

# **MISSISSIPPI COMMISSION ON WILDLIFE, FISHERIES, & PARKS**

Tuesday, January 16, 2019 - 3 p.m. Educational Session  
1505 Eastover Drive, Jackson, MS 39211

## **EDUCATIONAL SESSION – 3 PM**

**PRESENT:** Commission Chairman Bill F. Cossar, Commissioners Scott Coopwood, Robert Taylor, Billy Mounger, and Clay Wagner.

Among the MDWFP staff attending were: Dr. Sam Polles, Executive Director; Robert Cook, Deputy Executive Director; Michael Bolden; Jennifer Head; Curtis Thornhill; Charles Knight; Col. Steve Adcock; Larry Pugh; Russ Walsh; and counsel, Doug Mann, Special Assistant Attorney General.

Educational Sessions are for informational purposes only. Commission action on any topic may only be taken during a regular business session.

## **ALLIGATOR SEASON REPORT**

Ricky Flynt, Wildlife Alligator/Furbearer Coordinator, presented a handout entitled “2018 Alligator Hunting Season Report.” Highlights of his report are detailed below.

### Permit Drawing Results:

- 4,190 applicants for 930 available permits
- Number of permits sold 1<sup>st</sup> Drawing – 834
- Number of permits sold 2<sup>nd</sup> Drawing – 93
- Number of “Opt Outs” for 2<sup>nd</sup> Drawing – 58
- Grand Total of Permits Sold – 927

### Harvest Data Summary:

- 805 applicants hunted
- 3,030 hunters participated
- 3.764 – size of average hunting party
- 761 alligators harvested (428 - less than 7' and 333 - larger than 7 feet)
- 1,671 alligators captured and released
- 536 hunters harvested an alligator
- 9.45 hours to capture/harvest per alligator

In 2018, there were 34 counties open to private lands alligator hunting. Of the 123 property applications received, 117 properties were permitted. Maps were presented of these properties. A total of 106 alligators were harvested on private lands.

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### **CHRONIC WASTING DISEASE UPDATE**

Russ Walsh, Director of Wildlife Bureau, presented a PowerPoint presentation updating the Commission on Chronic Wasting Disease (CWD) in Mississippi.

Since the last Commission meeting November 14, 2018, CWD has been confirmed in Marshall and Benton Counties in Mississippi and the bordering Tennessee counties of Fayette and Hardeman. A CWD public meeting was held in Holly Springs on December 20, 2018. As part of the MDWFP CWD Response Plan, the CWD Management Zone was expanded to include Benton, Lafayette, Marshall, Pontotoc, Tippah, and Union counties; all portions of Alcorn, Lee, and Prentiss counties west of Hwy 45; and all portions of DeSoto and Tate counties east of I-55.

Since October 1, 2018, the CWD lab has received 5,317 samples to test. Freezer locations for sample drop-offs were increased from 14 to 26 around the state. Around 2,000 deer heads have been dropped off at these locations. The time frame from sample collection in the freezers to the lab is an average of six days. Then from lab submission to results is an average of 2.6 days. Therefore, hunters should be able to pull up their deer results on the website 8-9 days after drop off.

Walsh also presented a Mississippi map, which is updated daily from the CWD data base, displaying how many samples have been received by each county. Currently the map shows 59% of the counties have reached the goal set for CWD sampling. Through this data base and map, the Wildlife Bureau knows immediately where further sample collections are needed.

### **ADJOURNMENT**

With no other items to be presented, the Educational Meeting was adjourned. The Commission will reconvene on Thursday, January 17, 2019 at 10:30 a.m. for the Business Session.

**MISSISSIPPI COMMISSION ON WILDLIFE, FISHERIES, & PARKS**

Wednesday, January 17, 2019 - 10:30 a.m. Business Session  
1505 Eastover Drive, Jackson, MS 39211

**MINUTES OF THE BUSINESS SESSION – 10:30 AM**

**PRESENT:** Commission Chairman Bill F. Cossar, Commissioners Scott Coopwood, Robert Taylor, Billy Mounger, and Clay Wagner.

Among the MDWFP staff attending were: Dr. Sam Polles, Executive Director; Robert Cook, Deputy Executive Director; Michael Bolden; Jennifer Head; Curtis Thornhill; Charles Knight; Col. Steve Adcock; Larry Pugh; Russ Walsh; and counsel, Doug Mann, Special Assistant Attorney General.

Chairman Cossar, having noted for the minutes that a quorum was present, gaveled the meeting to order at 10:30 a.m.

**OPENING PRAYER**

Commissioner Mounger opened the meeting with prayer.

**MINUTES**

**ACTION:** Upon motion by Commissioner Coopwood and seconded by Commissioner Mounger, the minutes of the November 14, 2018 Commission meeting were unanimously approved.

**AGENDA**

**ACTION:** Commissioner Wagner moved to approve the agenda for January 17, 2019, Commissioner Taylor seconded the motion and the motion carried.

**PUBLIC COMMENTS**

**Danny Wynne, Greenwood** – Mr. Wynne expressed his concern with the increase of supplemental corn feeders for deer during turkey season. His property is surrounded on all four sides with legal and illegal feeders. Conservation officers have cited the hunters on two sides of his property, for illegal feeders that are too close to the property line, or grain piled on the ground. He stated that by the end of deer season, the turkey population has vanished on his

property. He asked the Commission to please prohibit supplemental feeding with grain during turkey season.

### LICENSE SALES REPORT

Jason Thompson, Director of License/Boat Registration Division, presented the License Sales Report for the month of December 2018. The total revenue for the end of December is down 4% and license sales down 4%.

Highlights of his report are listed below:

- Resident license sales – down 6%
  - Foundation Youth Exempt Licenses – 4,816 licenses purchased by Foundation
- Non-resident licenses – down \$22,000
- Permit category – down 8%
- Lifetime Licenses – up 23%

### WILDLIFE

#### Enclosure Application Request – Forrest County

Russ Walsh, Executive Wildlife Director, presented a request from the Turkey Trott Ranch in Forrest County to fully enclose an additional 950 acres immediately adjacent to the existing 1,050 enclosure. A map was presented showing the current enclosure and the new request.

The Commission was advised that in January and March of 2012, Turkey Trott bought and imported six deer into the state from two Pennsylvania-based captive deer facilities. In October 2012, Turkey Trott managers received information that the imported deer had come from a herd that may have been exposed to CWD. Turkey Trott is currently under a five-year, federal court ordered quarantine. During this time, the enclosure will be subject to the annual sampling and testing of twenty-two deer by MDWFP, in accordance with testing and sampling guidelines and protocols found in the MDWFP CWD Response Plan. Additionally, every deer mortality occurring during this five-year quarantine will be tested for CWD. If any deer within Turkey Trott tests positive for CWD during this five-year quarantine, the MDWFP shall completely depopulate Turkey Trott under the terms and conditions established by the Court.

MDWFP staff recommended this request be denied until the quarantine is lifted. To allow this facility to be permitted would be in opposition to the purpose and intent of the court order and agreement. This is an extension of the same property and, for practical purposes, the same players.

**ACTION: By motion of Commissioner Coopwood and seconded by Commissioner Taylor, the Commission unanimously denied the Turkey Trott Ranch request until the quarantine is lifted.**

**Hope Outdoors – Antlerless Deer Harvest Request (Special Hunt)**

Hope Outdoors will be hosting a hunt for approximately 10 special needs individuals February 9-11 in Marion County. Many, if not all, of the participants would be first-time hunters. Hope Outdoors requested for each hunter to be allowed to harvest one antlerless deer outside of deer season, which ends on January 31 in the Southeast Zone.

MDWFP staff recommended approval of the Hope Outdoors Special Hunt request.

**ACTION: By motion of Commissioner Wagner and seconded by Commissioner Coopwood, the Commission unanimously approved the Hope Outdoors request.**

**Lake Thoreau – Antlerless Deer Harvest Request (Special Hunt)**

Walsh presented a request by the Lake Thoreau Environmental Center, owned by the University of Southern Mississippi. This property is used extensively for conservation education workshops and classes. In past seasons, they have hosted late season draw hunts (bow only) to reduce deer populations (urban, largely non-hunted area).

Two hunts are scheduled for the weekends of February 2-3 and 9-10 (approximately six hunters per weekend). Due to all the events currently scheduled at Lake Thoreau, the only dates remaining were outside of deer season which ends on January 31 in the Southeast Zone. They requested for each hunter to be allowed to harvest one antlerless deer.

MDWFP staff recommended approval of the Lake Thoreau Special Hunt request.

**ACTION: By motion of Commissioner Mounger and seconded by Commissioner Taylor, the Commission unanimously approved the Lake Thoreau request.**

**Supplemental Feeding Clarification for Wild Turkeys**

Counsel presented Proposed Rule 2.4 changes below which cites language from the Mississippi Code pertaining to supplemental feeding deer during wild turkey hunting season. This inclusion of the statutory authority in Rule 2.4 is intended to help clarify the differences between supplemental feeding for white-tailed deer during deer season and the possible ramifications of supplemental feeding during wild turkey hunting season.

**PROPOSED Rule 2.4 – Supplemental Feeding of Wild Animals Outside of Wildlife Enclosures****D. Applicability to Wild Turkey**

1. MISS. CODE ANN. §49-7-33 makes it unlawful “to hunt, trap, or kill any wild bird or wild animal of any kind with the aid of bait...” The statutes authorizing the taking of white-tailed deer with the aid of supplemental feed DO NOT authorize the same for wild turkey.

2. MISS. CODE ANN. §49-7-101(4) provides that, "Any person killing any turkey out of season, and any person **baiting** turkeys is guilty of a Class II violation and shall be punished as provided in Section 49-7-143." [\$100 - \$500 fine, plus jail time]. [emphasis added]. See *also*, 40 MISS. CODE ANN., Part 2, Rule 3.3 for more information.

**ACTION:** Upon motion made by Commissioner Taylor and seconded by Commissioner Wagner, the Commission unanimously approved Proposed Rule 2.4 as recommended by staff.

## LAW ENFORCEMENT

### Law Enforcement Update

Col. Steve Adcock, Chief of Law Enforcement, presented a handout to the Commission which highlighted license violations for the months of November and December with "No License" as the #1 violation. Shooting range customer attendance totaled 1,949 at McHenry and 1,814 at Turcotte. Using a mud boat, officers assisted in locating a woman and her automobile on a flooded road in Newton County. Two youth events receiving officer assistance included a North Region youth hunt and a MSSP North Qualifier event at McIvor Shooting Range.

### Lake Mary Update

On January 5<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup>, officers seized 37 ducks and wrote citations in Wilkinson and Adams Counties for violations at Lake Mary. Nine boats and 21 hunters were checked.

### Reinstatement Request

Col. Adcock presented the following license reinstatement request. The violator was asked to come forward and state the circumstances of his arrest before the Commission.

- ***Tanner Dinsmore, Macon, MS***

Dinsmore stated that he was home from college for the Christmas holidays and decided to drive around that evening with three women joining him. He was arrested for headlighting and taken to jail that evening. No shots were fired. Dinsmore stated that he would never do this again.

Col. Adcock recommended the Commission restore his license at this time; however, if he receives another citation, he will serve the full three years for a second offense.

**MOTION:** By motion of Commissioner Wagner and seconded by Commissioner Mounger, Dinsmore's license was reinstated by unanimous consent with the stipulation that he will serve the entire three years for a second citation.

## OTHER BUSINESS

### National Wild Turkey Federation (NWTF)

Joe Wood, NWTF Board Member, Mississippi Chapter, presented each Commissioner and the Executive Director with a Preston Pittman, hand-made, turkey call on behalf of Mississippi Chapter of National Wildlife Turkey Federation.

### Executive Order – Emergency Closure of Hunting Season: WMAs and Private Lands

Counsel advised the Commission that an Emergency Closure of Hunting Season at certain Wildlife Management Areas and private lands was initiated by Executive Order on January 10, 2019, due to high water levels presenting an imminent threat and peril to the public health, safety, welfare, and infrastructure, and that deer and small game hunting opportunities should be set aside and/or closed until the waters recede. Acting on behalf of the Commission, Executive Director Polles issued the Executive Order and a vote by the Commission ratifying this action would be required for the minutes.

**ACTION: By motion of Commissioner Wagner and seconded by Commissioner Taylor, the Commission unanimously ratified the Emergency Closure of Hunting Season as specified in the Executive Order. A signed copy of the Executive Order which was ratified has been appended to the minutes.**

## NEXT MEETING DATE

The next Commission meeting date was set for Monday, February 18, 2019. The meeting will take place at Quail Ridge Conference Center, 7811 Hwy 397, Louisville, MS. The Business Session will begin at 9:30 a.m. There will be no Educational Session.

## EXECUTIVE SESSION

The Chairman asked if there as a need for an Executive Session. Executive Director Polles stated that there was a need for an Executive Session to discuss personnel matters regarding the job performance of specific individuals in specific positions.

**ACTION: Commissioner Wagner made a motion to close the meeting to determine the need for Executive Session for discussion on personnel matters regarding the job performance of specific individuals in specific positions, and budget line items affecting the continued employment of specific employees. Commissioner Taylor seconded the motion and the Commission voted unanimously to close the meeting.**

Counsel announced to those present that the meeting was now closed to determine the need for Executive Session for a strategy session involving personnel matters regarding the job performance of individuals in specific positions, and budget line items affecting the continued employment of specific employees.

The meeting was closed, and the room cleared.

Discussion followed.

**ACTION: Commissioner Wagner made a motion to enter Executive Session to discuss personnel matters regarding the job performance of individuals in specific positions, and budget line items affecting the continued employment of specific employees. Commissioner Taylor seconded the motion and the Commission voted unanimously to enter Executive Session.**

Counsel announced to those present outside the meeting room that the Commission had entered Executive Session to discuss personnel matters regarding the job performance of individuals in specific positions, and budget line items affecting the continued employment of specific employees.

Executive Director Polles updated the Commission on several budget matters, including the upcoming budget process in the current Legislative Session, the agency's budget request, and current cash flow issues. It was noted that the recent acquisition of the lands comprising the Phil Bryant WMA had depleted some Federal funds that would otherwise have been available for draw. That issue seems to have been rectified by the beginning of the Federal Fiscal Year on October 1<sup>st</sup>. Dr. Polles did advise that the agency had implemented internal purchasing and spending controls to get through this period.

A brief discussion followed.

No action was required of the Commission.

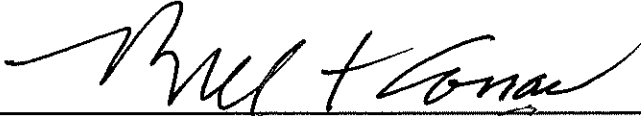
**ACTION: There being no further items for discussion in Executive Session, Commissioner Wagner made a motion to open the meeting. Commissioner Taylor seconded the motion and the Commission voted unanimously to open the meeting.**

Counsel announced to any members of the public outside the meeting that the Commission had exited Executive Session and opened the meeting. No votes were taken.



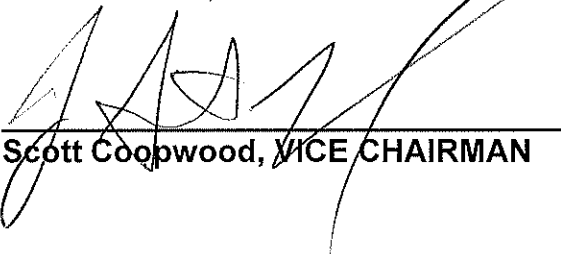
ADJOURNMENT

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



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Bill F. Cossar, CHAIRMAN

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Date



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Scott Coopwood, VICE CHAIRMAN

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

**MISSISSIPPI DEPARTMENT OF WILDLIFE, FISHERIES, & PARKS**

**EXECUTIVE ORDER:**

**EMERGENCY CLOSURE OF HUNTING SEASON;  
WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT AREAS AND  
PRIVATE LANDS**

**PURSUANT TO** the authority set forth in MISS. CODE ANN. §49-1-29(a), the Executive Director, with the approval of the Mississippi Commission on Wildlife, Fisheries, and Parks, hereby finds that the unusual heavy rainfall during the month of December 2018, in addition to higher water levels due to unusually heavy rainfall in previous months, has resulted in extraordinarily high water levels and backwater flooding in the Mississippi Delta and associated tributaries of the Mississippi River.

The Executive Director finds that the high water levels present an imminent threat and peril to the public health, safety, welfare, and infrastructure, and that deer and small game hunting opportunities should be set aside and/or closed until the waters recede.

**The following areas shall be closed to all hunting except waterfowl as indicated below:**

- Zone 1: When the Greenville, MS gauge reaches 48 feet and shall remain so until the Mississippi River level falls to or below 46 feet on the Greenville gauge. (Lands in Washington and Issaquena Counties which lie south of Highway 82, west of Highway 1 and North of Highway 14).
- Zone 2A: When the Vicksburg, MS gauge reaches 43 feet and shall remain so until the Mississippi River level falls to or below 41 feet on the Vicksburg gauge. (Lands in Issaquena, Sharkey and Warren Counties which lie south of Highway 14, west of Highway 61 and north of the Big Black River).

**Effective immediately the below areas are closed to all hunting except waterfowl.**

- Zone 2B: When the Steel Bayou gauge reaches 90 feet and shall remain so until the Mississippi River level falls to or below 88 feet on the Steel Bayou gauge. (Lands in Sharkey, Humphreys, Yazoo, Issaquena, Warren counties which lie south of Highway 14, west of Highway 149, south of Highway 16/149, west of Highway 3, and east of Highway 61).
- The following Wildlife Management Areas (WMA): Lake George, Twin Oaks, and Sunflower.
- In addition, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has closed Panther Swamp National Wildlife Refuge located in Zone 2B consistent with state regulations. Brown Tract in Zone 2B on the northeast side of Delta National Forest is closed to all hunting until flood waters recede. Waterfowl hunting is not permitted in the Brown Tract.

Shipland and Mahannah WMAs are currently closed to all activities except waterfowl hunting until further notice. U.S. Forest Service has closed all roads on Sunflower WMA to motor vehicle access.

The MDWFP will continue its increased law enforcement presence in the affected areas to patrol the levees, promote public safety for residents affected by the rising waters, and enforce the wildlife laws that protect animals affected by flooding, more specifically, MISS. CODE ANN. §49-7-77. The MDWFP reminds hunters that high water has also affected areas along the Pascagoula and Pearl rivers and it is unlawful to hunt, trap, take, frighten, or kill game or fur-bearing animals forced out of their natural habitat by high water.

**SO ORDERED, this the 10<sup>th</sup> day of January, 2019.**

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "S. Polles", written over a horizontal line.

SAM POLLES, Ph.D.  
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR