

**Endangered and Nongame Species Advisory Committee
Meeting Minutes
July 16, 2025**

**Assunpink Central Region Office
1 Eldridge Road, Robbinsville, NJ**

Members in attendance: Russ Furnari (online), Howard Geduldig (acting chair today), Dave Jenkins, Marion McClary, David Mizrahi (online), Eliot Nagele, Chandler Navara, Catherine Tredick.

Absent: Brooke Maslo, Martha Maxwell-Doyle, Howard Reinert

Staff in attendance: David Golden (Assistant Commissioner), Jason Hearon (Assistant Director, NJFW), Kristen Meistrell (Assistant Director, NJFW), Kathy Clark (NJFW ENSP chief); Mary Monteschio (NJFW Regulatory Officer), Kim Korth (ENSP), Christina Davis (ENSP), Jake Ducey (NJFW), Juliette Harle (NJFW), R. Somes (ENSP).

Public: Dr. Erica Miller (online), Nina Jochowitz (online), Barbara Sachau (online)

The Chair convened the meeting at 10:05 AM.

The public notice for this meeting was read by K. Clark. The meeting agenda was provided to the New Jersey Secretary of State's Office.

Introductions of those in attendance.

Approval of Minutes

C. Tredick made a motion to approve the minutes of the May 14 meeting, seconded by E. Nagele. The motion was approved unanimously.

Assistant Commissioner's Report

AC Golden welcomed new Committee member D. Jenkins, who retired in 2018 as chief of the ENSP.

Fish & Wildlife (NJFW) has been working to expand stewardship of wildlife management area lands and we are compiling a 5 year plan to manage habitat on state lands. Traditionally this work has been handled by NJFW's Bureau of Land Management, but we are planning to apply for more CBT (Corporate Business Tax) funding for habitat management that targets stewardship and species recovery. There are a wide variety of projects identified. Increasing the CBT funds available for stewardship will require some legislative changes.

NJFW signed onto the Non-Lead Partnership, a coalition group promoting the voluntary use of non-lead ammunition in hunting. NJFW's sign-on creates some momentum for other organizations to also sign onto the partnership. On Sunday, July 27th, there will be a Partnership day at Colliers Mills WMA with information and demonstrations. The importance of this effort

is mostly about wildlife health – preventing harmful exposure to the scavengers that can consume lead fragments.

Governor Murphy signed off on the Wildlife Corridor Action Plan bill that requires DEP and DOT to develop the plan, with funding allocated for both agencies.

The Northeast Association of Fish & Wildlife Agencies (NEAFWA) has a northeast conservation leadership program and two members were accepted to the program: Kristen Meistrell and Eliot Nagele. Expect a great experience!

Legislative Updates

M. Monteschio reported NJ legislature is in recess. Congress is in and out of session. No news to report.

Old Business

Nominations Committee

H. Geduldig reported that DEP Commissioner LaTourette confirmed Dave Jenkins as a new ENSAC member in the public-at-large seat. In the same Administrative Order 2025-13, he confirmed R. Furnari as ENSAC chairperson.

The ENSAC needs to appoint a new representative for the Wildlife Rehabilitators Advisory Committee (WRAC). The purpose of WRAC includes reviewing regulations, and currently, the exotic/nongame regs are in review for changes on many different permits. The WRAC meets quarterly. Next WRAC meeting is 10/27/25. AC Golden suggested the ENSAC might be interested in a presentation from the permits unit.

State Wildlife Action Plan (SWAP) – Kim Korth

K. Korth presented on the progress of the State Wildlife Plan revision that is due to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service in September.

Status of plan requirements and delivery:

- The list of Species of Greatest Conservation Need (SGCN) is complete.
- Habitat types for NJ were identified and cross-walked so they can merge into the Northeast standardized lexicon. Habitats are linked to species and regions.
- Threats – Statewide and regional threats were prioritized.
- Actions – Actions were prioritized. We added species guilds to the actions database to create the link between actions and the species groups that will benefit.
- Dynamic website build – The framework is complete, and data linkages are being tested for the user interface.
- The draft plan is out for public comment as of June 30. Comments will be accepted through July 31.
- I&E is using social media to engage the public during the comment period.
- The DEP's Fish & Wildlife website hosts the SWAP website now with all content. However, the website will be improved in coming months for easier accessibility and searchability for users.
- We plan to submit the Plan to the USFWS in August, ahead of the Sept 30 deadline.

Kim gave a demonstration of the current website navigation. Discussion followed. It's noted that the next 10 year revision will be more easily done because the website framework will be done.

Public Input, limited to 3 minutes each

Nina Jochnowitz commended staff for the SWAP website pages. She suggested providing the link to licensed wildlife rehabilitators as well as local ACOs. She expressed concern over an earlier comment regarding the potential dissolution of the WRAC. If NJW is looking for people to help, she has availability after the field season.

One public member had trouble commenting but was accommodated after red knot update. Barbara Sachau expressed concern about use of pesticides.

New Business

Update: Red Knot spring migration – K. Clark

K. Clark provided data on Red Knot survey results from 2025 in the context of the long term dataset. The peak count in 2025 was 25,600, which is slightly higher than recent years. The general sense was that horseshoe crab spawning was good, supporting the shorebird migration; horseshoe crab egg density data will not be available until approximately September. Discussion followed regarding the different metrics used to track trends in the Delaware Bay and Atlantic Flyway Red Knot population.

Update: Osprey nesting season preliminary results – K. Clark

Committee members were provided a handout with very preliminary results of the 2025 nesting season. Osprey Project volunteers who check nests along the Atlantic coast are reporting very low nesting success. The majority of nests checked and reported to date, 82% of 424 nests, failed to produce any chicks. Similar results have been documented in Chesapeake Bay ospreys. More results are due from some Delaware Bay locations and from northern and inland NJ. AC Golden shared some information from NJFW Marine Fisheries Administration staff that part of the problem is the rapidly shifting distribution of the osprey's main food source, Atlantic menhaden, toward the north. The mid-Atlantic is the historic stronghold of this fish's distribution, but with warming ocean waters it is shifting north and east, likely making this fish less available to NJ ospreys. Staff will need to compile all data before finalizing an osprey report later this year.

AC Golden conveyed information from Marine Fisheries Administrator, J. Cimino, about fish population data. He said the size of menhaden fish stocks is stable, however the distribution of menhaden has shifted north significantly, away from Chesapeake Bay and New Jersey coast, as a result of warming water temperatures. R. Furnari reports the Hackensack area ospreys appear to be doing better than these Atlantic Coast results. ENSP will compile complete data and include the sites that were checked in April/May that documented occupancy.

Lunch Break 12:30-12:50

Habitat projects in the coastal zone – AC Dave Golden

AC Golden presented on Fish & Wildlife coastal habitat restoration projects. There is increasing

interest in building coastal resilience, and we are doing this kind of work on wildlife management areas. There are 16 active coastal projects as of 2025. This presentation describes 3:

Abbotts Meadow WMA marsh was formerly ditched and dikes, which damaged the natural hydrology with expanding mudflats and erosion. The restoration project placed 600,000 CY of dredged material on 143 acres in December 2023. Monitoring is tracking improved vegetative cover in new areas of upland, high marsh, and low marsh (and less mudflat).

Higbee Beach WMA's Pond Creek restoration project will restore natural resources by reestablishing full tidal connection to the marsh, enhancing habitat, and protecting freshwater inputs. Project area is 290 acres of the 1,160 acres of WMA. The site had a history of industrial use (a magnesite plant), and tidal flow of Pond Creek into Delaware Bay was blocked. Project goals are to restore tidal flow, protect resources by constructing a berm, and creating an extraordinary public user experience with a walkable berm, observation blinds, and a variety of wildlife habitats.

Barnegat Light restoration project creates habitat for beach-nesting birds next to the Barnegat Inlet jetty. In a phased work plan, it first created open nesting habitat, phase 2 created a foraging pond, and phase 3 expanded the nesting habitat along beachfront. There has been great response by least tern, piping plover, and black skimmer nesting populations.

Colonial Waterbird populations in the coastal zone – C. (Kashi) Davis

K. Davis provided a presentation on this species group that has a study area from Bay Head to Cape May, and began in 1976 so it's one of ENSPs longest datasets. Species of long-legged wading birds are surveyed every two years by helicopter. Species include Great Egret, Snowy Egret, Cattle Egret, Glossy Ibis, Tricolored Heron, Little Blue Heron, Black-crowned Night-heron, Yellow-crowned night-heron (latter two will also nest in other tree areas). White Ibis is expanding its range from south of NJ; having expanded from 3 pairs in 2020 to 921 in 2025. The survey is targeted for third week of May when incubation is at peak.

Overall results show that the total number of birds counted varies across years, but the biggest change is the decreasing trend in number of colonies from over 40 to 20. The total number of birds in recent years is influenced by recent expansion of White Ibis into NJ.

Data are reported and shared with Atlantic Flyway Nongame Bird Technical Section. ENSP staff are also working with The Wetlands Institute on marsh habitat restorations and monitoring the response by nesting birds.

ENSP documented large failures at Gull Island colonies due to mink predation. There was discussion on the NJFW response to this high level of predation, and suggestion that this be a topic for the October joint meeting of ENSAC and Fish & Game Council. Also, Chairman R. Furnari can convey this issue to the Fish & Game Council.

Key takeaways:

- Birds are moving away from rising sea level, such as moving to marsh islands where there are trees vs. shrubs.

- Phragmites and dredge spoil areas provide the most important substrate and nesting areas for long-legged wading birds in NJ.
- The decrease in number of colonies is alarming and a trend in other coastal species.
- The impact of expanding White Ibis on other colonial nesters is unknown.
- We don't yet know if restoration projects can help stabilize the state's population of wading birds, but it does offer an avenue that has both momentum and funding.

The Committee thanked the presenters.

September 17 will be the next regular meeting of the ENSAC.

Motion to adjourn by M. McClary and seconded by D. Jenkins. Meeting was adjourned at 1:35 pm.

Summary of Action Items

- Provide the Committee with the DEP response on the rodenticide issue when it's available.
- Request a presentation from NJFW permits unit regarding nongame wildlife permits and rules.
- Request topic for the October joint meeting: obtaining help of trappers to respond to emerging mammalian predation events in coastal bird colonies.