

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE  
NJ FISH AND GAME COUNCIL**

**Central Region Office  
Robbinsville, New Jersey  
August 9, 2022**

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 Frank Virgilio.

Chairman Virgilio 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 July 26, 2022 and delivered to the designated newspapers for Fish and Wildlife, the Newark Star Ledger and the Atlantic City Press.

Roll call was taken in attendance:

Chairman Frank Virgilio  
Councilman James DeStephano  
Councilman Mitchell Jones  
Councilman Ed Kertz  
Councilman Rick Lathrop -(absent)  
Councilman Rob Pollock  
Councilman Bob Puskas - (absent)  
Councilman Loren Robinson  
Councilman Ken Whildin

Fish and Game employees included: D. Golden, L. Barno, G. Kopkash, C. Stanko, A. Ivany, S. Crouse, J. Hearon, K. Springer, M. Monteschio, and D. Bajek.

There were several members of the public in attendance.

Chairman Virgilio asked for a motion to approve the June 14th F&G Council minutes.

**Councilman Robinson made a motion to approve the June 14 F&G minutes, seconded by Councilman Jones. Vote taken, 5 approve, 1 abstention (DeStephano). motion carries.**

Chairman Virgilio and the entire Fish and game council welcome you to our Assunpink Wildlife Management area on the second Tuesday in August. Last month he had the opportunity to witness a Division of Fish and Wildlife hero hiding in plain sight. Liz Jackson, Senior Educational Biologist and program coordinator for Hooked on Fishing. On a sunny Saturday in July, Liz brought three groups together to go fishing on the Charter boat Bonanza II out of Fortescue in South Jersey. Like a professional musical conductor, Liz orchestrated Interdependency and inclusion with the school children from hooked on fishing, the veterans fishing group, and the newly hatched woman's afield program. Liz was Successful at Implementing Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion, by Connecting people of all colors among the diverse age groups and races as she bounced around the boat, Creating a strong sense of belonging. Liz Jackson is one of the many heroes in New Jersey Fish and Wildlife.

Once again, we will continue testing a new comment period where we will give commenters a second time if they feel they still need more time to comment after the standard 3-minute limit. Today there will be two comment periods, the first after the fall trout stocking schedule and the second at the end of the meeting.

Assistant Commissioner Golden has a lot of exciting things to update you on. Over the past few months, we have gotten rewards, we have finalized publications, we posted our new website. We as a program have also participated in the DEP Youth Inclusion Program over the last month. This was a program that was initiated at the department level as part of the Environmental Justice initiative. It brought three groups of youths from the inner city, which were iron bound cooperation, workers Camden and groundwork Elizabeth. They brought young adults out to different DEP programs. Fish and Wildlife provided a weeks' worth of programing which included 2-days with Freshwater Fisheries, one at the Hatchery and one close to where the groups we coming from. Our Law Enforcement offered a day, we also had a day at Sedge Island. The overall program for DEP was 6-weeks. So far, we received positive feedback from the groups. An update on the State budget, the bear appropriation of 1.5 million was passed again and we are meeting internally to decide how that budget will be used. We have another years worth of money for non-lethal bear work. Our Mosquito Control Program also saw a 3 million dollar supplemental appropriation which is highly significant for that program which normally runs off 1.5 million a year. Finally, DEP as a department saw an increase in the budget enough to hire several new FTE's and we were able to get one of those FTE which will go to our Bureau of Shellfisheries.

## **Councill Reports:**

### **Agriculture:**

Councilman Jones reported it has been pretty dry and there is deer damage along with bear season. The bears are interacting with the public more and we are getting more reports on the north side of the state with crop damage.

Councilman Kertz reported there is plenty of deer damage. Somerset county Board of Agriculture meeting and they are helping with depredation permits with the farmers and would like to see them go to the convention in winter to do a presentation.

Dr Reist reported there is not a lot going on at the moment. Avian Influenza issue has decreased, no new detection in the United States in the last month.

### **Farmer/Sportsman Relations:**

Councilman Jones reported that the Farm Bureau is working with Hunters Helping the Hungry, and they have had their trailer out and about.

### **NJ State Federation of Sportsman's Clubs:**

Councilman DeStephano reported most meetings were canceled. He asked if the raffle permit renewal changed from July to January like all the other renewals. He mentioned that NY state is monitoring beach tree damage from an invasive species and was wondering if it is in NJ. Lastly, since the permit requirements have been changed, is the Division is going to let trappers use pistols?

Councilman Robinson reported he attended in-person meetings at Ocean County, Monmouth Federation, Hunterdon County, Somerset, Board of Agriculture, Game Code, Federations Wildlife council, and Finance meeting. Virtually he attended the Central region meeting. Ocean County asked for Greenwood Forest Quail stocking and a dog training area. Monmouth discussed the saltwater registry and wanted to follow up on the Hunter Education classes. The State Federation discussed gun laws and the Delaware River Gap. Board of Agriculture discussed Deer Management program. Also, the Tuckerton Decoy show is September 24-25 and November 5-6 the Fur Harvesters Convention will be in Chatsworth

Chairman Virgilio reported he attended the Hunterdon County, Somerset Board of Agriculture meeting. The NJ state Federation of Sportsman's Club introduced its pilot program on Deer Reduction Response Team and Farmer Deer Management Partnerships. That program will be

reviewed at the September Federation meeting and at that time we will be able to open it up and bring that discussion to council as to what the program actually entails. Being done under a special provision of federation bylaws, where the federation is allowed to create a NJ Wildlife council who fall under those provisions can operate dependently of the federation with a partner agency. The partner agency that we are looking to work with is the NJ Farm Bureau. As that develops more will come your way.

**Finance Committee:**

Councilman Robinson reported they had a meeting this morning and will discuss later in this meeting.

**Fish Committee:** no meeting

**Game Committee:**

Chairman Virgilio reported they are working on the 2025 amendment considerations for Game Code such as, court payable, organize/rearrange current code, and complete regulation simplification.

Chairman Virgilio wanted to let everyone know that Councilman DeMartino is no longer with the F&G Council, he moved out of state.

**Wildlife Rehabilitators Advisory Committee:**

Councilman DeStephano reported the meeting next month is postponed.

**Law Enforcement Committee:** no meeting

**Public Member Comments:**

Councilman Pollock reported that there is a lot of concern in Morris County with bears. He also wanted to know if you could look into Land Management activities helping with climate change

### **Legislative Report:**

Mary Monteschio reported that 2-reports were handed out, one for the July meeting that was canceled and one for August. One addition to the August report for the inflation reduction act, there is a provision in there for 121 million for climate change. RAWA update, it has passed the house and waiting for Senate to act. We have 42 co-sponsors.

Matts Landing update, a report was drafted and is with Department Commissions for review and approval. There were two public hearings and Central Jersey is ready to close by the end of the month.

### **Division Reports:**

#### **Business Administration:**

Chief Springer gave an update on the Wildlife Habitat Supporter donations and the closures of some Walmart's sale locations. Also, a spreadsheet was provided to see the comparison of license sales for the last 4-years. Overall license sales are down 7.77% as compared to this time last year. The total donations for the Wildlife Habitat Supporter Program total \$25,655. The Walmart sale closure, NJ F&W was contacted by Walmart's new IT contractor regarding change to their business model and the sales of hunting and fishing licenses. As a result of this change, Walmart has closed 18 hunting and fishing license sales locations. of these 18 closures, 9 stores have not sold hunting and fishing licenses since October 2019 or earlier as well as 2 stores have closed. The Bureau of Administration is working to nurture our relationship with existing license agents and to achieve these goals Elizabeth O'Neil will be serving as F&W liaison to the licensing agents. Further, to prevent situations like the Walmart issue, Barb Stoff worked with Aspira to build a specialized report that provides a time stamp of the last license/permit sale at each license agent. This will allow staff to analyze sales at all of our licensing agents.

#### **Freshwater Fisheries:**

Chief Crouse reported Hackettstown Hatchery got five FTE -seasonals. We are at the busiest time of the year. We recently completed our 2022 Walleye production. The harvests within our ponds this year had an 88% return rate from the fry that were placed in the pond, and that is the highest number on record. We traded with the Fish and Boat Commission Chanel catfish eggs for walleye. The hatchery also provided 300,030 Fathead Minos and mosquito fish to the state Mosquito Commission for use of biological control. Today is the last day for the Youth Inclusion at Pquest and Hackettstown where they had tours, fishing, demonstrations on electric fishing, hands on in the field sorting species of fish and how they can get into this career. Our fisheries biologist have been in the field quite a bit in the recent months. the northern crew has been focusing on trout production streams and inventorying our wild trout streams. The southern crews have been

sampling the lower Delaware River and monitoring invasive species, such as Flathead catfish, Snakeheads and newly the Blue catfish. Within the north and south offices staff have been involved with fish kill investigations. If anyone gets a call on fish kills, they should contact 877-warn-DEP

### **Information and Education:**

Chief Ivany wanted to thank Chairman Virgilio on the kind words about Liz and Alana. The Garden state Classic was canceled for August and now will be January 12-15, 2023, with vendors and they will present the last 3-years of winners. The new hunting digest is now available online. We have received the templet for the Freshwater Fisheries digest. The new website is now up and running. The mobile trailer worked at the Law Enforcement event in July with 3,000 people going through it. We are working with DEP Office of Local Assistance and met with them to discuss having the trailer at the municipality. Wildlife Habitat Supporter update, we are looking to generate more awareness and support for the program, so there will be WHS signs at the Wildlife Management Areas across the state with a QR code to direct them to the web page.

### **Land Management:**

Tyler Kinney reported in the Southern region the Winslow crew partnered with the Camden County Division of Environmental Affairs to remove 201 car tires from Winslow WMA. Make Peace Range the cleanup is almost finished and a deteriorated house on Winslow WMA was demolished. Habitat projects for Fall 2023 will take place three to remove invasive species and reclaim a former field. Bids for Higbee Beach were reviewed and forwarded to the Office of Coastal Engineering and expected to begin October 202. Point Pleasant boat ramp construction continues and is expected to be completed in November. Staff opened the access to Delaware Lake. We are working with volunteers to install wood duck boxes in the southern region.

Assistant Director Barno mentioned that Tony McBride is now the new Northern region Land Management Superintendent as of July 30<sup>th</sup>.

### **Law Enforcement:**

Chief Panico reported the Bureau of Law Enforcement was chosen by Atlantic State Marine Fisheries as the recipient of the 2022 Award of Excellence. We participated in the Youth Inclusion program, and officers participate in Officers Night Out at the Burlington County Fair.

**Wildlife Management:**

Chief Stanko reported that our Migratory bird project leader just returned from the Atlantic Flyaway, where he was there for nine days. He saw 39 Polar bears and banded 5,021 birds. Avian influenza samples were taken from 300 snow geese. Related to Norvin Green, we are still not getting the response we would like to see. They responded back that they went out to the field and the areas originally selected, out of three- only one is suitable for hunting. Category 1 bears: we had 20 at the last meeting in June, the total for 2-months is 68 CAT-1 bears reported with 1-hunterden County, 10 in Morris County, 6 in Passaic County, 32 in Sussex County and 19 in Warren County. That breaks down to 37% aggressive bears, 25% agricultural damage, 12% attempted home entries, 7% actual home entries, 3% property damage greater than \$500, 3% protected hives and 10% were protected wild stock. We set 28 traps and we euthanized 9 animals, and 7 non-target animals were released on site.

**Endangered and Nongame Species:**

Chief Heilferty reported RAWA continues to the states, and we are hoping for progress in early September. The Beach Nesting Program this year is less storm related issue, but more human disturbance and maintenance and vehicle run over the nests. We are working on writing up regulations to help enforce some issues. The program is coordinating with stakeholders trying to identify some areas where we can coordinate high marsh restoration projects. September 17 staff jointly hosting with NJDOT for the Northeast Wildlife Conference.

**Old Business:****Greenwood Lake Update:**

Assistant Director Barno gave a brief update on Greenwood Lake. We did see a preliminary schematic for a boat ramp at Browns Point. Both Parks and Fish and Wildlife made comments on it and some of the limitations on it are based on the percent of the pervious surface. We are working on that, and Parks has provided some additional areas where surface could be removed and the architect is taking that information and updating the design.

**Black Bear Education Marketing Campaign:**

Chief Ivany reported the FY22 campaign ran from April 5th-july24th. the marketing vendor is in the process of compiling the final media campaign report we and will update you more when we have that. The media ad campaign stressed the importance to residents and communities reducing bear attractants such as trash, pet food, and bird seed around homes. The ads akso

directed the public to F&W newly redesigned Black Bear webpages, which are more user friendly. The Statewide media campaign generated more than 11,835,000 impressions and that includes a media mix allocation with ads in English and Spanish. The marketing vendor concentrated 70% of media ads in bear management field zones 1-6 up north, which are areas frequent to black bears. The remaining 30% was allocated for the rest of the state. There were nearly 12 million impressions generated statewide with more than 3.5 million generated in South Jersey. During the campaign more than 51,500 clicks were generated on the new black bear webpage which provide bear safety and information materials. This compares to only 13,000 page views during the same time frame in 2021. The public requested and received more than 1,000 "Know the Bear Facts" brochures in English, more than 600 in Spanish, more than 1,200 kids' activity booklets, and more than 600 bear safety camper cards. The new full length Black Bear Education and Safety video garnered more than 4,200 views and the posting for the new black bear outreach position has closed and are now looking over resumes, with interviews to be conducted in the upcoming weeks.

**New Business:**

**New Fish and Wildlife Website:**

Assistant Commissioner Golden gave a brief presentation of the new F&W website.

**2022 Fall Trout Stocking Schedule:**

Shawn Crouse gave a brief presentation on the 2022 Fall Trout Stocking Schedule.

**Public Comment on Fall Stocking Schedule:**

Barbara Sachau commented she thinks this program is artificial, growing in an environment then putting them into a stream. She is not in favor of this program.

Chairman Virgilio asked for a motion on the 2023 Fall Trout Stocking Schedule.

**Councilman Robinson made a motion to accept the 2022 Fall Stocking Schedule as presented by Chief Crouse, seconded by Councilman DeStephano. Vote taken; all in favor, motion approved.**

**Tuckahoe Special Waterfowl Hunt:**

Joe Leskie gave a brief presentation on the Tuckahoe Special Waterfowl Hunt.

**Delaware River Shorebird/Peregrine Update:**

Kathy Clark gave a brief presentation on the Delaware River Shorebird/Peregrine.

**Public Comment:**

Barbara Sachau commented she feels the minutes and monthly reports are being withheld from the public. She mentioned you talk about stakeholders and the only stakeholders you seem to be talking about is the small group in NJ who farm and hunt.

Chairman Virgilio added that he emailed the monthly reports last month to Barbara and provided the link where she could locate them.

Assistant Commissioner Golden wanted to inform the public that the minutes from the previous meeting can not be posted until they are approved at the following meeting. Also, the bureau reports cover the 15<sup>th</sup> of this month to the 15<sup>th</sup> of the next month, so they get submitted/reviewed then posted. July reports are up on website now.

Barbara Sachau commented again that she thinks the Division needs to respond to 9 million New Jersey citizens and not just a small percent of us. She feels fisherman are too cheap to pay the launch fee at Greenwood Lake so they have to get the Division involved to go out for free.

**A motion was made by Councilman DeStephano to adjourn at 2:21 pm, seconded by Councilman Jones. Vote taken; all approved. Motion carries.**

**The next meeting will be on September 13<sup>th</sup> at 10:00 am. At the Assunpink office.**