

NJ Endangered and Nongame Species Advisory Committee

Meeting Minutes

January 20, 2010

Assunpink Wildlife Management Area

ATTENDEES

COMMITTEE: Barbara Brummer (Chair), Joanna Burger, Emile DeVito, Jane Galetto, Howard Geduldig, Rick Lathrop, Erica Miller, James Shissias, Dale Schweitzer.

Absent: James Applegate, David Mizrahi

STAFF: Kathy Clark, Dave Chanda, Amanda Dey, Amy Wells, Brian Zarate

Absent: Dave Jenkins

GUESTS: Heather Cammisa (HSUS), Gordon Milnes (Clayton), Rick Dutko (NJDEP-DPF)

The meeting was called to order at 10:20 a.m. Notice of the meeting date and location were filed with and posted at the Office of the Secretary of State on December 8, 2009.

Introductions of members and public were conducted.

Minutes

A motion was made by J. Burger, seconded by E. DeVito, to approve the minutes for November 30, 2009. All in favor, none opposed, the minutes were approved. R. Lathrop abstained.

Updates

Administration

A motion was made by D. Schweitzer, seconded by R. Lathrop to revise the distribution of meeting information. Members requested the drafted minutes and action items be distributed 2 weeks after the meeting. All in favor, none opposed, the revisions were approved.

A motion was made by R. Lathrop, seconded by H. Geduldig and approved by the committee to recommend J. Burger, D. Schweitzer, and D. Mizrahi for reappointment to ENSAC as their terms end effective April 2010.

Feral Cats / Trap-Neuter-Release

B. Brummer reported the NJ Fish and Game Council approved the changes to the drafted Joint Resolution on Trap-Neuter-Release (TNR) and Free-Ranging Domestic Cats.

E. Miller will chair the Feral Cat Ad Hoc Working Group consisting of H. Geduldig, D. Mizrahi, E. DeVito, A. Scherer (USFWS), L. Wolgast (NJDEP-FGC), Gordon Stull (BCCI) and H. Cammisa (HSUS). The group will begin working on the issue in April with the establishment of an objective that will focus on how to reduce feral cat populations

Pine Snake Delisting Petition – Update

Kathy Clark reported the Department has determined to deny NJ Builders Association's petition to delist the Northern Pine Snake. Public Notice was published in the January 19, 2010 Register. The petitioner has 60 days to appeal the decision. Former Commissioner Mauriello thanked staff noting their thorough and targeted response. ENSAC members will be notified of any updates.

Director's Report

Dave Chanda provided an update on the Department's administrative transition noting Commissioner Mauriello and Deputy Commissioner Watson have now left the Department and the new Commissioner Bob Martin has begun meeting with staff. Discussions that D. Chanda had with the transition team included the flexibility within the Landscape Project, social, environmental and economic considerations in the Division's decisions and actions, and getting assistance expediting the approval of time sensitive vendor contracts. Director Chanda explained the DFW is a relatively small agency and the 30% decline in DFW staff over the last 5 years has limited the agency's ability to function but this reduction has not relieved taxpayers of any burden since DFW funding comes from other sources..

ENSAC will send a welcoming letter, with a brief background of the members, to the Commissioner.

Director Chanda and Paulette Nelson will be attending the State Wildlife Grants meeting in Washington, D.C. This meeting serves as an opportunity increase communication with congressional representatives and gain support for program funding.

Director Chanda reviewed the concerns associated with the mandatory federal implementation of a saltwater fishing registration program. The purpose of the registration is to compile information on species harvested in open waters. Currently, the National Marine Fisheries Service is coordinating the registration without charge, but the collection of a \$15/angler fee will begin in 2011. NJ sportsmen are petitioning for the implementation of a salt water fishing license which would provide NJ with the ability to qualify for 3:1 matching funds from the federal government.

Central Jersey Railroad Expansion - Update

E. DeVito referred to a feasibility study to reestablish a freight line from Winslow to Lakehurst. The line would run on a currently inactive right-of-way through several state forests, wildlife management areas and e/t habitat. Concerns centered on the negative impacts to e/t species for which the abandoned railroad right-of-way now provides important habitat features. An enormous amount of money has been spent to protect vast areas of surrounding land, protection of unique habitats, fragmentation of habitat, possible exemption from environmental impact statements and/or regulations. While the neighboring properties have been protected through state or conservation ownership, most of the railroad right-of-way, especially the entire stretch through Wharton State Forest, is owned by NJDOT. Some sections have been purchased by private landowners; none is owned by NJDEP.

Delaware Bay Shorebirds & Adaptive Resource Model (ARM)

A. Dey reported that she presented information on shorebirds and horseshoe crab indices to the NJ Fish and Game Council. A copy of the materials will be placed in the Document Library (not for public distribution until baywide egg data report is complete).

J. Burger provided a schematic of the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission's old and new paradigms. The new paradigm incorporates Structured Decision Making and stakeholders in a process of developing an Adaptive Resource Management (ARM) model to manage horseshoe crab and shorebird resources. Discussions of the ARM model continued from the previous ENSAC meeting with concern expressed about uncertainties underlying model assumptions and parameters as well as risk associated with implementing the model without a test period. Major concern was also expressed over the devolution of the Structured Decision Making process into the old paradigm of the ASMFC technical committee structure.

The ARM model group will be presenting the model to the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Council on February 2, 2010. It is expected the ARM model will be deferred back to the Shorebird Technical Committee and Horseshoe Crab Technical Committee for further consensus and validation. Director Chanda, staff from the Marine Fisheries program and ENSP staff will meet to discuss such concerns prior to the presentation of information at the ASMFC meeting in February.

Delphi Status Review Process

Kathy Clark distributed and reviewed a draft version of an outline for a standard operating procedure (SOP) to serve as guidance for conducting species status reviews. Members supported efforts to create the document and provided many comments and recommendations. The outline document will be revised and distributed via e-mail for further review.

Wildlife Litigations

K. Clark noted all charges in the Cherokee – Petty's Island case have been dismissed. In unrelated litigation, there has been an appeal to the Water Quality Management rule amendments and the interpretation of ENSCA.

Bog Turtles in NJ

Brian Zarate, ENSP Assistant Biologist, provided a PowerPoint presentation on Bog turtles (*Glyptemys [Clemmys] muhlenbergii*) in NJ. The species is reported in 10 states; NJ is the epicenter of the northern population; it is found in 10 counties in NJ. Bog turtles were classified as endangered in NJ in 1974 and federally listed as a threatened species in 1997. Predominant threats include changing habitats, fragmentation of existing habitat, and illegal collection. Strategies to protect the species include prioritizing viable sites, evaluating lower priority sites, management of habitat (including vegetation through grazing and targeted herbicidal applications), education and law enforcement protection.

A motion was made by E. Miller, seconded by J. Shissias, and approved by the Committee to adjourn the meeting at 2:45 p.m.