

MISSISSIPPI COMMISSION ON WILDLIFE, FISHERIES, & PARKS

Wednesday, January 18, 2017

2:30 p.m.

Delta State University, Hugh Ellis Walker Alumni Foundation

MINUTES OF THE MEETING

PRESENT: Commission Chairman William "Billy" Deviney, Commissioners Bill F. Cossar, Clay Wagner, Scott Coopwood, and Robert Taylor

Among the MDWFP staff attending were: Dr. Sam Polles, Executive Director; Robert Cook, Deputy Executive Director; Michael Bolden, Larry Castle, Jennifer Head, Colonel Steve Adcock, Ed Penny, Larry Pugh, Jason Thompson, and counsel, Doug Mann, Special Assistant Attorney General.

Chairman Deviney, having noted for the minutes that a quorum was present, gave the meeting to order at 2:30 p.m.

OPENING PRAYER

Robert Cook, Deputy Executive Director, opened the meeting with prayer.

MINUTES

ACTION: Upon motion by Commissioner Cossar and seconded by Commissioner Taylor, the minutes of the December 14, 2016, meeting were unanimously approved.

AGENDA

Dr. Sam Polles, Executive Director, stated that the agenda was in need of amendment to include two items under OTHER BUSINESS; namely, reports from the Wildlife Bureau on Deer Management Zones and Habitat and Predator Management.

ACTION: Commissioner Wagner moved to approve the agenda for January 18, 2017, as amended by the Executive Director. Commissioner Cossar seconded the motion. The Commission voted unanimously to approve the agenda as amended.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

Bobby Woods, Greenville, MS.

Mr. Woods requested that the Commission reconsider the 100 yard rule for shooting deer near an active feeder. This change would allow his grandson and other young people to have a clean shot at 30 yards, which would encourage him to hunt instead of playing video games. Chairman Deviney stated

that Mississippi gives the hunter an option of using supplemental feed or not. Mississippi is right in the middle of this issue with some states being less restrictive and some more. Larry Castle, Director of Technical Programs, agreed with Mr. Woods that we need to recruit more youth into hunting and MDWFP offers First Deer awards for kids and a variety of different youth hunts all over the state. His personal preference is to follow tradition and teach his grandkids how to follow a trail rather than promoting simplified deer shooting. However, Castle added, this should be a personal choice for each hunter, and this Commission has done a great job trying to please both sides.

Mike Thompson, Bolivar County. Mr. Thompson requested that the Commission repeal the supplemental feeding rule as it applies to land between the Mississippi River and the mainline levee, which holds the largest concentration of white-tailed deer in the state. His reasoning included that supplemental feeding increases the risk of Chronic Wasting Disease, Blue Tongue, and other diseases; as well as altering wildlife behavior by attracting unnaturally large concentrations of deer in one location and conditioning them to feeding times. He feels that shooting deer with the aid of supplemental feed is the same as shooting deer at night with the aid of a light. He thanked the Commission for their consideration.

LICENSE SALES REPORT

Jason Thompson, Director of License/Boat Registration, presented the License Sales Report for the month of December 2016. Total sales for the end of the year are up over \$900,000 (7% increase).

Highlights of Thompson's end of the year, annual report are listed below:

- Resident License Sales – up \$1,000,000 (21% increase)
- Sportsman license sales – up \$700,000 (25% increase)
- All Game Hunting and Fishing Licenses - up \$240,000 (50% increase)
- Small Game Freshwater Fishing licenses – up \$40,000 (19% increase)
- Non-resident licenses – overall down 1.57%
- NR Small Game Hunting - up 12%
- NR 7 Day Small Game – up 25%
- NR Freshwater Fishing – up 11%
- NR 3 day Freshwater Fishing – up 15%
- NR 1 day Freshwater Fishing – up 8%
- Permit category – down \$28,000
- Lifetime License category – up 13% (65 more licenses sold this year)

Mr. Thompson noted that three handouts were included in the Commissioner notebooks depicting License Sales Trends since FY 2007 in relation to Quantity, Revenue, and Generational Cohort for their review.

WILDLIFE

FINAL Rule 40 Miss. Admin. Code Part 2, Chapter 1 WMA

Rule 1.6 – WMA User Permit

Ed Penny, Director of Conservation, presented for final passage Rule 1.6. No changes or comments had been received. This permit would allow non-hunters to enjoy other activities, such as bird watching. The one day fee for Mississippi residents would be \$5 and non-residents would be \$10.

ACTION: By motion of Commissioner Cossar and seconded by Commissioner Taylor, FINAL Rule 1.6 was approved by unanimous vote of the Commission.

Ed Penny also gave condensed reports on the following items:

Federal Audit.

MDWFP is currently under a regular federal audit by U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service for federal aid grants. This comes up every four years to review our need and use of grant money.

Free Range Deer Program.

Mississippi State University is currently conducting a deer project in the Black River Region. This project will be monitoring and assessing bucks during the hunting season.

Waterfowl Program.

Waterfowl hunting has been successful with the weather pattern we have experienced this winter.

Turkey Program.

The Commission was reminded that MDWFP will implement a voluntary turkey harvest reporting system for 2017 spring season. Hunters will be encouraged to register their harvests online. The information gained through harvest reporting will allow a better, more detailed look at the state's turkey flock.

PARKS

PROPOSED Rule 40 Miss. Admin. Code Part 6

Rule 1.1 – State Park Fees

Jennifer Head, Director of Parks, presented a proposed rate increase for Quail Hollow Golf Course due to the improvements made there. This will be consistent with fees charged at Mallard Point Golf Course.

ACTION: By motion of Commissioner Wagner and seconded by Commissioner Taylor, the Commission unanimously approved the proposed Parks Rule 1.1 change.

LAW ENFORCEMENT

Update

Colonel Steve Adcock, Chief of Law Enforcement, presented a handout which highlighted citations, shooting range attendance, and the Annual Toy Drive for Batson Children's Hospital.

OTHER BUSINESS

Deer Management Zones

Larry Castle, Director of Technical Programs, distributed a handout to the Commission entitled "Deer Management Zones." He informed the Commission that MDWFP had been collecting data since 1978 and currently has the best information on deer breeding of any state. This data revealed that deer breeding begins first in the North Region in December and is progressively delayed as you go south with the Southeast Zone beginning in January. Based on this data, the season structure was adjusted in the Southeast Zone with a delayed opening date of October 15 and extended closing date of February 15. Mr. Castle explained that this was the brief version of the why and where of expanding the deer season and he would be happy to go into greater detail by request. Wildlife Bureau staff also presented a PowerPoint program on the Wildlife Management Area program, the diversity of habitat and management projects, the various hunting opportunities, and the needs of the different areas across the state.

Habitat and Predator Management

Castle gave an update on publicity planned for the February Habitat and Predator Emphasis month. MDWFP and partner organizations will begin a targeted campaign to engage and inform the state's hunters, landowners, and conservationists about practices that can bolster wildlife populations during the month of February. Technical information and film are ready to be sent out in print, radio, T.V., social media, and the internet on a variety of wildlife conservation topics. Castle pulled up some of the publicity videos for viewing prior to their release.

NEXT MEETING DATE

Next Commission meeting date was set for Monday, February 13, 2017 at Quail Ridge Conference Center, Louisville, MS. The Educational Session will begin at 9 a.m. and the Business Session will begin at 9:30 a.m.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

The Chairman asked if there was a need for an Executive Session. The Executive Director stated that there was need for a brief Executive Session to discuss a personnel matter and an ongoing investigation of a law enforcement agency.

ACTION: Upon motion made by Commissioner Wagner and seconded by Commissioner Coopwood, the Commission voted unanimously to close the meeting to determine the need for Executive Session to discuss personnel matters involving job performance of specific individuals in specific

positions, budget line items that could affect the continued employment of individuals in specific positions, and an ongoing investigation by the Law Enforcement Bureau.

Counsel announced that the meeting was closed to determine the need for an Executive Session to discuss personnel matters involving job performance of specific individuals in specific positions, budget line items that could affect the continued employment of individuals in specific positions, and an ongoing investigation by the Law Enforcement Bureau.

Following a brief discussion, Commissioner Coopwood made a motion to enter executive session to discuss personnel matters involving job performance of specific individuals in specific positions, budget line items that could affect the continued employment of individuals in specific positions, and an ongoing investigation by the Law Enforcement Bureau. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Wagner, and the Commission voted unanimously to enter Executive Session.

Counsel announced to those remaining outside the meeting room that the Commission had entered Executive Session for the purposes stated above.

Deputy Executive Director Robert Cook updated the Commission on a pending realignment issue involving specific employees whose position series were due to be realigned. The plan had been approved by the State Personnel Board and the Office of the Governor.

Discussion followed. No action was required of the Commission.

The Executive Director and Deputy Executive Director informed the Commission that they were exploring a reorganization of the Marketing and Public Relations functions of the agency. The plan is still in the earliest stages and should not negatively affect current employees. No action was required of the Commission.

Colonel Steve Adcock, Chief of Law Enforcement, updated the Commission on a hunting incident investigation involving a fatality in Attala County. Preliminary information indicated that the incident may not be hunting related other than location; however, the investigation was still ongoing. No action was required of the Commission.

There was no further business for Executive Session.

Upon motion made by Commissioner Cossar and seconded by Commissioner Coopwood, the Commission voted unanimously to exit Executive Session and open the meeting.

Counsel announced that no action was required or taken by the Commission on the items discussed during Executive Session, to any members of the public remaining on the premises.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business before the Commission, Chairman Deviney gaveled the meeting into adjournment.



Billy Deviney, CHAIRMAN

Date



Clay Wagner, VICE CHAIRMAN

Date