

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE
NJ FISH AND GAME COUNCIL

Central Region Office
Robbinsville, NJ
February 10, 2015

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 on January 28, 2015 and delivered to the designated newspapers of the Division, the Newark Star Ledger and the Atlantic City Press.

Roll call was taken. In attendance were:

Acting Chairman Burke
Councilwoman Blumig (arrived at 10:20 a.m.)
Councilman Brodhecker
Councilman DeMartino
Councilman Gudmundsson
Councilman Van Mater

Absent: Councilwoman Brummer
Councilman Link
Councilman Puskas

Division employees included D. Chanda, L. Herrighty, P. Nelson, L. Barno, D. Golden, M. Chicketano, D. Jenkins, A. Ivany and C. Stanko.

There were numerous members of the public in attendance. Acting Chairman Burke advised those in attendance that there was a change in the agenda today, and that the proposed Comprehensive Black Bear Management Policy would not be reviewed and would be voted on until a later date in order to give the members of the Council ample time to review the document. Council members were reminded to send any comments they may have to Chief Golden as soon as possible.

Minutes of the January 13, 2014 meeting were reviewed, and a few minor changes were made. **A motion was made by Councilman Gudmundsson, seconded by Councilman DeMartino to approve the minutes as corrected. A vote was taken with all in favor, none opposed.**

Acting Chairman Burke noted several upcoming outdoor and sport shows.

Acting Chairman Burke referenced an incident that occurred in North Carolina, where a person was found to have been consumed by a bear. He noted that the person lived in a remote area, and the exact cause of death was not known, but at some point the bear became involved in this situation.

Also noted was the State of Florida's proposed black bear hunt. They have not had hunt since 1994. Acting Chairman Burke added that the current population is estimated to be 3,000 plus. Increased bear/human conflicts

are occurring, with four serious injury incidents reported last year. Acting Chairman Burke noted many parallels between Florida and New Jersey relative to bears. Florida hopes to join the 32 other states that have bear hunts, out of the 41 states that have a bear population.

Director Chanda addressed the Council. He felt it was the correct decision to wait on voting on the bear policy, and noted there was a great amount of hard work done by the staff on this project.

Three Division employee meetings have been scheduled for staff statewide, and Director Chanda gave a brief review of the information that will be shared at these meetings.

At the last Council meeting, Director Chanda noted a number of recent or imminent retirements, most notably in the Bureau of Land Management where the Chief and all three Regional Superintendents have either retired or will be doing so very soon. Director Chanda relayed that Chief Golden would be transferring from the Bureau of Wildlife Management to the Bureau of Land Management as the Bureau Chief, and Supervising Biologist Stanko would be acting as the Chief of Wildlife Management. He also advised that Chief Golden would continue to work on the current amendments to the Comprehensive Black Bear Policy. Additionally, he is hoping to be able to have interviews for the Chief of Information and Education position soon.

(Councilwoman Blumig arrived at 10:20 a.m.)

Lastly, Director Chanda noted work by the local National Wild Turkey Federation (NWTF) with their Wounded Warrior Wheelin' Sports Program. The Division is looking into purchasing four track wheelchairs that may be used for this program as well as others. He gave a brief review of the program and noted more information is available at the North Carolina Fish and Wildlife website, which is what the Division is patterning this program after. There was some additional discussion on this matter.

Acting Chairman Burke advised with no agenda items for today, there would be no public comment at this time.

He referred one last comment to Assistant Director Herrighty on an e-mail that had been received noting the suggested nominations of Councilmen Link and Brodhecker, and Jim DiStefano to the Council and that they were moving forward. The nominee previously interested in the South Jersey position has withdrawn, and Frank Virgilio has expressed an interest in this position.

Councilman Brodhecker reported for the Agriculture Committee. He noted that there is 16" – 18" of snow in his area. The deer are not moving, and it has also been too cold for bears. He added that the pine siskins are in the area.

Councilwoman Blumig reported for the Federation. At the county meetings they discussed same-day stocking of pheasants to reduce predator loss. Clubs that have opted to do this noted a significant change in the number of birds being harvested. They have information on this that is available to the Division.

The Somerset County Federation is still interested in contacting Treasury regarding credit card sales of licenses at hunter education classes. Assistant Director Nelson noted that there is not one specific person to contact, it is just a rule from Treasury that this is not able to be done.

Lastly, Councilwoman Blumig noted a letter presented at the State Federation meeting from two young anglers who had won a local angler championship and were looking for financial support in order to attend the National championship being held in Oklahoma.

Councilman Gudmundsson reported in the Northern Region bears were a topic of discussion, and members were excited to hear of proposed policy changes.

Members also commented favorably to the possibility of an early morning stocking of pheasants. Assistant Director Herrightly noted research done in the late 1970's on this, adding that if this were to occur, it could mean a later daily start time for hunters each day.

Federation groups from Sussex and Morris Counties will be involved in the Sussex County Fair. They are hoping the Division will continue their support of this event.

Councilman Gudmundsson advised that the Morris County meeting was cancelled due to the weather.

Councilman Gudmundsson noted there was good attendance at the fisheries meeting in Hackettstown. He added that the Freshwater Fisheries Committee would be meeting later today.

Councilman Van Mater had no Federation report. He did note seeing a lot of snow and Canada geese in his area, as well as bald and golden eagles.

Acting Chairman Burke had no report, but advised that there were meetings later this week.

Councilman DeMartino reported the Monmouth County meeting was cancelled, and he was unable to attend the Ocean County meeting.

At the Mercer County meeting, members suggested better signage at the Division booth at the outdoor sportsmen's shows in Raritan. Also, information was requested on a fawn mortality study from 2011 on the number of fawn killed by coyotes (he was advised that New Jersey does not collect this information, possibly this was done in Pennsylvania).

Acting Chairman Burke reported for the Finance Committee, who met last month. As of January 13, 2015 \$10 million had been collected in fees, which was reported to be on target compared to this time last year. The Division is seeking an exemption from Treasury for the cost of fringe benefits for employees, (200 paid from the Hunter and Anglers Fund, 234 overall) which is 48 to 49% of the budget. Senior license and permit proposals were also discussed. For the Fiscal Year 15 budget, there are \$20,527,700 in proposed expenses, and \$19,541,923 in projected income, resulting in a shortfall being anticipated.

There was no report from the Freshwater Fisheries Committee who will be meeting later today.

Acting Chairman Burke reported for the Game Committee. At the January 16 meeting they reviewed draft Game Code changes, and he added that staff were to continue to work on this document. At the meeting earlier today, it was suggested that the March meeting be rescheduled from March 10 to March 3. **A motion was made by Councilwoman Blumig, seconded by Councilman Van Mater to reschedule the March 10, 2015 Fish and Game Council meeting to March 3, 2015 at 10 a.m. at the Central Region Office. A vote was taken with all in favor, none opposed.**

Assistant Director Nelson reported for the Legislative Committee.

New bills were reviewed, including:

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| A-4092 | Imposes certain registration and reporting requirements to prevent illegal trade of tigers.
(noted to be companion to 14:S-678) |
| A-4093 | Prohibits certain possession, sale, offering for sale, trade or |

distribution of shark fins.
(noted to be companion to 14:S-2057)

A-4141 Permits publication of legal notices by governments and individuals on official government website instead of newspaper.

Four others were reported as pending at the last meeting, and were noted to be out of Committee and moving forward. They included: S-573, S-699, S-2492 and S-1583.

Councilman DeMartino asked if S-699 (authorized hunting of game animals every day of the week during hunting season) would need to be readdressed by the Council regarding their support. Assistant Director Nelson suggested that they consider scheduling a Legislative Committee meeting. There was additional discussion on the affect this bill could have on the waterfowl hunting season, who could approach a bill's sponsor to ask for a change in wording, and articles that have been seen that have incorrect information in them. There was some additional discussion on this with regard to waterfowl hunting and possibly having the bill reworded, and Acting Chairman Burke advised these were all matters that could be discussed at a committee meeting. No date for a meeting was set, but the option of a conference call meeting was discussed. Councilman DeMartino will take the lead on this.

There was no report for the Endangered and Nongame Species Advisory Committee.

There was no report for the Waterfowl Stamp Advisory Committee, but it was noted that they are scheduled to meeting again on March 24.

Committeeman Brodhecker reported for the Wildlife Rehabilitators Advisory Committee, who met on January 25. They discussed possible rule changes regarding report filing and permit renewals. Kelly Simonetti was reelected as the Committee Chair.

Division reports were given. Chief Barno reported for the Bureau of Freshwater Fisheries. She noted that 50 anglers attended the recent meeting at Hackettstown, adding that ten of them were first time attendees.

The second fisheries public forum is scheduled for February 21 at Batsto. Principal Fisheries Biologist Smith will be presenting a program on Lake Hopatcong, and trout stocking allocations for the southern part of the State will be given. Northern trout stocking allocations will be presented at the Pequest meeting. Chief Barno gave a brief review of the discussions at the recent meeting.

Staff will begin making plans for the upcoming field season.

Changes for the 2016 Fish Code were discussed at the Committee meeting earlier today. Chief Barno would like to present these at the April meeting for approval.

Principal Biologist Ivany reported for the Information and Education Section. He acknowledged the signage concerns at the Division's booth at the outdoor show noted earlier in the meeting by Committeeman DeMartino. Currently, due to computer issues, the machine used for sign production is down so additional signs were not able to be made.

Staff are preparing for other upcoming events, including the Suffern Outdoor Show, and the Outdoor Writer's Workshop. Staff are also working with personnel from the Bureau of Freshwater Fisheries on ways to promote the upcoming trout stocking season. Lastly, Principal Biologist Ivany advised that registrations are now being accepted for the Governor's Surf Fishing Tournament which will be held on May 17.

Assistant Director Herrighty reported for the Bureau of Land Management. He noted the recent acquisition of 1,500 acres at the Split Rock Reservoir, adding that the Division has been talking with the Division of Parks on obtaining other adjacent land.

In the Central Region, work is underway to try to replace the steps at the Deal Fishing Access that were destroyed by Hurricane Sandy.

In the Southern Region, staff are working with the DEP's Bureau of Solid Waste Enforcement to install trail cameras to try and help with problems of illegal trash dumping on wildlife management areas.

Councilman Brodhecker inquired about a bridge overpass near the Paulinskill River WMA. There has been some graffiti painted on this bridge, and he questioned who was responsible for maintenance. Assistant Director Herrighty advised he was not sure, but this could be looked in to.

Acting Chairman Burke questioned roof damage due to snow at one of the facilities in the Northern Region he had heard about; none was known of by Assistant Director Herrighty. Councilman Gudmundsson noted that damage had occurred at National Parks Service property.

There was also discussion on leases. Councilwoman Blumig questioned if there were billboards on any of the wildlife management areas (WMAs). Assistant Director Nelson described there was one that was installed without permission years ago, but the matter is still in litigation as to having the problem resolved. Inquiry was also made as to any gas pipelines that were or may be installed on WMA property. Assistant Director Nelson advised that Principal Biologist K. Davis from Environmental Review would have information on any such matters.

Councilman DeMartino inquired as to that status of FEMA reimbursements from Hurricane Sandy, and was advised that matters are still pending.

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

Chief Chicketano noted that Conservation Officer Zeigler from the Northern Region was resigning to take employment in another state. He will be missed.

Also noted was a recent incident involving terroristic threats made to a Division employee. Chief Chicketano reviewed the background history of the case. Numerous warrants were received to move forward with the arrest of the suspect, who is now in the Middlesex County Correctional Institution. Conservation Officer Martiak was the primary officer in this investigation and apprehension.

Lastly, the three new Conservation Officer recruits reported on at a previous meeting have started employment. They will be entering the Gloucester County Police Academy on March 3.

Chief Golden reported for the Bureau of Wildlife Management. He advised that staff continue to work on the bear policy.

Staff met last week regarding work on the pheasant program and pheasant formula. There was discussion on outreach and other information that may be included in the model. Updates will be provided to the Council in the future.

Chief Golden gave an update on the U.S.D.A.'s feral swine abatement program. The U.S.D.A. received a grant for this work throughout the Country, and New Jersey was noted to be a state where there was a problem,

especially in the area of the White Oak Branch WMA. The most recent information showed two sows in the area. These two sows have been removed, and no other physical evidence of additional swine has been seen in the area or on the trail cameras that were in place.

A summary of the estimated deer season harvest to date , compared to last year's season harvest to date, was distributed to the members for their review.

Chief Golden reviewed the work done on the quail program. There were 46 habitat surveys done in 2014 following National Bobwhite Conservation Initiative protocols, and out of these 17 were qualified as suitable, 20 as neutral and 9 as non-habitat. Work will continue to maintain the qualified parcels, as well as to improve the 20 neutral and 9 non-habitat ones. Updates will continue to be provided to the Council.

Supervising Biologist Stanko gave a brief update on the status of the Game Code to the Council. The filing deadline is now February 12, but she noted the proposal would be filed today. The process is a month behind, but staff are confident they will still have a September final publication. The public meeting date has been changed from March 18 tentatively to March 31. Staff are hoping for a March 16 publication date in the New Jersey Register.

Chief Jenkins reported for the Endangered and Nongame Species Section. Staff have spent the past few days working on the snapping turtle data that is on the agenda for the Fish Committee later today, as well as on diamondback terrapin turtle data. He advised that this had been presented to both the Fish and Game Council and the Endangered and Nongame Species Advisory Committee previously at a joint meeting last September, and noted some of their concerns regarding overharvest of snapping turtles. The diamondback terrapin concerns being addressed by the Marine Fisheries Council. In both cases they are looking to constrain the harvest of these species.

GIS Specialist G. Fowles will be working with staff from the Bureau of Wildlife Management on bobcat related issues since the retirement of M. Valent. ENSP staff still have concerns regarding the under reporting of bobcats caught by trappers. He also noted concerns for the reporting of road killed bobcats, and that staff may ride to the reported location of a vehicle struck bobcat only to find no carcass. Chief Jenkins added that they are trying to get the word out that it is illegal for someone to take and possess a bobcat carcass.

An update on the Wildlife Action Plan was given, along with additional information that has been added for public comment on the Division of Fish and Wildlife website. Updates to the website will continue as the process moves forward.

There was no old or new business to discuss.

The public comment period was opened. Acting Chairman Burke advised that each commenter would have three minutes to speak, but there would be a total time of 15 minutes given overall for public comment.

Janet Pizar from Chatham read aloud her written comments about her opposition to the proposed amendments to the Comprehensive Black Bear Management Program and presented same for the record.

Ms. Pizar also questioned the Acting Chair regarding the requested exemption for staff fringe benefits and salaries, specifically related to the Rockport Game Farm. He advised that this is a general matter, and there are times that Treasury will supplement for these costs. There was additional discussion on this matter, and Assistant Director Nelson advised that Treasury sets the rate of costs for these benefits, and at times agencies may need their assistance to cover these costs.

Acting Chairman Burke also noted to Ms. Pizar regarding her written comments on not having a current population estimate for black bears. He advised that if the hunting season ends on a Saturday and the Council meets the following Tuesday, it would be impossible to get this information before that time.

Joe Rizzo from Mayetta was next to address the Council. He noted concerns regarding the proposed Sunday hunting bill relative to waterfowl hunting, including possible no discharge ordinances that may come as a result of this law being passed, and more out of state hunting pressure that may cause conflicts with local hunters who have established a good rapport with landowners. Mr. Rizzo noted that he had reach out to Senator Kyrillos' office and spoke to one of his aides. Mr. Rizzo commented on how this would also affect people such as himself who make their living on the bay. He will be sending a letter to the Council during the public comment period.

Barbara Sauchau from Whitehouse addressed the Council. She noted commented that Vermont is banning the use of urine based deer lure because of Chronic Wasting Disease concerns, and wondering why no action on this was being done here. She also noted concerns about a tumor causing virus in turkeys in New York and why nothing was being done here. Ms. Sauchau also referenced an article in the Philadelphia Inquirer regarding clashes between users at the Pinelands tract, and shared her comments on same.

Ms. Sauchau noted comments written in the newspapers regarding Sunday hunting, and read aloud from one of these. She felt it was not a popular bill with the public and should not be pushed by this Council. Ms. Sauchau also shared comments on other wildlife including fox and opossum eating mice which may carry Lyme disease ticks, and referenced an article on Lyme disease ticks.

Jean Molic from Turnersville addressed the Council, stating she wondered why the hunter who shot and killed the mother black bear had a shotgun with him. She also questioned the hunting season dates and weapons that were to be used. Acting Chairman Burke referred her to the Digest for hunting season information, noting that some of the seasons go in to February. Ms. Molic also questioned if the bear gall bladders were collected, and was advised that the Council does not usually take questions but she was welcome to put her questions in writing. She was advised that the Division does not collect gall bladders. Ms. Molic again questioned how you would stop the sale of gall bladders, and was advised that they cannot be sold legally. She was advised that she could call and report any illegal activity she might see regarding the sale of gall bladders to the Division.

Ms. Molic commented further that the Division is causing problems between wildlife and people. Ms. Molic was advised when she reached the three minute time limit.

Lou Valucchi from Mahwah commented that he felt it should not be a goal of the Council to reduce the population of bears or to even have a hunt, and felt that New Jersey could support 10,000 bears. He shared additional comments on bear rankings as nuisance or dangerous. Mr. Valucchi felt that any immediate dangerous situations could be handled by local police departments. Mr. Valucchi also referenced comments made by Ms. Sauchau last month regarding speeding cars causing road kills.

Lastly, Mr. Valucchi shared comments regarding not using snares, referenced online information obtained by google searching General Schwarzkopf grizzlies, and monarch butterflies.

With no one else wishing to address the Council, **a motion was made by Councilman Gudmundsson, seconded by Councilman DeMartino to adjourn. A vote was taken with all in favor, none opposed.**

Meeting adjourned at 12:12 p.m.