

MISSISSIPPI COMMISSION ON WILDLIFE, FISHERIES, & PARKS

Wednesday, May 15, 2019
12: 30 p.m. Business Session
1505 Eastover Drive, Jackson, MS 39211

MINUTES OF THE BUSINESS SESSION

PRESENT: Commission Chairman Bill F. Cossar, Commissioners Scott Coopwood, Robert Taylor, and Clay Wagner. Commissioner Billy Mounger was also present by teleconference communication.

Among the MDWFP staff attending were: Dr. Sam Polles, Executive Director; Robert Cook, Deputy Executive Director; Michael Bolden; Jennifer Head; Curtis Thornhill; Col. Steve Adcock; Russ Walsh; Amy Blaylock; and counsel, Doug Mann, Special Assistant Attorney General. Senator Mike Seymour was also present.

OPENING PRAYER

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

MINUTES

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

AGENDA

ACTION: Commissioner Wagner moved to approve the agenda for May 15, 2019, Commissioner Taylor seconded the motion and the motion carried.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

Donald Rawls, Luke Ballard, and James Fagan, concerned turkey hunters from Southeast Mississippi, were present to voice their concern for the declining population of wild turkeys in their area. An open forum was held in their district on April 25, 2019 with 40 people in attendance to discuss the turkey situation. The presenters expressed gratitude for the open forum appearance of MDWFP officials, Adam Butler (Turkey Program Coordinator) and Law Enforcement Officers Msgt. Kelly Farmer and Pvt. Joey Herrington, who provided insightful data and answered questions.

The Southeast representatives collected ideas and suggestions from the forum and presented them in a handout to the Commission. Some of the proposed 2020 turkey hunting changes were: a shorter hunting season in SE Zone, month long season in April, two-bird limit, physical tagging system (2 tags), and hunting hours to begin 30 minutes before sunrise and ending at 1 p.m.

The handout also listed a mandate for heavier fines (\$1,000 or more) for turkeys (not physically tagged), and/or to increase the purchase price of turkey tags in Mississippi. Legal counsel advised that monetary increases would require Legislative Authority. This would require their local representative or senator to pass legislation to increase such fines and fees. The group made a final suggestion to close wild turkey hunting at Marion County WMA for two to five years in order to study the habitat and repopulation.

Commissioner Taylor noted that many of the statistics in the handout came straight from the 2019 MDWFP mandatory spring turkey harvest reporting results. This data will be a valuable tool in managing Mississippi's turkey populations and, as noted by these gentlemen, in identifying counties with low harvest rates.

Turkey Program Coordinator Adam Butler added that turkey decline is a concern in other states as well. The MDWFP Strategic Plan shared a lot of these concerns two years ago, and these are valid points.

Barry Biggers, Treasurer, Wild Turkey Federation, also made a comment that this subject was currently being discussed by his board as well. They would like to work hand in hand with these men in South Mississippi.

Commissioner Mounger suggested setting up a Wild Turkey Summit, like the current Duck Summit, where all the organizations involved with wild turkeys can meet, exchange ideas, and collaborate towards a common goal.

ACTION: Chairman Cossar asked Adam Butler and staff to study these suggestions and make recommendations to the Commission.

LICENSE SALES REPORT

Jason Thompson, Director of License/Boat Registration Division, presented the License Sales Report for the month of April 2019. The total revenue for the end of April is down 3% from last year.

Highlights of his report are listed below:

- Resident license sales
 - 3-day Freshwater – up 3%
 - Apprentice Licenses – up

- Non-resident licenses – down 2%
 - NR 1-day Freshwater Fishing – up 3%
 - NR WMA User Permit – up 2.5%
 - NR Fall Turkey Permit – up 4%
 - NR Spring Turkey Permit – up 2%
- Permits – down 8%
- Lifetime License category – up 17% (136 more sold)

License packages are now available online and the mobile application with the Super Sportsman Package (\$80) being the largest seller.”

WILDLIFE

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

- **Rules 1.1 – 1.46 – WMA Regulations**

Walsh presented the rule changes for each WMA last month. No comments were received, and recommendation was made for final adoption.

ACTION: Upon motion made by Commissioner Wagner and seconded by Commissioner Taylor, the Commission unanimously approved FINAL WMA Regulations (Rules 1.1 - 1.46), as recommended by staff.

FINAL – 40 Miss. Admin. Code Part 2, Chapter 2 - Deer

- **Rule 2.2 – Deer Seasons and Bag Limits**

Walsh presented changes to Rule 2.2 last month allowing more deer to be harvested in certain areas to reduce deer density in response to Chronic Wasting Disease protocol. Staff presented these changes at three public meetings (April 22 in Batesville, April 30 in Jackson, & May 7 in Hattiesburg). Positive comments were received. Walsh recommended final adoption.

ACTION: Upon motion made by Commissioner Wagner and seconded by Commissioner Taylor, the Commission unanimously approved FINAL Rule 2.2, 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 April. The number one citation issued was “No License”. Officer Blaylock spoke to a youth group in April concerning the importance of conservation and the duties of a Conservation Officer. Officers statewide checked 1,200 water

vessels and 2,000 individual boaters on Saturdays, April 20th and April 27th. "No License" was the number one violation.

Discussion followed on fines issued by MDWFP Law Enforcement. MDWFP only receives \$5 from a fine issued. Counties receive the majority of the money collected on fines. The larger the fine issued by the court, the more money the county receives. Even so, many of the county courts are not serving warrants or collecting fines that have been issued by MDWFP. Not only are the violators not having to pay their fines but this causes a respect issue for MDWFP Law Enforcement Officers. Millions of dollars statewide are never collected. Usually if a Board of Supervisors becomes aware that these fines are not being collected, they start putting pressure on the court.

ACTION: Chairman Cossar requested a list of the top 20 counties where courts are not serving papers.

Captain Scottie Jones, LE Programs & Planning, presented a report on the Southeastern Clay Combine hosted by McIvor Shooting Facility. This event brought forth 96 top shooters from four states (Mississippi, Georgia, South Carolina, Alabama) in a two-day event. South Carolina won the overall tournament. Georgia will host this event next year.

License Reinstatement Request (1)

Col. Adcock presented the following license reinstatement request. Adcock asked the violator to come forward and state the circumstance of his arrest before the Commission. The violator had paid his fines and attended the Hunter Education class as required for restitution.

- *Bobby Joe Bell, III – Clarksdale, MS*
Bells informed the Commission that he was driving after dark with a friend when a buck appeared on the road. His friend shot the deer with Bell's gun. They loaded up the deer in his jeep. A Game Warden appeared at his workplace the next morning and arrested him. He spent a mandatory five nights in jail and \$3,000 in fines and court fees.

Col. Adcock recommended reinstatement; however, if he comes back again, his license will not be reinstated.

MOTION: By motion of Commissioner Wagner and seconded by Commissioner Coopwood, Bell's license was reinstated by unanimous consent.

OTHER BUSINESS

No other business was brought forward.

NEXT MEETING DATE

Date: Wednesday, June 19, 2019
Location: 1505 Eastover Drive, Jackson, MS 39211
Time: 2 p.m. Educational Session
3 p.m. Business Session

EXECUTIVE SESSION

The Chairman asked if there was a need for an Executive Session. Executive Director Polles stated that there was no need for an Executive Session.

ADJOURNMENT

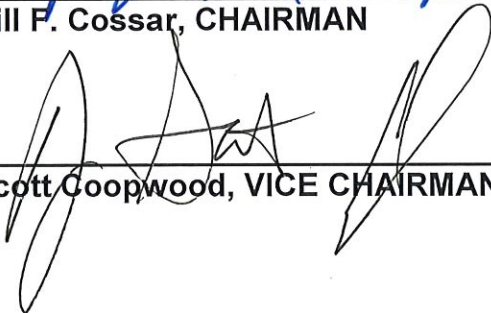
There being no further business before the Commission, Chairman Cossar gaveled the meeting into adjournment.



Bill F. Cossar, CHAIRMAN



Date



Scott Coopwood, VICE CHAIRMAN



Date