

NJ Wildlife Rehabilitators Advisory Committee
Meeting Minutes
October 23, 2024
Central Region Office
NJ Fish and Wildlife

WRAC Purpose: The purpose of the WRAC is to provide advice and assistance to New Jersey Fish and Wildlife (NJFW) to improve the wildlife rehabilitation program and the care that is provided to injured and orphaned wildlife.

Committee Members Present: Diane Nickerson, Jim DeStephano, Heather Freeman, Tracy Leaver, Giselle Chazotte-Smisko, Michael O'Malley

Committee Members Absent: Vicky Schmitt, Dr. Erica Miller, Lisa DeLambert

NJFW Employees: Katherine Szostak, Sherry Preisig, Jim Oxley

Members of the Public: Lori Swanson.

Meeting called to order at 10:44

- A motion was made by J. DeStephano to approve the May 22, 2024 minutes. H. Freeman seconded. G. Smisko, T. Leaver, and M. O'Malley abstained. The meeting minutes will be approved at the March 12, 2025 meeting.
- D. Nickerson has no new updates on the senate bills. H. Freeman has not seen any updates on the bills either.
- T. Leaver was unable to coordinate a schedule before the busy season started for NJFW training. At some point, she wants to follow up on the issues that seem to be coming up, which is why the training program came up in the first place. She wants to make sure NJFW is on the same page when endangered species are involved in rehabilitation. D. Nickerson stated that WARNDP needs to be involved in this training since they are the ones answering a lot of phone calls. T. Leaver wants to coordinate dates with the committee for further training, which should include K. Szostak, S. Preisig, and J. Oxley.
- E. Miller advised that highly pathogenic avian influenza (HPAI) is coming back and moving from the west to the east coast and is likely coming with the weather. D. Nickerson suggested continuing with the previous HPAI protocols that took place in 2021. E. Miller continued to explain that hemorrhagic disease is slowly making its way to NJ, as is chronic wasting disease (CWD). CWD has been detected in Lancaster County, PA. West Nile Virus is also back. There has also been an increase in distemper across the northeast. A fox in the western part of PA had distemper and also tested positive for toxoplasmosis.
- K. Szostak announced that all permit fees for wildlife rehabilitators will be waived. This includes animal exhibitor, salvage, and endangered species. Hobby permits will not be waived.

- S. Preisig announced that she and K. Szostak will begin conducting routine inspections of all wildlife rehabilitators and all other permittees.
- S. Preisig also brought up the idea of potentially doing workshops for wildlife rehabilitators, and if there are currently any if that can be posted on the NJFW website. M. O'Malley stated that the New Jersey Association of Wildlife Rehabilitators (NJAWR), which is a membership organization, could be promoted on the website.
- D. Nickerson explained that NJAWR was originally founded to work in collaboration with NJFW and be the liaison. H. Freeman also explained that the purpose of NJAWR is to get good information out to wildlife rehabilitators in New Jersey.

Wildlife Rehabilitation Regulation Notes

- V. Schmidt suggested in a previous email that something needs to be addressed regarding nonnative wildlife. K. Szostak suggested that anything involving nonnatives be directed to the NJFW instead of going directly to rehabilitators. H. Freeman advised that this issue does not need to be addressed.
- G. Smisko had an issue with the part in the draft regulations about not taking animals from out of state. She wants to add that approval should not be given by NJFW. D. Nickerson explained that as long as out of state animals are kept separate from NJ animals; NJFW agreed. S. Preisig said this is something that we can come back to in the future.
- G. Smisko was concerned that the portion about record retention was too much. Should this apply to medications and treatment? Anything other than basic care? D. Nickerson said she would look at the standards.
- No public comment.
- G. Smisko moved to adjourn. T. Leaver seconded. All in favor; motion approved.