

**Endangered and Nongame Species Advisory Committee
Meeting Minutes
March 20, 2024**

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

Members in attendance: Rick Lathrop (Chair), Emile DeVito (online until 11:30), Russ Furnari, Howard Geduldig, Ty Gould-Jacinto, Martha Maxwell-Doyle, Erica Miller, David Mizrahi (online), Howard Reinert

Absent: Marion McClary, Catherine Tredick

Staff in attendance: Jason Hearon (Assistant Director, NJFW), Kathy Clark (NJFW, ENSP chief); NJFW ENSP staff: Kris Schantz, Brian Zarate, Kashi Davis (online), Sharon Petzinger, Kim Korth, Bill Pitts, Robert Somes, Alex Kisurin, Melissa Roach. Mary Monteschio (NJFW), Juliette Harle (NJFW), Aidan Higginbotham (NJFW), Kristen Meistrell (NJFW).

Public: Miranda Kay (Duke Farms), Robert Aluck (Sourland Conservancy)

Chair convened the meeting at 10:07 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 and two NJ newspapers.

Introductions of those in attendance.

Approval of Minutes

R. Furnari made a motion to approve the minutes from the January meeting, seconded by H. Geduldig. There was no discussion and the minutes were approved unanimously.

Report by Assistant Commissioner Dave Golden

A.D. Hearon reported for A.C. Dave Golden. He introduced a new Fish & Wildlife staff member, Kristen Meistrell, who is working on Fish & Wildlife grant projects. New grant proposals are being prepared for the Appalachian Corridor in northwestern NJ, and another for a consortium of non-profit groups working together to develop conservation projects, including Warren Mill dam removals, Paulinskill River WMA (Hyper Humus) restoration, and improving habitat statewide for early succession-dependent species.

In other F&W news, trout stocking is happening statewide, and the Pond Creek restoration project at Higbee Beach WMA has started; that project will result in the restoration of about 200 acres and provide a new walkable trail for wildlife-related recreation.

Regarding the Appalachian Corridor project, K. Meistrell explained the project is in the northwest region to build on the conserved lands of Allamuchy State Park, Jenny Jump State

Park, and Worthington State Forest. There will be an outreach component to these projects. For the early successional habitat project, the first focus will be maintaining and recovering existing early successional habitats.

Legislative Updates

M. Monteschio reported on the federal “America’s Wildlife Habitat Conservation Act” that was introduced in the House of Representatives in February with a hearing in March that was divisive, so that federal bill is not likely to advance (HR7408).

Public Input

None. As noted on the Fish & Wildlife website, public comment can only be given in person due to technological limitations at the CRO.

Old Business

Nominations Committee

At the request of the Nominations Subcommittee, the members met in closed session. The subcommittee recommended Eliot Nagele to fill the upcoming vacancy of the Qualified Non-profit seat on the ENSAC. **The motion to make this recommendation to the DEP Commissioner was made, and members voted unanimously to approve.**

State Wildlife Action Plan (SWAP) Update – Kim Korth, ENSP

K. Korth reported that the prioritization of Level 3 threats was completed by stakeholder surveys and review by the Technical Advisory Group (TAG). There were two rounds of surveys to prioritize Level 2 threats statewide, and two rounds to prioritize on nine regions. Those were followed by one survey to prioritize Level 3 threats in each of nine regions. Threats that received at least 30% of overall “votes” will move to the next step of analysis and bringing in the related actions for review.

New Business

Today’s presentations by staff were the second half of ENSP project presentations following January’s meeting. Today staff covered the major reptile, amphibian, insect, mussel, and eDNA projects. Also included was one bird project that couldn’t be covered at the January meeting.

Forest Songbirds – Sharon Petzinger
Snakes – Kris Schantz
Turtles – Brian Zarate
Amphibians – Bill Pitts
Butterfly Conservation – Robert Somes
Pollinators – Robert Somes
Freshwater Mussels – Robert Somes
eDNA in ENSP – Alex Kisurin

Other Business

The Committee members thanked the staff on the scope and breadth of today’s presentations on the ENSP’s research and management work.

Meetings in 2024

The next regular ENSAC meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, May 15. ENSAC meetings in 2024 will be in-person unless otherwise arranged. Dates will be on the website and are:

January 17
March 20
May 15
July 17
September 18
November 20

R. Furnari motioned to adjourn, seconded by T. Gould, and the meeting adjourned at 1:45 PM.

Summary of Action Items

- 1) (Continuing item) Identify a longer-term strategy for ENSAC involvement in ASMFC's actions.