

MISSISSIPPI COMMISSION ON WILDLIFE, FISHERIES, & PARKS

Wednesday, July 17, 2019

1 p.m. Educational Session 2 p.m. Business Session
1505 Eastover Drive, Jackson, MS 39211

EDUCATIONAL SESSION – 1 PM

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

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; Larry Pugh; Russ Walsh; Amy Blaylock; Andre Hollis, and counsel, Doug Mann, Special Assistant Attorney General.

WMA Check-in Mobile App

Jason Thompson, License/Boat Registration Division Manager, advised the Commission of a new WMA Check-in Mobile App which has been developed in cooperation with MIS Network Administrator, Michael McRae, and Director of Wildlife, Amy Blaylock.

Blaylock came forward with a PowerPoint presentation to show the current WMA Daily Visitor Permit Card process and difficulties with this system. Visitors fill out the Permit Card at a WMA entrance and deposit the first part (A side) in a box there. Upon leaving the WMA, they fill out their harvest information on the second portion of the card (Side B). These cards are picked up weekly or bi-weekly by MDWFP to record harvest data on all species and WMA activity use. Entering this data in the computer is a timely process and sometimes the information on the card is not legible.

Jason Thompson came forward with a handout explaining the new WMA mobile check-in app. This app will give MDWFP the ability to collect real-time harvest information for Wildlife and real-time WMA use for Law Enforcement to quickly find someone if they are lost or in an emergency situation. This app also eliminates staff time collecting and entering data. The only limitation is that the user must have a smart phone. The manual card would be eliminated. If a smart phone is not available, options were discussed for a web portal or an 800 number .

Discussion followed. Several recommendations were made by the Commission, including the addition of the interactive WMA map on the check-in app.

A handout on the new MDWFP Agent Map app was also distributed. This app has been added to reveal the location of every agent in Mississippi and the mileage from customer's GPS location to each agent.

Deer Harvesting

Dr. Polles asked Russ Walsh, Wildlife Executive Staff Officer, to come forward and answer some questions the Commission had on deer harvesting and CWD hot zones in the state. Walsh informed the Commission that our past harvest data reveals lower harvesting last year. Fewer deer harvesting could mean higher density of white-tailed deer this season. Other states have had a hard time getting hunters to harvest more deer, even in the hot zones. Some states have extended the hunting seasons to entice more harvesting, but hunters get weary. Walsh stated that more data is needed in some Hot Zone areas, especially where only one deer with CWD has been found. MDWFP is still uncertain where the CWD-positive deer in these zones originated. Plans are being made to speak to hunters in the hot zone areas and the importance of harvesting more deer.

The department is also surveying deer on a 30-mile stretch of a mainline levee in the Delta flood zone. The survey is assessing mortality of white-tailed deer. MDWFP will be working this fall to collect data on public and private lands to assess population, fawn recruitment, body condition, and antler growth. Further, data will also provide information on impacts to other species. The results of this survey and public opinion will factor into the decision-making process for the next hunting season.

Education session recessed until 2 p.m.

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Wednesday, July 17, 2019

1 p.m. Educational Session 2 p.m. Business Session

1505 Eastover Drive, Jackson, MS 39211

MINUTES OF THE BUSINESS SESSION – 3 PM

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

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; Larry Pugh; Russ Walsh; Amy Blaylock; Andre Hollis, and counsel, Doug Mann, Special Assistant Attorney General.

Chairman Coopwood welcomed special guest Scott Coopwood, Chairman of the House Wildlife, Fisheries, and Parks Committee.

OPENING PRAYER

Deputy Executive Director Robert Cook opened the meeting with prayer.

OATH OF OFFICE

Bill F. Cossar, having been re-appointed by Governor Phil Bryant to serve a new five-year term beginning July 1, 2019 and ending June 30, 2024, was sworn into office by Notary Sharon Polzin.

MINUTES

ACTION: Upon motion by Commissioner Mounger and seconded by Commissioner Taylor, the minutes of the June 19, 2019 Commission meeting and July 12, 2019 Special Commission Meeting were unanimously approved.

AGENDA

ACTION: Commissioner Mounger moved to approve the agenda for July 17, 2019, Commissioner Taylor seconded the motion and the motion carried.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

Warren Strain, Communication Director, introduced Robert Denly and Preston Sullivan, who had comments to present to the Commission concerning hunters with dogs trespassing on their properties.

- **Robert Denly**, Yalobusha County, presented a handout to the Commission concerning one or more dogs hunting and running deer on his property every day, weather permitting. He came before the Commission to see what could be done to protect his property and his constitutional right to enjoy his property.

Counsel advised Mr. Denly that in the Mississippi Code hunters are guaranteed 39 days to hunt with dogs. This comes from a long tradition of hunting with dogs in Mississippi.

The Commission sympathized with Mr. Denly and advised him to get landowners who are paying taxes to take this to the Mississippi Legislature. If 400-600 landowners show up at the Capitol, the Legislature will listen.

- **Preston Sullivan** came before the Commission with handouts on hunting dog solutions from Georgia and East Texas. Georgia law stipulates after three violations, the dog-deer hunting privileges are revoked. East Texas law allocates certain acreage for deer hunters with dogs. Sullivan acknowledged that Homochitto National Forest has a good system with a few problems. He stated that his end goal is not to eliminate deer hunting with dogs but to keep it within boundaries.

The Commission advised Mr. Sullivan to bring a proposal in writing to the Legislature and to this Commission which will present a solution concerning ethical dog hunters. The Commission does not have authority to change the law in Mississippi but we can support and recommend changes.

LICENSE SALES REPORT

Jason Thompson, License/Boat Registration Division Manager, presented the License Sales Report for the month of June 2019. The total revenue for the end of June is down 2.7% from last year.

Highlights of his report are listed below:

- Resident license sales – down 4.8%
- Non-resident licenses – down 2.5%
- Other Licenses category – down .08%
- Lifetime Licenses – up 18.28%

License Packages

- 779 packages were sold since May 2019
- 172 of those packages sold were MS Super Sportsman
- 447 packages were sold in June

Auto Renewals

- Since February 2019 a total of 14,144 customers have signed up for Auto Renewal
- 3,745 customers have signed up for Auto Renewal in the month of June

Alligator Sales

- 957 public land permits were sold in June 2019, compared to 928 in June 2018
- Southwest Zone had the most sales with 194 total permits sold.

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 June with “no license” being the top violation, followed by no WMA Permit, no boat registration, PFD Violation, and trespassing.

Fourth of July weekend kept 140 law enforcement officers busy checking on 6,339 boaters, 1,585 registered vessels, and 403 unregistered vessels (canoes, kayaks). A total of 386 citations were issued.

Officer Rowan recently stopped an individual in Prentiss County matching the description of an escaped inmate from Central MS. After investigating he discovered he was not the escaped inmate but did uncover multiple syringes, narcotics, and counterfeit money.

Discussion followed on requirement to buy a license after receiving a violation for “no license.” Adcock stated that it is a statutory requirement for a non-resident to buy a license after receiving a violation for “no license.” Residents are not required to buy a license, however, their fine will be reduced from \$500 to \$100 if they buy a license. Col. Adcock stated that MDWFP did not have as many resident “no license” violations when the Code required them to buy a license when they went to court. Executive Director stated that Law Enforcement needs to follow up on “no license” violators the second year and see if they buy a license.

License 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.

- **Wesley Seale, Little Rock, MS**

Seale stated that he was driving home one night in January, saw a deer in the pasture, shot the deer, and loaded it in his truck. One month later an officer arrested him. He had no previous citations; however, this citation cost him around \$6,000. He asked forgiveness and stated 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.

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

OTHER BUSINESS

Natural Deer Urine Ban

Last year the Commission passed Rule 2.8 - "Prohibition on use of Natural Cervid Urine" due to the outbreak of CWD in Mississippi. ARCUS Hunting requested that the Commission reconsider this decision and allow manufacturers enrolled and participating in and certified by the Archery Trade Association (ATA) Deer Protection Program to be exempt from this rule.

Russ Walsh, Wildlife Executive Staff Officer, stated that when this rule was presented to the public, no negative comments were received. The only negative comment was from ARCUS. Walsh stated that some herds have CWD even though enrolled in the USDA CWD Herd Certification Program. According to the Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies' report (*AFWA Technical Report on Best Management Practices for Prevention, Surveillance, and Management of Chronic Wasting Disease*):

"Urine production and sales is not regulated by any agency, nor are there any testing or marking requirements of urine products. The Archery Trade Association Deer Protection program is modeled after the USDA HCP but has no regulatory authority to provide an adequate prevention and distribution of contaminated urine products."

Walsh asked how allowing natural cervid urine would benefit the wildlife resource in Mississippi. Walsh's recommendation was to continue the ban.

In the ATA program, nine approved producers collect urine from captive deer under special regulations. Col. Adcock, Chief of Law Enforcement, stated that a ban of some products and not others would be unenforceable since an officer would not know if a bottle of cervid urine was approved or not by ATA.

Commissioner Cossar stated that he had read all the material from ARCUS and the odds are almost zero that cervid urine could spread CWD.

ACTION: Commissioner Cossar made a motion to keep the ban with the exception for manufacturers enrolled, participating in, and certified by ATA. The motion failed to receive a second.

Discussion followed and more questions were presented which needed consideration by the Commission.

ACTION: Commissioner Wagner made a motion to table this matter for further consideration. Commissioner Taylor seconded the motion and the motion carried. The matter was laid upon the table subject to call at a later date.

No Wake Zone – Jourdan River

Col. Adcock stated that numerous complaints had been received on the Jourdan River in Hancock County, regarding speeding watercraft creating excessive wakes that cause property damage and unsafe conditions for other boaters. The Board of Supervisors of Hancock County, Mississippi, in concert with MDWFP, requested the adoption of the following rule which will designate this area as a “NO WAKE” zone.

Mississippi Code 40: Part 4, Chapter 2: Rules and Regulations regarding Boat and Water Safety

- **PROPOSED Rule 2.6 – “No Wake” Zone for Waters of the Jourdan River at the Intersection of Mississippi State Highway 603**

Counsel stated that this will be a part of MDWFP Administrative Rules so that it can be enforced.

ACTION: Upon motion by Commissioner Wagner and seconded by Commissioner Mounger, Rule 2.6 was unanimously approved as presented.

Special Commission Meeting – Friday, July 12, 2019

At a Special Teleconference Commission meeting last Friday, July 12, 2019, the Commission approved a resolution authorizing the expenditure of funds from the Wildlife Heritage Fund for the purchase of land for the Phil Bryant WMA. The urgency for this special meeting was due to the closing for the first phase purchase of approximately one-third of the Nature Conservancy held lands scheduled for Tuesday, July 16, 2019. The approved resolution was presented to the Commission.

NEXT MEETING DATE

Date: Wednesday, August 21, 2019

Location: Hancock Bank, 2510 14th Street, Gulfport, MS 39504

Time: 1 p.m. Educational Session; 2 p.m. Business 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 budget line items affecting the continued employment of specific employees, and transactions in real property.

ACTION: Commissioner Cossar made a motion to close the meeting to determine the need for Executive Session for discussion on budget line items affecting the continued employment of specific employees, and transactions in real property. 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 regarding budget line items affecting the continued employment of specific employees, and transactions involving the purchase of real property.

The meeting was closed, and the room cleared.

Discussion followed.

ACTION: Commissioner Wagner made a motion to enter Executive Session to discuss budget line items affecting the continued employment of specific employees, and transactions in real property. 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 budget line items affecting the continued employment of specific employees, and transactions in real property.

Counsel updated the Commission on the recent acquisition of additional lands for the Phil Bryant WMA, as authorized by the resolution passed in the Special Commission Meeting held on July 12, 2019.

No action was required of the Commission.

FY 2021 MDWFP Budget Request

Jennifer Head, Budget Director, presented the FY 2021 MDWFP Budget Request for the Commission's consideration. Discussion followed regarding prior years' funding levels, expenditures, and related matters. Suggestions were offered by the Commissioners.

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

FY 2021 MDWFP Budget Request

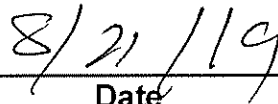
ACTION: Commissioner Cossar made a motion to accept the FY 2021 Budget Request, contingent upon the requested changes being made. Commissioner Taylor seconded the motion and the Commission voted unanimously to accept the Budget Request as amended.

ADJOURNMENT

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



Scott Coopwood, CHAIRMAN



Date



Robert Taylor, VICE CHAIRMAN



Date