

**MINUTES OF THE
NATURAL LANDS TRUST MEETING
March 5, 2021
12:00 PM
Via Video and Teleconference**

Chairman Catania called the meeting to order at 12:10 PM. A quorum of trustees was present. At least one of the trustees was a state governmental representative.

The Open Public Meetings Act notice was provided as follows: Notice of the date, time, location and agenda, to the extent known, was forwarded to three newspapers of general circulation, and provided to the Secretary of State in accordance with the Open Public Meetings Act. In addition, notice was provided on the Trust's website in compliance with the Act requiring State, regional, and local authorities, boards, and commissions to establish a website providing specific information to facilitate transparency in government.

In attendance were:

Michael Catania, Chairperson	Jim Hall, Trustee
John Cecil, Vice Chairperson	Emile DeVito, Trustee
Theresa Lettman, Trustee/Secretary- Treasurer	Hannah Good, Trustee representative for the State Treasurer
Senator Bob Smith, State House Commission representative, Trustee	Robert J. Cartica, Executive Director
Judeth Yeany, DEP Trustee	Martin Rapp, Trust Staff
Larry Torok, DEP Trustee	Cari Wild, Trust Staff

Absent:

Steve Eisenhauer, Trustee
Alternate for Ray Bukowski, Trustee representative for the DEP Commissioner

Guests:

David Wheeler, Executive Director, Conserve Wildlife Foundation
Dr. Amanda Dey, Endangered and Nongame Species Program
Denise Appleget, Hamilton Township Resident
Jason Howell, Pinelands Preservation Alliance

General Public Comment: Ms. Appelget noted that last year she participated in a widely attended and successful clean up at the Hamilton Preserve. Based on her proximity to the Hamilton Preserve and ties to law enforcement officials, she offered to find ways to partner with the Trust and provide local eyes and ears on the preserve. She thanked the Trust for including work at the Hamilton Preserve in this year's budget and suggested that the Trust could leverage its resources by working with her and other local residents. Mr. Catania, Mr. Cartica, and Mr. Rapp thanked her for taking the time to come and talk to the Board and for her support.

Mr. Howell had similar concerns related to illegal activities at the Hamilton and Crossley preserves. He suggested that the mapping and marking of trails at these preserves would lead to

productive uses of the preserves to counter negative uses. Mr. Catania thanked him for his and the Pinelands Preservation Alliance's support and suggested that he work with Mr. Cartica and Mr. Rapp.

Financial Report: Mr. Cartica outlined the Financial Statements for the quarters ending June 30, September 30, and December 31, 2020. Mr. Hall motioned to approve the Financial Statements. Mr. Cecil seconded the motion and the Financial Statements were unanimously approved by a vote of 9 to 0.

The **March 27, 2020 minutes** were reviewed. Ms. Yeany motioned to approve the minutes. Mr. Hall seconded the motion, and the minutes were unanimously approved by a vote of 9 to 0.

Unfinished Business:

Mr. Catania and Ms. Wild provided the Board with a **Petty's Island, Pennsauken Township, Camden County Status Report**. COVID made educational programming challenging in 2020, but in-person programs were provided by NJ Audubon Society. The Trust also worked with the Center for Aquatic Sciences and our shared fellows to provide remote programming called "Virtually Camden." In November 2020, the William Penn Foundation awarded the Trust with a two-year \$70,000 grant to continue environmental educational programming at Petty's Island. The Trust is currently in the final year of its contract with NJ Audubon Society to provide this programming. This July, the Trust will rebid the contract. We expect to award it on the same basis of the two prior contracts, with it being a one-year contract with four one-year renewal options. Mr. Catania noted that the Trust continues to work with the William Penn Foundation to be considered for funding for design of the future Visitor's Center.

New Business:

Mr. Cartica presented the **Spending Authorization for Calendar Year 2021**. This year's authorization includes several species- or habitat-specific inventories as well as land management projects including those to limit illegal ORV access and dumping at the Hamilton Preserve. Mr. Cecil motioned to approve the Spending Authorization for Calendar Year 2021. Mr. Hall seconded the motion, and the 2021 Spending Authorization was unanimously approved by a vote of 9 to 0.

Mr. Cartica presented the Board with the **Tennessee Gas Pipeline (TGP) Plant Fund-2021 Work Plan**. Some trustees expressed concern about the Deer Exclusion Demonstration Project as being repetitious of numerous similar projects already completed in New Jersey. Trustees were advised that use of this funding is mostly at the discretion of the Division of Parks and Forestry even if trustees feel the proposed work is unnecessary. Mr. Hall motioned to approve the TGP Plant Fund-2021 Work Plan. Mr. DeVito seconded the motion, and the 2021 Work Plan was unanimously approved by a vote of 9 to 0.

Ms. Wild presented the Board with **Delaware Bay Migratory Shorebird Project Resolution Approving 2021 Budget**. Each year, the Trust approves a budget request by the Conserve Wildlife Foundation (CWF) and the DEP's Endangered and Nongame Species Program (ENSP) for funding from the Delaware Bay Migratory Shorebird Fund.

The proposed 2021 shorebird budget totals \$38,500 which includes \$31,000 for CWF and \$7,500 for ENSP. In 2020, \$31,000 was budgeted and expended. The Trust was fully reimbursed for this amount in November 2020 after CWF received federal funding. The \$31,000 reimbursement was deposited into the Trust's General Fund account with the expectation that CWF would need funding early in 2021. The current balance in the Trust's Shorebird Account including long-term investments is approximately \$61,000. Mr. Wheeler noted that the Trust's ability to provide advance funding early in the year continues to make shorebird and horseshoe crab research possible.

Ms. Dey outlined most recent red knot and horseshoe research, which indicates that the peak count of the stopover population of red knots on Delaware Bay is in decline. During 2018 peak count was 32,930, then 30,880 in 2019, and 19,397 in 2020. The Delaware Bay-wide superpopulation estimate appears to be relatively steady from 2011 through 2020 (estimates ranging from 49,405 – 40,444 with one outlier year of over 60,000) but with 2020 being at the lowest point of the range. Mean horseshoe crab egg density decreased from 14,000 eggs/m² in 2018 to 11,814 eggs/m² in 2020. Of concern is that notwithstanding male-harvest only in mid-Atlantic states over the past decade, the female horseshoe crab population is not increasing. There was an early tropical storm (Arthur) which kept Delaware Bay temperatures cool during May 2020 possibly delaying spawning and egg resources, which appears to have resulted in the early departure of red knots and ruddy turnstones to find food resources elsewhere.

Mr. Catania requested that, as with prior budgets, the 2021 shorebird budget should be approved with a rider authorizing a reallocation of expenses between categories subject to a limitation of the total budgeted amount. He also requested that the Board authorize a \$31,000 upfront payment to CWF to fund Delaware shorebird work to be done in May and June 2021 with receipts for such work to be provided later. Mr. DeVito motioned to approve the 2021 budget with the reallocation rider and upfront \$31,000 payment. Mr. Torok seconded the motion, and the 2021 shorebird budget was unanimously approved by a vote of 9 to 0.

Ms. Wild presented the **Draft 2020 Annual Report**. It was requested that the Board provide any comments/changes on the draft report within the next thirty days. Ms. Yeany motioned to approve the draft report subject to Board members and staff having the flexibility to incorporate changes. Ms. Lettman seconded the motion, and the 2020 Annual Report was unanimously approved by a vote of 9 to 0.

The currently scheduled dates for 2021 Board meetings are June 25, September 24, and December 3, 2021.

Mr. Cecil motioned for the meeting to be adjourned. Ms. Lettman seconded the motion, and the meeting was adjourned at 1:05 PM by a unanimous vote of 9 to 0.

Respectfully submitted,



Theresa Lettman
Secretary/Treasurer