

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE
NJ FISH AND GAME COUNCIL

Central Region Office
Robbinsville, NJ
May 14, 2013

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

The meeting was called to order at 10:08 a.m. by Acting Chairman Burke.

The flag salute and Pledge of Allegiance were completed.

Acting Chairman Burke 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 and delivered to the designated newspapers of the Division, the Newark Star Ledger and the Atlantic City Press on April 17, 2013.

Roll call was taken. In attendance were:

Acting Chairman David Burke
Councilwoman Cathy Blumig
Councilwoman Barbara Brummer
Councilman Phil Brodhecker (arrived at 10:22 a.m.)
Councilman Joseph DeMartino
Councilman Agust Gudmundsson
Councilman Jeffrey Link (arrived at 10:13 a.m.)
Councilman Dan Van Mater

Absent: Councilman Robert Puskas

Division personnel included D. Chanda, L. Herrighty, P. Nelson, A. Petrongolo M. Chicketano, L. Barno, A. Ivany, T. Nichols and C. Stanko.

Members of the public included former Councilman Messeroll, representatives from the Department of Agriculture, and others.

Minutes of the April 9, 2013 meeting were reviewed. **A motion was made by Councilman Gudmundsson, seconded by Councilman Van Mater to accept the minutes as presented. A vote was taken with all in favor, and one abstention from Councilwoman Brummer.**

Acting Chairman Burke commented on an article in today's Atlantic City Press concerning bridge replacement in Somers Point. Sportsmen petitioned to have a portion of the old bridge on Route 9 kept in place for fishing access, and with the assistance of Senator Van Drew were successful in their efforts. Acting Chairman Burke explained the area and the added access this will now give to anglers.

A Federal grant program run through Stockton College was reviewed. This program uses side scan sonar to detect and remove “ghost” crab pots that commercial crab harvesters had lost. The program allowed these same crab harvesters to be hired to conduct the program on the Great Bay.

(Councilman Link arrived at 10:13 a.m.)

Also noted was the start today of the removal of the Seaside Heights boardwalk roller coaster, which fell into the ocean during Hurricane Sandy.

Director Chanda addressed the Council, also noting the Route 9 Drag Island bridge project. He added that it was good for the people to get involved to have fishing access. He further described the project and surrounding area and its’ use for the Council.

Director Chanda congratulated the Federation of Sportsmen and the Conserve Wildlife Foundation on the success of their 1st Wildlife Conference and Convention.

Last week was the ribbon cutting ceremony at the newly remodeled Information and Education building at Hackettstown. This building will be used by Centenary College, and Director Chanda reviewed their plans for this facility.

The feasibility study for the archery park is expected to be completed this week. Costs are higher than originally anticipated, and plans may have to be adjusted accordingly. Review of this project may be on the June meeting agenda.

Acting Chairman Burke noted there was only one agenda item for today, which was the vote on tentative 2013 – 2014 Migratory Bird Seasons dates. The public comment period on this one item was opened, with those choosing to comment limited to three minutes.

Barbara Sauchau addressed the Council. She remarked that there was a vote today on a presentation given last month, and had asked for a written report on this information but did not receive it. She noted her complaint that there were not copies of information for agenda items available beforehand for the public. She further expressed her complaints on waterfowl killing, complaints of hunters shooting into buildings, read a portion of a news article regarding hunting, felt that there should not be farm fields on wildlife management areas due to behavioral conditioning of waterfowl, and poisoning of birds. (Ms. Sauchau expired her three minutes to make comment).

(Councilman Brodhecker arrived at 10:22 a.m.)

Assistant Director Herrighty asked to make a point of reference, noting that Supervising Biologist Nichols information was presented at last month’s meeting and was posted on the Division’s website after that meeting and was available to those who wanted to review it.

Jim Donofrio was next to address the Council. He thanked the Division and Principal Biologist Nichols for his work in surveying the hunters regarding the proposed dates, and that most are pleased with the proposed dates as given.

Committee reports began. Councilman Link reported for the Agriculture Committee, and noted that this is a busy time for him personally. Farmers in his area are breaking ground for planting. He has not had the opportunity to go turkey hunting, so has not heard any feedback on the hunting in his area.

Councilman Brodhecker reported that bears have been attacking guinea fowl in his area. Those with beehives have been installing electric fencing to keep out bears. Also noted was an increased amount of ticks in areas where there was not too much problem in the past. Councilman Brodhecker added that he spoke with Councilman Puskas this morning, and they are seeing a lot of geese in Councilman Puskas' area.

Councilman Van Mater was the first to report for the Federation. He had attended a meeting last week, but had nothing new to report. Councilwoman Blumig noted that the Federation's Chronic Wasting Disease (CWD) Committee will be meeting this Friday. Councilman Gudmundsson will be attending a meeting this evening, and had no new information to report.

Acting Chairman Burke had attended the recent Atlantic County meeting, and advised that there were many good comments about the recent convention. Members of the Gloucester County Federation spent additional time assisting with repairs at the Rockport Pheasant Farm.

A letter was received from John Battistini, who researched on this own about the possible purchase of pheasant chicks. This letter will be forwarded to Assistant Director Herrighty for a response. There was some additional discussion on this matter, and Assistant Director Herrighty updated the Council on improvements being done at the pheasant farm to try to improve production.

Acting Chairman Burke also inquired about adding a turkey check station in Atlantic County. There was some discussion, and Assistant Director Herrighty advised that they may convert the turkey check system to the automated system after one more season.

Councilman DeMartino reported that he had attended the Ocean County meeting. Requests have been made to him to consider more turkey permit quotas for zones 14 and 12. Assistant Director Herrighty advised that this is being looked into, but that it would be a two year process because of the Game Code cycle. Also, they are considering possibly making some boundary changes.

There was no report for the Finance Committee, who had not met recently. Assistant Director Nelson advised that the revenue was on par with last year, and the previously reported loss has been made up.

Acting Chairman Burke reported that the Game Committee also has not had a recent meeting. Councilman DeMartino advised that he had attended the public hearing on the Game Code, and that four people were in attendance. One person was entirely opposed to the proposed Game Code amendments, and three others were Federation representatives who spoke against the antlerless deer proposal. There was additional discussion on this matter.

At this time, Acting Chairman Burke noted that the vote on the proposed waterfowl season dates would take place after the committee reports.

In the absence of Councilman Puskas, Assistant Director Nelson reported for the Legislative Committee. There has been little activity, since they are working on the Fiscal Year 2014 budget. Bills being tracked are:

S 2665 (companion to A 3944)	Removes statutory limitation on number of permits that may be issued by Division of Fish and Wildlife for the taking of beaver.
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S 2674 (companion to A 1033)	Authorizes Sunday bow hunting on Federal military installations.
A 4036 (companion to S 2726)	Establishes directed bait and human food fishery for menhaden, and clarifies existing law regarding taking of menhaden.
A 4088	Imposes civil penalty for the exhibition or use in performance of a living bear, elephant, lion or tiger.
A 507 (companion to S 2024)	Establishes licensing program in Department of Agriculture for farmed deer and other cervids.
A 2248	Establishes certain requirements for trapping of snapping turtles.
A 3944	same as S 2674 listed above

Bills were reviewed and discussed.

Acting Chairman Burke noted that he had been asked about the Sunday firearm hunting bill A 1538. There was additional discussion on this.

Councilwoman Brummer reported for the Endangered and Nongame Species Advisory Committee. She noted that Bureau staff have been very busy addressing Hurricane Sandy issues relative to shorebirds and horseshoe crabs. The ENSAC meeting for tomorrow has also been cancelled due to the workload of staff.

There was no report for the Waterfowl Stamp Committee, who are tentatively scheduled to meet again in July.

There was no report the Wildlife Rehabilitators Advisory Committee, who will meet again on May 22.

There was a minor change in agenda, and at this time Chief Petrongolo reported for the Bureau of Land Management. He noted that there were no newly reported acquisitions listed in the monthly report, however, there was an addition of 100 acres to the Stowe Creek WMA which he reviewed for the Council. He further explained the timeframe in which we are notified of acquisitions, which sometimes will overlap the monthly reporting period.

There are a number of forestry projects going through the approval process. These include timber harvests at the Weldon Brook and Greenwood Forest WMAs.

Repairs to the dikes at the Tuckahoe WMA have been completed. The entire five miles of dikes were worked on, utilizing Corporate Business Tax funds, but Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) reimbursement will be applied for. Additionally, Chief Petrongolo advised that the roads on the dike areas are now closed until the fill material settles, and traffic access for the future will be re-evaluated.

FEMA representatives made a site visit to the Sedge Island WMA last week. Staff are trying to complete emergency repairs to make the facility operational once again.

Repairs are ongoing at the Spicer's Creek WMA, and should be completed within one to one and a half months. Other projects being planned include ramp repair at the Thundergut Pond WMA, which is now closed, and road projects at the Ken Lockwood Gorge. Road repairs at Moore's Beach have been completed, and will allow access to do beach replenishment repairs.

Acting Chairman Burke inquired about whether or not all roads were now opened at the Lenape Farms area. Chief Petrongolo explained that most roads were now open, but there is still limited access to certain areas of this tract.

At this time, Acting Chairman Burke called for a review of the proposed waterfowl hunting season dates, to be followed by a vote. There was additional discussion on this matter, and comments received by the Council and staff were shared. **A motion was made by Councilman Gudmundsson, seconded by Councilman Brodhecker to approve the proposed 2013-14 waterfowl hunting season dates as given. A vote was taken with all in favor, none opposed.**

Chief Barno reported for the Bureau of Freshwater Fisheries. The proposed Fish Code has been at the Office of Legal Affairs for the past three weeks, and she noted their review is usually a six week process. They are hoping to have this published in the August 4, 2013 New Jersey Register. Additionally, Chief Barno noted that anglers will be notified by signage to watch the Division website for any regulation changes.

Chief Barno reported that the spring trout stocking program is in week six, and updated the stocking season thus far.

Staff will be receiving land locked salmon from Massachusetts this week, and will exchange them for northern pike fingerlings. The salmon will be held at the Hackettstown Hatchery to grow, and will be distributed this fall.

At the Hackettstown Hatchery, three of the four buildings are now filled. The last of the musky fish are hatching, and Chief Barno described a different methodology that is being tried with them this year.

Staff from the Research and Management Section are working on the Delaware River at the mouth of the Musconcong River to look for androgynous species using electro-fishing methods. None have been reported so far.

Trap nets have been set at Oxford Furnace. Carnegie Lake and Mountain Lake will follow. Staff is doing preliminary work and will be looking for population and growth estimates for muskellunge and a working on the stocking program for walleye.

Angler log books have been distributed for the Flatbrook and the South Branch of the Raritan.

Chief Barno reported that Lake Hopatcong is scheduled for a five foot draw down this fall, which has been creating much back and forth discussion with the citizen's advisory committee.

Principal Biologist Ivany reported for the Information and Education Section. Fishing license sales have made a strong comeback, and he distributed information on same.

As of April 21, the Hunter Education Unit has shown graduate numbers slightly above those recorded at the same time last year.

Survey information on the licensing and permit packing is underway, with information being sought both online and by mail. A draft of the information findings is expected to be available mid-July.

Principal Biologist Ivany noted concerns about proposed Senate Bill S-2723 which would require applicants for Firearms Identification Cards to first have a hunter safety card of some type. He read from the text of this proposal, and noted the concern is this could double or triple the demand for Hunter Education courses. There was additional discussion on this matter.

Handouts of the Hunter Education graduate information was distributed as well.

Acting Chairman Burke noted that the Bureau of Law Enforcement has requested time at the end of the meeting to meet with Council in Executive Session to hear a license restoration appeal, after which the meeting would adjourn.

Acting Chief Chicketano reported for the Bureau of Law Enforcement. He reviewed several of the highlights listed in the Bureau's monthly report with the Council.

Acting Chief Chicketano also noted public education efforts of Lt. Ely, who attended a career day at a middle school in Egg Harbor Township.

A brief description of the computer aided dispatch (CAD) system was given. It was noted that officers can now do a lot of their work in the field from their vehicles.

There was also inquiry as to the testing of dash cams. Acting Chief Chicketano advised that while they are equipped to be able to move forward with this system, the software required is tamperproof which makes it very expensive.

Acting Chief Chicketano was also asked if there were any officers who were using dogs as part of their duty. He explained that when needed, a former Deputy Conservation Officer has a dog that may be utilized, but none of the officers have duty dogs adding that the costs involved are a factor.

The June 11, 2013 meeting was discussed, and suggested to be changed to June 27. **A motion was made by Councilman Gudmundsson, seconded by Councilwoman Brummer to reschedule the June 11, 2013 Fish and Game Council meeting to June 27, 2013 at 10 a.m. at the Central Region Office. A vote was taken with all in favor, none opposed.**

Lunch break began at 12:01 p.m., and the meeting resumed at 12:49 p.m.

With the change in date of the June meeting, it was suggested that the July 9, 2013 meeting be cancelled. **A motion was made by Councilwoman Blumig, seconded by Councilwoman Brummer to cancel the July 9, 2013 meeting. A vote was taken with all in favor, none opposed.**

Assistant Director Herrighty reported for the Bureau of Wildlife. He noted that bear activity calls are down by 33%, however two were removed last weekend from urban situations, and one had to be euthanized several weeks ago.

Turkey season harvest results for Week-A were up by 50 birds compared to last year. No other season information was available at this time.

Assistant Director Herrighty advised that the Atlantic Flyway Council recommended to the Fish and Wildlife Service doing away with the egg addling start date for Canada geese and gave a brief review of why.

Supervising Biologist Stanko presented the results of the 2012-2013 deer season harvest. A power point presentation was given, along with handout information to the Council. Items noted included being on par with last years' harvest totals, with only a 167 deer difference overall, and compliance of hunters with the new automated game checking system. Also noted was the antlered harvest for bow and arrow had more deer reported than the shotgun season compared to last years' numbers, and the use of crossbow is gaining in popularity. There was additional discussion on the information given today.

There was no old or new business to discuss.

The public comment period was opened, with members of the public advised they would have three minutes to address the Council.

Janet Pizar from Millburn addressed the Council. She inquired about Assembly Bill A-2248 regarding snapping turtles, asking if the Council had an official position on this and if the Montclair State University study was considered. Assistant Director Nelson advised that the Division is opposed to this bill for other reasons. There was some additional discussion, and it was noted that this bill had been discussed earlier in the meeting.

Barbara Sauchau also addressed the Council. She commented on various matters, including deer and duck killing, that her requests for information were non-responsive when directed to the Division website, fines for certain violations should be increased, prices for permits should be increased, read from a letter that had been published regarding hunters in the area of the West Windsor-Plainsboro school district, and a Canadian toxicologists' study on birds. (Ms. Sauchau expired her allotted time to speak and was advised of same).

With no other public speakers, **a motion was made by Councilman Van Mater, seconded by Councilman Brodhecker to adjourn to Executive Session. All were in favor.**

At the end of the Executive Session the regular meeting resumed, and **a motion was made by Councilman Gudmundsson, seconded by Councilwoman Blumig to adjourn. A vote was taken with all in favor.** Meeting adjourned at 1:34 p.m.