

MISSISSIPPI COMMISSION ON WILDLIFE, FISHERIES, & PARKS

Monday, February 18, 2019 – 9:30 a.m. Business Session
Quail Ridge Conference Center, 7811 Highway 397, Louisville, MS 39339

MINUTES OF THE BUSINESS SESSION – 9:30 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 9:30 a.m. Appreciation was extended to the Taylor family for allowing the Commission to meet at the Quail Ridge Conference Center. House WFP Committee Chairman Scott Bounds and former Senate WFP Committee Chairman Giles Ward were also thanked for helping to make the arrangements for the Commission meeting.

OPENING PRAYER

Commissioner Mounger opened the meeting with prayer.

MINUTES

ACTION: Upon motion by Commissioner Taylor and seconded by Commissioner Mounger, the minutes of the January 17, 2019 Commission meeting were unanimously approved.

AGENDA

ACTION: Commissioner Coopwood moved to approve the agenda for February 18, 2019, Commissioner Wagner seconded the motion and the motion carried.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

Nolan Howard, Greenwood – Mr. Howard spoke to his experience in deer hunting and voiced his objection to supplemental feeding. The Commission thanked Mr. Howard for coming.

LICENSE SALES REPORT

Jason Thompson, Director of License/Boat Registration Division, presented information on the auto-renewal system which went live this month on February 5th. Currently 771 customers chose to op in and 879 to op out for auto-renewal. There are some privileges, such as apprentice license, which do not have the auto-renewal option. The new interface allows the customer to view all current privileges and the opportunity to sign up for auto-renewal.

Thompson then presented the License Sales Report for the month of January 2019. The total revenue for the end of January is down slightly under 3%.

Highlights of his report are listed below:

- Resident license sales – down 5%
- Non-resident licenses – down 2%
 - Freshwater Fishing – up
 - 3-day Freshwater – up
 - 1-day Freshwater - up
- Permit category – down 9%
- Lifetime Licenses – up 23%

WILDLIFE

CHRONIC WASTING DISEASE REPORT

At Chairman Cossar's request, Russ Walsh, Executive Wildlife Director, presented the following update on CWD. Mississippi has 12 confirmed cases of CWD, five additional suspect positives awaiting confirmation in Marshall and Benton counties. Tennessee stands at 183 confirmed cases. Currently the best science on CWD is the prion theory, other theories being studied and tested were also discussed.

FINAL Rule 2.4 – Supplemental Feeding of Wild Animals Outside of Wildlife Enclosure

Walsh presented Rule 2.4 for final adoption as presented last month. Last month it was noted that the changes made to the rule were merely the inclusion of language from the Mississippi Code pertaining to supplemental feeding deer during wild turkey hunting season. This inclusion of the statutory authority is intended to help clarify that it is unlawful to take or attempt to take wild turkey with the aid of supplemental feed which has been deposited or scattered in a certain area. Additionally, the new language cross references both statute and 40 Miss. Admin. Code, Part 2, Rule 3.3 "Wild Turkey," which provides that no person, at any time, shall take, catch, kill or attempt to take, catch, or kill any wild turkey by means, aid or use, directly or indirectly, of any bait such as shelled, shucked or unshucked corn or of wheat or other grain, or any other feed whatsoever that has been so deposited or scattered so as to constitute an attraction or enticement to, on, or over the area where such 128 person or persons are attempting to kill or

take them; provided, however, that wild turkeys may be taken over grains resulting from normal agricultural practices.

ACTION: Upon motion made by Commissioner Mounger and seconded by Commissioner Coopwood, the Commission unanimously approved FINAL (with No Changes) 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 month of January with "No License" and "Hunting from Public Road" listed as the top two. Officers assisted with the Youth Waterfowl Camp at Muscadine Farms WMA and an Eagle Scout Banquet. As part of the banquet, a Scout sits with a representative from a career in which he may pursue. MDWFP Law Enforcement Officers and biologists were chosen as possible career paths.

OTHER BUSINESS – Part 1

PROPOSED Rule 6.1 – Rules and Fees for MDWFP Public Shooting Ranges

Capt. Scottie Jones, LE Programs & Planning, presented changes to WMA shooting range fees to a flat daily rate of \$15.00 for everyone.

ACTION: Upon motion made by Commissioner Coopwood and seconded by Commissioner Mounger, the Commission unanimously approved PROPOSED Rule 6.1 as recommended by staff.

NEXT MEETING DATE

The next Commission meeting date was not scheduled at this time. An announcement will be made at a later date.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

The Chairman asked if there was a need for an Executive Session. Executive Director Polles stated that there was a need for an Executive Session.

ACTION: Commissioner Wagner made a motion to close the meeting to determine the need for Executive Session. 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 to update the Commission on ongoing investigations of a law enforcement agency.

The meeting was closed, and the room cleared.

Discussion followed.

ACTION: Upon the motion of Commissioner Taylor, and seconded by Commissioner Wagner, the Commission voted unanimously to enter Executive Session to discuss ongoing investigations of a law enforcement agency.

Counsel announced to those present that the Commission had entered Executive Session to discuss ongoing investigations of a law enforcement agency.

Dr. Polles and Chief Adcock updated the Commission on ongoing operations related to the high-fenced enclosure, Turkey Trot. MDWFP employees from the Wildlife Bureau had completed white-tailed deer sampling and related activities under the quarantine imposed by the US District Court for the Southern District of Mississippi. A brief discussion followed regarding the need to make such activities a matter of record, in light of the discovery of CWD in the state. Dr. Polles noted that staff had prepared a proposed rule that should do this very thing, and had planned to present it at the March meeting. The Commission asked if the rule were otherwise ready for consideration. Dr. Polles replied that it was.

The Chairman then said that if the rule was ready for consideration, why not take it up now? Upon advice of Counsel, the Commission decided to end Executive Session and return the meeting to "Other Business" and take up the proposed rule.

ACTION: There being no further items for discussion in Executive Session, Commissioner Wagner made a motion to open the meeting in Other Business for the purpose of considering the proposed rule. Commissioner Taylor seconded the motion and the Commission voted unanimously to open the meeting, in "Other Business."

Counsel announced to any members of the public outside the meeting that the Commission had exited Executive Session and opened the meeting to return to "Other Business" to consider a proposed rule.

OTHER BUSINESS – (Part 2)

PROPOSED Rule 8.6 – Enclosures that Prevent the Free Ingress & Egress of White-Tailed Deer – Administrative Quarantine

Russ Walsh presented a new rule which defines Administrative Quarantine for enclosures in violation of any applicable law, rule, or regulation regarding high-fenced enclosures that prevent the free ingress and egress of white-tailed deer.

Under the proposed rule, the most restrictive level of Administrative Quarantine will be imposed upon any enclosure determined to be the destination of an act of unlawful importation of live white-tailed deer into the State of Mississippi. Upon conviction, the operator(s) of such enclosures will be required to:

- Cease any and all breeding operations. Existing breeding pens must be depopulated.
- Quarantine, and the reporting requirements thereof, shall be imposed for a minimum of ten (10) years.
- Should the facility (operators) fail to perform required testing and reporting, or otherwise violate the terms of the quarantine, all white-tailed deer within the enclosure shall be euthanized and tested for CWD.
- Should depopulation be required as set forth above, the enclosure may be prohibited from being registered to contain white-tailed deer in the future.

For any enclosure associated with a conviction for unlawful importation of live white-tailed deer into the State of Mississippi, which has been placed under Administrative Quarantine, a "Notice of Administrative Quarantine" will be filed for record in the land records of the county or counties where the enclosure is located. The Notice shall set forth the reason(s) and duration of the Administrative Quarantine, including but not limited to, the infractions committed on the property, which could have a negative impact upon the native wildlife and ecosystems.

ACTION: Upon motion made by Commissioner Wagner and seconded by Commissioner Taylor, the Commission unanimously approved PROPOSED Rule 8.6 as recommended by staff.

ADJOURNMENT

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



Bill F. Cossar, CHAIRMAN



Date



Scott Coopwood, VICE CHAIRMAN



Date