

**Endangered and Nongame Species Advisory Committee  
Meeting Minutes  
May 17, 2023**

**Assunpink Central Region Office  
1 Eldridge Road, Robbinsville, NJ**

Members in attendance: Howard Reinert (acting chair), Emile DeVito, Russ Furnari, Howard Geduldig, Erica Miller, Catherine Tredick, Jane Morton Galetto

Absent: Rick Lathrop, Robin Dougherty, Marion McClary, David Mizrahi.

Staff in attendance: Ginger Kopkash (Assistant Director), Kathy Clark (Acting Chief ENSP), Kim Korth (ENSP), Jason Hearon and Tyler Kinney (Bureau of Land Management). Online: Jeff Brust (Bureau of Marine Fisheries), Mary Monteschio (NJFW), Peter Winkler and Nate Figley (Bureau of Land Management)

Public: Steve Mars. Online: unidentified person

The public notice for this meeting was read by K. Clark.

Introductions of those in attendance.

**Approval of Minutes**

E. Miller made a motion to approve the minutes from the March meeting, seconded by R. Furnari. There was no discussion and the minutes were approved unanimously (H. Geduldig abstained).

**Report by Assistant Commissioner Dave Golden**

There was no format report available as AC Golden and AD Barno were attending another meeting. However, AC Golden joined remotely to discuss some topics.

**Legislative Updates**

M. Monteschio had provided the legislation list as of 5/1/23. There are a number of bills in consideration tomorrow (5/18) in the Assembly Ag and Food Security Committee. One bill would name the Common Eastern Bumblebee (*Bombus impatiens*) as the NJ State Native Pollinator.

Recovering America's Wildlife Act – RAWA – is back with support for action this year. AC Golden added that it's been introduced in the Senate with six sponsors and supporters are seeking ten sponsors with bipartisan support.

**Public Input**

Steve Mars (retired USFWS) reported that Federal Highways Administration has a new program to fund wildlife passages. This is a four year grant program directed at government transportation

departments. He expects the program will be very competitive for funding and NJDOT would be the applicant with co-sponsors in relevant agencies and organizations. Nationally there are 320 million vertebrates killed on highways every year so there is great value to this program. Roads with over 10,000 vehicles/day are barriers to successful wildlife crossings. He has talked to the ENSP CHANJ (Connecting Habitat Across New Jersey) staff regarding this program, but NJDOT would need to take the lead on project applications and implementation. There is an August 1 deadline for first applications in this 4 year program. Grant funds can also be spent on monitoring and land acquisition.

AC Golden added that CHANJ provides the tools to identify wildlife passage locations. A letter from ENSAC to NJDOT might help get the administrative support needed. Suggest that ENSP CHANJ team be consulted for what ENSAC action might be desired.

**Action item: K. Clark will get input from CHANJ staff about what is the suggested ENSAC action and bring that back at the next meeting.**

## Updates

### Nominations subcommittee: H. Geduldig

At the end of March, ENSAC members received the resume of Martha Maxwell-Doyle as a candidate for the anticipated vacancy of non-profit organization seat (J. Galetto's ending term). The position was posted on the NJFW website and to date no emails received (posting is open until May 19). H. Geduldig will solicit member input after May 19.

### Glassboro Wildlife Management Area – Tyler Kinney, BLM

NJFW targeted habitat management for American Woodcock (AMWO) because the decline in NJ is minus-4.25%/year compared to -0.84%/year across all eastern states. Urban development, suppression of fire and flooding, and habitat succession have caused the population decline.

At Glassboro WMA, the WMA is 93% forest habitat, 4.1% fields (5.0% after project). The site was selected due to its proximity to wetlands and distance between clearings and wetlands identified as important to AMWO use and survival. The site was previously cut between late 1930s to 1960s; there were no rare plant records. The site management would generate a field that would support AMWO and pollinator species. The project was reviewed and changes were made to avoid impacts to cavity nesters and Atlantic White Cedar.

Project went awry because the wetlands boundary layer used was not accurate, and there was no layer indicating regulated wetland transition areas (that is, there is no such layer). As a result, the agency was fined for impacts to wetlands and transition areas.

The NJFW proposal for restoration will address: reducing effective size of the cleared area to benefit Barred Owl; provide nest boxes for cavity nesters; create open-canopy forest; and create mosaic of early-successional habitats.

AC Golden provided a landscape context for NJ, that public open space has transitioned to forest habitats, about 1,500 ac/year over 30 years. The larger rationale for this kind of project is NJ is the great loss of habitats that wildlife rely on. This project came under scrutiny because of the wetland issue, but at its foundation it is a very important project to reduce the loss of early successional habitat. We post information about our land management projects on our website to provide public awareness, but to date, do so only for the larger acreage projects; smaller projects do not get the full 14-step review and stakeholder process. H. Geduldig suggested there could be more information provided on smaller projects. AC Golden noted we have to consider how to create the habitat balance for the broad scope of wildlife, knowing we are not mitigating the loss of early-successional habitat (overall, a loss of 320,000 acres of early-successional habitat during a time when loss of forest was 9,000 acres). NJFW has lands to manage but early-successional habitats are being lost at a great rate, and more focus on this problem is essential.

J. Galetto suggested that signs on site would help people understand habitat projects. J. Hearon responded that we do install signs but plan to make larger and more durable signs in the future, in addition to agency website project descriptions.

E. DeVito thanked T. Kinney for coming and giving this presentation. He notes that the wetlands regulations are confusing and the project needed DEP land use review. He said J. Arsenault has been hired to scout for suitable locations in the GWMA area for AMWO and early-successional habitat management.

H. Geduldig noted this project was presented to the Fish & Game Council, and a presentation to ENSAC may have been worthwhile. D. Golden noted there is a threshold on which projects get presented at meetings.

#### Diamondback Terrapin – Jeff Brust, Bureau of Marine Fisheries

The Marine Fisheries Council reviewed the terrapin white paper in July 2022 then sent it to their blue crab committee, which met in the off-season in February 2023. Strong pushback from the industry reps that BRDs (bycatch reduction devices) would affect their catch and livelihood. Since then, J. Brust, B. Zarate and Matt Heyl have continued working on a way forward, including answering some population/mortality questions (working with NGOs), and documenting some regional trends. Marine Fisheries staff is collecting data this summer on the recreational fishery (as a large component of crab harvest) for which data is lacking. Also working with commercial fishermen to document harvest and measurements that will help when considering the BRD size and if larger crabs might be excluded. Location of pots (distance to shore) may also be a factor in how vulnerable terrapins are to bycatch. Even though data collection will take all summer, staff can begin rule writing and continued shared review of same.

J. Galetto commented that her recollection from prior presentations is that terrapin populations cannot sustain any loss. Discussion about the data collection and possible solutions.

#### Delaware Bay Shorebird Project – Kathy Clark, ENSP

ENSP staff are conducting the aerial survey in 2023, led by Bill Pitts, who conducted the survey in 2009 and 2010. The previous surveyor from 2021-2022 declined to participate and will be

replaced by a DE state biologist. Since 2011 there have been six different observers on the aerial, and we look forward to returning this survey to NJ and DE agency staff. The first of three surveys was done yesterday with a total of 5,029 red knots counted; most were on the NJ shore with just 350 on the DE shoreline. The USFWS just published a press release that discusses the different surveys for red knots being done in Delaware Bay.

*Break for lunch*

### **New Business**

#### **State Wildlife Action Plan (SWAP) – Kim Korth, ENSP**

Kim provided a presentation on the work ENSP and NJFW have been doing to begin the SWAP revision. The first step is to review and update the list of SGCN. The five resource categories are 1) global (IUCN, NatureServe G rank); national (federal listing, PIF, American Fisheries Society); Regional (NE RSGCN, Atlantic Coast Joint Venture Waterfowl Plan); NJ state status; and Taxa specific data reports. We created an automated system that pre-screens and sorts our native fauna into four bins using the SGCN selection factors: Not SGCN, SGCN-confident, SGCN-1 factor only, or Data Deficient/Assessment Priority SGCN.

The species or taxon-specific criteria were applied to generate the first draft of the SGCN list, which moves on to biologist review, with the ability to reference all the criteria met. Biologists must use standardized justifications to move species off of or onto the SGCN list, basically a fatal flaw analysis. Changes will be made in the database, be reviewed again, then the draft list will be provided for stakeholder review. Discussion about the species and threats/habitats, and an example review of the Airtable database of species and how they were evaluated.

### **Other Business**

Next regular ENSAC meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, July 19. It will be an in-person meeting. ENSAC meetings in 2023 will be in-person unless otherwise arranged.

**C. Tredick made a motion to adjourn, second by E. Miller, meeting adjourned 1:40 PM.**

### **Summary of Action Items**

- 1) Future topics include a presentation on freshwater fish proposed for addition to the endangered and nongame wildlife lists.
- 2) (Continuing item) Identify a longer-term strategy for ENSAC involvement in ASMFC's actions.