

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE
NJ FISH AND GAME COUNCIL

Conservation Center

Robbinsville, NJ

March 8, 2016

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

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

The flag salute and Pledge of Allegiance were completed.

Acting Chairman David 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 on February 28, 2016 and delivered to the designated newspapers of the Division, the Newark StarLedger and the Atlantic City Press.

Roll call was taken.

In attendance were: Acting Chairman Burke
Councilwoman Brummer
Councilman Brodhecker (late arrival at 10:45 a.m.)
Councilman DeMartino
Councilman Gudmundsson
Councilman Van Mater
Councilman Link
Councilman DeStephano

Absent: Councilwoman Blumig
Councilman Conover

Division employees included D. Chanda, L. Herrighty, P. Nelson, M. Brown, J.S. Cianciulli, D. Golden, A. Ivany, C. Stanko, J. Matthews, L. Barno, D. Jenkins, M. Hencheck, B. Longcor, T. Anderson, D. Ogonofski; B. Stoff; T. Nichols; P. Toppin; L. Quirk

There were numerous members of the public in attendance.

Motion was made by Councilman Gudmundsson and seconded by Councilman DeMartino to approve the minutes of the January 12, 2016 meeting as emailed. Vote taken, all were in favor and no abstentions.

Acting Chairman Burke advised the Council Members that Councilman George Conover has resigned and that the quorum to pass a vote returned to 5 and the committees have changed back to 4. Acting Chairman Burke indicated that he was going to modify the agenda items and that the Conservation Office of the Year Award will be done after lunch. Also, Acting Chairman Burke indicated that there were going to be several presentations given at the Council meeting that day.

Director Chanda addressed the council and all in attendance and advised them that he attended the Fly-In and NGO to Washington, DC to talk about the State Wildlife Grand Funding as the Master of Ceremonies. Director Chanda

advised that the Blue Ribbon Panel's Report will be released shortly and he was engaged in the biggest conservation initiative. The Blue Ribbon Panel has undertaken a huge effort and New Jersey is going to be a major player in the process. The Blue Ribbon Panel is seeking \$1.3 billion annual funding to state fish and wildlife agencies to be provided from royalty taxes on oil, wind and gas industries and will not be earmarked for any specific projects. Director Chanda indicated that this is really happening and that he is proud to be a part of the panel. With his involvement with the Blue Ribbon Panel, John Morris, Owner and CEO of Bass Pro Shops has thanked him. There is a lot of involvement from industry folks. Next steps are that the panel members see this through. The legwork for this initiative is underway, the bill needs 2 sponsors (1 Democrat and 1 Republican) and is ready to go within two (2) weeks. Assistant Commissioner Richard Boornazian and Assistant Director Nelson both attended the Fly-In Conference. Assistant Director Nelson reminded the Council members that the State Wildlife Grant (SWG) is still a line item in the President's Budget and that the New Jersey Delegation support on the SWG is still needed.

Acting Chairman Burke thanked Director Chanda for all his efforts and hopes it goes through. Acting Chairman Burked also indicated that if a vote was going to take place, he would open up a public comment period prior to the council voting.

Committee Reports:

Agriculture Committee Report: Councilman Link indicated that it was a strange year with the weather patterns and lack of snow and the water levels. He indicated that he is happy to move forward as well as other farmers. Vineland Area starting planting already.

State Federation Reports:

Councilman VanMater informed the Council that there was no meeting last month and things are quiet. Councilman Gudmundsson indicated that he continues to get letters from the Knee Deep Club. Both meeting this month at Warren County and Sussex County, the deer hunters are concerned with low numbers. Councilman DeStephano advised the council that in Bergen, Morris, Essex and Warren Counties the complaints are regarding the deer and killing does and he was unable to attend Sussex County, but he did read the Sparta Mountain Plan (87 Page Report). Councilman DeStephano read the entire report and felt that it is incredibly detailed and would recommend that people read it thoroughly. Councilman Gudmundsson has also heard a lot of vocal opponents to Sparta Mountain Plan. Councilman Gudmundsson feels that the report is thorough and believes it is going in the right direction and that a lot of misinformation is being spread. Councilman DeMartino attended a Waterfowl Meeting. He received a lot of complaints about deer. Councilman DeMartino indicated that in Middlesex County, they discussed an extra youth pheasant day, possibly 2 Saturdays. Acting Chairman Burke indicated that he was away during the month of February and unable to attend any meetings. He did, however, mention that Cumberland County is hosting a Trash Hunt this month and that Atlantic County is planning a Youth Sporting Clay Event.

Finance Committee: No meeting held.

Fish Committee: Councilman Gudmundsson indicated that they did not meet this past month. He also wanted to thank Chief Lisa Barno and her staff for their work on the Fish Code.

Game Committee: Meeting was held on January 21, 201 and what was covered will be presented later by Chief David Golden. Next meeting to be held March 15, 2016 at 9:30 a.m.

Legislative Committee: Assistant Director Nelson advised that over 6000 bills were introduced, most have been seen before. Councilman DeMartino is scheduling a Committee Meeting at 9 a.m. on April 12, 2016.

Councilwoman Brummer was questioning if a summary of what council members should be paying close attention to in a summarized format and send them out as a link. There has been some movement on a few bills:

A793 (Companion Bill S3193) – Requires Department of Agriculture and DEP to work with the US Army Corps of Engineers to establish joint permit application process for aquaculture projects.

A794 (Companion Bill S3194) – Requires Department of Agriculture and DEP to work to adopt joint permit application process for aquaculture projects.

A939 (Companion Bill S1157) – Changes law regulating size limits of lobsters.

A2447 (Companion Bill S977) – Prohibits possession, transport, import, export, processing, sale, or shipment of certain animal species threatened with extinction. Division opposes

A2510 (Companion Bill S978) - Prohibits possession and transport of certain animals and body parts thereof at PANYNJ airports and port facilities. Division opposes

A2763 – Enters NJ in Interstate Wildlife Violator Compact. We are the 49th state, permits information sharing among Law Enforcement Agencies and out of state violations may count toward license suspensions. It passed the assembly. S1933 (not listed on sheet) introduced by Senator Sweeney.

A2949 – Provides diamondback terrapins protection as nongame indigenous species. Passed Agriculture Assembly

Two Resolutions:

AR34 – Urges US Fish and Wildlife Service and DEP to resolve conflict between protection of red knot shorebird and economic viability of State’s oyster industry.

AJR24 – Declares aquaculture an important State economic driver and urges State to include aquaculture industry in its economic development plans.

A109 – Increases membership of Fish and Game Council and clarifies it has sole authority to regulate freshwater fishing, hunting and trapping. No traction-was not heard in 3 sessions back to 2012.

Endangered and Nongame Species Advisory Committee: Councilwoman Bummer advised that the next ENSAC meeting was going to be held on March 16, 2016 and one of the topics to be discussed was the Delphi Study on Fish.

Waterfowl Advisory Stamp Committee: Meeting scheduled for April 19, 2016.

Wildlife Rehabilitators Committee: Meeting held on January 27, 2016. There are two positions that will be vacant as their terms are expiring. If you have any names, you may want to put them forward. Next meeting will be held in either May or June.

Chief David Golden also presented and discussed the FAA Lease and asked that Council Consider Renewal of the least. Questions were raised by council members regarding clear zone and low vegetation. Councilman Agust Gudmundsson recused himself from this discussion.

Acting Chairman Burke provided a public comment period before a vote was taken on Lease Renewal:

Barbara Sachau, Whitehouse Station, NJ – Ms. Sachau expressed her concerns and believes we should not lease for pheasant killing. She also expressed her concerns about none of the information being presented is given to the public prior to the meeting.

Motion made by Councilman DeMartino and seconded by Councilman Brodhecker to approve the FAA Lease agreement. Vote taken 7 approved and 1 abstention by Councilman Gudmundsson.

Chief David Golden, Bureau of Land Management, gave a Pheasant Distribution Presentation to the Council Members with a breakdown and information on the proposed formulas that were discussed at the Game Committee Meeting. Currently, 55,000 pheasants are distributed each year on 23 Wildlife Management Areas (WMA), Delaware Water Gap (DWG) and Fort Dix (FD). The breakdowns are as follows:

North	Central	South
53% - 29000	23.5% - 13000	23.5% - 13000
7 WMA's & DWG	7 WMA's & FD	9 WMA's

There are 15 days of stocking from mid-November to December 31 annually.

Criticisms received on various issues. Goal is to increase Hunter Safety and Hunter Satisfaction. In 2014, 6,643 Pheasants Stamps were purchased. A survey was e-mailed and 10% participated (1189).

Acres stocked have a wide range. There were 3721 stocked without buffers. For the presentation, field acres only were being discussed.

Flatbrook WMA was the first WMA and it is for historical reasons why it gets the greatest number of birds.

Survey yielded that 74% of hunters are willing to travel between 21 to 61 miles to hunt stocked pheasants. Based on this result, much discussion ensued and the decision was made to use 40 miles as the distance hunters are willing to travel. The Game Committee is recommending significant changes and is discussing a phased in approach to the recommendations regarding the stocking formula. Timeline proposed is to have Stakeholder Meeting in April, 2016; Division Representatives making presentations to the Federation meetings in May, 2016; May thru July revisit the proposal and make revisions as appropriate then finalize; August, 2016 – Make presentation to the Fish and Game Council for a vote. During 2016 and 2017 have an evaluation of stock assessments completed and reviewed.

Revision to Pheasant Allocation:

	Current (2015)	Proposed	Difference
North	53% (29,000)	40% (21,907)	-7093
Central	24% (13,000)	30% (16,445)	+3445
South	24% (13,000)	30% (16,945)	+3945

NOTES: Some areas only stocked 10 days versus 15 days. Phase the reallocation overtime – recommendation from Game Committee was over a three year period. The three year phase in process may be easier for hunter to adapt to. Councilwoman Brummer questioned why not only use acreages as a determining

factor. Chief Golden will forward copies of the graphs presented to all Council members listing the proposals. Councilman Gudmundsson questioned if we could reevaluate the numbers due to shifts in stocking. He also questioned if behavioral changes would take into consideration.

Councilman Brodhecker stated he believes that when going to various stakeholders meetings, we pitch the phase-in approach first and reevaluate. Questions were raised if the sale of Pheasant Stamps is being used as a variable in the formula. Some additional comments made by Council members were: If implemented all at once, you may lose a lot of hunters; engage the stamp buyers as they are more of an expert that we are. Guidance: Phase it in or do it all at once. Acting Chairman Burke stated if this is being moved into the stakeholder phase, no vote is required. Acting Chairman Burke indicated that it should be vetted out through the Stakeholder and Federation meetings presenting all possible phase in options and see what we get, but before doing so, the information needs to be simplified. There are 3 Options for new Pheasant Distribution: Make the change in the first year; do it over a 3 year approach; and then phase in over a period of 6 years and reevaluate after 2 or 3 years. Hold two stakeholder meetings based on who purchases pheasant and quail stamps and send the location and times of the meetings by postcard to stamp buyers

Trevor Anderson, Assistant Biologist from the Hunter Education Unit made a presentation on Shooting Ranges. He is currently working on Trap Range Renovation and the Archery Range Renovations. His plans are to work on Archery Ranges; Trap Ranges and Rifle Ranges. In order for people to use the ranges, they must present a valid hunting license. At the present time, Flatbrook and Black River ranges are complete. Mr. Anderson is currently working with Eagle Scouts on two projects: Colliers Mills Archery Range and the Clinton Archery Range. His possible future projects include lead abatement, liming, soil testing and characterization studies.

Lunch break at 12:08 p.m. and returned from lunch at 12:47p.m.

Presentations Made:

Conservation Officer of the Year Award for 2015 was presented to Conservation Officer Paul Toppin by Acting Chief Matthew Brown. Acting Chief Brown spoke on the numerous attributes that Conservation Officer Toppin possesses that elevated him to be nominated and awarded this prestigious award. Acting Chief Brown noted a few positive notations about Conservation Officer Toppin, that he is an asset to the organization and a well-rounded officer; that he works well with all staff; and has an outstanding work performance record. Director Chanda also spoke elegantly about Conservation Officer Toppin and thanked Mrs. Toppin for her support on the home front. Acting Chairman Burke also thanked Conservation Officer Toppin for his service.

Chief David Jenkins gave a presentation on the State Wildlife Action Plan. Chief Jenkins indicated that he is about 1 week away from posting focal areas, names, etc. and they will be taking a 2 prong approach – focal areas and focal species. He indicated that the focal species that have specific threats are being reviewed and once that has been completed, the information will be posted. Some additional meetings and information to be reviewed and presented at the ENSAC meeting being held on March 16, 2016. Chief Jenkins indicated that an internal meeting was going to be held with internal program staff on March 11, 2016 to discuss non-consensus species and make their recommendation to the ENSAC Council meeting. He also advised that there were over 40 species reviewed and they were unable to reach a consensus on 6 species. Chief Jenkins indicated that Brook Trout were a special concern and it was going to require a lot more discussion.

Robert Longcor, Federal Aid Coordinator, gave a presentation on the Archery Park. Mr. Longcor presented a slide of a previous Fish and Game Council Meeting dated April 9, 1957 where those members had the foresight to have an Archery Park in New Jersey. On October 30, 2015, the application was submitted to Land Use Regulation for the Clinton WMA. This site was chosen as it is within 35 miles of 3 million people and 50 miles of 10 million people. The facility will have 116 parking spots, an outdoor 90 meter archery range with 84 shooting lanes and

will have a Corten Cabin Look with an angled roof. Inside the facility, there will be a 70 meter range large enough for 28 shooters (Olympic Size); 1 classroom which can hold up to 35 students, 6 offices and 3 workstations. Timeline proposed is Land Use review completed by June 16, 2016; Final review in Fall, 2016; Code Review completed in December, 2016 then go to the bid phase to close in June, 2017 and construction to begin in Fall, 2017. The design is in keeping with the Highlands Project Development for the Outdoor Ranges. The staffing needs will be met by moving the Hunter Education Unit in North Regional Office (NRO) into the facility. Mr. Longcor worked with Chief Al Ivany in the development of a business plan. Division staff met with the Highlands Council and they support the facility. Additional information include that there are only 5 facilities in the entire country; will be charging user fees for the facility; located near the Spruce Run Recreational Area; based on location, believes that the use will increase during the Spring and Fall; using 30 acres for the project area; loss of fields due to project is being recovered elsewhere on Clinton WMA through hydroaxing and other land management efforts.; No Hunter and Angler fees to be involved; and there was return on investment study.

Division Reports:

Chief Lisa Barno reported for the Bureau of Freshwater Fisheries. Chief Barno shared a copy of the 2016 Spring Trout Allocation Information with all Council Members. She indicated that there are currently two online Angler Surveys being conducted by the Bureau. The first is to obtain angler feedback on Coolwater/Warmwater Fishing Opportunities, the second, just recently released, pertains to Wild Trout fishing opportunities. Over 800 anglers have taken the Coolwater/Warmwater Survey and 125 anglers have taken the recently released Wild Trout Angler Survey. Spring field sampling for the Cool Water Assessment has begun with 14 trap nets set over the course of a week at Cranberry Lake with only two Northern Pike were captured. Bureau staff also met this month with Merrill Creek personnel, and their private fisheries consultant, as although open to the public the reservoir is privately owned. Field sampling efforts conducted by the consultant in 2015 were discussed. The Bureau is interested in the possibility of stocking Landlocked Salmon in the reservoir. The salmon would serve as a substitute for Brown Trout since the Pequest Trout Hatchery is currently rearing only Rainbow Trout. Merrill Creek staff were interested in the possibility. Chief Barno also reported that the New Jersey Water Supply Authority is planning a major dam repair project at Round Valley Reservoir in 2018. The project will be going to the bid and design phase later this year. Once project design phase is complete the extent of any drawdown necessary to complete the work will be known. The Bureau will continue to work closely with NJWSA personnel to minimize potential impacts to anglers while the project is underway.

Chief Barno indicated that the last two of the Bureau's three stakeholder meeting were held this past month. The South Jersey Fisheries Forum held on February 20, 2016 was attended by 20 anglers. 105 anglers attended the annual Trout meeting. All together 155 anglers attended the three stakeholder meetings held this winter. The Fisheries Forums provide anglers an opportunity to see updates on current management projects as well as to provide input on regulatory and future management direction of the state's freshwater resources. Chief Barno concluded that trout stocking will begin on March 21, 2016.

Chief Jeff Matthews reported for the Bureau of Fish Production. Chief Matthews indicated that the annual Trout Meeting was held on February 27, 2016 at the Pequest Trout Hatchery; over 100 anglers were in attendance. All Rainbow Trout are being stocked this year again from the facility. Hatchery production goals were met with inventory indicating the trout are an average of 10.5 inches weighing one half pound each. Staff is ready for pre-season stocking on March 22, 2016. All is well with production at the Hackettstown facility, trap nets will be set soon in Spruce Run Reservoir for northern pike. The promotional license sale video was completed by OIT and will be made public soon. Office of Management and Budget has approved the power purchase agreement covering raceways and is working on the proposal now. Brown Trout – Dr. Jan Lovy will lead in acquiring pathogen free eggs to be re-introduced into the hatchery once all parameters are satisfied to protect the fish from any predators that may jeopardize the production stock. We are looking a few years down the road yet.

Chief Al Ivany reported for the Bureau of Information and Education. Chief Ivany spoke about upcoming events for the Spring. He and staff are going to the Suffern NY World Fishing and Outdoor Exposition on March 10 thru March 14th. Open House at Pequest is April 2 and April 3, and Opening Day of Trout Season is April 9. Chief Ivany also indicated that the Pequest Natural Resource Education Center will be open on weekends beginning on the Open House weekend through October.

Acting Chief Matt Brown reported for the Bureau of Law Enforcement. Acting Chief Brown advised the council that we recently hired a Conservation Officer Recruit, Matthew Heyl, and that he started the academy on March 7, 2016 and this training will last 25 weeks. Acting Chief Brown also informed the Council Members that with the summer months approaching, going to increase the presence of Conservation Offices on the problem WMA's – Cedar Lake, Colliers Mills and Greenwood as there seems to be a lot more visitation to the WMA's from Philadelphia residents. Looking at purchasing an Off-Shore Vessel and currently working with Contract Manager. Currently the Request for Proposal (RFP) is being reviewed and will be posted by March 15, 2016 and with all bids due by April 15, 2016. Boat will be 35'. Drones – not going to pursue at this time as there are too many regulations put on by the Attorney General.

Chief Carole Stanko reported for the Bureau of Wildlife Management. Chief Stanko indicated that for Division-wide use of drones to look at the policies by Division of Parks and Forestry and these will be internally under review for our use. Spring is coming and at Rockport the birds laid eggs the last week in February. Working on a composting plan in the Department of Agriculture for Rockport. Chief Stanko received between 10 to 12 inquiries regarding Semi-wild season extension. The extension will not be considered as there has been nice weather. Chief Stanko indicated that there have been no other Feral Hog sighting's. Chief Stanko advised the Council members that Daniel Roberts, will be presenting a report on deer at the next Council meeting.

Barbara Stoff spoke to the Council members and advised them there were a few problems/issues with the Buddy Fishing License over the past 2 weeks. Ms. Stoff will be mailing another set of instructions to all license agents. As of this meeting, 300 Buddy Fishing Licenses sold (150 new people). Turkey season: those who were notified through the lottery have until March 21, 2016 to get their permit. Failing to pick them up means they will go on sale on March 28, 2016.

No one was available to give a report for the Endangered and Non-Game Species Program

New Business:

Ted Nichols, Principal Biologist, gave a presentation on the New Jersey 2016-2017 Migratory Bird Seasons and made recommended changes to hunting seasons and bag limits. In 2016, there is going to be a new process based on 2015 data. After much discussion and his presentation, Mr. Nichols is recommending that the changes go to 60 days with a 6 bird limit (60/6); Brant: 60/1; Canadian Goose 80/5; Youth days – 2 days in each zone (New Jersey's age is 16). Before taking a vote on the waterfowl dates, a public comment period was provided.

Public Comment on Waterfowl Proposal (limited to 3 minutes):

Barbara Sachau, Whitehouse Station, NJ – Ms. Sachau is against killing season for all dates and feels we need to respect nature;

Janet Pizar, Millburn, NJ – Ms. Pizar had a question for Mr. Nichols regarding the criteria used for the resources and come up with the harvest and dates. She spoke about several years back that snapping turtles increased and there was no ban then. Ms. Pizar questioned how this will benefit the resources.

There were no other comments.

Motion was made by Councilman DeMartino and seconded by Councilman Link to accept the dates as presented and the 60/1 bag limit on Brant and all other birds. Vote taken, 8 were in favor and no abstentions .

Public Comment (3 minutes):

Kevin Broderick, Chesterfield, NJ – He spoke to the Council members about deer drives being under attack; the Pinelands Commission ruling regarding motorized vehicles. Vehicle Plan and that there was no public input in Wharton State Forest and now there is 50% road/trail closures making it more restrictive. He also spoke about the youth hunting for the 6-day shotgun season and how it will impact his hunting club.

Janet Pizar, Millburn, NJ – She indicated that she wanted to speak on 2 issues. The first being the Annual Deer Harvest Report being presented in April/May and if possible to use codes in the legends. The second was regarding the December minutes and how displeased she was on how the information was presented in the minutes.

Barbara Sachau, Whitehouse Station, NJ – Spoke about the diseases found in deer in Vermont. She also indicated that there are a lot of comments about the Sparta Mountain plan and she believes it is “logging”.

There were no other comments

Motion made by Councilman DeMartino and seconded by Councilman DeStephano to adjourn meeting. Vote taken; all in favor; no opposition;

Meeting adjourned at 2:46 p.m.