

MINUTES OF THE JOINT MEETING OF THE
NJ FISH AND GAME COUNCIL
AND THE
ENDANGERED AND NONGAME SPECIES ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Central Region Office
Robbinsville, NJ
September 17, 2014

A meeting the New Jersey Fish and Game Council (Council) and the Endangered and Nongame Species Advisory Committee (ENSAC) was held on the above date.

The meeting was called to order at 10:14 a.m. by the Acting Chairman Burke of the Council.

The flag salute and Pledge of Allegiance were completed.

The following statement was read aloud: 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 and delivered to the designated newspapers of the Division, the Newark Star Ledger and the Atlantic City Press on August 28, 2014.

Roll call was taken.

In attendance for the Fish and Game Council were:

Acting Chairman Burke
Councilwoman Blumig
Councilman Brodhecker

Absent: Councilwoman Brummer
Councilman DeMartino
Councilman Gudmundsson
Councilman Link
Councilman Puskas
Councilman Van Mater

In attendance for the Endangered and Nongame Species Advisory Committee were:

Committeeman Applegate
Committeewoman Burger
Committeewoman Morton-Galetto
Committeeman Lathrop
Committeeman Mizrahi
Committeeman Reinert
Committeeman Shissias

Absent: Chairwoman Brummer
 Committeeman DeVito
 Committeeman Geduldig
 Committeewoman Miller

Acting Chairman Burke from the Council advised those in attendance that due to an oversight the monthly bureau reports were not brought to the meeting today, but anyone wishing to receive them could have them mailed. A sign-up sheet was distributed for anyone wishing to have reports mailed to them.

He also noted that there were no agenda items to vote on today, so all public comment would be held to the end of the meeting.

Acting Chairman Burke commented on the recent WILD Outdoor Expo that was held. He noted that staff and volunteer did a tremendous job on this event, and despite the light attendance on Saturday due to the weather, the overall attendance for both days was close to 7,000.

Acting Chairman Burke also shared a newspaper article from Cape May, which reported that a whiskered tern had been seen there and noted that this was only the third time one had been seen there.

A large amount of retirements are forthcoming, especially in the Bureau of Land Management which manages over 344,000 acres of property. Acting Chairman Burke a noted his concerns on this and hoped Director Chanda could offer some insight on this matter.

At this time, minutes from past meetings were addressed.

ENSAC Committeeman (Vice Chair) Lathrop, who was serving as Acting Chair, asked for a motion on the minutes of their June 26, 2014 meeting. **A motion was made by Committeewoman Burger, seconded by Committeeman Reinert to approve the minutes.** Committeeman Lathrop noted Chairwoman Brummer was listed at “Acting” in several parts of the document and that this should be corrected. **A vote was taken with all in favor, none opposed and one abstention to approve the minutes as corrected.**

Acting Chairman Burke advised that due to the lack of a quorum for the Council, the minutes for the August 12, 2014 meeting would be reviewed and voted on at the October 14, 2014 meeting. He asked that a draft version of these minutes be posted to the Division’s website pending final approval.

Director Chanda addressed the meeting. He noted that several members of the Fish and Game Council had conflicts which kept them from attending today.

He advised that the Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies should be sending information out soon regarding the creation of a Blue Ribbon Panel – under the leadership of the co-chairs; Bass Pro Shops founder John L. Morris and former Wyoming governor Dave Freudenthal – the panel

aims to reimagine a 21st century model of funding conservation that bridges the funding gap between game and nongame species. He noted that the ENSAC members were familiar with the Teaming With Wildlife effort which has brought limited federal funding for the Endangered and Nongame Species Program (ENSP) to continue with their work. He gave a brief review of the plan, noting that additional information would follow.

Director Chanda advised that last week staff met with members of the leadership team of the USFWS at Sedge Island. Many issues were discussed.

Staffing concerns were addressed. Director Chanda noted that employee wise Fish and Wildlife is an aging agency, with many pending retirements and many other staff who were eligible to go at any time, including himself and Assistant Director Herrigty. He also commented that much of the professional staff from the Bureau of Land Management would be gone by May, 2015, and the Bureau of Law Enforcement would be seeing the same thing by December, 2015. He has met with the Commissioner to discuss the importance of putting a successional plan in place, and will approach the Civil Service Commission about the staffing of the Bureau of Law Enforcement.

Director Chanda noted the bigger challenge was the costs of fringe benefits for employees, which resulted in a \$1 million deficit at the close of the last fiscal year. He described that during Director McDowell's administration, costs were at 17%, and when Director Chanda was first appointed it was 27%. Now, costs to the Division are at 61%. He reminded both groups that the Division is not looking to increase fees to the sportsmen to help to cover these increased costs. He has assigned all bureau chiefs the task of making recommendations to fill in all the gaps for personnel, and also try to save \$1 million. He will report further on this matter as information becomes available.

Lastly, Director Chanda spoke about SCR 84 which will be on the voting ballot this Fall. This open space initiative bill would basically eliminate the previously approved Corporate Business Tax amendment from 2006, which allowed for monies to be utilized to improve and maintain the infrastructure. The new bill would eliminate many of the plans that the Division currently has in place for building construction and improvements, but would continue to allow monies to be used to acquire properties for open space. He added that a lot of habitat work would also be eliminated. Director Chanda reviewed other impacts this would have on the Division.

Chief Jenkins from the Endangered and Nongame Species Program (ENSP) addressed both groups. He introduced new staff member John Heilferty, who comes to his program from the Bureau of Land Use Regulation - E&T Unit. He also noted that GIS Specialist Peter Winkler has moved to the Bureau of Land Management within the Division.

Councilwoman Blumig noted that Councilman DeMartino had contacted her by e-mail, requesting data for the Finance Committee meeting in October as to the amount of people who are currently in the saltwater registry.

Committeeman Reinert inquired about who was in charge of granting an exemption for the Division from having to have to cover their own costs of fringe benefits. Director Chanda

advised that this would come from the State Treasurer, and also noted that the Division of Fish and Wildlife and the Endangered and Nongame Species Program are two of the few agencies that pay their own fringe benefits costs. However, the Endangered and Nongame Species Program is usually exempted from paying fringe. Director Chanda gave some additional review on the funds and budgets.

Committeeman Shissias commented on the language of SCR 84, and heard that it would allow for funds to be used for infrastructure use. Director Chanda noted while that may be, historically all funds for open space initiatives were used for acquisitions. He shared additional comments, noting that funds for work such as maintaining roads for public access into our areas would be eliminated. There was additional discussion on this matter.

At this time, presentations were made to the members, which included:

Update on Bobwhite Quail Research and Management Activities – Dave Golden

Review of New Jersey Regulations Regarding Snapping Turtle Harvest and Status of Other State Regulations - Brian Zarate

There was additional review and questions taken regarding these two presentations, including input from Chief Barno from the Bureau of Freshwater Fisheries on snapping turtles.

There was no old or new business to discuss.

At the conclusion of the presentations, the public comment period was opened. Barbara Sauchau from Whitehouse commented on the programs that were given. She also noted that Pitman-Robertson funds or grant monies were not mentioned by the Director today.

Janet Pizar from Millburn noted she remembers a presentation was given on turtles two years ago, adding comments that the bureaucracy involved for changes to the Game Code regarding turtle harvest could be too late. (Acting Chairman Burke noted that this would be included in the Fish Code, not the Game Code). She added that she felt there were grounds for a harvest moratorium.

There were no other public comments given today.

A motion was made by Committeewoman Burger, seconded by Committeewoman Morton-Galetto to adjourn. A vote was taken with all in favor, none opposed, and the meeting was adjourned.