

**Endangered and Nongame Species Advisory Committee
Meeting Minutes
March 12, 2025**

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

Members in attendance: Rick Lathrop (online), Russ Furnari, Howard Geduldig, Marion McClary (online), Martha Maxwell-Doyle, Erica Miller, David Mizrahi (online), Eliot Nagele, Howard Reinert, Catherine Tredick (online).

Absent: Ty Gould-Jacinto

Staff in attendance: Jason Hearon (Assistant Director, NJFW), Kristen Meistrell (Assistant Director, NJFW), Kathy Clark (ENSP chief); Mary Monteschio (NJFW Regulatory Officer), Kim Korth (ENSP), Robert Somes (ENSP), Alex Kisurin (ENSP); Jake Ducey (NJFW), Juliette Harle (NJFW), Peter Stark (BWM)

Public: Dr. Chandler Navara, Annaliese Wells (grad student), Dave Jenkins, Virginia Osnatu (Duke Farms, online), Barbara Sachau, online

The Chair convened the meeting at 10:05 AM.

The public notice for this meeting was read by K. Clark. The meeting agenda was provided to the New Jersey Secretary of State's Office and two NJ newspapers.

Introductions of those in attendance.

Approval of Minutes

E. Miller made a motion to approve the minutes of the January 22 meeting, seconded by R. Furnari. The motion was approved unanimously.

Assistant Commissioner's Report

AC Golden is away at the North American conference this week. AD Hearon provided announcements: This is a very busy time of year. Habitat management on wildlife management areas is in full swing. Trout stocking by agency staff is underway. Regulations changes are in draft or review for the Game Code and Fish Code.

Legislative Updates

M. Monteschio reported some good news: the bill that requires DEP and DOT to establish a Wildlife Corridor Action Plan was passed in the Senate in October and in the Assembly, and is moving forward with some of the changes NJFW suggested.

The tidal areas access rule proposal's comment period closed in mid-February and we received about 100 comments; staff are working on responding to them.

Old Business

Nominations Committee

H. Geduldig reported that the nominations for Dr. Brooke Maslo (Rutgers University) and Dr. Chandler Navara were put forward to the Commissioner by AC Dave Golden.

Chair R. Lathrop is term-limited as of 4/1 and the Committee will need to elect a new Chairperson. There are two interested candidates: H. Reinert (currently Vice-chair) and R. Furnari.

Motion to elect R. Furnari as ENSAC Chair and H. Reinert as Vice-chair as of April 1.

Motion offered by E. Miller and seconded by M. Maxwell-Doyle. All members voted and the motion passed unanimously.

There is one candidate for the open Public-At-Large seat that is vacated by Tyrese Gould-Jacinto's resignation. K. Clark publicized this expected vacancy with a solicitation notice on the NJ Fish & Wildlife website on 2/7/2025. One candidate expressed interest, Dave Jenkins, who retired from NJ Fish & Wildlife in 2018. H. Geduldig provided Dave's resume to ENSAC members for review; ENSAC members will vote in the next week or so.

Chair asked for interested candidates to serve on the Nominations Committee and M. McClary and M. Maxwell-Doyle offered to serve.

State Wildlife Action Plan (SWAP) – Kim Korth

K. Korth provided an update on the accomplishments and remaining tasks to complete the 10-year revision of the NJ State Wildlife Action Plan in a Powerpoint presentation.

SGCN list is complete

- SGCN Habitat + Region Associations final review complete

- Species Profiles for E, T, SC complete

- Herp species have been entered into the Species Profile database

Habitat

- Habitat Types and Regions complete

- Habitats linked to species and region

Threats

- Statewide and Regional Priority Threats

Actions

- Priority Actions for L3 Regional Threats

- Prioritization of those priority Actions Round 1 was completed by staff and key partners

Dynamic Website Build

- Framework is complete

SGCN

- Range Maps complete by 3/30

- Working on getting photos for species profiles

Habitat

- Description of key habitat areas – using map from CHANJ and Rowan's Blueprint (4/30)

Actions

- Round 2 of Action Prioritization

- Sent to TAG, partners, and engaged Technical Stakeholders 3/17 (Due 4/4)

- Statewide Actions are currently being worked on

Dynamic Website Build

Testing phase. After testing we'll have designer make it pretty (Complete 7/1)

Public Comment

Review by DEP, DFW, TAG, Tech Partners, and public announced 6/1 (goal date)

Draft to USFWS (Dee Blanton) 5/1

Submit to USFWS 7/15 (drop dead is 9/15)

The presentation included examples of species range maps, and an example of a website page of a species profile that will include species description, status, habitats used and life stages, range, threats, actions, and species images.

Request for candidates for Horseshoe Crab Advisory Panel

K. Clark reminded the members of the opportunity to suggest someone to serve on the Horseshoe Crab Advisory Panel (AP). The Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission's (ASMFC) Horseshoe Crab Board is expanding the composition of the AP to include "non-traditional" stakeholders (e.g., environmental NGO). The ENSAC may suggest someone or pass along this opportunity to someone in the shorebird conservation community.

D. Mizrahi had heard this topic at a summer ASMFC meeting. There was some discussion and candidates might include D. Mizrahi and T. Dillingham of American Littoral Society. Those interested should reach out to Joe Cimino of NJFW Marine Fisheries Administration.

Public Input, limited to 3 minutes each

Barbara Sachau stated the GoToMeeting (online) transmission issues are frustrating and online listeners missed the initial few minutes of today's meeting. Speakers are not identifying themselves for the benefit of online listeners. She states all animals in NJ should be considered endangered because all have a hard time living in NJ due to human population and damages to habitat. Extinctions are happening every day.

New Business

NJ Fisher Project – Peter Stark, Bureau of Wildlife Management

The fisher is a member of the Mustelidae family (*Pekania pennanti*) that includes weasels.

Size: males are 8-20 and females are 4-6 lb.

Habitat preferences: closed canopy forest; diverse forest stands.

Reproduction: they have delayed implantation (parturition early April); they use tree cavity dens.

Diet: rodents/rabbits, carrion, birds, some plants.

In colonial times they appeared in inventories; they were presumed extirpated by 1900s.

1977: NY reintroduction (Catskills); an ear-tagged fisher captured in Hampton, NJ (1978).

1989: CT reintroduction.

1994-98: PA reintroduction.

Mid-2000s: NJ sightings, incidental captures, photographic evidence.

2008-present: documented in road mortalities, live captures, sightings, etc.

Verified occurrences in Sussex, Warren, Passaic counties.

A hair-snare survey in 2019-19 for bobcats documented fishers.

Current research: NJFW runs 1) a trail camera survey and 2) live-capture of animals for a telemetry project.

1. Trail camera survey runs January to April. Uses baited trees to attract fishers to camera locations. It uses a randomized design and is timed to avoid active bear season. The study area bounded by Rt. 80 and Rt. 287, which is considered the current range limits.
2. Live-capture for telemetry: Right now, there are 3 fishers (2 males and 1 female) transmitting GPS data to contribute data for home range size and habitat selection data. Upon capture, staff collect measurements, a premolar (for age), DNA, fecal and blood samples. Blood is tested for rodenticides, which are being found in high levels. Animals are marked: ear tags, lip tattoo (to control for ear tag loss), and a GPS collar on individuals over 5 lb. in size. One telemetered adult showed a minimum polygon movement of 9 square miles.

Future work will focus on reproduction, habitat preference and resources use, movement across landscape & distribution, and population/density estimates.

Gray Fox & Fisher Study

NJFW is a partner in a separate, regional study of Gray Fox and Fisher, a multi-state research project coordinated by Dr. Melanie Kunkel of Cornell University. The gray fox is declining regionally for unknown reasons. Cooperating state agencies are:

- collecting deceased gray foxes for necropsy;
- Analyses will be for comprehensive screening for pathogens and toxins.

For fisher:

- States are collecting deceased fishers;
- Analyses will be for pathogens/toxins and rodenticide loads.

NJFW has collected 25 gray foxes so far, mostly from the pinelands.

NJFW has collected samples from 4 deceased fishers and blood samples from 3 live fishers.

Some discussion followed about the gray fox study. The information available on the NJ population is mainly through voluntary reporting by trappers and hunters. Reported harvest has been declining for many years but is confounded by trapping method (such as adoption of foot-encapsulating, “dog-proof” trap for raccoons). The next Game Code revision should include mandatory harvest reporting. The gray fox population is larger in southern NJ habitats than northern NJ.

The Committee thanked P. Stark for his presentation.

Lunch Break 12:00-12:30

Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza (HPAI)

K. Meistrell provided an update: Agency staff have been working hard to respond to HPAI in wildlife. All reports of dead or sick birds go to the DEP Hotline (877-warn-dep) and staff review all reports. Staff are also working on the response protocols as things go along and for the future.

Variables influencing response level include number of birds involved, proximity to sensitive areas, and E&T wildlife. HPAI is confirmed in Salem and Warren counties and likely in 10 more counties; it is presumed to be in all counties at this point. We are testing all bald eagles that are recovered. The total at this time is reports of 3,000 sick or injured birds. Staff are also working with Dept of Health, Dept of Ag, and DEP Solid Waste.

NJ Wildlife Rehabilitators Advisory Committee (WRAC)

AD Meistrell attended part of the WRAC today (concurrent meeting time). The WRAC needs to fill some positions, noting that ENSAC and FGC each have a rep on the WRAC. The WRAC also needs to improve their meeting schedule. A topic today was mange in wild foxes and the possibilities for treatment by rehabilitators. Regarding new regulations, amendments to the captive game and exotic regs will include amended rehabilitation regs.

The WRAC meets every other month (or as needed) but meetings have been cancelled many times, so E. Miller recommends a virtual option. The ENSAC will vote on a rep to the WRAC.

Other Business

May 14 will be the next regular meeting of the ENSAC.

R. Furnari motioned to adjourn, seconded by H. Geduldig, and the meeting adjourned at 1:00 PM.

Summary of Action Items

- Provide the Committee with the DEP response on the rodenticide issue when it's available.