

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE  
NJ FISH AND GAME COUNCIL

Central Region Office  
Robbinsville, NJ  
April 14, 2015

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

The meeting was called to order at 10:10 a.m. by Acting Chairman Burke.

The flag salute and Pledge of Allegiance were completed.

Acting Chairman Burke 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 March 26, 2015 and delivered to the designated newspapers of the Division, the Newark Star Ledger and the Atlantic City Press.

Roll call was taken.

In attendance were: Acting Chairman Burke  
Councilwoman Blumig  
Councilman DeMartino  
Councilman Gudmundsson  
Councilman Link  
Councilman Van Mater

Absent: Councilman Brodhecker  
Councilwoman Brummer  
Councilman Puskas

Division employees included L. Herrighty, P. Nelson, L. Barno, D. Golden, M. Chicketano, D. Jenkins, C. Stanko, A. Ivany, T. Nichols, D. Roberts and B. Zarate.

There were numerous members of the public in attendance.

Minutes of the March 3, 2015 meeting were reviewed. **A motion was made by Councilman VanMater, seconded by Councilman Gudmundsson to approve the minutes as presented. A vote was taken with all in favor, none opposed.**

Acting Chairman Burke noted that there was a full agenda today, and there would be a slight deviation from the schedule. At 11 a.m. today a presentation would be given by the Bureau of Law Enforcement on cases involving the illegal commercialization of wildlife. A second presentation on snapping turtles would be given by staff from the Endangered and Nongame Species Program at 11:30 a.m. Later in the meeting would be a presentation on proposed changes to the Fish Code, followed by discussion for the Council and public comment on the proposals, and also a presentation on the proposed 2015-2016 migratory waterfowl dates to be considered for the upcoming season.

Acting Chairman Burke commented on the recent Outdoor Writer's Workshop that he and Councilwoman Blumig attended. Commissioner Martin was the keynote speaker. Assistant Commissioner Boornazian as well as other members of the Commissioner's staff were also in attendance.

Upcoming events that were mentioned were the continuation of the trout season, the youth turkey hunting day this coming Saturday, the regular turkey hunting season opening next week, and the opening of the Bass Pro Shops store in Atlantic City tomorrow. It was noted that a portion of the profits from their opening day will be donated toward the WILD Outdoor Expo.

Members also commented with the start of spring several bird species have been seen, including ospreys, eagles, hummingbirds and American kestrels.

Assistant Director Herrighty noted the Director's absence today, advising that he had been invited to address the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission and discuss bear management strategies. Acting Chairman Burke mentioned that there are many parallels between New Jersey and Florida regarding the bear population.

Assistant Director Nelson commented that license sales are on target as the same time last year.

Assistant Director Herrighty advised that the Commissioner would be testifying on the budget address to the Senate Budget and Appropriations Committee this Thursday morning. There should be a video stream available to anyone interested in watching.

Acting Chairman Burke advised those in attendance that he would be holding off with the public comment period until after the agenda items listed as presentations for today were completed.

Council reports began. Councilman Link reported for the Agriculture Committee, describing that the wet weather has been causing problems in some areas. In March, the Quality Deer Management Association held their annual banquet, which was quite successful financially. Councilman Link noted some of the programs they support with these funds, including foot plots on wildlife management areas, purchase of air rifles for youth sharp shooting team and sponsoring youth shooters to be able to participate in different national shooting events. He also referenced an article on bears in Florida that he had forwarded along and the similarity to problems seen in New Jersey. Only a small amount of geese have been seen in his area.

Acting Chairman Burke noted that the blueberry crop in South Jersey is about two weeks behind in growth.

Councilwoman Blumig reported for Councilman Puskas who was not in attendance today. He wanted to report that the geese have destroyed most of the wheat field crops in his area.

Councilwoman Blumig noted that all her fields are prepped for planting but they have been held up by the weather for the delivery of tree seedlings. The bee activity has started to pickup with the amount of nectar and pollen that is available to them.

Councilman Link commented on the deer population in his area and the lack of food available to them this winter into spring. Deer were seen eating landscape planted ivy that was growing up walls, plants in his nursery and weeds in the compost pile.

Councilwoman Blumig reported for the Federation of Sportsmen. There is a deer committee scheduled for tomorrow, and at some regular County meetings there has been talk of developing wildlife management area harvest targets compared to harvest amounts on private lands. Acting Chairman Burke advised that this has also been discussed in the Southern region. There was some additional discussion on this.

Councilman Van Mater reported that the Burlington County Federation met last week. In the Southern region, there have been many reports of dead deer and turkey along the roadways.

Councilman Gudmundsson reported seeing many cars parked along Route 46 near Pequest on the opening day of the trout season. The South Branch was also very active, with many fish being caught. He did not see too many fishermen along the Musconetcong.

Councilman Gudmundsson reported that the Pequest Open House had a very good turnout. There was some additional discussion among the members regarding the opening day of trout season.

Federation dinners and the Trout Unlimited banquet season are both done.

Councilman DeMartino had no new information to report, but did note that the waterfowling groups met this past Tuesday and discussed potential dates for the upcoming seasons.

Acting Chairman Burke encouraged members who are not able to attend area Federation meetings to try and secure copies of the minutes of those meetings to review. He noted that some sporting and fishing activities were delayed due to the weather.

There was some discussion on the bonus tag program for striped bass.

There was no report for the Finance Committee. A meeting will be held on May 12<sup>th</sup> after the regular Fish and Game Council meeting.

The Fisheries Committee report will be later today.

The Game Committee will also report later today. It was noted that the public Game Code hearing was held on March 31, and had very few speakers.

There was no new information to report for the Legislative Committee. They are tentatively planning to meet in June.

There was no new information to report for the Endangered and Nongame Species Advisory Committee, the Waterfowl Stamp Advisory Committee or the Wildlife Rehabilitator's Advisory Committee.

Division reports began. Acting Chief Ivany reported for the Bureau of Information and Education. He noted several recent activities that have occurred, including the Outdoor Writer's Workshop and the Pequest Open House. Both events were well attended and have received positive feedback.

The opening day of trout season events at the Pequest Trout Hatchery were well attended. The Lt. Governor was in attendance to help with the presentation of awards for the photo contest and Jr. Skillful Angler program.

Black bears are becoming active, and a news release is due to go out soon. Educational programs are also beginning for the Spring.

The Governor's Surf Fishing Tournament is scheduled for May 17.

Acting Chairman Burke added that a large numbers of youth fishing tournaments are scheduled in the coming weeks.

Councilwoman Blumig commented on a recent bear education program that was given to a K-9 Search and Rescue unit by Senior Biologist M. Smith and the tremendous job she does with her presentations.

Chief Chicketano reported for the Bureau of Law Enforcement, giving a power point program and detailed review of the Special Investigative Unit and the work they have done on preventing the commercialization of wildlife. Special consideration was given to Lt. Batten and his work as an undercover operative on elvers, which Chief Chicketano described for the Council. The personal sacrifices made by Lt. Batten during this undercover work were also noted.

Chief Chicketano announced that Lt. Batten had been selected Shikar Safari Club International Outstanding Wildlife Officer of the Year. His name will be added to the plaque that bears the names of past officers who have received this award, and will be displayed at his field office in the Southern Region for the next year. Fellow officers from the Bureau of Law Enforcement were present to help congratulate him on this honor. He was not aware that he had been nominated for and selected to receive.

Chief Chicketano also outlined another case involving detailed investigative work by Conservation Officer Martiak on a report that originated as a coyote attack, continued to the individual making terroristic threats involving explosives, and evolved into serious personal threats made to a Division employee by the person being investigated. For his extensive work investigating this matter and coordinating with other agencies to apprehend the suspect as well as secure search warrants for the individual's home, he was presented with a Command Citation by Chief Chicketano.

On behalf of the Council, Acting Chairman Burke thanked both officers for their service.

Sr. Zoologist B. Zarate addressed the Council and gave a power point presentation on snapping turtles. The program included a review of the recommendations being made for the next Fish Code cycle. Chief Barno followed up this presentation by discussing with and answering questions from the Council.

The meeting stopped for lunch at 12:04 p.m. and resumed at 12:54 p.m.

Chief Barno continued with a review of the proposed changes to the Fish Code. She also gave timeline of the process that is needed to follow through with making code changes. All information was presented in a power point program, after which concerns or questions from the Council were addressed. **A motion was made by Councilman Gudmundsson, seconded by Councilman DeMartino to keep the harvest of channel catfish on the Delaware River consistent with the regulation throughout the rest of the State, for the limit of five fish over 12 inches. A vote was taken with all in favor, none opposed.**

**A second motion was made by Councilman Gudmundsson, seconded by Councilman DeMartino to make the general harvest limit of fish on the Delaware River 25 fish unless otherwise specified. A vote was taken with all in favor, none opposed.**

At this time, the floor was opened to public question or comment with a two minute limit. Janet Pizar inquired if Furunculosis was a threat to other species such as frogs and turtles. Chief Barno was not aware of it being found outside of fish, describing it was a density disease and how it might spread. There was some other discussion regarding density disease. Ms. Pizar also asked if there was a computation of economic loss from the previous Furunculosis outbreak, which was estimated to be \$115,000 in license sales and/or \$600,000 in fish for stocking.

Barbara Sauchau stated her opposition to not having three minutes to speak at this time. She proceeded to read from an article about trout fishing. Comments from the article included the components of fish food, and that

hatcheries are polluters because of the discharge of fish excrement and what it contains. (Ms. Sauchau was allowed three minutes, which she expired before finishing the article).

Lou Valucchi from Mahwah addressed the Council. He stated that Barbara and Janet (first names only) were very knowledgeable and would make a good balance to the Council.

Councilwoman Blumig inquired to Chief Barno about the fish feces discharge at the Pequest Hatchery, knowing that previously it had been collected and used on the fields. Chief Barno advised that the discharge is treated before it goes out of the Hatchery and exceed the standards for required for the Pequest River. There was some additional discussion on this and the information Ms. Sauchau had read from today.

With no one else wishing to make public comment, **a motion to proceed with the proposed changes to the Fish Code was made by Councilwoman Blumig, seconded by Councilman Gudmundsson. A vote was taken with all in favor, none opposed.**

Chief Barno noted that there is a focus on the 2018 Fish Code and gave a small review of what may be coming forward on that.

Chief Golden reported for the Bureau of Land Management. He noted several recent retirements, including Southern Region Superintendent L. Pettigrew, Crew Supervisor G. Stone and later this week, Northern Region Superintendent R. Olsen. This now leaves the Bureau with no Regional Superintendents, and only one Planner, where there previously were three of each. He is trying to replace most of these positions in the near future.

Chief Golden distributed and reviewed questions from the pheasant distribution model survey that staff has been working on. Members of the Council were asked to review and e-mail any comments to him. This survey will soon be sent to current and past pheasant stamp purchasers for their input. There was some minor discussion on this. Chief Golden also showed a sample of maps of the stocking areas on the wildlife management areas where birds are distributed. Plans are to have these maps available for pheasant hunters in the future. There was additional discussion on the information presented today and on the pheasant stocking program on wildlife management areas.

Chief Golden gave an update on the Metal Detecting Policy. He reviewed that the Division used to give free special use permits for this activity but the demand for permits grew too big and the issuance of permits was put on prohibition two years ago. There has been some pressure from the Gloucester County Federation for the Division to reconsider their position on this and to reinstate the program. Personnel have been reviewing the permit that is issued by the State Parks Service to see if the Division should develop something similar. Chief Golden further explained some of the details being considered for the permit if the program does move forward. The State Historic Preservation Office has noted concerns in areas where there could be artifacts. There was additional lengthy discussion on having this type of activity on wildlife management areas as well as enforcement issues that may be of concern. Chief Golden advised that nothing is being offered currently and will not be until the logistics can be worked out.

Acting Chairman Burke advised that some wildlife management area properties in deer hunting zone 42 were not well marked, and he has also seen ATV trails on WMA properties.

Chief Golden gave an update on the recent Split Rock Reservoir property acquisition. Boundary signs are being put in place. There is some question on the trail access easement and if it was part of the sale. This easement and access restrictions are still be investigated. Also, he noted the potential for the installation of ramp access at Split Rock Reservoir is still under review, and would have to include road repair to the area.

Chief Chicketano reported for the Bureau of Law Enforcement. There was some discussion on the information he gave earlier today. He then reviewed some of the highlights as listed in the monthly report.

Councilwoman Blumig advised that she had raised the issue to the Commissioner at the Outdoor Writers Workshop about the possibility of the Division incorporating credit card payments. She had also spoken with Councilman Puskas who suggested that Conservation Officers have credit card readers to be able to issue licenses on the spot to sportsmen and women who were checked and found not to be in compliance, such as is done in Florida. She further explained a situation where this had occurred. Chief Chicketano noted that not all officers have smart phones, which would be necessary for something like this. He added that Captain Fresco from the Marine Unit had contacted Fish and Wildlife Officers in Florida regarding this matter, and while they were not able to physically issue a license on the spot they could offer an application or provide a phone number to get a number issued over the phone which would serve license purchasers until their actual license arrived in the mail. There was some additional discussion on this type of license acquisition, such as the customer purchasing one with a smart phone, but Chief Chicketano noted other factors that would come in to play in this type of instance, such as a violation for failure to display which would require a statutory change to modify this regulation, or the lack of access to equipment such as to a computer as could happen in the Marine Unit.

Acting Chief Stanko reported for the Bureau of Wildlife Management. She advised that there were very few people in attendance at the Game Code hearing on March 31, and the hearing was completed within 15 minutes.

Work on the Comprehensive Black Bear Management Policy and Game Code amendments for black bears is on schedule, and staff hopes for a May 18 publication in the New Jersey Register. The public meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, June 2 at the State Museum in Trenton.

An update on the quail restoration program was given. The Division along with several partners is working on a plan at the Pine Island Cranberry Corporation property in Burlington County. On April 1, 80 radio collared native quail from Georgia were released. After 12 days, the first report was made and there was a 16% loss. Chief Stanko reviewed the different reasons for loss that were recorded, and advised that this was the first portion of the 240 birds that are to be released over the next three years. Further information on this project was reviewed and updates will be provided as the project progresses.

Chief Stanko next introduced Acting Deer Project Leader D. Roberts to present the past seasons deer harvest results. He first advised that the Deer Project has reorganized into a two region system, and showed the breakdown of counties assigned to the Northern and Southern areas. Sr. Biologist J. Powers will be covering the northern region, and Sr. Biologist J. Leskie the southern region.

The final deer harvest for the 2014-2105 deer season was 52,704. This was a 3% increase over last years' total harvest. A power point presentation was given showing harvest breakdowns by season type, weapon type, trends by weapon type and temporal harvest patterns. Regulation sets were reviewed as well as antler point restriction (APR) zones.

Principal Biologist T. Nichols was in attendance to give a power point presentation on the recommended migratory bird season. He noted that today was informational only, and a vote on these dates would be requested at a later meeting. Special attention was given to and described by Principal Biologist Nichols with regard to Atlantic brant.

Principal Biologist Nichols also advised that there would be major changes to the annual regulatory migratory bird cycle in the coming year. Due to publication dates in the Federal Register, the cycle will back up to the previous year, and all dates should be finalized in February.

Acting Chairman Burke requested that members of the Council discuss the information presented on the current proposed season dates with their constituents before the next Council meeting.

Chief Jenkins from the Endangered and Nongame Species Program was in attendance to give an update on the Wildlife Action Plan. Work continues on the plan, and internal meetings are scheduled next week. He advised to follow the Division's website for progress information.

There was no old or new business to discuss.

The public comment period was opened. Speakers were advised that they would have three minutes, with a total overall time of 15 minutes for all speakers.

Barbara Sauchau continued to read from the article she expired her time on earlier in the meeting. She also referenced a person from Phillipsburg that she wanted investigated and the reason why, and was advised that this would be a request she should make to the local police department. Lastly, she commented on a Huffington Post report on a bald eagle, on the presentation made by Principal Biologist Nichols, on the title change for Acting Chief Stanko, and the bear incident at the Apshawa Preserve. (Ms. Sauchau expired her time)

Janet Pizar referenced an article on deer collisions, and also distributed her own information to the Council on deer. She had formulated her own map with regard to deer harvest information. She questioned about what farmers, automobile drivers, and business owners in areas where the deer seasons are made less liberal and wondered what they think of these deer zones being managed for deer increase. She referenced the information she had distributed describing different pages within. There was some discussion between Ms. Pizar and the Council relative to what she was presenting, and information that she was claiming was not available. Ms. Pizar was advised to submit written comments on the information she felt was not available. Ms. Pizar continued, and there was additional discussion regarding what she was presenting today. (time expired)

Dr. Reist from the Department of Agriculture wanted to advise the Council of an avian influenza issue. The USDA DS and USDA Wildlife Services feels that all turkey flocks may be being affected by migrating waterfowl, and would appreciate any information from the Council on issues that may arise. He advised that both wild and domestic birds can be affected, and it is a quick moving virus. Assistant Director Nelson noted that Division Pathologist Stansley is aware and on top of this issue.

With no one else wishing to address the Council, **a motion was made by Councilwoman Blumig, seconded by Councilman DeMartino to adjourn. All were in favor.** Meeting adjourned at 4:10 p.m.