

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE
NJ FISH AND GAME COUNCIL
Central Region Office
Robbinsville, New Jersey
December 12, 2023**

The regular meeting of the Fish and Game Council was held on the above date.

The meeting was called to order at 10:00 a.m. by Chairman Frank Virgilio.

Chairman Virgilio 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 December 7, 2023 and delivered to the designated newspapers for Fish and Wildlife, the Newark Star Ledger and the Atlantic City Press on December 7, 2023.

Roll call was taken in attendance:

Chairman Frank Virgilio
Councilman James DeStephano
Councilman Mitchell Jones
Councilman Ed Kertz
Councilman Rick Lathrop
Councilman Rob Pollock
Councilman Bob Puskas- **Absent**
Councilman Loren Robinson
Councilman Ken Whildin

Fish & Wildlife employees included: D. Golden, L. Barno, G. Kopkash, A. Ivany, J. Hearon, K. Springer, and J. Bullock.

There were several members of the public in attendance.

Chairman Virgilio asked for a motion to approve the September 6th and October 10th F&G Council minutes.

Councilman Robinson made a motion to approve the September 6th minutes, seconded by Councilman DeStephano. Vote taken. All approve. Motion approved.

Councilman Robinson made a motion to approve the October 10th minutes, seconded by Councilman Jones. Vote taken. All approve, motion approved.

Chairman Virgilio asked for a motion to approve the 2024 F&G meeting schedule.

Councilman Robinson made a motion to accept the 2024 G&G meeting schedule with the change of the November meeting to Wednesday November 13, seconded by Councilman Jones. Vote taken, all approved. Motion carries.

Chairman Virgilio welcomed everyone during this most wonderful time of the year, a time filled with joy, love, peace, patience, kindness, and goodness!

On behalf of the entire Fish and Game Council, I would like to thank Assistant Commissioner Dave Golden and his entire staff for their dedication to protecting and managing New Jersey's Fish and Wildlife resources. I would also like to thank the outdoor enthusiasts and hunters of New Jersey for being true heroes. It is worth repeating a quote from Jim Miller, a professor emeritus from Mississippi State University; "Hunters were the first to call for laws to restore wildlife populations, and they continue to support and defend scientific wildlife management, and they're passionate about wild things and places."

Finally, thanks to Janet Pizar, Barbara Sachau, and the Animal Protection League of New Jersey, representing the public trust in wildlife management that commands broad general representation for equal lawful jurisdictions in creating wildlife policies.

Also, he would like to recognize the passing of Professor James E. Applegate, Ph.D. Dr. Applegate was an early believer in the role that humans played at every stage of wildlife management. In the early 1980s, he and two others created a Rutgers University board game entitled "Oh My Deer." I was one of the fortunate individuals who got to play on his handmade, original game board. Oh, My Deer players poised as the State's Wildlife Biologists and worked as a team, making decisions that would affect the size and fate of a deer herd. He knew how to mix fun with learning. He was a charter member and served 50 years on the NJ Endangered and Nongame Species Advisory Committee. Dr. Applegate's contributions were legendary and he will surely be missed.

Today, stakeholders will have 6 opportunities for comments: one after each community-based deer management application presentation and the regular comment period at the end of the meeting.

Assistant Commissioner Golden mentioned he has received a lot of good feedback in the council's role in the CBBMP, and as you all know we just completed the second segment of the bear hunt. He appreciates the council's ongoing support as well as the staff's ongoing involvement in a safe regulated hunt this year. We will have the 4-day extension of the hunt to begin on Wednesday. So far the harvest numbers have been good, they are high but our harvest rate is still below the 20% which will trigger the extension. On the personnel front, an email was sent to the Council back in October about a restructuring we are doing in Fish and Wildlife. We have experienced some growth in staff and expansion in a number of programs. A decision was made to take our operations branch and turn it into two Assistant Director units. We have continued to move that forward and selected a new Assistant Director that will now oversee the Bureau of Land Management and Endangered and Nongame Species Program. We are happy to announce Jason Hearon will be taking that role and we are excited for him to take this position and the future under his leadership. Also, just a note, Carole Stanko retired, and we are at the point of filling the position, which was announced Statewide and closed last week. We have a couple of back really strong candidates, so we are hopeful we will fill Carole's position in the next month and a half.

Thursday marks the 50th Anniversary of the Endangered and Nongame Species Conservation Act for New Jersey. New Jersey's act pre-dates the Federal Act by two weeks, so that has always been a point of pride for NJ. Our ENSP program and our BI&E have been working very hard to put together social media posts and a video which you will get to see later today.

Agriculture:

Councilman Jones reported last month we did not have our meeting here because Farm Bureau convention was going on. Some wildlife policies came from there, nothing surprising out of those policies. As far as the bear hunt goes you, we got quite a few bears but i still here guys saying there's quite a bit of bear damage. I will say that early in this season I went up to Pequest and watched them check in a couple bears, and it is a very good operation up there. The folks they had been working that night brought a couple local bears in i knew about where they were coming from, but they have one guy who had no idea where he was or where the bear came from and it's interesting to see. We're seeing quite a few geese around right now, they're cleaning up the cornfields, but I think they'll be moving into the wheat, probably creating some damage there. Warren County Community College is working on a bear drone damage survey for cornfields so when that gets done, I'll share that. I believe they're going to have economic damage and actual units of loss. We could see when it comes out if we want to have them come and present it, we could take that up at the formal relations committee meeting. The only other thing that came out of Farm Bureau convention was the response to bear categories and how they're handled in their responses and category one killing of livestock and protected versus non protected.

Councilman Kertz reported he also attended the Farm Borough Convention. He enjoyed being there and got a chance to talk to a lot of the farmers. He talked to some of the local guys after

six-day firearm and during the six-day firearm season they are not seeing too many deer. He had three coyotes running around his farm all summer, which took out all the fawns, so he was asking different guys when they're driving if they're seeing any fawns and there aren't many around anymore so that's going to be concern for next year for the bucks. The harvest was down a little bit in our areas well.

Dr Reist, Department of Agriculture reported our big-ticket item is Avian Influenza, we're seeing the same in in in wild birds as we have last year this time and our detections in in the country in domestic fowl are as high as they were this time last year, but about half the height of our peak in March of last year. So, we didn't see it but we're getting a peak now here in October- November that's as high as we had in October -November of last year. The closest states with recent detections are Vermont Ohio and Arkansas, so everybody keep an eye out on the High Path Avian front. The rule FDA made a rule on livestock drug sales which is the antibiotics that most people use to treat farm animals and perhaps some people use for wildlife in terms of rehabilitators a bunch of antibiotics were taken off of the over the counter list and now they all have to be used under a veterinarians directions and that's sort of been problematic for most farmers because of the strong shortage of veterinarians that will even deal with livestock animals even if you pay them. So that's been a challenge for many farmers that were sort of treating their own animals but now need a veterinarian and get their drugs they need to treat them. North Dakota broke a record this year, they had 25 cases of anthrax in their domestic animals detected. I've talked to you guys about it before, but anthrax is something that's in the environment not really that common in jersey although we've had it very sporadically but in places like North Dakota they have a bunch every year and they hit that record.

Farmers Sportsman Relations:

Councilman Jones reported they are looking at mid-January for a meeting.

NJ State Federation and Sportsman's Clubs:

Councilman Robinson reported he's been busy since the last in person meeting October. We had a Waterfowl Stamp Committee meeting right after our last council meeting. He also attended Somerset, Ocean, Monmouth, Central Region, and The State Federation meeting. November, he attended Middlesex, Union, Huntedon, predator hunters had a meeting and participating in the youth pheasant hunt for the Hunterdon County Federation which had a great turnout and a nice day. The State did its usual fantastic job, Chris Murphy from Land Management and Bryce Payne CEO was there and gave a nice to talk to the kids. It was nice and the kids had a great time. He also participated in the tuckahoe Waterfowl Management Hunt again this year. John Tiffany and their crew did a great job, it's improved every year I've been there, and I've been there since the beginning. This was the third year, and it was even better this year. This month

we had a fur harvesters' clinic that was sponsored by Fish and Wildlife and the Fur Harvesters and New Jersey Trappers. We also had our Law Enforcement meeting yesterday.

Councilman Whildin reported he attended the Waterfowl stamp committee meeting after the last council meeting, just a couple topics of interest 60% of the abandoned birds harvested in New Jersey come from Canada 49% coming from Quebec and 11% coming from Ontario. We voted to approve the alpha goal of \$57,500 to the Canadian habitat which is what this the money is really set aside for. I attended the Trappers Convention early in the Month of November that was pretty well attended I spent about 3 1/2 to 4 hours there seeing a lot of folks and it gets better every year, especially the education and the willingness of the of the vendors to share their knowledge with the with folks who are attending. We also had a Law Enforcement Committee meeting yesterday and we'll talk about that later in this meeting.

Chairman Virgilio attended the New Jersey Farm Bureau's 150th annual meeting, during the discussion with delegates two of the recently adopted wildlife policies are of importance to our council and I'll forward them over to all council members. We want to schedule a Farmer Relationship Committee meeting and we'll also look towards the Game Code committee meeting and handle these issues. One of these issues dealt with Wildlife Management in general and the second dealt with the modifications on how permits are currently issued and enforced for improved effectiveness and information permit management tools especially looking at the different categories of bears and how they may be tweaked. What we're looking at is after the first of the year getting to these meetings like I just mentioned so we could actually bring these and put them as a high priority item for the federation, the council, and for the Farm Bureau. We really wanted to see if we could come to grips with some of the issues that were brought up. They had a book of about 80 pages thick that was condensed down into about 15 pages which I'll forward to everybody but there's a couple of considerations that I think the Council and New Jersey Fish and Wildlife could help with. He also attended a meeting at Island Beach State Park where we focused on adjustments to allowable tournament fish based on recent changes in regulations and we continue making plans for the 2024 Annual Governor Surf Fishing Tournament. He attended the New Jersey Trappers Convention, there was emphasis placed on public safety captures and new equipment aiding them into those captures. He attended New Jersey Predator Hunters Regional meeting where we discussed the certain game code relations witch, we will bring up in the game code committee. He attended a meeting at Burlington County Federation, and they discussed plans for deer season which just took place. Lastly, he attended a meeting and at Nacote Creek discussing stabilized funds for Marine Fisheries.

Finance committee: No report

Fish Committee: No report

Endangered and Non-Game Advisory Committee:

Councilman Lathrop reported they had a meeting in November, where staff from the Bureau of Freshwater Fisheries and Chief Crouse presented some of the fish species additions that were proposed for endangered and special concern status.

Wildlife Rehab Committee:

Councilman DeStephano reported they set the meeting schedule for next year for January 24, March 22, and October 23. Due to only meeting 3-times a year, they are still working on rules they want to see and the sign off vote will be at the January meeting.

Law Enforcement Committee:

Councilman Whildin reported we will discuss later under License Restorations.

Public Member:

Councilman Pollock reported there are some letters floating around from Marine Fisheries for challenging some of the mortalities that he has been appointed to and they will be coming your way. Also, he has been seeing a lot of traffic and calls about the Island State beach permit availability for fishing and vehicular beach access. It was sold out in the first day. When you go on the internet and do some searches, you see some people have four of them. There are some Out-Of-State ones left so maybe some of them could be converted.

Legislative Update:

Mary Monteschio reported that we are still getting legislation added to the legislative agenda.

To add to the list that we have:

S4170- window tinting on marked Law Enforcement vehicles.

S4109- requires an establishment of a pilot program for mosquito control activities for certain municipalities. There are a bunch of Mosquito Control bills moving at this point.

S4094- expands the body armor replacement fund eligibility, initially was only for State Police but now they added other State Police Departments such as Human Services, Fish and Wildlife, and State Park Police.

A5816- changes the membership of the Lake of Hopatcong Commission and requires DEP to develop a water level development plan for Lake Hopatcong to be approved by the Commission.

HR6352- silencer or compression act

Two updates:

A5495- allows a person with a carry permit a handgun while hunting, was passed by the assembly yesterday.

S1891- law prohibiting the feeding of black bear, last week was released by committee to the house senate.

Assistant Commissioner Golden reported he contacted AFWA to get an update on RAWA, in the Senate it is the same as it has been, but the Senate is in a deadlock right now, they are two votes short of being able to pass it and the conversation revolves around the offset. The House version has a lot of changes, including changing the name, and having to renew every 5-years.

Mary Monteschio reported on land swaps, Colliers Mills, Heisslerville WMA, Forked River Game Farm and Nacotee Creek and New Egypt Speedway.

Division Reports:

Office of Business Administration:

Chief Springer reported the license sales from the end of November 2019 to November 2023. License sales through November 2023 were up 1.36 % compared to the end of November 2022. As compared to 2019, which is considered a normal year pre-covid, license sales were up by 1.15%. The Wildlife Habitat Supporter Program's total number of donations for November is \$1,065. The total donations received since the program started in November 2021 is \$67,110. She was also asked to provide the 5-year comparison of the apprentice licenses and buddy license sales. The total Apprentice Archery and Apprentice Firearm sales for 2023 is 1,605 licenses. In 2019, the combined apprentice sales were 923; in 2020 sales were 1839; in 2021 sales were 2057, and in 2022 sales were 1,752. Buddy fishing license sales for 2023 were 2454; in 2019 sales were 3697; in 2020 sales were 5182; in 2021 sales were 3299; and in 2022 sales were 2579 licenses.

Freshwater Fisheries:

Chief Crouse reported at Pequest the Fall Trout Stocking Program began on October 10th and concluded on October 18th. The program consisted of a total of 20,670 two-year-old Rainbow Trout averaging 14.2 inches and 950 Broodstock trout averaging 19.2 inches. All scheduled waters were stocked. A big thank you to all staff that helped out, especially Land Management,

Information & Education. The Winter stocking consisted of two days, November 20 and 21, just prior to the Thanksgiving Holiday on November 23.

Hackettstown, all stocking has been completed for 2023. Finished up with stocking Landlocked Salmon averaging 15 inches. Lake Aeroflex (505), Merrill Creek Reservoir (650), Tilcon Lake (450), and Wawayanda Lake (1,275).

Research and Management, a draft Aquatic Invasive Species Management Plan was reviewed by NJDEP staff, with representation from representative F&W staff. It has been posted on our website, with public comment closing on February 6th. A brief presentation might be given during the January Fish and Game Council meeting.

BFF and I&E staff have worked together to complete the 2024 Freshwater Fishing Digest. It is now online and will be available on shelves soon. All fisheries surveys have been completed for the year. Most recent surveys include Black Bass Assessments by electrofishing on 11 lakes: Alloway Lake (Salem), Assunpink Lake (Monmouth), Davis Mill Pond (Cumberland), Lake Lenape (Atlantic), Lefferts Lake (Monmouth), Merrill Creek Reservoir (Warren), Parvin Lake (Salem), Prospertown Lake (Ocean), Salem Canal (Salem), Shenandoah Lake (Ocean), and Union Lake (Cumberland). Data are being analyzed.

Gillnetting for Lake Trout in Round Valley Reservoir and Merrill Creek Reservoir occurred during October and November. Data are being analyzed. Scott Collenburg presented a brief presentation to the Endangered and Nongame Species Advisory Committee on November 15th. He reviewed the 10 Freshwater Fish species being recommended for state listing: Endangered (Atlantic Sturgeon, Bridle Shiner, Ironcolor Shiner), Threatened (Slimy Sculpin), and Special Concern (American Brook Lamprey, Blackbanded Sunfish, Comely Shiner, Mud Sunfish, Northern Hog Sucker, and Shield Darter)

Land Management:

Chief Hearon reported right now is mostly pheasants and quail and hunting access prior to the 6-day firearm. The delivery of the pheasants and quail has gone as smooth as possible. We have had very few complaints and the few we had were hunter confusion. This week there has been a lot of storm cleanup, after this week's storm. We just had a successful case made at Greenwood Forest, where Law Enforcement were able to apprehend people for the continued dumping of construction waste. Our staff has been very helpful in getting rid of an abandoned boat at Higbee's WMA. We have been dealing with a lot of postings at WMA's, there seems to be an uptick the past couple of years, so this year we made an effort to continue to take them down. We continue to move forward on the Glassboro project and are close to a final design and will be putting that behind us soon. The Coastal Program, Tyler Kinney has been hired as Program Specialist 3 and he has already hit the ground running. In addition to the coastal program, we were able to offer a position for heavy equipment operator to go with that and an offer was made and accepted.

Abbots Meadow is part of some work being done in Salem County which is well on its way for progress on Wetlands Restoration and we are halfway done. Heisslerville is the dredging of the Morrisville River to bolster parts of the dyke. We should be finishing up in January. The Holly

Farm office hold up Is still an issue, we are waiting for the final design plans and have had a 3-month delay and anticipate a final design review this month.

Information and Education:

Chief Ivany reported they attended the League of Municipalities Conference in Atlantic City with the Mobile Education Trailer. Attendance was excellent with many people stopping by the Fish & Wildlife display to ask questions and receive information. Tiffany Woolley, who has been working as a temporary employee with the R3 program was hired as a fulltime Program Specialist Trainee with a start date of December 2. Tiffany will continue to work in the R3 program, and we welcome her on board in her new position. Our black bear education program coordinator, Lyla Kaul, has taken a different position and is no longer with the Agency. Plans are underway to backfill this position. A request for proposal for the fiscal year 2024 black bear media campaign was sent for bids.

Hunter Education and Trapper Education classes are done for the year and totals will be available in January. Staff partnered with the New Jersey Trappers Association and New Jersey Fur Harvesters organization to host our second fur handling workshop. This event targeted new trapper education students who indicated the desire to learn more about the “after the catch” process. The event was hosted at Croton Rod and Gun Club in Flemington. Twelve instructors attended from all corners of the state to share their vast fur handling knowledge with new trappers. Fifteen students attended and left with confidence, and a deep understanding of proper fur handling practices.

The Freshwater Fishing Digest went online yesterday, with 90,000 copies being produced and available before Christmas. The New Jersey Endangered and Nongame Species Conservation Act 50th Anniversary celebration culminated with a DEP news release and comprehensive video released on December 14, the actual date of the signing of the legislation in 1973. As a result of that legislation, NJFW established the Endangered and Nongame Species Program to carry out the work necessary to restore and maintain our endangered and nongame species. We have been promoting the anniversary of the act throughout the year with website updates, fieldtrips with DEP Commissioner LaTourette, GovDelivery messages, social media posts and videos encompassing the act and work our endangered and nongame species staff do. A comprehensive update was provided by Chief Ivany regarding the Division Representative Program and plans to revamp and improve the program.

Law Enforcement:

Chief Panico reported the new CPO’s they have in the Police Academy are slated to graduate Jan 12, 2023 and then they will go to our in-house training in February, then sometime in April they go to their field training component. Recently, HR posted 2 new hires that posting is up and will post until January 5th. We are looking for 2 positions for the Central Region with a start date sometime in July and start the police academy in August and graduate in early January 2025.

The CPOs in North and South use their newly acquired ATVs for patrol for the first time, they encountered a lot of hunters and surprised hunters in places we were never able to reach before. Thank you to Assistant Commissioner Golden for making these purchases.

Wildlife Management:

Assistant Director Barno reported we finished up bear season and want to give huge thanks to the staff. Harvest numbers look good, we had 331 bears taken in segment A and another 137 bears in segment B for a total of 468 bears. Of that total, 223 were males and 245 were female. We marked the success of the hunt through the number of tagged bears that are harvested and out of the 163 tagged bears that were available for harvest, 29 were harvested, which gives us a harvest rate of 17.8% with our target being 20%. Since we didn't hit the 20% target rate causes the extension to occur. Once the season has ended, staff take all that information that is collected at the check station and finalize the numbers. Bear incidents we've had over the last month, we had 10 Cat 1 incidents and of that 4 bears were trapped and euthanized, 4 were aggressive, 1 home entry, 2 for cultural damages, 2 for property damage over \$500 and 1 protective livestock. Overall compared to 2022 incidents are down from this time last year. We had a total of 107 compared to 194. The sightings are down as well from 12 this year compared to 18 last year. Damage and nuisance are down to 95 this year compared to 176 last year. Having the hunt last year and this year helped with bringing the numbers down.

We have our deer harvest summary for this year, we are at a total for the season 25,311 deer, which is down 8.6% from last year where we had 27,692. Fall bow was down the most at 15.4%, permit bow was slightly up at 1.2%, six-day firearm was down 5.6%, and muzzle loader was almost even.

Staff is also working on a survey; this is a result of the hunter forums we had for deer and to propose regulation changes. We have been drafting survey questions and are hoping to get it out by the end of the season.

Starting in January, we have a fisher project to assess the distribution and location of fisher within our study area to determine the extent of their home range and habitat use and movement. This will deploy trail cameras in the northwest portion of New Jersey from January to April 2024. This was a project that was originally scheduled for the beginning of this year but due to supply issues and all the materials to conduct the survey was put on hold. The camera stations will be baited with sardines and skunk lure with a 5 second video. Staff will also be live trapping and putting GPS collars on the fishers. Once we have that initial data, we will provide it to council.

Old Business:**Greenwood Lake Update:**

Assistant Director Barno reported that we have a revised schematic for the ramp, and she met with Parks and Forestry to review with them and are waiting to schedule with the architect and designer, we have some dates we provided and are waiting for them to confirm. Once that takes place it will be up to Parks about posting that information on their website.

Lunch: 11:45 – 12:30**New Business:****Community Based Deer Management:****Bernard Twp-**

Jodi powers read aloud the Community based deer management plan. The application seeks council approval for a 6-week extension of the permit shotgun, permit muzzleloader, and winter bow seasons to end March 31, 2024. They use two hunting clubs consisting of 68 members to hunt on 43 township owned and 3 county owned properties. The program goal is to reduce the number of deer vehicle accidents to 45-50 accidents per year. As of November 2023, 42 deer vehicle accidents were reported. Fish and Wildlife have recommended for the past couple years that Bernards Township explore other population estimates, such as drone surveys to provide an updated population estimate. The township has obtained several quotes and is seeking funding for an updated population estimate.

The recommendation of the agency is for approval for this permit based on the number of deer vehicle accidents, Fish and Wildlife recommends approval of the Bernards application for 2023-2024 Community Based Deer Management Permit.

Chairman Virgilio asked for a motion to opened the floor to discussion.

Councilman Kertz made a motion to open the floor, seconded by Councilman Robinson.

Council discussion took place.

Chairman Virgilio asked for a motion to close the floor to discussion.

Councilman Robinson made a motion to close the floor, seconded by Councilman DeStephano.

Public Comment on Bernards Twp CBDMP permit:

Janet Pizar commented she opposes the CBDMP for Bernards Township.

Barbara Sachau commented she opposes the CBDMP for Bernards Township.

Chairman Virgilio asked for a motion for Bernards Twp.

Councilman Kertz made a motion to approve Bernards Township's CBDMP as stated, seconded by Councilman Robinson. Vote taken; all approve. motion carries.

Joint Base McGuire:

Jodi powers read aloud the Community based deer management plan. The application seeks council approval to cull deer starting January 1,2024 through December 31,2024. Seven USDA/Aphis wildlife service's staff would be able to cull deer on 2 military airfields and two areas immediately adjacent the northeast section of runway 624 and an area west of runway 1836. Joint Base is a federal property and as such a memorandum dated August 1,2023 from the Joint Base Commander will act as the resolution allowing them to apply. Then in addition the US Attorney General Office through the Commanding Officer, not the Burlington or Ocean County Prosecutor has authorized the use of suppressors. Joint Base is applying for this permit to reduce the white tail deer strike with military aircraft, they already possess a special wildlife permit to shoot any wildlife off the runways, but the community-based permit will allow agents to shoot deer using suppressors from mobile shooting units.

Fish and Wildlife recommends the approval of this permit and would allow the USDA staff to remove the deer.

Chairman Virgilio asked for a motion to open the floor for discussion.

Chairman Kertz made a motion to open the floor, seconded by Councilman Robinson.

Council discussion took place.

Chairman Virgilio asked for a motion to close the floor.

Councilman Kertz made a motion to close the floor, seconded by Councilman Robinson.

Public Comment on Joint Base:

Barbara Sachau commented that she opposes Joint Base CBDMP.

Jant Pizar commented that she opposes Joint Base CBDMP.

Chairman Virgilio asked for a motion on Joint Base.

Councilman Kertz made a motion to approve the Joint Base CBDMP permit as described, seconded by Councilman Jones. Vote taken; all approve. motion carries.

Essex County:

Jodi Powers the Community Based Deer Management Plan. The application seeks approval for 12 weekdays from Tuesday-Thursday, starting January 11,2024 and ending February 29,2024. Sixteen volunteer sportsmen would be provided access to cull deer on 2 county owned properties. The goal is to reduce the deer density to improve forest health. A repeat forest health evaluation was completed in August of 2023. Fish and Wildlife recommends the approval of Essex County Community Based Deer Management Plan permit.

Chairman Virgilio asked for a motion to open the floor for discussion.

Councilman DeStephano made a motion to open the floor, seconded by Councilman Robinson.

Council discussion took place.

Chairman Virgilio asked for a motion to close the floor.

Councilman Jones made a motion to close the floor, seconded by Councilman Robinson.

Public Comment on Essex County CBDMP:

Janet Pizar commented that she opposes Essex County CBDMP.

Barbara Sachau commented that she opposes Essex County CBDMP.

Chairman Virgilio asked for a motion on Essex County CBDMP.

Chairman DeStephano made a motion to accept Essex County Community Based Deer Management Plan, seconded by Councilman Jones. Vote taken; 6 approve, 2 oppose. motion carries.

Princeton Township:

Jodi Powers read aloud the Community Based Deer Management Plan. The application seeks councils' approval to cull deer starting January 1,2024 and ending March 31,2024. White Buffalo would be provided access to cull deer on nine township owned and 10 private owned properties. The Princeton Mayor and council passed a resolution endorsing the application on September 11,2023 and the Mercer County Prosecutors Office in a letter dated September 15,2023 authorized White Buffalo to use suppressors. The goal is to reduce the number of deer

vehicle accidents. Fish and Wildlife recommends approval of Princeton Township Community Based Deer Management plan.

Chairman Virgilio asked for a motion to open the floor to discussion.

Councilman Robinson made a motion to open the floor, seconded by Councilman DeStephano.

Council discussion took place.

Chairman Virgilio asked for a motion to close the floor.

Councilman Kertz made a motion to close the floor, seconded by Councilman Jones.

Public Comment on Princeton Township CBDMP:

Barbara Sachau commented that she is opposed to the Princeton CBDMP.

Janet Pizar commented that she is opposed to the Princeton CBDMP.

Chairman Virgilio asked for a motion on the Princeton CBDMP.

Councilman Kertz made a motion to accept the Princeton CBDMP as described, seconded by Councilman Jones. Vote taken; 7 approve, 1 oppose. Motion carries.

Mercer County:

Brian Schumm read aloud the Community Based Deer Management Plan. The application seeks councils approval for an exception to hunting in daylight hours past the closure of the Winter bow and shotgun season. Scorpion Outdoors would be provided access to cull deer on 7 county owned properties. The Mercer County Park Commission has passed a resolution endorsing the application. The goal is to improve forest health. Success of the program is being monitored through vegetation surveys, the number of deer moved annually between CBDM permit activities and traditional harvest as well as local deer density surveys. Fish and Wildlife recommends that the council approve the location for Mercer County Parks Commission with the remission of Robling Park.

Chairman Virgilio asked for a motion to open the floor for discussion.

Councilman Robinson made a motion to open the floor, seconded by Councilman DeStephano.

Council discussion took place.

Chairman Virgilio asked for a motion to close the floor.

Councilman Kertz made a motion to close the floor, seconded by Councilman DeStephano.

Public Comment on Mercer County CBDMP:

Barbara Sachau commented that she opposes the Mercer County CBDMP.

Chairman Virgilio asked for a motion on Mercer County CBDMP.

Councilman Kertz made a motion to accept the Mercer County CBDMP as described, seconded by Councilman Jones. Vote taken; all approve. motion carries.

License Restoration:

Richard Petteruti- Not present

Officer Tyler Hausamann read aloud the statement for the revocation appeal for Mr. Petteruti who was not present. Mr. Petteruti was convicted on May 8,2023 of violation **N.J.S.A/N.J.A.C. 23:4-13.1**. Hunt with a firearm without wearing required/adequate hunter orange. A second violation on September 5,2023 of violation **N.J.S.A/N.J.A.C. 7:25-5.6 (A)**, Hunt/take black bear during closed season. **N.J.S.A/N.J.A.C. 7:25-5.6 (A)4** Possess/use illegal missile while hunting black bear. **N.J.S.A/N.J.A.C. 23:4-16(d)**. Did possess a loaded firearm within 450 feet of an occupied building. **N.J.S.A/N.J.A.C. 23:4-12** Did hunt bear in a manner other than prescribed by code.

Chairman Virgilio asked for a motion to open the floor for discussion.

A motion was made by Councilman Robinson to open the floor for discussion and seconded by Councilman DeStephano. Vote taken, all in favor; motion approved.

After the council discussed Mr. Petteruti's violations, Chairman Virgilio asked for a motion to close the floor for discussion.

A motion was made by Councilman Robinson to close the floor for discussion, seconded by Councilman DeStephano. Vote taken, all in favor; motion carried.

Chairman Virgilio stated that the council has three options, reinstate, continue with the revocation, or delay for additional information. If there is a motion to reinstate, for the record justification is needed.

Councilman Robinson made a motion Not to reinstate Mr. Petteruti's license, seconded by Councilman Kertz. Vote taken, all in favor; one abstention (Jones). Motion carried.

Public Comment:

Barabara Sachau commented she is against the bear hunt and hunting on all NJ animals.

Janet Pizar commented on the new bear policy of cubs under 75lbs. but you have yearlings 1-year older that are still being taken. She also commented on the effectiveness of deer hunting, questioning the numbers on the 170,000 deer.

Chairman Virgilio asked for a motion to adjourn the meeting.

Councilman Robinson made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 2:37pm., seconded by Councilman Kertz. vote taken. Motion approved.

Next meeting will be held January 9, 2024, at 10:00 am. In-person at the Robbinsville office.