BUREAU OF INFORMATION AND EDUCATION

MONTHLY REPORT
November 16, 2020 – December 15, 2020

HUNTER EDUCATION/NASP/R3

Hunter Education (Keith Griglak, Sam Forlenza, Alice Panichello)

The last of the classes have been completed for the year. Student numbers for the calendar year are as follows:

Archery 2019 - 2105
Archery 2020 - 2246
7 % increase

Firearm 2019 – 2815
Firearm 2020 - 3041
8 % increase

Percent Female 2019 – 13 %
Percent Female 2020 – 15 %
2 % increase

The average student age is between 29 and 30 years of age.

All these increases in student numbers came with five less months of teaching. This would not have been possible without the support from our team of volunteers. The addition of Bureau of Law Enforcement Conservation Police Officers at programs was also a welcomed addition and proved to be very popular with students. Our new style of education has proven to be a winner.

Data entry operator for the Hunter Education Unit, Alice Panichello, is retiring January 1. Alice has provided exemplary customer service for more than two decades, and we all wish her the very best in retirement.

NASP® (Katie Paey)

An Easton Foundation Grant of $200 was allocated to an existing NASP school for the purchase of replacement equipment. New Jersey still has $2,800 remaining to allocate before March 31, 2021.

R3 (Ryan Risher)

Staff will be hosting an intermediate target shooting event Friday night on Dec. 18 at Pine Belt Sportsman's Club offering a free round of target shooting and instruction on targets simulating different small game and game bird species. Participants will not only have the opportunity to get out and shoot but will learn how recreational shooting has a role in excise taxes being obtained that supports wildlife conservation.

Staff is coordinating a deer processing workshop at Garden State Archers scheduled for Jan. 9th.

A virtual NEAFWA R3 committee meeting was attended. Much of the conversation was to discuss a clearinghouse for R3 practitioners to have resources all compiled in one location, regional marketing needs, etc.

One youth participated in a waterfowl hunt at the Wading River Special Use Area during this reporting period.

Staff attended a webinar “How to Communicate about Hunting - with Mark Duda” that highlights persuasive and compelling ways to communicate about hunting to non-hunters.

AQUATIC EDUCATION (Karen Byrne)

Sedge Island Natural Resource Education Center

Staff continues to maintain the facilities and island.

Internship applications continue to be received.

Inquiries have started to come in for 2021 programs. A staff meeting is scheduled for later this month to develop a plan and complete the paperwork necessary to secure programming approval.

Staff provided transportation by boat for seven Watershed Ambassadors to assist the Conserve Wildlife Foundation of New Jersey's Habitat Program Manager Ben Wurst with cleaning up osprey nests and installing a new nesting platform.

A striped bass fillet and dissection video was recorded for the Hooked on Fishing – Not on Drugs virtual training project.

The *Women's Waterfowl Hunt for Beginners* was held December 5 for 11 women. Despite a Nor'easter and COVID-19 guidelines, several participants were successful in harvesting waterfowl. Overall, evaluations were positive with suggestions of spending more time with calls and identifying locations to hunt. An evaluation for the virtual portion was emailed to all participants. Responses were also positive, though many felt that meeting in Microsoft Teams was the most unsatisfactory part of the workshop.

Other Activities

The Women in the Outdoors (WITO) Archery Deer Camp was held November 20-22. Staff provided mentors to assist with the hunting portion of the workshop. Currently, additional program options for WITO are being explored to expand the curriculum.

Staff continues to seek DEP approval to use the software platform *Thinkific* to offer online courses. A productive meeting was held between all involved to address security and other concerns. Consequently, paperwork is being processed to facilitate the next step in the approval process.

WEB SITE (Paul Tarlowe)

New or Updated Pages, Images, and Documents

Two (2) new pages, this year's Winter Trout Stocking Program and the 2021 Skillful Angler Leader Board, were posted during this report period. Additionally, seven (7) "News" pages were posted. Pages for the 2021 Freshwater Digest were prepared, as was a page for upcoming striped bass regulations.

Approximately eighty-nine (89) pages were revised/updated during the report period. This included daily updates of bear harvest data.

Twenty-nine (29) images were edited and posted on the site, including those for the Skillful Angler Leader Board (22) and Artificial Reef Deployments (6) pages. Additionally, one e-mail banner was created.

Approximately thirty-three (33) documents were edited in or converted to PDF format. These included: Exotic and Nongame Permits (13); Digest and Regulation pages (7); Minutes/Agendas

(5); and eight (8) other documents, including the *FY20 Annual Report*. Deer regulations required multiple revisions within the Hunting Digest and regulations documents.

Listserv Messages

Thirteen (13) messages were drafted and sent to various e-mail lists and outdoor writers.

Analytics

The number of hits on the homepage in November was 27,116; an average of 904 hits per day. It is a decrease of 7,100 hits from November 2019, the first drop in monthly year to year comparisons in well over a year.

The ten most visited pages in November were: License Information – 23,191; Hunting License Information – 15,761; Deer Information – 15,542; Hunting – 13,651; Hunter Education – 10,705; Hunting Digest – 8,373; Regulations – 6,813; Fishing License Information – 5,628; Ranges – 5,256; and Wildlife Management Areas – 4,967.

Other popular pages were: Small Game Information – 4,592; Striped Bass Bonus Program – 4,492; Contact Us – 4,197; Public Hunting Land – 4,110; Permit Information – 3,994; License Agents – 3,732; Pheasant Stocking Maps – 3,610; HunterCourseDotCom – 3,438; Deer Hunting Land – 3,217; Exotic Permits – 2,901; Waterfowl Information – 2,901; Fishing Information – 2,818; AHRS – 2,495; Saltwater Fishing – 2,426; Bear Facts – 2,298; Winter Trout Information – 2,136; Bear Season Information – 2,134; and Places to Fish – 2,067.

The most requested PDFs this reporting period in descending order were: Hunting Digest; Firearms Deer Hunting Regulations; Bow Deer Hunting Regulations; Snakes of New Jersey; Pheasant Stocking Schedule; Marine Regulations Summary; Small Game Seasons Summary; Bear Recipe Guide; Wildlife Rehabilitators; DMZ Boundary Descriptions; Air Gun FAQs; Hobby Permit Application; Migratory Bird Seasons; and Saltwater Fishing Guide.

Responses to the Public

Responses were made to approximately 590 e-mail messages, many concerning hunting regulations, hunter education and licensing. Additionally, responses were sent to twenty-six (26) referrals from the Assistant Commissioner's Office and twenty-five (25) messages from the DEP Public Access Center phone line.

Additional Activities

Additional activities included virtual meetings with staff and with a vendor for our revised website, weekly social media Teams meetings with co-workers and attending the Commissioner's Weekly Updates Teams meetings.

For more information about the Division's website, contact Paul Tarlowe at 908-637-4125 x114 or via e-mail at Paul.Tarlowe@dep.nj.gov.

WILDLIFE INFORMATION/DIGEST EDITOR - TRENTON (Cindy Kuenstner)

Digest Production

The 2021 *Freshwater Fishing Digest* was finalized and approved for printing with a shelf date of January 6.

Production continues on the *2021 Marine Digest*, due out in May.

Outstanding Deer Program

Staff responded to hunters inquiring about the status of the January Deer Classic event due to the sports show cancellation.

The last batch of entry applications were picked up from the Trenton office. Hunters will be contacted about the Deer Classic cancellation with assurance that all entries will receive recognition in a yet-to-be-determined manner.

Staff participated in a meeting with the I&E bureau chief and members of the Outdoor Sports Group who manage and produce the Edison sportsmen's show for alternative event possibilities due to cancellation of the January event.

Suburban Deer Management and Other Public Outreach

Staff attended a webinar on "How to Communicate About Hunting" by Mark Damien Duda of Responsive Management. His book is available free to fish and wildlife agency personnel and those in the field of hunting and the shooting sports.

Fish and Wildlife's Facebook and Instagram Pages

Staff monitors posts that generate considerable follower comments. Photos are provided to accompany posts as requested.

Other work completed during this reporting period: observed DEP Commissioner McCabe's weekly broadcasts; cataloged wildlife and scenic photos; documented additional hunting *Digest* deer regulation errors for clarification next year; distributed, reviewed, prepared and submitted the second and third pass revisions to the publisher for the freshwater *Digest* in addition to providing final approval/sign-off; edited the Director's Message for the *Digest*; confirmed the production quantity and status of shipping/delivery for the freshwater *Digest*; worked with Marine staff for availability during the marine *Digest* production process; distributed a request/recommendation for advanced planning of the 2021 hunting *Digest* photo-article previews, asked managers to arrange for accompanying photos during the hunting seasons when seasonal habitat conditions are present; assisted connecting a hunter with Law Enforcement regarding a hunter-harvested deer expiring on private property; reviewed several versions of the Wildlife Supporters preview stamp for inclusion in the freshwater *Digest*; discussed with

colleagues revisions to next year's hunting Digest regarding license and permit expiration dates; and returned calls in response to office voicemails.

WILDLIFE INFORMATION - TRENTON (Kathy Porutski)

Internal Communication (IC) topics that were *written* or *edited* and sent out this month include:

Staff with State Vehicles Must Complete Vehicle Taxability Form ONLINE by 11/20
Division of Fish and Wildlife Updates – Week of November 16, 2020
NOV Posting - Site Remediation and Waste Management Program
Reminder – Deadline for Using Compensatory Time Is December 18
NOV Posting - Division of Air Quality
NOV Posting - DFW Manager 2 Opportunity (Unclassified)
Division of Fish and Wildlife Updates – Week of November 30, 2020
NOV Postings Division of Information & Technology (2) / Division of Occupational Health & Safety (1)
NOV Posting Director of Parks & Forestry
Division of Fish and Wildlife Updates – Week of December 7, 2020
NOV Posting - Env. Engineer Trainee (Division of Land Resource Management)
Alice Panichello (Hunter Education) is Retiring!

Spotlight *Announcements* Created w/ Images:

'Tis the Season – Happy Everything!

Also, during this reporting period: Bureau of Information and Education's Monthly Report for November was compiled; Commissioner McCabe's Team Meetings were remotely attended; a mandatory furlough day was used on 11/27; and the latest ePAR and expectations were completed.

PUBLIC INFORMATION AND DIGITAL MEDIA (Jonathan Carlucci)

Publications/Graphics/Social Media

- A Chronic Wasting Disease brochure for hunters was completed
- The I&E cloud drive folder structure was reorganized
- 3 new WMA Wildlife Habitat Supporter logo versions were created
- Digest ad graphic space was developed for the WMA Stamp
- DFW and other logos were modified for video and other staff uses

- Logos were provided to NHR staff
- Staff business card layouts were created

Photography/Videography

- WMA site photography and video were uploaded to I&E OneDrive
- Staff observed wildlife at Lockatong WMA for photographic purposes
- Winter aerial video content was created
- Photo library was searched to fulfill DEP staff requests for photographs

Meetings Attended

- UAV team meeting
- *Changing Your Perspective on Environmental Compliance* webinar
- Virtual meetings with I&E staff

PUBLIC INFORMATION AND DIGITAL MEDIA (Matt Hencheck)

Video Production

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Black Bear Educational video - Filming additional footage and interviews for the upcoming educational Black Bear video. The video is still in the editing stage with plans to have a finished draft version by early January.

WMA Wednesday's – staff will be gathering footage and photos of wildlife management areas as a promo for the division's social media posts.

Fall Brant Migration video – Producing a video on the fall migration of brant in the coastal New Jersey areas. This video will highlight the brant's migration tracking via Google maps and will include interviews from division staff.

SOCIAL MEDIA (Katie Paey)

Facebook

The DFW Facebook (FB) page had **37,593 followers** and **35,747 likes** at the end of this reporting period.

Twenty (**20**) Facebook posts were posted this period. Posts include photographs and video taken by staff, graphic pieces created for special promotions and shared posts from other pages.

Posts with the most reach and engagement this period – **Reach** is the number of unique people who have seen content associated with our Facebook page. **Engagement** is post clicks, likes, comments and shares (any action someone takes on the page or post):

12/4 – Six-Day Firearm Season – reached **55,186** people; **8,634** engagements
11/23 – Artificial Reef Deployment – reached **33,221** people; **4,366** engagements

Staff continues to like and respond to comments and other questions on our FB page in post comment threads, direct messages to the page, event postings and outside timeline posts.

Instagram

The DFW Instagram page had **8,924 followers** at the end of this reporting period.

Seventeen (**17**) Instagram posts were posted this period. Posts include photographs and video taken by staff, and graphic pieces created for promotions.

Instagram posts with the most reach this period –

12/4 – Six-Day Firearm Season – reached **7,551** people
11/21 – Winter Trout Stocking – reached **7,008** people

Staff monitored and responded to comments and private messages.

Content for Facebook and Instagram is continuously needed. ***If you have ideas for a Social Media post, please contact*** **Katie.Paey@dep.nj.gov.**

Graphics and Photography

- A CARES Act graphic was created for social media.

Other Activities

- Participated in weekly Social Media/GovDelivery Planning Meetings on 11/20, 12/4 and 12/11.
- Completed DFW Range brochure, detailing all Hunter Training Area ranges throughout the state. The draft brochure was submitted to Supervising Biologist Linda DiPiano for approval.

WILDLIFE EDUCATION AND OUTREACH

Pequest Natural Resource Education Program (Linda DiPiano, Jessica Griglak, Chris Lido, Alexandra Clark, Steve Verdi and Tom Hill)

The Pequest calendar as well as group and volunteer schedules continue to be maintained.

Staff continues to check voicemail messages remotely. Calls are returned or messages sent as needed.

The facility's water line replacement project continues to move forward. A meeting was held with potential bidders. In addition, the roof replacement project was prepared to go out for bid.

Grounds continue to be maintained.

A Request for Information (RFI) form for the fabrication and installation of pre-designed exhibits was developed. A Q&A sheet was also created to assist companies in preparing their proposals. The RFI was emailed to several exhibit design companies that must respond by January 8, 2021.

Trout in the Classroom (TIC)

Staff continues to communicate and assist teachers with their tanks as schools fluctuate between in-person and virtual learning.

An email reminder was sent to TIC teachers to make sure they have their emergency procedures ready in case of power outages.

A TIC monthly newsletter was developed and emailed to teachers.

Mobile Education Trailer (MET)

A brochure to promote the trailer, including a statement of purpose, where it will be used and information on how to reserve it for outreach activities was created. The publication will be given out at various staff-attended outreach events. Final edits are being made prior to printing.

Other

Administration of the Record Fish Program is ongoing.

Hooked on Fishing - Not on Drugs (HOFNOD) Program (Liz Jackson, Alanna Newmark)

The creation of a virtual HOFNOD team leader weekend training is well underway. Currently, about 95% of the necessary footage has already been filmed.

The *HOFNOD Evaluation Report* prepared by Rutgers University's Bloustein Center for Survey Research was received. Staff is currently reviewing the draft.

The 5th Annual Youth Fishing Challenge was held on October 17. Seven sites hosted an event for an impressive total of 246 participants.

The deadline for the new HOFNOD logo contest has been extended until December 31, 2020.

BLACK BEAR EDUCATION PROGRAM (Michelle Smith)

Black Bear Education Program

No requests were received for black bear educational literature or bear seminars.

Wildlife Habitat Supporter Donation Program

Updates were made to the Wildlife Habitat Supporter Donation Program (WHSDP) product design and it is currently awaiting approval from the Commissioner's Office. A meeting was held to review guest log-in requirements for the Electronic Licensing System that would allow the public to make donations through the site. Suggestions were drafted for updates the Aspira company should make to the system.

Three meetings were scheduled and held with a marketing firm vendor to discuss their proposal to develop a multi-media promotional campaign for the WHSDP program.

Staff gave a presentation on the program to the Endangered and Nongame Species Advisory Committee.

Division Website Redesign

Four meetings were attended to discuss redesigning the Division's website. A meeting was also held to explore utilizing a contract vendor's services for this project. A draft flowchart was completed as an example of a redesigned Bureau of Information and Education webpage.

Outreach Publications

A meeting was attended to discuss the development of a *Guide to Wildlife Management Areas* brochure. A list of ideas for chart categories was also developed.

Other

An Outreach and Education group meeting was held to discuss bureau expectations for the future.

A weekly bureau recap meeting was attended.

WILDLIFE CONSERVATION CORPS (Linda DiPiano)

The Wildlife Conservation Corps now has 4,211 members.

No volunteer opportunities were offered this reporting period.