approve the minutes for March 18, 2009.

Members requested an updated Member List.

B. Brummer, Chair, noted the topic of Guidelines on the Releasable and Non-releasable Nongame Wildlife would be postponed to the next meeting

Updates

Status of Action Items

- a) D. Jenkins noted the agenda, minutes and brief biographies of each member have been posted on the DFW website. In the future, all background materials for each meeting will also be placed on the website.
- b) The thank you letter to Dan Hernandez has been sent.
- c) ENSAC's recommendations for the reappointment of E. Miller and R. Lathrop have been submitted to the Director's office. Staff will continue to monitor the progression of the recommendations through the review and signature process.

Natural Resource Damage Program

J. Sacco provided an overview on the creation of and responsibilities assigned to the NRDP. To date, over 1900 hazardous and/or oil spill cases have been settled. Over \$60 million recovered, and more than 8000 acres of habitat and aquifer recharge areas have been protected and/or

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restored. Negotiations continue with parties responsible for the 138 sites that have received complaints for natural resource injuries. Discussions continued on critical response time periods, restoration guidelines, and in-kind restoration process.

White Nose Syndrome in Bats

Mick Valent, Principal Zoologist, provided summary information relating to the current status of WNS in NJ and the region prior to the meeting. The syndrome is impacting 6 species of cave bats. Due to bats leaving the mine prematurely during the winter months and dying on the landscape as well as the possibility that spring emergence occurred earlier than normal, an accurate mortality estimate cannot be made until bats return to the mine in the fall. In addition, he provided an overview of an experiment to be conducted by a NJ Wildlife Rehabilitator. The project is designed to evaluate the effectiveness of using a diluted apple cider vinegar solution to kill the *Geomyces destructans* fungus on treated bats that exhibit clinical signs of WNS. The proposal has been reviewed and approved by researchers from the USFWS, the National Wildlife Health Center and others. Histologic testing will determine if the treatment kills the fungus or if viable fungus remains in the tissues.

While research designed to identify the cause and method(s) of transmission continue, local efforts are now focused on observing and obtaining summer roost counts and to determine if WNS is having an impact on reproductive success. ENSP biologists, in cooperation with the Conserve Wildlife Foundation of NJ, will work to recruit additional volunteers for the Summer Bat Count. Volunteers locate and count bats at summer roost sites throughout the state.

An update will be provided at the next ENSAC meeting.

ENSP Guidance on Wind Energy Development * Coastal Zone

Dave Golden, Principal Zoologist, provided background information to the members prior to the meeting. Discussions included that while there is a limited amount of available information regarding the impact of taller turbines on migratory birds, there is even less information regarding the impact of smaller turbines. Turbines will be permitted using a tiered approach. Smaller "Type A" turbines will have limited Departmental review, while larger turbines will require Individual Permits and studies to monitor wildlife impacts. The focus will be directed on pre and post construction on impacted species. The areas of highest risk have been identified and sighting maps will be utilized to gather data on both impacted birds and bats. Members noted challenges to wind turbines in NJ include huge costs associated with the investment and construction of a turbine; once a turbine is operational it becomes increasingly difficult to shut down the operation; restarting a facility that has been shut down has a larger impact of birds; differentiating concerns for each type of species and each type of turbine; and recognition that due to the variety of concerns and geographic location along a flyway. The opinion of the committee was that solar power and/or other alternative energy may be more promising for NJ.

Staff are currently working with the Office of Coastal Planning on CZM rule amendments addressing wind energy development.

NJ Division of Fish and Wildlife Budget

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Director Chanda noted State funding for all State programs is down, the \$325,000 appropriation to match the State Wildlife Grant (SWG) program has been put in reserve by Treasury and his staff are attempting to justify the return of funds based on the fact that the work has already been completed. ENSAC will prepare a letter to the Commissioner requesting the funds be re-appropriated.

Biotics

G. Fowles, GIS Specialist, provided an overview of the Biotics database, the State's clearinghouse for information about the status and occurrence of rare species and ecological communities. This customized database application was developed by NatureServe for the use of Natural Heritage Programs nationwide in order to conduct biodiversity inventory, mapping and data management. In New Jersey, it is used by the Div. of Fish and Wildlife's Endangered and Nongame Species Program (ENSP) to track and monitor occurrences of rare and threatened wildlife species and is used by the Div. of Parks & Forestry's Natural Heritage Program for the inventory and management of data about rare plant species and ecological communities. Biotics currently contains over 14,000 animal records. The rare wildlife data extracted from Biotics is used in part for habitat mapping, environmental reviews, and species status reviews. ENSP staff have worked hard over the past five years since acquiring Biotics and taking responsibility for the processing and maintenance of rare animal records in the database, to come up with an efficient and effective data processing protocol, to decrease the large backlog of rare species data that needs to be entered, to integrate all source of rare animal data into the one Biotics database, and to provide more thorough documentation of decisions that our program has made in relation to the data. Currently ENSP is working with Rutgers University's CRSSA lab to develop an online data submittal application, NJ Wildlife Tracker, which promises to further streamline the submittal, review, and data entry process of rare animal observations. The data is not released publicly other than through habitat patch-based Landscape Project mapping. It does not get released in response to an OPRA request unless there has been a permit denial in which case some information about particular observations may be released, but the observer's name is always omitted from the response to the request.

S2055 - ATV Bill

Jane Galetto noted she had testified before the Senate Environment Committee on bill S2055 and companion bill A823 which regulates the operation of snowmobiles, all-terrain vehicles, dirt bikes and certain other vehicles and off-road vehicles. The bill has now passed both the Senate Environment and Assembly Transportation committees.

A motion was made by J. Burger, seconded by S. Schweitzer and approved by the Committee to adjourn the meeting.