

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE
NJ FISH AND GAME COUNCIL
Central Region Office
Robbinsville, New Jersey
February 7, 2023**

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 February 1, 2023 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- Late 10:15
Councilman Ed Kertz- Absent
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, J. Heilferty, 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 December 13th F&G Council minutes.

Councilman Robinson made a motion to approve the December 13 minutes, seconded by Councilman DeStephano. Vote taken. All approved.

Chairman Virgilio announced the recent passing of Ray Porutski. He was a graduate of Rutgers University with a degree in Wildlife Management. Ray loved hunting and fishing but more importantly he loved his wife Kathy, and we offer her our sincere condolences and prayers.

Assistant Commissioner Golden also gave condolences to the Porutski family. Ray retired around a decade ago as a Central Region Superintendent and was a really kind man and will be missed. We are experiencing connectivity issues which may affect the virtual experience. One thing to consider for the Council as we move forward and try to figure out what the hybrid experience is that we present to the public, some organizations have moved to providing just audio rather than video and it's something to consider. There has been some concern with the death of humpback whales. We looked into this and continue to keep tabs on it. The Director of NOAA is taking the lead on this issue. The humpback whale population is growing and there is no positive connection with wind development that is taking place off the coast of NJ. The necropsies have showed in a number of them blunt force trauma. John Heilferty is retiring at the end of this month so this will be his last Council meeting, we are sad to see him go. Kathy Clark will be stepping up temporarily as his replacement.

Dr. Reist, Department of Agriculture reported AI (Avian Influenza) is back in Pennsylvania with three redetections, one being in a commercial duck flock.

Agriculture:

Councilman Jones reported that the state agricultural convention in Atlantic City is tomorrow and Thursday. We will get policy and resolutions and go from there.

Farmer/Sportsman Relations:

Councilman Robinson thanked Assistant Director Barno and Chief Stanko for attending and giving a presentation at the Hunterdon County chapter of the NJ Federation of Sportsmen's Clubs meeting. We had presentations from the NJOA, the New Jersey Predator Hunters Club, and Hunters Helping the Hungry. He got a report from the Hunterdon County Parks about the hunts, and they harvested 11 deer in 3 days. He attended the CBBMP public hearing and garbage management seemed to be the big issue there. The State Federation meeting was a zoom meeting.

Middlesex County was in person; Law Enforcement was a zoom meeting as was Union County's meeting. He also attended Spruce Run National Wild Turkey Federation Dinner.

Councilman Whildin attended the Cumberland County Federation meeting where Jody and Megan gave a presentation on Epizootic Hemorrhagic Disease and did an excellent job.

Chairman Virgilio attended a webinar on What Women Want, it's a R3 virtual conference on women's hunting and shooting sports where the focus was on building confidence in women hunters and shooters. He attended the December Cumberland County meeting; the Southern Region Federation meeting. The Saint Patrick's Day dinner will be on March 17th where proceeds will go to both Camden and Gloucester Counties. He attended the Backcountry Hunters and Anglers meeting where Chief Stanko gave a presentation on our CBBMP. And finally, he attended the Bear Public Hearing.

Finance Committee: no report

Fish Committee: no report

Game Committee: no report

Waterfowl Stamp Advisory Committee: meeting in March.

Wildlife Rehabilitators Advisory Committee: meeting was cancelled; will be rescheduled.

Law Enforcement Committee:

Councilman Weldon reported the committee met and we'll discuss later in this meeting.

Public Member:

Councilman Pollack reported that he has been told there have been roadblocks by PA deer checks for hunters.

Legislative Report:

Mary Monteschio reported there was one addition A5088 DOT established program. It was introduced January 23rd, no Senate version yet.

Division Reports:

Business Administration:

Chief Springer handed out graphs of the license sale comparisons from 2019-2022. Overall license sales for 2022 were down 5.82% as compared to 2021, compared to 2019 which is considered a normal year pre Covid 2022 sales were down by almost 3/10 of a percent. The Wildlife Habitat Supporter Program total amount of donations for calendar year 2022 were \$31,835.00 and the total donations since the program started in November 2021 is \$36,175.00. The final bear sales for permits sold was 7095 to 5195 individuals. Of the individuals that purchase permits 602 were sold to nonresidents from 20 different states. Waterfowl stamp sales for the past 5-years in 2017 the total sales were 12,138 stamps with 1777 sold to nonresidents. In 2018 total stamp sales were 12,075, with 1821 sold to nonresidents. In 2019 we saw a decrease in sales with 11,460 stamps sold with 1765 being nonresident, 2020 we were up with a total of 12,511 with 1839 being nonresident, 2021 we were down to 12,102 stamps sold with 1974 being nonresident. Total sales for 2022 are not available yet, but as of January 31st, 2023, we had 11,716 stamps sold with 1978 being nonresident. The nonresidents that purchased these stamps represent 45 states. the revenue generated by the sale of waterfowl stamp is calculated based on a fiscal year that runs from July through June rather than a calendar year. For the period of 2017 through 2021 the cost of a resident waterfowl stamp was \$5.00, and a nonresident stamp was \$10.00. The revenues total for 2017 were \$66,059, In 2018-\$65,600, in 2019 -\$62,945, in 2020 -\$68,798, and in 2021 -\$68,116. These total sales include duplicates. In 2022 the cost of a waterfowl stamp increased with resident stamps increasing to \$10.00 a stamp and nonresidents to \$15.00 a stamp. As of January 31st, 2023, the sales of waterfowl stamps have generated \$120,489.00 almost double the total revenue for 2021 with over 2 months of sales remaining.

Freshwater Fisheries:

Chief Crouse reported the theme of collaboration goes well beyond NGO 's and he would like to acknowledge current collaborations within most bureaus and programs within Fish and Wildlife. He is currently working with people from Business Administration to secure funding of 2 federal sport fish restoration grants that will span over the next 5 years. Working with ENSP staff on entering fisheries data into NatureServe's Biotics database to support the listing of several fish species. Also working with NSP determine the feasibility of freshwater mussel propagation. He is working with the I&E staff to iron out details for the 2 virtual fisheries meetings coming up the Freshwater Fisheries Forum on February 25th and the Annual Trout meeting on March 4th. we will be using an instant online poll to get a better feel for how popular recommendations coming from the public are amongst those in attendance. Trout season is coming up and we will be working closely with Land Management staff on the stocking schedules. We recently collaborated with Law Enforcement to design, print, and post Trout Stocked Waters signs. he will be talking about spring Trout Stocking season later in this meeting. State Aquatic Invasive Species (AIS)

Management Plan is sorely needed to guide actions to effectively prevent introductions, rapidly respond to detections, and control AIS proliferation. New Jersey is one of only 6 states without an AIS management plan recognized by the Aquatic Nuisance Species Task Force within the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. The New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection - Division of Science and Research recently received a \$20,000.00 grant from the Mid-Atlantic Panel on Aquatic Invasive Species (MAPAIS) to prepare an Aquatic Invasive Species Management Plan for the state of New Jersey. Chris Smith will be our agency lead on invasive animals. Heather Desko from New Jersey Water Supply Authority will be the lead on invasive plants. Nicole White of Little Bear Environmental Consulting LLC was hired to facilitate along with a core team including staff from NJ DEP – (DSR, NJ DEP Fish and Wildlife, and the NJ Water Supply Authority), have initiated tasks to support completion of the plan. Fish and Wildlife will be looking to assemble our team shortly. Fish and Wildlife is working collaboratively to develop and adopt an active and adaptive management plan by late 2023 based on specific guidance offered by the Aquatic Nuisance Species Task Force. Once a preliminary draft plan has been completed it will be circulated for public comment. With public input included, a final draft will be sent through NJ DEP senior management and presented to New Jersey Water Monitoring Council, the NJ Fish and Game Council, the Endangered and Nongame Species Advisory Committee, and other relevant groups before going to Governor Murphy for review and signature. Once signed by the Governor, the plan is submitted to the US Fish and Wildlife Service Aquatic Nuisance Species Task Force for recognition. The US Fish and Wildlife Service offers annual implementation grant funding to all states with Aquatic Nuisance Species Task Force accepted plans.

Information and Education:

Chief Ivany reported Hunter education numbers totaled 5350 people come through hunter ed including 2141 for archery and 3209 for firearm, which are almost identical to the pre COVID numbers 5338. The average age the student is 31 years old. The R3 tuckahoe management hunt is now complete. More than 300 hunters took advantage of this program. The woman's Turkey mentor hunt application period has closed with more than 30 women applied with 10 spots for this year's mentor hunt. The Suffern Outdoor Show has been postponed until January 2024 in Edison. The Deer Classics went well. We had a great turn out with the deer display, we had 87 mounts brought to the classic in 17 categories and because of the way the walls were rearranged at the show that we were able to handle all those mounts no problem and looked really great. We had 3 years of awards, 74 awards in total were given on Sunday to close out the classic and plaques for award winners who could not attend and certificates for award winners have just been sent out to everyone and are in the mail as we speak. He would like to thank BLM for their support at the show, especially Pete Winkler and his crew because they come help set up and break it down at the end. Official score sheets for the program are also being revised and being placed on the website for everyone to use for submission to the 2024 deer classics. The Division Rep program met internally developing a plan to move forward over the winter to meet needs of sports men and women. Dates are currently being scheduled for the spring for the Conservation Outreach Trailer and one of those days will be April 29th at Rutgers. Anglers R3 plan and we are putting together

both an advisory and workforce committee, which will be around a year long process. Linda DiPiano is working on the Marine digest and a target shelf date of May 10th.

Land Management:

Chief Hearon wanted to thank Chief Crouse for pointing out collaboration with staff. Our staff is working on encroachments. People are using wildlife management property, so we have a push going on right now taking up a lot of our staffs time as well as law enforcements. We are preparing for trout stocking. The governor released funding for coastal resilience projects, so we are working with a series of nonprofits and developing projects. Boat ramp updates- point pleasant is now open, the tuckahoe boat ramp is open but under construction. The habitat project at Glassboro WMA is 23 acres of American Woodcock habitat and we will be starting that next week.

Law Enforcement:

Chief Panico reported our new CO 's graduated in January and should be in the fields in April. We are a quarter way into hiring process for new recruits, we have 36 applicants pass the first part of resumes and then we'll have to do the physical test in April. Body cameras are finally here with deployment in May.

Wildlife Management:

Chief Stanko reported the preliminary deer numbers, as of the end of January and we still have 2 weeks left before the season closes and we are at 36,776 which is up 5% from last year. Our Wildlife Control staff are in their 3rd week of training, the first week was on shooting, we had 6-days of first aid, and the last week was self-defense classes. The public hearing for CBBMP and Game Code changes was January 18th at the New Jersey State Museum. We had 46 attendees 36 comments, and they were split almost evenly pros and cons and had several organizations represented and commented. Public comment closed February 3rd and as of now we have about 8,800 comments and Assistant Director Barno is taking the lead to put everything together along with staff from Trenton to input this data into a database to get our response document for the New Jersey Register and for Council synopsis as well.

Endangered and Nongame Species:

Chief Heilferty wanted to thank Chairman Virgilio on his retirement, it's been a team effort. We are currently a staff of 11 including himself and are in the process of interviewing. At the January ENSAC meeting we had 2 retirements, Joanna burger who has been on the board since a year after

the committee was formed and Doctor Applegate who worked the full time on the committee. Sparta mountain update- we completed 10 acre modified cut this season. The project started November 16th through January 20th. That project was delayed to some extent due to wet weather. Almost 50 acres since 2018 and we will have 40 more acres of management over the next 4 years.

Old Business:

Greenwood Lake Update:

Assistant Director Barno reported there is a meeting tomorrow about parking, we are trying to get as much parking space as possible.

Comprehensive Black Bear Management Policy and Black Bear Management Update:

Chief Ivany reported we contracted with Princeton Partners to develop and implement fiscal year 2023 multimedia and Black Bear Outreach Campaign which will run from March 15th through November 15th, 2023. We are using new creatives along with previous creatives also a behavior analysis study to judge the success. Bear literature has been distributed to all municipalities with more than 39,000 pieces of black bear safety literature were distributed. As for garbage management, waste haulers in northern New Jersey were contacted to explore options for sharing bear safety end garbage management literature as well as promoting our website to customers. One waste hauler agreed to share garbage management flyers with customers and we are meeting with DEP Division of Solid Waste, who brought on a new employee to work with the garbage management issues. Our black bear web pages, the reporting period of November 1 through January 31st the majority of hits had to do with the black bear hunting season with 60,000 page views on that topic alone, 11,500 regarding black bear harvesting. We had 5500 on our Fish and Wildlife bear page the rest of our educational pages received anywhere from 1000 - 2000. Also, a draft BlackBerry response for police departments web page has been created to allow law enforcement to easily obtain black bear training resources, forms and bear safety information.

New Business:

2023 Trout Stocking Schedule:

Chief Crouse gave a brief presentation on the upcoming 2023 trout stocking schedule.

Public Comment on Trout Stocking:

Barbara Sachau commented she is against the trout stocking program.

Chairman Virgilio asked for a motion to accept the 2023 trout stocking schedule.

Councilman Robinson made a motion to accept the 2023 trout stocking schedule. Seconded by Councilman Jones. Vote taken, all approved. Motion passed.

Community Based Deer Management Application- Princeton

Jodie powers read aloud the CBDM application for Princeton. Princeton Township is again requesting a Community-Based Deer Management Permit (CBDMP) that would allow the Township to hire White Buffalo Inc. to cull deer through March 31, 2023.

Public Comment for CBDM- Princeton:

Barbara Sachau commented she is against the Princeton CBDM application.

Chairman Virgilio asked for a motion to accept the Princeton CBDM application.

Councilman Robinson made a motion to accept the Princeton CBD M application. seconded by Councilman DeStephano. Vote taken all in favor. Motion passed.

Lunch: 12:18- 1:00

License Restorations: (4)

Louis Strina- Present

Captain Quirk read aloud the statement for the revocation appeal for Mr. Strina who was present. Mr. Strina was convicted of a violation on December 17,2022, for **N.J.S.A/N.J.A.C 7:25-5.27(a)** Take/kill antlerless deer during closed season. A second violation on February 9,2022, for **N.J.S.A/N.J.A.C 23:3-1.a** Hunt without a valid license.

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

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

After the council discussed Mr. Strina'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 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 Whildin made a motion Not to reinstate Mr. Strina's license, seconded by Councilman Robinson. Vote taken, 4 in favor; 1 opposed. Motion carried.

Evyn Legkyi- Not Present

Captain Quirk read aloud the statement for the revocation appeal for Mr. Legkyi who was not present. Mr. Legkyi was convicted of a violation on May 20,2019, for **N.J.S.A/N.J.A.C 23:5-1 Fishing closed waters**. A second violation on March 1,2022, for **N.J.S.A/N.J.A.C 23:10-5 & 23:5-11 Interfering with a Conservation officer and throwing a fish back after being told not to**.

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

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

After the council discussed Mr. Legkyi'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 Jones. 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 Robinson made a motion Not to reinstate Mr. Legkyi's license, seconded by Councilman DeStephano. Vote taken, all in favor; Motion carried.

Tao Hu- Not Present

Captain Quirk read aloud the statement for the revocation appeal for Mr. Hu who was not present. Mr. Hu was convicted of a violation on April 30,2021, for **N.J.S.A/N.J.A.C 23:5-45.1a Taking one undersized striped bass**. A second violation on December 28,2022, for **N.J.S.A/N.J.A.C 723:5-45.1a Taking undersized striped bass**.

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

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

After the council discussed Mr. Hu'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 Jones. 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 Robinson made a motion Not to reinstate Mr. Hu's license, seconded by Councilman DeStephano. Vote taken, all in favor; Motion carried.

John Rhoades- Not Present

Captain Quirk read aloud the statement for the revocation appeal for Mr. Rhoades who was not present. Mr. Rhoades was convicted of a violation on November 19, 2021, for **N.J.S.A/N.J.A.C 23:5-45.1a Possession of 1 over 38" striped bass**. A second violation on July 1, 2022, for **N.J.S.A/N.J.A.C. Possession of 2 mutilated summer flounder parts**.

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

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

After the council discussed Mr. Rhoades 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 Jones. 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 Robinson made a motion Not to reinstate Mr. Rhoades license, seconded by Councilman DeStephano. Vote taken, all in favor; Motion carried.

Public Comment:

Barbara Sachau commented that it is sad that people want to kill deer/animals. She also thinks there should be no farms on WMA's.

Councilman Jones made a motion 2 adjourned the meeting at 1:34 PM, seconded by Councilman DeStefano. Vote taken, all in favor; motion carried.

Next meeting will be March 14,2023 at the Central Region conference room at 10:00 a.m.