

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE
NJ FISH AND GAME COUNCIL

Central Region Office
Robbinsville, NJ
November 10, 2009

The regular meeting of the New Jersey Fish and Game Council was held on the above date. In attendance were:

Acting Chairwoman Jeanette Vreeland
Councilman Dave Burke
Councilman Ed Kertz
Councilman John Messeroll
Councilman Dan Van Mater
Councilman Len Wolgast

Absent: Councilwoman Barbara Brummer
Councilman Fred Hough
Councilman Robert Puskas

Division employees included: Director Dave Chanda, Assistant Director Larry Herrighty, Paulette Nelson, Jim Sciascia, Tim Cussen, Tony Petrongolo, Sue Predl and Andy Burnett.

There were also several members of the public in attendance.

The meeting was called to order at 11:28 am.

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 and sent the designated newspapers of the Division, the Newark Star Ledger and The Press (Atlantic City) on October 23, 2009.

The flag salute and Pledge of Allegiance were completed, and moment of silence was held in honor of Veteran's Day and for those involved with the tragedy at Fort Hood.

Roll call was completed.

Minutes of the October 20, 2009 meeting were reviewed. **A motion was made by Councilman Messeroll, seconded by Councilman Van Mater to approve the minutes as given. Councilman Burke asked to correct two items that he had spoken on, and a vote was taken with all in favor, none opposed to approve the minutes with corrections.**

Acting Chairwoman Vreeland reviewed some of her activities this past month, which included a great amount of travel. She also thanked Councilman Messeroll for sitting in as Acting Chair for the last meeting.

Director Chanda addressed the Council. He reported that the opening day of the small game season had gotten off to a good start, and that the birds at the pheasant farm looked good.

He reported that there would be a meeting next week with Assistant Commissioner Cradic regarding the transition to the new Governor. Councilman Wolgast noted that he and several other members of the New Jersey Outdoor Alliance were asked to represent the Alliance should they be asked to assist with the transition team.

The public comment period was opened for anyone wishing to speak on the agenda item regarding the application from Bernards Township for a Community Based Deer Management Permit. There were none.

Councilman Kertz reported for the Agriculture Committee. He noted that they have had quite a lot of rain in his region.

Councilman Kertz added that there were no comments on wildlife at the Agriculture meeting last night, however rumors have been circulating about baiting in his area, and he noted that hunters in South Jersey are big on baiting.

Some of the hunters he has been speaking with noted deer and the accessibility of acorns this time of year. With the early acorn drop, the deer have left some area backyards to feed elsewhere. Councilman Kertz reported that he had lost 50% of his corn crop in some fields to deer damage.

Councilman Messeroll noted that he had been contacted by Councilman Puskas earlier today that he was trying to harvest his crops before the forecasted rain and would not be attending the meeting today. Councilman Kertz added that during a recent three day period of rain, over 5 inches of rain fell in his area.

Councilman Messeroll reported for the Federation. He noted that things have been quiet, with sportsmen getting ready for the upcoming hunting season. The bear situation was also discussed.

Members are looking forward to appointments to the Fish and Game Council going forward with the new administration.

The various county federations are trying to get the fishing line recycling program going in their areas.

Councilman Messeroll also noted the passing of Marty Scanlon. Mr. Scanlon had been President of the Trappers Association.

The next State meeting is scheduled for November 20, 2009. Acting Chairwoman Vreeland and Councilman Van Mater will be in attendance.

There was no new information to report for the Legislative Committee.

Assistant Director Herrighty commented for the Endangered and Non-Game Species Committee. Their meeting date has been changed to November 30, 2009. They will not be discussing feral cats at their next meeting, but will be appointing an AD HOC working group for this matter. Rule changes on pine snakes will be discussed.

Assistant Director Herrighty noted that Chief Barno from the Bureau of Freshwater Fisheries would not be attending today's meeting since she was attending an Eastern Brook Trout Joint Venture Partnership Meeting in Berkley Springs, West Virginia. She had asked him to advise members of the Council of the public fish forum scheduled for December 5, 2009 at the Hackettstown Hatchery. There will be a new poster session from 9 am to 10 am, and the meeting will begin at 10am.

Assistant Director Herrighty also reported that he had stopped by the Ken Lockwood Gorge last Friday afternoon, and was addressed by a fisherman who was pleased with the improvements to the roadway at that area. Councilman Wolgast added that someone he spoke with was ecstatic with the large sizes of fish being stocked recently.

Principal Biologist Sue Predl presented an application from Bernards Township for a Community Based Deer Management Permit. She noted that they have been receiving these permits since 2001. They utilize two hunting clubs for this permit. Township property is open during the regular season, and they are asking for a six-week extension for the period February 22, 2009 to March 31, 2009 to hunt the 32 township properties as well as 3 county owned properties. Last year, a total of 302 deer were harvested during the regular seasons, and 33 during the extended period. Deer are checked in at the Township police department during this extended period. All hunters are required to have the proper hunting licenses and permits. Hunters are allowed to keep the deer they harvest during the season. The township pays for butchering and any unwanted deer go to the food bank. A 2003 survey response from 775 residents showed that 86% had damage, with 73% of that being significant damage and estimates of cost at \$19 million. In 2008, there were a reported total of 109 deer vehicle accidents reported. In past years, deer vehicle accidents have been as high as 275. A forward looking infrared survey done in 2002 showed an estimated 100 plus deer per square mile, and the most recent estimate is 20 deer per square mile. They are still having damage to lawns and landscape, and many vehicle accidents. The only exception to the New Jersey statute would be allowing hunting outside of the designated hunting times. Councilman Wolgast asked if any of these lands were purchased with Green Acres monies. Principal Biologist Predl will remind them that they can not restrict access to just these two clubs if lands were acquired with Green Acres monies, however they can restrict the number of hunters on an area. Additional discussion was held regarding the need for the clubs to have insurance, and whether or not the clubs had open memberships. Assistant Director Herrighty added that several years ago they were asked to increase their memberships, and Councilman Kertz suggested that if they had one more club come in to assist during the regular hunting seasons they may not need this permit. After some additional discussion, **a motion was made by Councilman Kertz, seconded by Councilman Wolgast to approve the application from Bernards Township for a Community Based Deer Management Permit. A vote was taken with all in favor, none opposed.**

Assistant Director Herrighty reported for the Bureau of Wildlife Management. He presented the most recent black bear report information, noting that the Category One calls were down by 5%, the Category Two calls were almost even, and the Category Three calls were up by 31%.

He reported he had received a call last night from Principal Biologist Kelcey Burgess regarding a horse that had been killed by a bear in North Township, Warren County yesterday. He described that the horse was found and the bear had left the area, but a trap was set, and the bear did return and was shot.

He also noted information that has been in the newspapers lately regarding the sighting of a mountain lion in Michigan. There have since been calls asking if there are mountain lions in New Jersey, and while they do receive calls of sightings all the time, there has been no evidence found to confirm these sightings.

The pheasants being stocked for the Fall hunting season all look well. Assistant Director Herrighty reviewed the new loading procedures staff at the Rockport Game Farm are utilizing to load the crates on the trucks using pallets. This new system seems to be working well.

Plans are in place to demolish the old brooder facility at the game farm and begin construction on the new modernized facility. Director Chanda added that this is being done with monies from the Vernon Valley account.

Councilman Messeroll asked if the excess birds could be sold, and Assistant Director Herrighty noted that this was tried in the past, but did not work well. The game farm is currently operating with a reduced staff, and they are breaking even on cost of raising the birds.

There were 1,266 birds caught during pre-season waterfowl banding activities.

Councilman Messeroll also noted a call he received from someone who had applied for a permit for the Forsythe Refuge. The hunter was awarded a permit, but did not notice the date that the permit needed to be picked up by on his postcard notification. It was suggested that the date be printed in red in the future so that it would stand out from the other colors used on the postcard.

Councilman Burke asked Assistant Director Herrighty about the bear sighting report, and the increase of the number of injured bears from last year to this year, inquiring if one road injured bear could create the increase in calls. Assistant Director Herrighty explained that the information is usually from different reports, with calls varying from a bear with an injured leg limping in someone's backyard to a bear hit by a car.

Councilman Burke also inquired on the FAA Technical Center possibly waiving their Earn-A-Buck requirement, as discussed previously. Assistant Director Herrighty had e-mailed Southern Region Deer Biologist Leskie regarding this matter, and he was not aware of this and would be contacting the Tech Center.

- Acting Chairwoman Vreeland distributed letter she had received on the Trap-Neuter-Release program to the members of the Council for their information.

Councilman Wolgast asked about the status of appointing a new Chief to the Bureau of Wildlife Management. Assistant Director Herrightly noted that it has been requested that the vacancy be announced, and while things are moving forward, nothing has come out yet.

Chief Sciascia reported for the Bureau of Information and Education. He attended the Recreational Boating and Freshwater Fishing annual workshop last week, and reviewed information from that workshop for members of the Council, including the results of the postcard mailing done to lapsed anglers. Results of the postcard marketing data analysis revealed only a small increase in license buying amongst lapsed anglers who received the postcard compared to lapsed anglers in the control group. Similar results were observed last year and the small lift in sales this year was also observed in 26 of the 32 states who participated in the RBFF lapsed angler marketing program this year. The RBFF is funding a survey of lapsed anglers in six states to find reasons why anglers do not purchase a license each year.

Chief Sciascia also noted that New Jersey's active anglers will be surveyed through a Federal Aid project as part of a five year survey to measure angler satisfaction with freshwater fishing in New Jersey.

A postcard promoting fall trout fishing was also sent to anglers with a history of trout stamp purchase who had a 2009 fishing license but had not purchased a trout stamp as of the fall of this year. Only a small lift in purchasing was observed when the treatment group was compared to the control group.

Based on the data observed from the various postcard direct mailings it appears that license sales generated by postcard recipients is not going to provide a positive return on investment. Email however is a very cost effective marketing tool and provided a greater lift in license buying by treatment groups than was observed from the direct mail groups. Sciascia pointed out that the Division needs to find ways to increase the number of license buyer records with associated email addresses.

Acting Chairwoman Vreeland suggested that something be put in the Digest to ask for e-mail addresses information from license holders.

Chief Sciascia distributed a hand out of fishing license sales, and noted that overall the numbers were up.

A direct mail piece was also sent to lapsed bow and arrow hunters, using a letter format similar to one used in North Carolina. This was sent to 5,000 lapsed hunters from 2007, and while there was no significant difference in license sales between the treatment and control groups, some valuable feedback was received from some of those who received the letter. Copies of the letter and emails were provided to the Council by Chief Sciascia.

Additional information was noted by Chief Sciascia in the handout that showed a significant increase in bow and arrow license sales overall to date. He further explained to the Council that

there are 6,000 bow and arrow hunters lost annually, but they are replaced by other bow hunters. He also noted that they need a more detailed analysis of hunter participation.

Chief Sciascia reported that the Hunter Education is showing an increase of 15% compared to this same time last year. When projecting out, they expect to double the increase from last year.

The meeting broke for lunch at 12:20 pm and resumed again at 1:04 pm.

Acting Chairwoman Vreeland noted information sent to the members for the 2010 meeting dates, adding that they would be reviewed later in the meeting.

Chief Cussen reported for the Bureau of Law Enforcement. He presented Conservation Officers Steve Sutton and Thomas O'Rourke to the Council. These officers were both given Distinguished Service Awards for their acts in preventing two individuals from taking their own lives. One of these occurred on a wildlife management area, and the other out in the field. Presentations were made to these officers by Director Chanda and Chief Cussen.

Chief Cussen reported that officers had a total of 6,188 hours of service during this reporting period. They included 1,195 for marine resources, 1,114 for deer hunting, 594 for hunting activities, 326.5 wildlife management area patrols and 58 for black bear patrol and investigation.

A total of 3,189 field inspections were conducted, resulting in 351 fish and wildlife complaints, 19 warnings and 2 criminal arrests. The complaints issued were 27 for waterfowl hunting, 17 deer hunting, 106 wildlife management area violations and 122 for marine recreation. He noted that of the 106 wildlife management area complaints, the vast majority were issued in the Central Region. Chief Cussen also noted an internet site that officers have been tracking that advertised rave parties. These illegal events came in and set up tents and amplifiers, and activities included music, alcohol and drug use. Officers in the Central Region obtained good information from this site of an event planned on one of our wildlife management areas, and were able to apprehend 70 individuals participating in these illegal activities. He added that this shows what the officers are capable of when they work as a group.

Councilman Kertz asked what the age range was of these individuals, and Chief Cussen noted some of them were in their thirties or forties, but most were in their late teens.

Councilman Messeroll inquired about a suicide he heard had happened on the Assunpink WMA. Chief Cussen confirmed that there was a suspected suicide last week at the shotgun range.

Chief Petrongolo reported for the Bureau of Land Management. He noted that 87 acres have been added to the wildlife management area system during this last reporting period, for a total of 325,006.54 acres to date.

He also noted that the Green Acres Bond Issue had been passed during the elections, which would make more monies available to preserve open space and added that there are many offerings in line.

Chief Petrongolo noted that last month he had reported on the addition of the Waddell's property, which runs along the Musconetcong River. He presented and reviewed a map of the area for the Council.

Leases prepared as part of the new Farm Lease Program have been approved by the State House Commission. They will now be sent to the winning bidders for signatures. He also noted that they have received inquiries for the non-bid properties, but those areas will have to wait and be rebid next year.

Work done using Corporate Business Tax (CBT) monies at the Shaw's Mill and Maskill's Mill dams are almost complete.

The roadway on the Hyper-Humus property in Sussex County that runs along the Paulinskill River has been tarred and chipped using CBT monies.

At the Ken Lockwood Gorge, they are still waiting for the rails to be installed on the handicapped docks. There are concerns about problems with the gates, and they are working to get this corrected. They may have to be barricaded for now until this is done.

Old and new business was discussed.

The calendar of meeting dates for 2010 was reviewed. Members were reminded that the December 2009 meeting would be held on the 15th, starting at 11 am. The Game Committee will meet at 9 am, and a presentation will be made in the afternoon by staff from the Bureau of Wildlife on the status of Bobwhite quail. **A motion was made by Councilman Burke, seconded by Councilman Kertz to adopt the tentative 2010 meeting schedule. A vote was taken with all in favor, none opposed.**

Councilman Messeroll felt that an orientation session should be held for upcoming appointees to the Fish and Game Council, noting that it was helpful to him when he was first appointed. It was also suggested that the new appointments be phased in gradually. Term limits and appointments were also discussed.

At this time, the public comment session began. Janet Pizar from Millburn addressed the Council. She noted the two attempted and one successful suicide that had occurred on wildlife management areas, and the timeframe in which they occurred, asking if anyone had looked for commonalities in these cases. She felt that this was necessary not only for those in "that state of mind" but for WMA users as well. (Note: one of these attempted suicides was not on a wildlife management area)

Ms. Pizar also questioned the case of the bear killing the horse in Warren County. She added that it is so rare for a bear to kill a horse, and inquired if the horse could have been an injured horse or died of natural causes and was just found by the bear. She also questioned if they were definite that the bear seen eating the dead horse was the same bear, or could it have been another bear, and added that this would be put in writing in her next letter of information requests. She also asked to go on record that she was still waiting for a response to her April, August and

September letters, but did thank Assistant Director Herrighty for his response to her October letter.

Ms. Pizar next referenced an article from Parade, a supplement of the Star Ledger. She said that the article noted that in the last 27 years more than 320 people in the United States have been killed by dogs. In the 1990's 30 people annually were killed by dogs, as compared to 19 people being killed by bears in the past 110 years. She noted a second Parade article which stated that there were four lethal shark attacks in 2001. She added that the article said there was a 5.9% fatality rate each year from shark attacks around the country, and again compared this to the bear statistics.

Ms. Pizar asked to go on record as referencing an article from the 1/24/88 edition of the Star Ledger, which brought to the public's attention that the Division of Fish and Wildlife and the Fish and Game Council wanted to hunt bears when they estimated that there were only 150 bears Statewide.

Ms. Pizar asked that it be on record that she hand delivered two letters, one to Acting Chairperson Vreeland and the other to Director Chanda. She then thanked Council for their time.

The next person to address the Council was Jim Giovanelli from Springfield Township, Burlington County. He had concerns about a depredation permit that was issued to his neighbor for deer damage control, and the times of day the permit was being utilized. Mr. Giovanelli described the situation, but also advised the Council that he had been advised earlier today that this matter would be taken care of.

Jim Soden was next to address the Council. He had some concerns regarding the exterior of the Central Region Office. Mr. Soden was advised to see Chief Petrongolo from the Bureau of Land Management on this matter.

There was no one else wishing to make public comment.

A motion was made by Councilman Messeroll, seconded by Councilman Van Mater to adjourn the meeting. Meeting adjourned at 1:42 pm.