

THE MINUTES OF
NJ FISH AND GAME COUNCIL MEETING
GOTO MEETING November 9, 2021

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 Virgilio.

Chairman Virgilio read aloud the following notice: In accordance with P.L.1975, c. 231 notice of this meeting was filed with the Office of the Secretary of State on October 28, 2021, and delivered to the designated newspapers for the division, The Atlantic City Press and The Newark Star Ledger.

Roll call was taken in accordance:

- Chairman Virgilio
- Councilman Phil Brodhecker (late)
- Councilman Joe DeMartino
- Councilman Jim DeStephano
- Councilman Dr. Rick Lathrop
- Councilman Ed Kertz
- Councilman Rob Pollock (late)
- Councilman Robert Puskas - (absent)
- Councilman Loren Robinson
- Councilman Ken Whildin

Division employees included: D. Golden, G. Kopkash, L. Barno, C. Stanko, J. Hearon, F. Panico, A. Ivany, S. Crouse, M. Woerner, T. Kinney, and D. Bajek.

There were numerous members of the public in attendance.

Chairman Virgilio asked if there were any changes or corrections to the October 12 minutes.

A motion was made by Councilman Robinson to approve the October 12, 2021, minutes, seconded by Councilman DeStephano. Vote taken; motion carried.

Chairman Virgilio welcomed everyone to our meeting. He would like to congratulate Governor Murphy on his historical reelection to a second term, something no other Democrat has done in

the past 40 years. He looks forward to working with his administration to build upon our more aggressive non-lethal methods to control black bear behavior in New Jersey.

In two short days we will celebrate Veteran's Day. Take the time to thank our veteran service men and women, for you may never know the extent of their sacrifice to protect and defend our country. Before you thank them for their service, think for a short moment about your expression of gratitude, then say it from your heart and not out of the sense of obligation, grasp the meaning of their service and your thank you will honor both you and that veteran. Finally on behalf of the Fish and Game Council, we welcome our newest councilman Robert Puskas, who will be serving as the central region farmers representative. Councilman Puskas is not new to council as he had previously served this State back in 2009. He is currently harvesting his crops this morning and should be joining us a little later.

Director Golden reported that Monday was the full-time return to office and there is a mandatory vaccination requirement or undergo weekly COVID testing. He updated the council on HR actions across the Division reporting that there are a number of new hires and promotions pending for Division employees. With this, 6 are Bureau of Wildlife Management with the bear project, plus 2 promotions to Technician and 1 Principal Biologist promotion. Diane Ogonofski retired the end of October, and her position is now posted. I&E hired program specialist Doug Rizio, who replaced Paul Tarlowe who was our web master. Endangered and Nongame is posting 1 promotion for Principal Biologist. The Office of Administration had 2 new hires, Freshwater Fisheries had 1 promotion to Sr. Biologist. Assistant Commissioner Ray Bukowski retired last month, and Craig Dorsett is now Acting Assistant Commissioner for Natural and Historic Resources. Also, yesterday the Governor signed the Waterfowl Stamp Bill, which will now raise the price from \$5.00 to \$10.00.

Review Draft 2022 F&G Council Meeting Schedule:

Chairman Virgilio asked for a motion to accept the 2022 F&G meeting schedule.

Councilman Robinson made a motion to approve the 2022 Fish and Game meeting schedule as presented, seconded by Councilman Whildin. Vote taken, all approved, motion carries.

Council Reports:

Agriculture:

Councilman Brodhecker reported up north we are full swing into harvesting and combining corn and soybeans. Hay season is pretty much wrapped up. Some fields are seeing very little bear/deer damage and other fields are hammered with damage, from one extreme to another. You really

can't tell until you get in there and walk around. A lot has to do with the surroundings if it is populated or not.

Councilman Kertz reported a lot of concern with EHD and there have been lots of deer involved car accidents.

Dr. Reist reported there will be a national Hoof and Mouth Disease exercise November 15, 2021. Rabbit Hemorrhagic Disease vaccine has recently been approved by the USDA. There is a US manufacturer with the vaccine that will mostly go into the pet trade. With African Swine Fever, there has been a lot of scrutiny on the movement of swine at livestock markets with people releasing swine for hunting.

Farmers-Sportsman Relations Committee:

Councilman Brodhecker reported they met a few weeks ago and discussed the Hunters Helping the Hungry Program with deer being available for processing from depredation permits. The NJ Farm Bureau acquired some funds to get a refrigerated trailer to park on the farm, and they implemented that program in Warren County with a couple farmers shooting on depredation permits and using the trailer to save the deer and utilize them. This was a big step in minimizing waste and utilizing the harvest. We also talked about the depredation permits as far as the shooters being able to report them electronically as they shot them, and we are hoping to get that done soon. Chief Stanko mentioned the pilot program in Atlantic County which is still in the works. We identified areas of improvement and we plan to get back around Atlantic County to perfect the program before we move it to other counties.

NJ State Federation of Sportsman's Clubs:

Councilman DeStephano reported he attended Sussex County Federation, Trappers Association meeting, Trapper Committee meeting, State Federation meeting, and Fall Harvesters Convention.

Councilman Robinson reported he attended in-person Federation meetings at Somerset and Hunterdon, and the Farmer-Sportsmen Relations Committee meeting, and virtual meetings for the State Federation and the Federation's White-tailed Deer Committee. The Veteran's Tower Shoot was very successful with 22 veterans and 5 dog handlers. He wanted to thank the Division for allowing us to use the track chairs for the disabled hunters; the Federation and local businesses provided lunch and breakfast. They harvested around 85 birds. He also attended the Youth Pheasant Hunt at the Clinton WMA, they had 32 youths attend and 7 dog handlers. The kids harvested 41 birds. He wanted to thank the Division for providing the birds. Land Management and the Hunter Education instructors did a great job. Thanks to CO Bryce Paey for being present and speaking to the kids. Overall, it was a great day.

Councilman Whildin attended the Cumberland County meeting, the Fur Harvesters Convention, which is 2-days, Saturday and Sunday, and the Mullica Hill Riffle Pistol Club BBQ and meeting, which was well attended with over 60 members attending.

Chairman Virgilio reported he attended Gloucester County, Cumberland County, State Federation, and Farmer Relations Committee meetings, the Fur Harvesters Convention, Youth Pheasant Hunt, and Youth Trap Shoot. What he liked most was they scheduled a trap shoot prior to the youth pheasant hunt, so that the people would have experience loading and firing the shotgun and had the youth walk up past the trap house and shoot as if in the field. He also attended a women's pheasant activity.

Finance Committee: No report

Fish Committee: No report

Game Committee: No report. Planning a meeting and will discuss alternatives to lead shot.

Endangered and Non-Game Advisory Committee:

Councilman Lathrop reported that they have a meeting next week.

Waterfowl Stamp Advisory Committee:

Councilman DeMartino reported there are two meetings scheduled, one in October and the other in March.

Wildlife Rehabilitators:

Chief Stanko reported they plan to have their next in-person meeting in February 2022.

Law Enforcement Committee:

Councilman Whildin reported they met last week to discuss license restorations and will address those later in this meeting.

Public Member:

Councilman Pollock reported every October there is an issue with people taking under-sized fish or taking over the limit. He witnessed officer Chris Moscatiello do an inspection and wanted to compliment the Officer on his professionalism and how he explained the rules. He would also like to recognize officer Ed Klitz; they both have had a lot of presence in the area and have made a big difference in eliminating some of the illegal activities. Their service is recognized and makes a big difference.

Legislative Report:

Chief Stanko reported Federal bill HR 5608 Chronic Wasting Disease Research and Management Act which would authorize \$70 million annually through USDA funds split evenly between research and management with not less than 75% of management funds directed to state and tribal Fish and Wildlife agencies. It also directs a review of the CWD herd certification program. This bill was introduced on October 19th and currently has 10 co-sponsors and no Senate version yet. RAWA co-sponsors are holding strong at 132.

Division reports:**Central Services:**

Assistant Director Kopkash reported we are improving our license system. One improvement that we have been focused on this past month is the addition of The Wildlife Habitat Supporter donation program. We also continue to monitor the sales of hunting and fishing licenses and Barbara Stoff does a great job at comparison from each month of what was sold that time in past years. Sales are up except for archery. 2020 shows some slight decreases in fishing and hunting programs. We anticipate those numbers to go up this year.

Freshwater Fisheries:

Chief Crouse reported Fall trout stocking was completed October 12-20 and wanted to thank the hatchery staff and biologists, the Bureau of Land Management, Law Enforcement and Bureau of Information and Education for their assistance. We stocked over 20,000 trout, 885 3-year-old rainbow trout were stocked in 34 waters across the state at 17 rivers and 17 ponds, with 2

deviations from the program. Bergen Mill Pond (aka Silver Lake) had increased sediment due to recent storm events and experienced significant siltation and the amount of open water to fish was greatly reduced so those additional fish were stocked in Verona Park Pond and Woodcliff Lake. Rosedale Lake has an ongoing HAB issue. We recommended to suspend it for now and will possibly stock in the Winter stocking Nov 22 and 23 if the HAB is reduced. We will not be releasing dates of when our waters are stocked prior to the stocking for the safety of our staff but will post at the end of the day to let the public know. Hackettstown finished up a successful 2021 program, all objectives were met. Our most recent stocking was Landlocked Atlantic Salmon with 3,199 fish. There were some issues at a coastal impoundment. Hooks Creek Lake (in Cheesequake State Park) had a report of a fish kill on September 20, a variety of warmwater fish floating so we suspended all stocking indefinitely until the water issue is resolved. Staff are working to preserve that waterbody and see if freshwater fisheries management that can be done. Staff are working closely with I&E to keep the 2022 Freshwater Fishing digest on track. I&E put together some “how to” YouTube videos for fishing.

Information and Education:

Chief Ivany reported the Tuckahoe Waterfowl Managed Hunt went well with 51 hunters participating over 4 days. The Take a Kid Pheasant Hunt on October 30th also went extremely well, with more than 200 youth hunters and 100 volunteers who assisted. Trout in the classroom, is now at 112 schools participating, and we are close to pre-covid numbers of 150 schools participating. The Division received a recent appropriation from the state to increase our black bear education efforts, and we are moving forward developing our largest multimedia marketing campaign ever, which will expand upon our traditional efforts. This will include paid social media, web search advertising, digital messaging, digital video, website updates, and radio public service announcements. We will also expand our outreach efforts into urban and southern NJ counties and include elements of the campaign in both English and Spanish. We recently sent a request for proposals to state marketing contract vendors and we have received four proposals back from vendors. This proposal includes a fiscal year-end evaluation as well as a written report as to the effectiveness of the campaign.

Land Management:

Chief Hearon reported that Lands Management is participating in the pheasant stocking across the state, which is off to a good start. Staff participated in the state-wide Youth Pheasant Hunt which was a success. Chief Hearon wanted to acknowledge a few people who make all this possible, volunteers, staff, the federation who donate, the dog handlers, thank you all for coming out and making it such a successful event for the Division. He also shared his report of Opening Day car count. We did see an uptick during COVID. The federation chainsaw training that we had, there was a problem getting the certificates out to participants, the training group that we used did not distribute them. We were told they were sent but no one received anything, so our Habitat Planner, Tyler Kinney went and picked them up in person and is in the process of

distributing those to the federations. Piney Hallow Range in Winslow was closed under Tony P and since that time we have had a lot of people work for Lands Management that were handling that situation and currently there is no movement to do any work there, but we have had significant improvements at other ranges in the region across the state.

Law Enforcement:

Chief Panico reported the marine officers are very busy with Blackfish. Inland officers are busy as well with pheasant season going on and we are well into the deer season. The entire bureau has been focusing on a lot of the Attorney General use of force training. They are all going to different academies. This training is essentially de-escalating training, they are also taking another course called Able, which is more of an officer resiliency type of training. The Attorney General's Office just released 8 modules of their use of force policy. So, on top of all their patrol duties, the officers are getting a big amount of training now through the end of the year.

Wildlife Management:

Chief Stanko reported the Division's website was updated on the bird mortality event that struck NJ during the summer. Dr. Lewis added a map showing the distribution and frequency of reports by townships throughout the state. Reports came in from the public from 129 townships and all 21 counties, but the outbreak seems to have greatly diminished right now so it is no longer a concern, and the Division is no longer requesting reports. The cause of the mortality event is still unknown. Since the last Council meeting, we have received 11 Category 1 black bear incident reports, 9 on protected livestock, 1 attempted home entry, and 1 car entry. We set traps on nine incidents and captured and euthanized 2 bears. Of the livestock instances, there was one full-sized horse, one mini horse, two sheep in separate incidents and the remainder were chicken depredations. As discussed at the last Council meeting, a mass Gov. delivery email titled "keep NJ CWD free" was broadcasted out with amended language to clarify the new CWD regulations like the ban on bones out meat, which was confusing people, so we now say meat with no bones. The Deer Project posted a list of Frequently Asked Questions regarding deer hunting to the main landing page and deer web page in an attempt to assist hunters and lessen phone calls to the agency. The upland bird stocking areas map app has been added to the hunting and trapping explorer app. Fall turkey numbers were in and we took a total of 68 birds, there were 29 female and 39 males which was down 17% from last year. Chief Stanko gave a brief presentation of the preliminary 2021 deer harvest estimates.

Old Business:

Norvin Green Forest:

Chief Stanko reported about a year ago we were getting questions from sportsmen because they were under the impression that Norvin Green State Forest had closed some of its area to deer

hunting. When Chief Stanko contacted park officials they said that area was never opened to deer hunting, it just may not have been posted so sportsmen may not have been aware. We have had an ongoing dialog since that time trying to get more property open. Parks and Forestry staff have identified 1,050 acres in the southern section to be opened to archery hunting only, as these areas are adjacent to suburban housing developments. Most of the areas have state park trails running through them and those that don't should be accessible by roadside pull-offs. Downside is they do not anticipate this happening this year or season due to difficulty arranging discussions with all parties involved and marking the boundaries due to staff shortages. We will continue to pursue this issue.

Hunting Digest Stakeholder Update:

Assistant Director Barno reported that this year's digest was a full redesign, and we will begin to look at the 2022-2023 hunting digest. We will be meeting with the stakeholders next week to see what changes we need to do to make the information clearer for everyone, then we will have internal discussions on what is needed for next year.

Greenwood Lake Update:

Assistant Director Barno reported that anglers are continuing to show their frustration with the lack of access to the lake. They have taken up a letter writing campaign to the Governor's Office seeking funding for construction of a ramp. The Division continues with internal discussions with Parks and Forestry concerning Browns Point.

New Business:

Habitat Supporter Program Update:

Director Golden gave a brief presentation on the voluntary donation program which is geared towards non-license buying WMA users to have the option to donate in the cost of conservation. There is a big launch taking place between this council meeting and the next council meeting. All recommendations were from our Wildlife User Survey.

Community Based Deer Management Permit Applications:

Jodi Powers gave a review of the following applications for Community Based Deer Management.

Princeton Township:

Pulled their application until next month.

Bernards Township:

Bernards Township applied for Community-based Deer Management permit. The Township’s application requested that two hunting clubs consisting of sixty-eight members participate in a six-week extension of the hunting season on 43 township and 3 county properties (ending on March 31,2022). The goal is to reduce the number of deer-vehicle accidents to 45-50 accidents per year. Based on the number of deer-vehicle accidents, Fish and Wildlife recommend the council approve this application.

Essex County:

Essex County has applied for Community Based Deer Management permit. The County’s application request to allow fourteen volunteer sportsmen to cull deer, weather permitting on twelve weekdays (Tuesdays and Thursdays) between January 11, 2022 and ending February 24, 2022. The basis for this application for a CBDMP is a significant amount of damage to the forest understory caused by an over-abundance of deer. Fish and Wildlife recommends the council approve this application.

Joint Base MDL:

Joint Based Maguire-Dix-Lakehurst has applied for CBDMP to reduce the risk of white-tailed deer strikes to military aircraft and operate within the Bird/Wildlife Aircraft Strike Hazard (BASH) guidelines. They will utilize the USDA APHIS Wildlife Services staff, who are stationed at JBMDL, to bait and shoot deer on and around the runway 24-hours a day year-round. Based on the significant number of deer in and around the airfields, fish and Wildlife recommends council approve this request.

Mercer County Parks Commission:

Mercer County Parks is applying for CBDMP to cull deer starting in January 2022 through March 31, 2022, on two parks located in Hopewell Township. Mercer County Parks is proposing to allow Scorpion Outdoors to cull deer using crossbows and shotguns. The goal is to improve forest health and overall ecological condition of natural areas and to enhance ongoing efforts to reduce the deer herd. The culling program at Mercer Meadows will run from January 1- March 31, 2022. The culling program at Baldpate Mountain will run from February 1 – March 31, 2022. Based on the high deer densities in Hopewell and on Mercer County Parks property, Fish and Wildlife recommends council approve this request.

Public Comment:

Barbara Sachau commented she does not agree with the Community Based Deer Management.

Chairman Virgilio asked for a vote to accept the Bernards CBDMP.

A roll call vote was taken, all approved. Vote carries.

Chairman Virgilio asked for a vote to accept the Essex County CBDMP.

A roll call vote was taken, 6-Yes, 1 abstention (DeStephano), 1 No (Robinson); vote carries.

Chairman Virgilio asked for a vote to accept the Joint Base MDL CBDMP.

A roll call vote was taken, all approved, vote carries.

Chairman Virgilio asked for a vote to accept the Mercer County CBDMP.

A roll call vote was taken, all approved, vote carries.

Lunch: 12:15 – 12:45

Farm Leases:

Tyler Kinney and Melissa Woerner gave a brief presentation on all the farm leases.

Public Comment:

Barbara Sachau commented she is not in favor of these farm leases.

A motion was made by Councilman Robinson to accept Tyler and Melisa's report to accept these leases, seconded by Councilman kertz. Vote taken, all approved; motion carries.

License Restorations:

Patrick Butler- not present

Captain Quirk read aloud the statement for the revocation appeal for Mr. Butler who was not present. Mr. Butler was convicted of a violation on July 25, 2016, for NJSA 23:4-13.1, 23:4-1 hunting without wearing orange and hunting in a manner not subscribed by code. A second violation on October 09, 2020, for NJSA 23:7-9. a(4) being in a WMA during closed hours.

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

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

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

A motion was made by Councilman DeMartino 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 Kertz made a motion Not to reinstate Mr. Butler's license, seconded by Councilman DeMartino. Vote taken, all in favor; motion carried.

Arthur Budd- not present

Captain Quirk read aloud the statement for the revocation appeal for Mr. Budd who was not present. Mr. Budd was convicted of a violation on January 26, 2018, for NJSA 23:4-47 harvesting an antlerless deer in zone 5 during six-day firearm season. A second violation on February 25, 2021, for NJSA 23:4-42 possession of untagged/unregistered deer parts.

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

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

After the council discussed Mr. Budd'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 DeMartino. 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 Kertz made a motion Not to reinstate Mr. Budd's license, seconded by Councilman Robinson. Vote taken, all in favor; motion carried.

Chad Nelson- present

Captain Quirk read aloud the statement for the revocation appeal for Mr. Nelson who was present. Mr. Nelson was convicted of a violation on February 13, 2020, for NJAC 7:25-5.13(i) hunting waterfowl with an unsigned Federal Waterfowl Stamp and NJAC 7:25-5.13(b) hunt waterfowl in a manner other than described. A second violation on February 09, 2021, for NJAC 7:25-5.13(i) hunting waterfowl with an unsigned Federal Waterfowl Stamp.

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

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

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

A motion was made by Councilman DeStephano to close the floor for discussion, seconded by Councilman Kertz. 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 DeStephano made a motion Not to reinstate Mr. Nelson's license, seconded by Councilman Kertz. Vote taken, all in favor; motion carried.

David Dickinson- not present

Captain Quirk read aloud the statement for the revocation appeal for Mr. Dickinson who was not present. Mr. Dickinson was convicted of a violation on November 25, 2015, for NJSA 23:2B-6 possession of conch under legal size. A second violation on November 20, 2019, for NJSA 23:7-9. a (1) Disturbing state property and on November 26, 2019, NJSA 23:2B-6 multiple state and federal Fish and Wildlife violations.

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

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

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

A motion was made by Councilman Kertz to close the floor for discussion, seconded by Councilman DeMartino. 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 Kertz made a motion Not to reinstate Mr. Dickinson's license, seconded by Councilman DeMartino. Vote taken, all in favor; motion carried.

Public Comment:

Janet Pizar mentioned with the ongoing application process of the Community Based Deer Management this proves there is no change in the deer population. She asked how does one reserve a trail chair and why there was no comment last month about the outcome of the Governors reaction to the emergency bear hunt proposal. Lastly, could she have the date of the Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies Diversity Inclusion Webinar.

Director Golden responded to the trail chair, there are limited number of chairs, and they are signed out at the field offices. Arrangements should be made ahead of time. Also, the date of the Power of Inclusion Training was 4-days for 2-hours a day in August. Director Golden did not have the exact date but said he could email it to her if interested.

Barbara Sachau commented that with Community Based Deer Management she thinks they should be announced as they come in, so the public has notice.

Director Golden wanted to mention that after the issue with not being able to comment during Public Comment period last council meeting, the Division did run a test on this platform and there were no issues at that time.

Lou Martinez wanted to let the Division and the council know he thinks they are doing an outstanding job at maintaining our wildlife.

A motion was made to adjourn the meeting at 2:14 pm by Councilman DeMartino, seconded by Councilman Kertz. vote taken; all in favor, motion carries.

Next meeting will be December 14, 2021, at 10:00 a.m. in a virtual meeting.