

NJ Wildlife Rehabilitators Advisory Committee
Meeting Minutes
January 31, 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: Giselle Chazotte-Smisko, Lisa DeLambert, Tracy Leaver, Michael O'Malley, Diane Nickerson, Dr. Erica Miller, Jim DeStephano

Committee Members Absent:

NJFW Employees: Lisa Barno, Katherine Szostak

Members of the Public: None.

Meeting called to order at 10:33AM.

- A motion was made by D. Nickerson and seconded by T. Leaver to approve the October 25, 2023 minutes. M. O'Malley and G. Smisko abstained. A vote was taken with all others in favor.
- D. Nickerson passed around the assembly bill information regarding the change of numbers. No new updates in 2021, 2022, or 2023. The old numbers are now housing bills.
- T. Leaver is working on NJFW training and will meet next week for discussion.
- Discussion regarding transfer forms between wildlife rehabilitators. L. DeLambert wanted to know if animals that are being transferred more than one time should be put on one transfer form or multiple forms and G. Smisko wanted to know if this form was required or recommended because multiple animals come in at a time and she doesn't always get information. D. Nickerson suggested that this form should be required because it would solve the problem of receiving animals without documentation. L. Barno advised NJFW can make a form and M. O'Malley suggested the form should list what food, water, and medication was provided to the animal, what type of care was provided, and how long the original rehabilitator had the animal.
- E. Miller provided a short disease update. The last cases for HPAI for the near vicinity was January 2, 2024 in Mercer County, PA. The last detection in NJ was in a bald eagle November 17, 2023 in Union County. HPAI is still showing up in the last 30 days over the US and 2 million domestic birds had to be euthanized. The most recent outbreaks were in Maine and Indiana. L. Barno and L. DeLambert advised that PA had an outbreak in a Kingfisher Farm. HPAI cases are also showing up in VA, NC, GA, ME, and NY. L. DeLambert said people from NJ were deployed out to CA to help with HPAI outbreaks. D. Nickerson's take home message is to "be diligent."
- WRAC terms were already addressed in the October 25, 2023 meeting.
- L. Barno announced NJFW has a new wildlife pathologist on staff: Patrick Connelly, who started in January. He has a background in deer disease research.

- Overview of the draft wildlife rehabilitation portion of the new regulations. See below for discussion notes.
- Next WRAC meeting will be March 27, 2024.
- A motion was made by G. Smisko to adjourn the meeting and seconded by L. DeLambert. A vote was taken with all in favor.

Wildlife Rehabilitation Subchapter Draft Comments

7:25B-11.1(a) This subchapter sets forth the requirements for the rehabilitation and/or care of injured, ill, or orphaned indigenous wildlife for the purpose of releasing the animal back to the wild. Specifically, this subchapter sets forth the process for obtaining a Wildlife Rehabilitation Permit, the standards for onsite subpermittees and offsite caregivers, the duration of the permit, the modification of a permit, and the permit itself.

- WRAC suggested rewording “...rehabilitation and/or care of injured, ill, or orphaned indigenous wildlife” to “...rehabilitation and/or indigenous wildlife in need of care.”

7:25B-11.1(c) A person may hold an indigenous species that is injured, ill, or orphaned, for up to 24 hours without a permit, provided that a permitted wildlife rehabilitator is successfully contacted by telephone and electronic mail of such holding and arrangements are made within the 24-hour period to transfer the animal to the wildlife rehabilitator.

- WRAC suggested leaving this broader because the public may call multiple times but won’t necessarily leave a message. Suggested to leave out the “how” and just to have the public notify the facility. L. Barno suggested that NJFW may be needed to provide assistance if the public is unable to get through to a rehabilitator.

7:25B-11.1(d) A currently licensed veterinarian who can practice in New Jersey may hold an indigenous species which is injured, ill, or orphaned for a period not to exceed 24 hours provided care, beyond triage and stabilization, is done in consult of a permitted wildlife rehabilitator approved for that species or taxa.

- WRAC suggested leaving the wording as “veterinarian currently licensed in their state” because some rehabilitators need to use veterinarians out of state for specific needs (i.e., avian).
- WRAC suggested shortening the time a veterinarian may hold an animal to 24 hours, however it can be longer provided there is an agreement between the veterinarian and wildlife rehabilitator.

7:25B-11.1(e) An indigenous species held without a permit shall be surrendered upon demand to Fish and Wildlife personnel without compensation.

- WRAC had some questions regarding the above proposed regulation. L. Barno explained that if someone has an animal that they shouldn’t have, this allows NJFW to show up and take the animal and it gives NJFW the right to retrieve animals that were taken from the wild and need to be surrendered.
- WRAC asked about whether or not an exam will be required to become a wildlife rehabilitator. L. Barno advised that the exam is no longer necessary and that they may be OPRA-able. NJFW is able to get all the information required during the initial inspection. WRAC advised that the exam could focus on the regulations and that it would help rehabilitators coming in from out of state to help ensure that they are in compliance with these regulations.

7:25B-11.2(c) Prior to applying for a Wildlife Rehabilitation Permit, an applicant shall first complete an apprenticeship in accordance with N.J.A.C. 7:25B-11.3 (except as provided in (f) and (g) below). Within two years of successful completion of the apprenticeship, the applicant must apply for a Wildlife Rehabilitation Permit in accordance with (d) below. Failure to apply within this 2-year period will result in the applicant having to restart the application process by completing a new apprenticeship.

- Further discussion on a test based on the regulation and NWRA training. Further research by NJFW shows:
 - New York requires a written exam with a minimum score of 80% and an interview. They also have a separate license for RVS. Licenses are valid for 5 years. NY rehabbers can't rehab white-tailed deer, black bear, and moose without additional license authority. There's also a line that states that they can't "rehabilitate wild white-tailed deer or moose from an established chronic wasting disease (CWD) containment area. Currently no containment area exists in New York." We should put something concerning CWD in the regs too. More info: <https://dec.ny.gov/regulatory/permits-licenses/fish-wildlife-plant/special-licenses/wildlife-rehabilitator>
 - PA has similar regs, but nothing about CWD mentioned. [https://www.pacodeandbulletin.gov/Display/pacode?file=/secure/pacode/data/058/chapter147/s147.304.html&d=reduce#:~:text=\(i\)%20New%20applicants%20shall%20succeed%20fully,the%20Bureau%20of%20Wildlife%20Protection](https://www.pacodeandbulletin.gov/Display/pacode?file=/secure/pacode/data/058/chapter147/s147.304.html&d=reduce#:~:text=(i)%20New%20applicants%20shall%20succeed%20fully,the%20Bureau%20of%20Wildlife%20Protection).
 - Delaware does not require an exam, nor do their regulations address CWD.

7:25B-11.2(d) Except as provided at (f) below, within two years of satisfactorily completing the apprenticeship in accordance with N.J.A.C. 7:25B-11.3, the applicant shall submit to Fish and Wildlife a completed application form and the following information:

- The Standards for Wildlife Rehabilitation are no longer free to everyone. K. Laws has a copy of the Standards from 2021.

7:25B-11.2 (g) Fish and Wildlife, at its sole discretion, may authorize or modify on a temporary or permanent basis, the following:

- WRAC suggested to strengthen the written documentation and to consult with WRAC before appointing new rehabilitators during the "as needed basis" period.

7:25B-11.8(a) A Wildlife Rehabilitation Permit authorizes a wildlife rehabilitator, their apprentices, onsite subpermittees, and/or offsite caregivers, to hold and provide care for injured, ill, or orphaned indigenous wildlife identified at (b) below, from admittance of the animal to the final disposition of the animal.

- WRAC suggested changing the end to "final disposition."

7:25B-11.8(b) A Wildlife Rehabilitation Permit shall be issued for specific categories and classes of mammals, reptiles/amphibians, and birds. The following classes and categories of species are the only animals that can be cared for under this permit. The care of animals other than those listed at (b)1 – 3 below is prohibited. Class I species are identified with an asterisk.

- WRAC suggested added "potentially dangerous species should not be going off site" in the new regulations. Wildlife rehabilitators should be able to take some animals from out of state. E.

Miller advised that HPAI is not a concern because birds can fly. WRAC also suggested no terrestrial rabies vector species should be taken, but can take bats.