

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE
NJ FISH AND GAME COUNCIL

Central Region Office
Robbinsville, NJ
March 9, 2010

The regular meeting of the New Jersey Fish and Game Council was held on the above date. In attendance were:

Acting Chairwoman Jeanette Vreeland
Councilman Dave Burke
Councilman Ed Kertz
Councilman John Messeroll
Councilman Robert Puskas
Councilman Dan Van Mater
Councilman Len Wolgast

Absent: Councilwoman Barbara Brummer
Councilman Fred Hough

Division employees included: Director Dave Chanda, Assistant Director Larry Herrighty, Paulette Nelson, Tim Cussen, Jim Sciascia, Tony Petrongolo, Lisa Barno, Patrick Carr, staff from the Bureau of Wildlife Management and staff from the Bureau of Law Enforcement.

Members of the public included representatives from the Federation of Sportsmen's Clubs, the Humane Society, the Animal Protection League of New Jersey, the Sierra Club, the Bear Education Resource Group, the Farm Bureau, various news agencies and others.

The meeting was called to order at 10:05 am.

The flag salute and Pledge of Allegiance were completed.

In accordance with P.L. 1975, c. 231 notice of this meeting was filed with the Office of the Secretary of State and sent to the designated newspapers of the Division, the Newark Star Ledger and The Press (Atlantic City) on February 17, 2010.

Roll call was completed.

The minutes of the February 2010 meeting were reviewed. Two minor changes were made. **A motion was made by Councilman Burke, seconded by Councilman Puskas to accept the minutes as corrected. A vote was taken with all in favor, none opposed.**

Acting Chairwoman Vreeland reviewed some of her activities from this past month, including attending many meetings, dinners and the Rockland Outdoor Show.

Acting Chairwoman Vreeland also noted that the Game Committee had met with Acting Commissioner of the Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) Bob Martin to discuss the draft of the Comprehensive Black Bear Management Policy that is currently being developed. A letter received from him was read aloud. In his letter, he suggested that they meet again following the conclusion of the public comment period to consider comments made on the draft policy. He also noted that he appreciates the work of the Game Committee in developing this draft policy, and the continued reliance on the science provided by Division biologists during this process.

Acting Chairwoman Vreeland also shared an article on the lion cubs she had mentioned at last month's meeting.

Director Chanda addressed the Council. He noted that comments on the agenda items would follow a brief presentation from Supervising Biologist Pat Carr on the most recent work done with East Stroudsburg University on DNA population estimates, as well as the study on aversive conditioning. Director Chanda also noted that over \$9 million has been spent over the last 10 years and black bear management. In the 30 years that black bears have been studied, over 3,500 bears have been handled. Research done shows that there is a healthy population, and although they have been seen in all 21 counties of the State, the overall population is not sufficient to give a Statewide estimate. The data today is for population estimates in the Northern area. He added that the Bureau of Information and Education has done a fantastic job with public outreach, and has won several National awards for their work. Over three million pieces of literature have been distributed, as well as public service announcements being done throughout the State. The Bureau of Law Enforcement has worked hard on the black bear management program, doing many residential sweeps over the last year, and in most areas saw a 98% compliance rate to the no feeding law. This Spring, they will focus on commercial areas for their bear sweep efforts. Director Chanda noted that staff will be working with the Department and the Legislature trying to tighten up some of the problems with the current legislation and the way it is written, hoping that it can be fixed so that it will be a more useful tool to help with the management of black bears.

Director Chanda then read a statement regarding today's discussion and review of the black bear policy. He advised all who were in attendance that comments made today were informal and not part of the official record as part of the adoption process. He added that if the Comprehensive Black Bear Management Policy were accepted, it would then be sent to the Acting Commissioner of the DEP for his consideration, and if accepted, then would be published in the New Jersey Register for a 60-day public comment period. At the close of the 60-day period, which would include a public hearing, all comments would be reviewed. Should the final policy be adopted, the document, all comments and responses to them, and any policy changes would be published in the New Jersey Register. Once published, the policy would become effective.

Supervising Biologist Carr began his presentation. Information included population comparison from years past until now. He also reviewed the Division's integrated black bear management strategy, which includes public education efforts, population monitoring and appropriate control measures, including aversive conditioning and the euthanization of dangerous bears.

Program information also noted that there were successful bear hunts in New Jersey from 1958 – 1970, and again in 2003 and 2005. Although the season was closed in 1971 and 2006, black bear are still considered a game species.

Since 2001, over 100,000 people have been reached directly, with over 3 million pieces of literature and bear education materials being distributed. Garbage management was also reviewed, noting bear resistant trash cans and dumpsters that are available.

Supervising Biologist Carr also noted the Title 23 law that banned the intentional feeding of black bears. The Bureau of Law Enforcement inspected over 4,600 residential properties, and found a 98% compliance with this law.

A map of New Jersey was displayed, showing the range expansion of black bears. Bears currently are reported in every New Jersey county. Research black bear capture methods and den work were described. It was noted that over 750 bear cubs have been handled throughout the entire time the den study has been in place, with over 450 of those being since 2001. Supervising Biologist Carr also noted that the bear population in the Mid-Atlantic Region of the United States breed at an earlier age, and produce more cubs. He compared this area to the Great Smoky Mountains National Park in Tennessee, where the average litter size is two cubs, noting that in New Jersey, the most common litter size (43%) is three cubs, and 23% of litters are four cubs. The oldest recorded female captured and collared in New Jersey was 26 years old.

A review of radio telemetry for captured and collared bears was given. The data show that bears prefer forested areas and upland wetlands. The adult survival rate is 86%, and the cub survival rate is 70%. Adult females were found to be healthy and not food stressed because of New Jersey's diverse habitat. Supervising Biologist Carr noted some examples of mortality include an average of over 80 vehicle collisions each year, the euthanization of Category One classified bears, electrocution from bears that climb utility poles, and dogs killing small cubs. Population monitoring, research trapping and DNA analysis were also reviewed. It was also noted that the bear complaints with negative human interactions vary over time due to different factors, but the numbers are still high. The black bear category rating and response criteria were also reviewed.

The aversive conditioning study was also reviewed. This study showed that treatment has only a short term effect, in which treated bears stayed away for an average of 45 days, compared to non-treated bears staying away an average of 18 days. However, treated or not, bears returned to an urban setting within 17 days.

Supervising Biologist Carr explained that Category One bears are euthanized. He added that over 950 police officers from various communities have been trained to assist with bear control efforts. The black bear population estimate for 2009 was 3,438 in bear management zones 1, 2 and 3. A DEP commissioned study also showed that fertilization control was very unlikely to be feasible for bear population control in New Jersey. He added that the data shows the New Jersey bear population can support a regulated hunting season, and dates are in place for a season to run concurrent with the 6-day firearm deer season. The Division of Fish and Wildlife uses adaptive management for wildlife decision making, and studies will continue.

Acting Chairwoman Vreeland noted that the information collected and the work involved was extensive. She asked Councilman Wolgast, Chairman of the Game Committee, to give some of the highlights of the policy. He noted that the Committee has been working on the policy since 2006. They have met with the previous DEP Commissioners and their staff, and most recently with Acting Commissioner Martin. The Game Committee not only believes that the population can support a regulated hunting season, but that it is necessary. The proposed dates are for a very conservative season, and a significant portion of the female population are denned up at that time. The goal is to get the population to where it needs to be to avoid human contacts. He added that the policy supports the continued education, research, category ratings, aversive conditioning for short term relief from nuisance bears, and continued research of alternative methods of population control. The Committee hopes that this proposal will be supported by the Acting Commissioner, and Councilman Wolgast added that this just a start, pending public comment. Councilman Wolgast made a motion to approve the proposed policy, but then he withdrew until the end of the public comment period.

The public comment period began. Speakers were asked to keep their comments to two minutes, and the speakers were called from the sign in sheet that they had been provided.

Janet Pizar, Director of the Bear Education Resource Group was first to address the Council. She gave a written copy of her comments to the secretary. She noted a newspaper headline from today, and went on to read from the text given to the secretary. Ms. Pizar felt that the non-lethal bear management plan did not fail, but that Division was non-existent for garbage enforcement. She also felt that the recreational killing of bears was the core of the management policy and plan, and noted that there will be no public acceptance for the recreational killing of bears.

The second speaker was Barbara Sauchau from Whitehouse Station. She felt that there was no voice given those who oppose hunting on this Council. She added that those who want to save bears and other wildlife killed in New Jersey get “no voice here” and referred to the Council as “all wildlife murderers”. Ms. Sauchau noted that commenters get two minutes to talk, but felt she got no cooperation or information from the Council, and added that they did not have a plan for all of New Jersey, just for hunters.

Barbara Metzler from Brookside was the next speaker. She noted the comments made by Supervising Biologist Carr, saying that information may have been sent out to people on containing garbage, however the law prohibiting that was not enforced. She also said that she does not see a high compliance, adding that the Bear Education Resource Group has taken photos all over New Jersey that show a lack of compliance. Ms. Metzler stated that members of the Legislature also chose to disregard the black bear feeding ban, and commented on statements that she said were made by Assemblywoman McHose in March of 2007. Ms. Metzler felt that bears were a self regulating species and should be left alone and that she was opposed to a black bear hunt.

Heather Cammisa, on behalf of the Humane Society was next to address the Council. She noted that they have 11 million members in the United States, with 436 thousand of those being from New Jersey. She read from a written statement, noting their opposition to a bear hunt and asked to urge the Division to continue to abstain from the trophy hunting of black bears. Ms. Camisa

noted that they were accepting of lethal control of bears as a matter of health and safety, but added that the target of individual bears was more honest than the random shooting of non-problem bears. She also reviewed information on aversive conditioning techniques. Ms. Camisa said she would welcome a renewed opportunity to work with the Division on the effective implementation of non-lethal management.

The fifth person to address the Council was Jeff Tittle from the Sierra Club. He felt that the Category One program for bear control has been working, but the problem was how to keep Category Two bears from becoming Category One bears. He felt that the administration and legislature added to the current problem, and added that cuts to staff and funding also do not help. Mr. Tittle also felt that there was a failure of the Legislature and the Governor in dealing with the garbage issue. He added that the Sierra Club will be re-examining their policy on black bears.

Next to address the Council was Angi Metler, Director of the Animal Protection League of New Jersey. She stated that nationwide research showed that non-lethal management was the only effective way to reduce nuisance bear complaints. She stated that she lives in bear country, and the only time she needed to use aversive conditioning was after a Category One bear was killed. She also referenced a huntable population, and felt that no matter what the population, Council would feel it was huntable. Ms. Metler also felt that snare traps are not humane, noting that she had released a bear from one, and took the bear to be treated by a veterinarian for broken wrist bones.

The last speaker was Rick Ege, Executive Director of the New Jersey State Council of Trout Unlimited. He noted that they do support the Division's biologists and felt that their decision was made based on sound science.

There was no one else wishing to make public comment.

At this time, **Councilman Wolgast asked to reinstate his previous motion to forward the proposed Comprehensive Black Bear Management Policy to the Acting Commissioner. This motion was seconded by both Councilman Kertz and Councilman Messeroll. A vote was taken with all in favor.** Acting Chairwoman Vreeland added that she was impressed with the amount of techniques used to collect the data given today, and felt that nothing was missed.

Director Chanda asked that everyone take a close look at the population estimates in the Northern portion of the state. They show that there are more black bear per square mile there than in almost anywhere else in North America.

Councilman Messeroll noted that this data was based on 10 years of work, and is not something new. He added that this proposal will go to a public comment period, and that all the comments will be read.

Councilman Van Mater felt that it was a sound policy.

Councilman Burke felt that it was a very comprehensive policy, and includes information on education and garbage management. All involved would like to continue to see a healthy population in the State, but you need a control mechanism to control the bear numbers. He added as a resident of South Jersey he is not looking forward to the point where he will have to keep trash in the house or garage, but noted cases of people being afraid to walk their dogs in the evening, or being concerned about their children waiting for the school bus because of bears, and we needed to have the proper policy in place with concern to human involvement.

Acting Chairwoman Vreeland added that regarding safety, children with backpacks can't carry their lunch in their backpacks anymore. She added that safety for the human population was her concern.

Councilman Kertz noted that he is also from South Jersey and that the bears are moving down towards his area. If they are not controlled, education programs will have to begin all over again in a new area. He added that the forest is not big enough to contain that many bears forever and that there needs to be population control, and that this is a step forward.

Councilman Puskas thanked Supervising Biologist Carr and the Division for their work. He added that comprehensive means all inclusive, and that the population needed to be balanced with human activity. He added that he would review the comments, and noted that while he does not live in bear country, they been in his area. He felt that this was the next step and that there was a need to move forward.

At this time, **a vote was taken with all in favor, none opposed to forward the proposed Comprehensive Black Bear Management Policy to the Acting Commissioner.** Director Chanda noted that the Division planned to have this information available on its website by this afternoon.

A motion was made by Councilman Messeroll and seconded by Councilman Van Mater to take a short recess for members of the news media to conduct interviews for their stories. The meeting broke at 11:08 am.

At 11:33 am the meeting resumed. The Agriculture Committee reported. Both Acting Chairwoman Vreeland and Councilman Kertz noted that there was quite a bit of snow in their area, and things were slow this past month. Councilman Puskas also had snow slow things down in his area, but noted that the geese have been active. Liz Thompson from the Farm Bureau had nothing else to add, noting the slow time of year.

Legislative Liaison Nelson reported for the Legislative Committee. She noted two new bills:

- A-2272 Increases membership of Fish and Game Council and clarifies it has sole authority to regulate freshwater fishing, hunting and trapping.
- A-2377 Authorized free hunting, fishing, and trapping licenses and free admission to State parks and forests for individuals with certain

types of military service, and their immediate family members.

It was also noted that ACR-105 may not go forward. This would amend the Constitution to dedicate water consumption and diversion user fee revenue for open space, farmland and historic preservation.

SR-46 was also reviewed. This urges the Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council to establish new artificial reefs for commercial fishing. It was noted by Legislative Liaison Nelson that this relates to commercial only reefs.

Yesterday, the Agriculture and Natural Resource Committee voted unanimously to accept the free saltwater registry. Legislative Liaison Nelson and Marine Fisheries Chief McCloy were in attendance to address the Committee, but they did not accept the argument that a free registry would still cost the Division money. They felt it was better for New Jersey to have no license to reap the benefits of anglers from other states coming to New Jersey to fish. This bill still has to go through the entire Legislature.

The next meeting of the Legislative Committee had been scheduled for April 13, 2010, but was rescheduled for May 11, 2010 at 9 am, before the start of the regular Council Meeting.

The Marine Fisheries Council is having a meeting on April 21, 2010 to discuss future funding issues. Members of this Council were asked if someone might be interested to work with them. Councilman Burke noted he would be interested, but was not available on that date. Councilman Messeroll also asked if the Marine Council looks at aquaculture, referencing the bill for the development of an Aquaculture and Fisheries Task Force. Legislative Liaison Nelson noted that they do, but this bill was more toward the shellfish side. Councilman Messeroll noted that there are groups looking at aquaculture fish farming, and explained the program for the Council. He added that this type of fish farming is extremely bad for the environment. He noted a website, foodandwaterwatch.org which has a fact sheet, and the Federal bill HR-4360, which relates to the off-shore aquaculture.

There was no report from Endangered and Non-Game Species Committee.

The Federation report was given. Acting Chairwoman Vreeland noted that plans for the Convention were coming along, and many of the different counties are having their annual dinners.

Councilman Messeroll noted an informal meet and greet that is scheduled for April 7, 2010, at 7 pm, sponsored by the Middlesex County Federation. There will be a presentation, and refreshments will be served. This is being held at the Polish American Club in Spotswood.

On March 11, 2010, Craig Lemon from the Hackettstown Fish Hatchery will be giving a talk at the Bloomfield Civic Center as part of an event being sponsored by the Essex County Federation.

Chief Barno reported for the Bureau of Freshwater Fisheries. She noted that all members had been given a copy of the tentative stocking schedule. Pre-season stocking starts on March 22,

and members of the Council are invited to come to the Pequest Hatchery to see the first trucks being loaded. After a brief review, **a motion was made by Councilman Messeroll, seconded by Councilman Puskas to approve the trout stocking schedule. A vote was taken with all in favor.**

Chief Barno noted that in many municipalities, there is a growing trend not to allow ice fishing. Because of this, the waters on the Winter trout stocking schedule will be reviewed, and may need to have adjustments made.

There was a public fisheries meeting at the Batsto Visitor Center two weeks ago, and Chief Barno noted that Senior Biologist Smith did a great job. Councilmen Burke and Van Mater, were in attendance, along with 42 anglers. An overview of the lake inventory work done at Lake Musconetcong was given. Councilman Burke and Van Matter both agreed that it was a good meeting. It was also noted that Regional Superintendent Widjeskog always attends the meeting on his own time, and his input is appreciated.

Chief Barno attended a meeting of the Lake Hopatcong Citizen's Advisory Committee yesterday. She reviewed information on lake lowering program that is being developed, and noted that there is a deadline of September of this year to have a plan in place for the Fall water lowering.

A letter was received recently from the Mountain Lake Community Association supporting the return of Mountain Lake to the trout stocking program.

Data was received from Muskie, Inc. asking for the minimum size on muskie to be increased from 36 to 40 inches Statewide. This matter will be reviewed sometime this Fall or Winter, since recommendations for the next code will not be needed until January of next year.

Staff at the Pequest Hatchery are preparing for Spring trout stocking. They also anticipate starting broodstock collection within two weeks. Staff at the Hackettstown Hatchery are waiting for the ice to thaw before they can plan for their broodstock collection.

Chief Barno noted a savings of \$40,000 to \$50,000 by not running the systems for channel catfish at the Hackettstown Hatchery this winter.

Fisheries crews have been busy with snow plowing.

Acting Chairwoman Vreeland referenced a letter received from Trout Unlimited regarding Flatbrook. Chief Barno noted that they have proposed some regulation changes for the Flatbrook area.

Chief Cussen reported for the Bureau of Law Enforcement. He noted that officers recorded a total of 6,218.5 hours during this reporting period. These were further broken down to include:

1,170 for deer hunting patrols
847 for marine resources patrols

381 for wildlife management area patrols
350.5 for small game hunting patrols

A total of 1,353 field inspections were made, resulting in 161 summonses, four written warnings and no criminal arrests. The summonses can be further broken down to include:

75 for deer hunting violations
30 for wildlife management area violations
14 waterfowl hunting violations
10 fishing violations
6 hunting violations

Councilman Wolgast noted that during the public comment period today, someone commented that she had released a bear from a snare trap. Chief Cussen acknowledged that yes, this was admitted, but the timeframe of this activity was unknown. He added that this is worth looking at further. Director Chanda added that the medical staff who treated the bear may also be in violation.

The meeting broke for lunch at 12:03 pm, and resumed at 12:46 pm.

Chief Sciascia reported for the Bureau of Information and Education. He noted that the results of the Recreational Boating and Fishing Foundation (RBFF) survey are in. While the specific results for New Jersey are still not available, he has seen a “pooled data” summary and has obtained good information. The number one reason anglers gave for fishing was to spend time outdoors, compared to past surveys that indicated to spend time with family and friends. The leading answers to questions about what might help people fish more were primarily where-to and how-to information. Chief Sciascia felt that if information could be provided to lapsed anglers on places to fish within 30 to 60 minutes of where they live that it may boost interest. Access to areas is also an issue, and he noted the need to develop an on-line feature with information on how to locate areas open to anglers. Work on this process was started last year coordinating with the Office of Information and Resource Management. He reported a federal grant for an outreach project to increase hunting and fishing participation is being created to meet the information needs identified in this survey.

RBFF matching grants will also be available again this year to help promote fishing participation to lapsed anglers. Chief Sciascia commented that the RBFF has always been very rigid on how funding was to be used, and he felt that the information received from this survey may make them more flexible in how recipients are allowed to use the matching funds received from the RBFF.

Promotions for the upcoming trout season are also underway. Over the winter, Backwoods Angler TV filmed a half-hour show on New Jersey Trout Fishing. Chief Sciascia felt this is going to be a great trout fishing promotional tool. The show is scheduled to air in late March.

Darlene Yuhas in the DEP Press Office is coordinating a push to get TV and newspaper coverage of pre-season stocking and opening day of the Trout Season. Similar efforts in the past have resulted in major coverage in nearly all the Daily papers and many of the tri-state TV networks.

At the Pequest Hatchery, they are preparing for the busy season providing programs for school groups. Chief Sciascia noted that students from the Trout in the Classroom program get priority for scheduling at the beginning of the year.

Upcoming events in the Bureau of Information and Education include the Outdoor Writer's Workshop on March 18, the Pequest Open House on March 27 and 28 and the opening day of trout season event at Pequest on April 10.

Acting Chairwoman Vreeland asked about information for County Sportsmen's Federations wishing to sponsor a student at the Coldwater Conservation School. Anyone interested should contact Resource Interpretive Specialist Griglak at the Pequest Hatchery and Chief Sciascia is going to coordinate the County Federation sponsorships with Chairwoman Vreeland .

Councilman Wolgast asked if there were any updates on the archery park. Chief Sciascia noted they were waiting on dates from the Archery Trade Assoc. and the Easton Sports Development Foundation to come to New Jersey to meet with the Morris County Parks Commission and other potential Morris County partners regarding siting the Park on the Greystone property.

Chief Petrongolo reported for the Bureau of Land Management. There were no new acquisitions to report from this past month. Currently, there are 325,877.04 acres in the wildlife management area (WMA) system. Chief Petrongolo noted that even though there may not be any new acquisitions, the amount of acreage may still increase from time to time due to reviewing old deeds and working with staff from the US Fish and Wildlife Service on property ownership details.

Staff from Green Acres did close on a property near Logan Pond in Cumberland County, which has access to the Repaupo Creek. Chief Petrongolo described that Logan Pond is an old gravel pond and access to the area was lost due to the construction of Interstate 295 in the 1970's. This area is a lowland forest area, and will also provide good fishing and duck hunting opportunities.

Land Management crews have been busy with Winter mowing projects. They have also been working with staff from the Bureau of Forest Fire Management to complete controlled burn projects.

The timber harvest at the Flatbrook WMA is completed; however, there is still some spraying to be done. Chief Petrongolo noted that this project has been worked on for over 15 years, and the species in the area will continue to be monitored. A hydro-axing project is also to be done at this area to restore scrub/shrub habitats, using funding from the Corporate Business Tax (CBT). This should be completed soon, since it was held up by the recent snowstorms.

Staff have been working with the farmers who won the bid for leases on WMA properties. In-kind services are being reviewed. Chief Petrongolo noted that all leases have gone through the State House Commission, and are going through the signature process so that they can be sent to the Commissioner. One lease has been recalled; the property was purchased with National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) funds, and their stipulations state that ground purchased with their funds cannot be leased. Chief Petrongolo further explained this matter, noting that other property on WMAs being considered for farm leases in the future will be reviewed to be sure that they were not purchased using any NOAA funds.

Assistant Director Herrighty reported for the Bureau of Wildlife Management. He reminded members of the Game Committee that there will be a meeting at 9 am next Tuesday to continue discussions on the proposed amendments to the Game Code.

Staff from the Bureau of Information and Education will be assisting with mailing surveys regarding antler point restrictions in South Jersey. Presentations will be done for the public on April 6, 12, and 15 regarding this matter.

Assistant Director Herrighty reported that the preliminary harvest totals show that the harvest was down 1.7%, with 52,372 deer being taken this past season compared to 53,260 last season. Antlerless harvest totals were down 4.4%, however antlered harvest totals were up 3.5%. Final season information should be available for the Game Committee meeting.

Assistant Director Herrighty reported that he had received a call from Supervising Biologist McBride today regarding a goose that had been shot with a field tipped arrow. Staff was able to capture the goose and take it to a veterinarian to have the arrow removed so that the goose could then be taken to a rehabilitator.

Councilman Wolgast noted a conversation he had with a bow hunter who travels the world to hunt. This gentleman had purchased a crossbow for his 10 year old daughter. She is very adapt at handling this bow, and they have planned a trip to hunt in Africa using the crossbow. He pointed out that this person bow hunts all around the world, but is an example of a bow hunter who has accepted that crossbows are an excellent way to get youth involved in bowhunting.

Topics to be discussed at the Game Committee meeting were reviewed. They include a resolution that was passed at the State House that is similar to the quail proposal that the Council has already voted on, as well as a resolution to allow the trapping of bobcats. Principal Biologist Valent from the Endangered and Non-Game Species Program will be contacted to make a presentation on bobcats sometime in the future. Council members who had recommendations for the next Game Code Committee were advised to give them to Assistant Director Herrighty.

Assistant Director Herrighty was asked if the applications for the turkey permit lottery were down, and he noted that they were down by 700 to 800 applicants. He also followed up on a previous inquiry about a programming error with the automated license system vendor that caused the beaver permits to start selling earlier than anticipated.

There was no old or new business to discuss, and the public comment period began. Those wishing to speak were asked to limit their comments to three minutes.

Janet Pizar addressed the Council. She commented that information she had seen from areas around the county on black bear management and all noted garbage containment as part of their program.

Ms. Pizar also referenced a letter from July, 2008 from Acting Chairwoman Vreeland to Assistant Commissioner Cradic noting an increase in black bear enforcement. Acting Chairwoman Vreeland advised Ms. Pizar that this letter was from some time ago, and she was not able to recall the specifics of this matter. Ms. Pizar also directed comments to Director Chanda regarding the 98% compliance to the black bear feeding law, asking where the research was. She noted that she has tried to work with the Division by presenting photos of uncontained garbage. Ms. Pizar continued with her comments regarding garbage and how she felt it related to problems with the black bears, adding that she felt that the Division had failed to do the number one basic element of black bear management that proves to be effective.

Barbara Sauchau was next to address the Council. She felt that releasing hunters on New Jersey was far more dangerous than bears are, and referred to an incident that had occurred in New York State. She questioned comments she said were made by Councilman Wolgast regarding doing what the law allows to control the bear population. She said that she had read the law and that you do not have to allow hunting. Ms. Sauchau continued on this subject, and ending by saying that she felt that the Council only listened to hunting clubs and not the majority of citizens, and felt that this was wrong.

Last to address the Council was Rick Ege. He noted that there are nine chapters of Trout Unlimited working to fill seats for the Coldwater Conservation School, adding that they were extremely grateful to the Division for partnering with them on this event. Mr. Egge also added that the Star Ledger had an online survey asking readers if they were for or against a black bear hunt, and noted that as of now, 70% were for and 36% were opposed to a hunt as of 12:21 pm today.

Director Chanda noted that he did not have the letter Ms. Pizar referred to in front of him, but the increased enforcement was not measured from the summonses issued, but from the six bear sweeps that were done in the heart of bear country, compared to none being done the year before. The 98% compliance comes from follow up home visits by Conservation Officers where problems had been corrected, not from tickets that were written.

There were no other public comments.

A motion was made by Councilman Messeroll, seconded by Councilman Puskas to adjourn. All were in favor, and the meeting adjourned at 1:30 pm.