

## Ska-mageddon: Riding the Fourth Wave

A game by Jeff Dieterle

### Introduction

2069. The Great Wave inundated the once vibrant state of New Jersey, reducing it to a pale shadow of its former glory. Every pernicious stereotype of the state has become manifest, and all that remains of the Garden State is an endless vista of swamps broken up only by the occasional paved wasteland, abandoned mall, or boardwalk sitting in the center of the new ocean. The whole place smells awful, and anybody who could leave already has.

But some things never change. Every remaining New Jerseyan, regardless of where they live, claims to be from “Central Jersey.” Rivers of blood have been shed over whether the regional pork product is “Taylor Ham” or “Pork Roll,” though the product hasn’t been produced in decades. Most gravely, New Jersey remains inundated with ska bands, whatever those are, fighting battles whose origins precede living memory.

Dark whispers speak of an ancient prophecy: one ska band will unite (or perhaps destroy) all others, determine the True Boundaries of Central Jersey, and usher in the Fourth and Final Wave of Ska, an apocalyptic event unrivaled even by the Great Wave. Some bands believe the prophecy, others dismiss it, but no one is so sure they’re willing to risk being excluded from Central Jersey.

### What Is Ska?

No one knows exactly what ska was before the Great Wave, but most people can agree on the following:

- Ska is a type of music.
- Ska involves horns.
- A single ska enthusiast is a “kid.” A group of ska kids is a “band.” All ska kids in an area are a “pit.”
- Before the Great Wave, ska bands usually had between 8 and 25 kids each.
- Ska kids like to “skank,” which is some sort of long-forgotten dance.
- There have been three waves of ska, each of which presumably caused a great deal of destruction.

### Pit Rules

Many rules of pre-Wave pits have been lost, but a few have been passed down. These rules are respected by all ska kids, regardless of personal animosity, and *you the players* need to follow them too:

- **Pick up the fallen.** Everyone stops what they’re doing when someone is in danger. Yell “cut,” and everyone should freeze until the danger has passed. Offer the afflicted your hand and ask what you can do to help.
  - This rule originally dealt with people who were in physical danger, but it should be applied to anyone who is struggling; if you see someone struggling emotionally, treat it similarly: reach out a hand and ask what you can do to help. If someone does this to you and you’re fine, take their hand; if you’re not, say so, and rest assured that your fellow players will take care of you.

- **Respect the boundaries of the pit.** Everyone in the pit should want to be there; it is strictly opt-in. If someone does not want to be part of the pit, even if they were previously part of it, leave them to their business.
- **Try to keep tempo and pace with those around you.** Pits are all about energy and catharsis, and that can be exciting, but it's easy to get carried away. If someone is a little bit intense, say "slower." If someone says "slower" to you, ratchet down the intensity of your interaction.
- **All pits are different.** Your local culture may have other rules to keep kids safe, and those are cool! Take a moment to discuss rules you may want to put in place to keep the pit safe and happy.

#### **Materials:**

- These rules
- 1 county map of New Jersey, with the counties numbered from 1-20 (you can black out Cape May county; the only thing anyone can agree on is that's probably South Jersey)
- Markers, preferably in multiple colors
- 1 20-sided die
- Name Tags
- Supplementary material from appendices (optional)
- Speakers for playing ska (*very optional*)

#### **Preparation:**

Tape the county map of New Jersey to a wall or other convenient surface where it can be referenced easily. Place the supplemental material on an easily visible surface near the entryway.

Read the **Introduction**, **What Is Ska?**, and **Pit Rules** sections of the rules out loud.

#### **Band/Character Creation**

Separate the players into "bands." Everyone knows that the average number of people in a ska band is about 12, but after the Great Wave, any two people can constitute a ska band if one of them owns a horn. Ideally, the game should start with as many bands as possible, even if each one only has 2-3 people.

Each band collaboratively determines their collective characteristics:

- **Band Name:** Any name works, but puns containing the word "ska" are best. *Write your band name on your nametags.*
- **Cool Symbol:** This should be cool, but simple; aim for something that can easily and quickly be drawn by each member of the band. *Draw this on your nametags.*
- **Home County:** Pick a single county from the map and draw your Cool Symbol there; if there is any disagreement within or between bands, or for some reason anyone is not familiar with New Jersey counties, roll the D20 and put your Cool Symbol in the appropriately numbered county.
- **One thing** (other than ska or geography) that the whole band can get behind, and is willing to fight for.

If you have time, come up with other individual characteristics, such as names, pronouns, the instruments you play, and maybe even personal interests.

Once everyone has completed band and character creation, each band should have one member explain the details of the band to the group.

Start playing ska if you must. *NB:* After the Great Wave, no one is entirely sure what makes something ska. Any music with horns will probably suffice.

## **Play**

The room represents the entire New Jersey Wasteland. Players move about the room, talking, posturing, negotiating, and trying to make the world resemble their bands' visions. Play is generally freeform and unmoderated (except for safety techniques); specific rules cover the following situations.

## **Taking Over Territory**

Each band begins with a single county; to grow, they need to secure a foothold in other counties. Counties can either be Occupied (filled with another band's Cool Symbol) or Unclaimed (empty). Claiming each has a procedure.

Taking over an **Occupied County** is a direct act of aggression, and requires challenging the band who occupies that territory to a **Skank-Off**. Before the Great Wave, skanking was a specific variety of dance; today, people know that skanking is dancing, but only have a vague notion of what it involves. Ska kids, however, know skanking when they see it. A skank-off is a highly ritualized form of combat:

- Two bands face off.
- The challenging band shouts the phrase "Pick it up!"
- The defending band shouts "Pick it up!" back at the challenging band.
- Both bands shout "Pick it up!" in unison and begin skanking at one another.

Everyone not involved in the Skank-Off should stop whatever else they're doing to watch the two bands. Each player should point toward the band they think is skanking best, using any criteria they find suitable. Once everyone is pointing, tally the votes; the band with the higher total takes over or maintains control of the territory.

If a band's last piece of territory is captured, they become members of the challenging band (though perhaps not enthusiastic members).

There are two ways to take over an **Unclaimed County**. Both require the band to move toward the map and announce their intention to take over a specific county, which must be adjacent to one the band already controls. If at least one other band verbally supports the claim, the claiming band automatically gains control of the county, drawing their Cool Symbol on it. This is the easy way, and it encourages quid pro quo arrangements and other chicanery. If no other band supports the move, the attempt to take over a county succeeds *unless* another band with an adjacent county chooses to challenge it, which involves the skank-off rules detailed above; the winning band gains control of the territory.

## **Leaving New Jersey**

At any point, players may decide they have had enough of the constant fighting, and leave the state of New Jersey. This may be done at any time, for any reason, with or without fanfare.

### **Switching Bands**

Band members move from band to band all the time; to do so, a player simply says, "Screw you guys," and removes their name tag. They then approach another band, and if the band is willing to accept them, they make a new nametag reflecting their new affiliation. Alternatively, a band can opt to kick out a member with a majority vote. An ejection vote may be initiated by a band member pulling all but the ostracized members aside, preferably in a huddle, and stating, "Listen, we've gotta talk," after which they can either kick people out of the band or elect to start a new band without telling that person.

### **Starting a New Band**

Any two (or more) characters may agree to start a new band. This is common when a new player joins the game, disagreements occur within bands, or multiple people have been cast out of their bands and not accepted by another band, but it can be done for any reason.

To start a new band, follow the directions presented in the "preparation" section. If the area you want is taken, reroll, pick an empty spot, or choose a cool band to join.

### **Ending the Game**

At some point, only two bands will remain, and dominance must be determined. The two bands should stand face to face and follow the following procedure:

Perform a ritual Skank-Off with no audience. Either band may choose to concede at any time; otherwise the Skank-Off lasts until everyone gets tired of skanking.

If neither band concedes, the band controlling the most territory is the dominant ska band in New Jersey. In case of a tie, the band with more members wins.

The dominant band must then:

- Determine the fate of the other remaining band (either banishing them from New Jersey or making them members of the dominant band).
- Circle the portion of the map that constitutes Central Jersey (this need not have any relationship to geography, but should include the dominant band's area of control).
- Proclaim the 4<sup>th</sup> and Final Wave of Ska - Each member may make one brief pronouncement about what 4<sup>th</sup> Wave Ska is about. These statements are all true, but not necessarily consistent.
- Skank out of the room triumphantly.

### **New Players**

If a player enters the room at any time, they are welcome to join in. Place the "What's Going On Here?" handout (and the full rules) in a prominent position, and allow them to create or join bands as needed. Players may also recruit willing non-players to bolster their bands.

# **Appendices and Handouts**

## What's Going On Here? – A guide for new players

The state of New Jersey was inundated by a great wave, and all that remains is something approximating ska bands fighting over who lives in Central Jersey. The people in this room are members of those bands. You can be in a band, too! Either approach an existing band and ask to join, or start your own with at least two people. To create a band, grab nametags and follow these steps with your bandmates:

- Band Name: Any name works, but puns containing the word “ska” are best. *Write your band name on your nametags.*
- Cool Symbol: This should be cool, but simple; aim for something that can easily and quickly be drawn by each member of the band. *Draw this on your nametags.*
- Home County: Pick a single county from the map and draw your Cool Symbol there; if there is any disagreement within or between bands, or for some reason anyone is not familiar with New Jersey counties, roll the D20 and put your Cool Symbol in the appropriately numbered county.
- One thing (other than ska or geography) that the whole band can get behind, and is willing to fight for.

If you have time, come up with other individual characteristics, such as names, pronouns, the instruments you play, and maybe even personal interests.

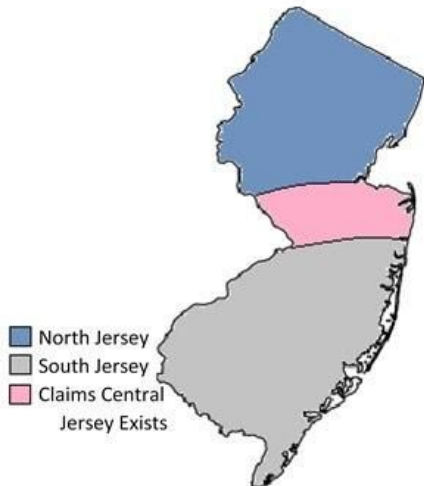
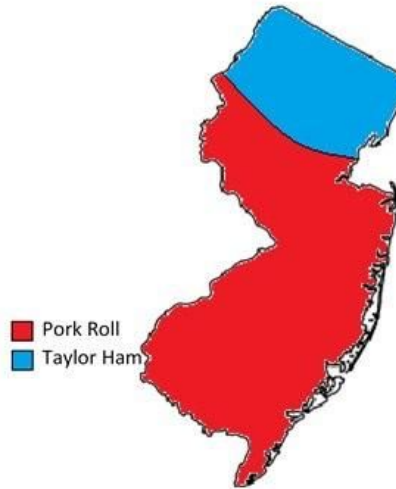
You may have to observe a bit to figure out how to play, but other ska kids are friendly and willing to help you out.

**County Map of New Jersey**



**Source:** [en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:New\\_Jersey\\_Counties.svg](https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:New_Jersey_Counties.svg).

Six Ways to Divide New Jersey (AKA things to fight about if you can't think of anything else)



Source:

[https://www.reddit.com/r/MapPorn/comments/7txcv4/6\\_ways\\_to\\_divide\\_new\\_jersey\\_732x1040/](https://www.reddit.com/r/MapPorn/comments/7txcv4/6_ways_to_divide_new_jersey_732x1040/)



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