

MISSISSIPPI COMMISSION ON WILDLIFE, FISHERIES, & PARKS

Thursday, September 26, 2019

8:30 a.m. Educational Session 9:30 a.m. Business Session
1505 Eastover Drive, Jackson, MS 39211

EDUCATIONAL SESSION – 8:30 AM

PRESENT: Commission Chairman Scott Coopwood, Commissioners Billy Mounger, Clay Wagner, and Bill F. Cossar were present. Commissioner Robert Taylor 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, and counsel, Doug Mann, Special Assistant Attorney General.

PRIVATE LANDS HABITAT PROGRAM – WILDLIFE BUREAU

John Gruchy, Private Lands Program Coordinator, gave a detailed account of all the programs, workshops, demonstrations, and technical guidance provided by the Private Lands Habitat Program. His presentation included a PowerPoint presentation and handout for the Commission. Highlights of his presentation included:

- More than 400 landowners visited per year, impacting more than 350,000 acres
 - a. 98% found services helpful
 - b. 78% applied management
- 194 public presentations given in FY19
- 30 workshops instructing 1,000 landowners statewide on managed fire
- 68,000 acres managed with fire
- Helped initiate the First Landowner-led Prescribed Burn Association in the SE
- 90% of total days spent hunting were on private lands in SEAFWA States
- Conservation on private lands is critical as 80% of Mississippi's land base is privately owned.

2019 ALLIGATOR SEASON UPDATE

Ricky Flynt, Alligator/Furbearer Coordinator, informed the Commission that everything went very smoothly with the 2019 alligator season as one of the most successful on record. MDWFP received a total of 4,414 permit applications and 957 of the 960 available permits were sold. The total harvest was 922 out of more than 2,000 alligators captured. Hunters were selective in the gators they kept in order to comply with the two gator limit and only one could be over seven feet long. This season also saw the highest hunter success rates of 75%.

Education session recessed until 9:30 a.m.

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MINUTES OF THE BUSINESS SESSION – 9:30 AM

PRESENT: Commission Chairman Scott Coopwood, Commissioners Billy Mounger, Clay Wagner, and Bill F. Cossar were present. Commissioner Robert Taylor 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, and counsel, Doug Mann, Special Assistant Attorney General.

OPENING PRAYER

Deputy Executive Director Robert Cook opened the meeting with prayer.

MINUTES

ACTION: Upon motion by Commissioner Cossar and seconded by Commissioner Mounger, the minutes of the August 21, 2019 Commission meeting were unanimously approved.

AGENDA

ACTION: Upon motion by Commission Wagner and seconded by Cossar, the agenda was unanimously approved.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

Warren Strain, Communication Director, introduced three individuals from the South Delta area for comment: **David Sheppard, Joe Parker, and Hunter Fordice**. Each appeared before the Commission individually; however, all appealed to the Commission to not reduce the number of deer hunting days as recommended by MDWFP at the last meeting. The hunters agreed to reducing the bag limits but not the number of days.

The Commission thanked the gentlemen for their comments.

OTHER BUSINESS

The **Hunters for MS Children (HMC)** item under "Other Business" was brought forward by request of the Executive Director. The Commission unanimously agreed, and the Chairman asked the representatives for **Hunters for MS Children** to come forward.

Michael Berry, HMC President, and Hunter Cox, HMC Vice President, came forward and stated that HMC is a non-profit organization, established in 2017, and takes 7-16 year-old disadvantaged or disabled kids hunting. In 2017/2018, 22 kids went hunting and 14 harvested their first deer. In 2018/2019, 24 kids went hunting with 16 harvesting their first deer. For the 2020 hunting season, HMC has established enough landowners to open their private land for HMC hunting purposes. HMC representatives shared that their organization is different from other youth groups--they will take a child hunting whenever they receive a call, not just one weekend a year. They only take 5-7 kids hunting at a time.

HMC requested special hunting privileges for HMC two weekends before Youth Hunting Season opens beginning Fall 2020 so that they will not interfere with Super Hunt weekend. According to their statement, HMC volunteers have helped with Super Hunt the past two years.

ACTION: The Commission discussed this request and unanimously decided to proactively approve HMC special hunting privileges for disadvantage and disabled youth two weekends before the Youth Hunting Season opens, by motion of Commission Mounger and seconded by Commissioner Wagner.

LICENSE SALES REPORT

Jason Thompson, License/Boat Registration Division Director, presented the License Sales Report for the month of August, 2019. The total revenue for the end of August is down 16.86% from last year.

Highlights of his report are listed below:

- Resident license sales – down 18%
- Non-resident licenses – down 17.95%
- Other Licenses category – down 2.62%
- Lifetime Licenses – down 4.33%

Auto Renewals

- Since February 2019 a total of 21,457 customers have signed up for Auto Renewal
- 5,097 customers have signed up for Auto Renewal in the month of August

License Packages

- As of September 24, 2019 there has been a total of 1,213 license packages sold.

WILDLIFE

Russ Walsh, Wildlife Bureau Chief of Staff, presented the following FINAL rule changes:

- 40 MS Admin. Code Part 2, Chapt. 1: Wildlife Management Areas:
FINAL Rules 1.1 – 1.46 - WMA Rules & Regulations

A. WMA Rules 1.1 – 1.45

Recommended relaxing mandate on using App as the only means for checking in at a WMA. Even though the paper forms are not mentioned in the rule, they will still be available for use at the WMAs for individuals who do not have a smart cell phone. There will be two different ways to check in.

B. Rules 1.23 & 1.24 – Sunflower and Twin Oaks WMAs

Turkey hunting during the 2020 spring season will be closed in the Sunflower and Twin Oaks WMAs.

C. Rules 1.10, 1.12, 1.21, 1.23, & 1.24 – South Delta WMAs

Adjust deer hunting seasons and bag limits to align with South Delta Zone established in Rule 2.2. (See Rule 2.2 changes below)

ACTION: Upon motion by Commissioner Cossar and seconded by Commissioner Mounger, all FINAL changes to Rules 1.1 – 1.45 were unanimously approved as presented.

- 40 MS Admin. Code Part 2, Chapt. 2: White-tailed Deer:
FINAL Rule 2.2 – White-tailed Deer Hunting Seasons and Bag Limits

In response to public comments received, the recommendation to amend the hunting season dates to 109 days was made; the bag limits will remain the same as Proposed at the last meeting.

A. Public & Private Land Season Structure

October 15 – January 31 (public and private land)

B. Bag Limits

1. 2 antlerless deer
2. 2 bucks - 1 antler criteria; 1 any antlered deer (private land only)

Statewide bag limits are 5 antlerless deer and 3 bucks (1 buck with any hardened antler)

ACTION: Upon motion by Commissioner Cossar and seconded by Commissioner Mounger, FINAL Rule 2.2 was unanimously approved as presented.

- 40 MS Admin. Code Part 2, Chapt. 2: White-tailed Deer:
FINAL Rule 2.8 – Prohibition on Use of Natural Cervid Urine

No comments were received.

ACTION: Upon motion by Commissioner Cossar and seconded by Commissioner Mounger, FINAL Rule 2.8 was unanimously approved.

- **National Forests in Mississippi**

Executive Director Polles distributed a handout to the Commission from the U.S. National Forest Service entitled "Executive Summary Report on Deer Dog Hunting in Mississippi." This report was a draft copy written by the University of Georgia. When complete, the U.S. National Forest Service will distribute copies to the public.

- **Game Check**

The Executive Director also distributed a "Game Check" brochure to the Commission that will be given to the public explaining the Game Check app for reporting deer harvest. This information will also be provided on the website, Facebook, and social media.

FISHERIES

Larry Pugh, Fisheries Bureau Chief of Staff, presented the following PROPOSED rule changes:

40 MS Admin. Code Part 3, Chapt 3 – Regulations regarding Commercial Fishing

- **PROPOSED Rule 3.1 – Commercial Fishing Regulations**

These are clarifications on regulations for the public and law enforcement:

- Clarify where the list of non-game gross fish can be found.
- "Mississippi" commercial fishing license required for Helpers.
- Definition of commercial trotline – trotline with more than 100 hooks.
- Require written permission to run, or take fish from, someone else's gear.
- Clarify fish that can be used a bait.
- Removed Alligator Gar creel limit; no possession of Paddlefish.
- Prohibit for possession of Paddlefish-closing commercial season.
- Clarified commercial fishing closure on Yockanookany River.
- Federal regulation on commercial fishing closure on NWR.
- Closed Foster's lake and Mud Lake to commercial fishing
- Clarified what gear are legal in open areas.
- Created new section dealing with commercial fishing on the Pascagoula River.
- Moon Lake – extended commercial fishing to March 31; deleted requirement that all boats must launch at Moon Lake Landing boat ramp.

ACTION: Upon motion by Commissioner Wagner and seconded by Commissioner Mounger, PROPOSED Rule 3.1 was unanimously approved as presented.

40 MS Admin. Code Part 3, Chapt 3

Pugh recommended repealing the following Paddlefish rules since there is no longer any commercial interest in the harvesting of paddlefish in Mississippi.

- **Rule 3.2 – Commercial Paddlefish Harvest Rules**
- **Rule 3.4 – Regulations regarding Paddlefish Harvest Management Units, Open Harvest Periods, and Harvest Quotas for the Commercial Harvest of Paddlefish**
- **Rule 3.5 – Procedures for Obtaining Paddlefish Permits for the Commercial Harvest of Paddlefish and Paddlefish Eggs; and Reporting Requirements for Paddlefish Harvest**

ACTION: Upon motion by Commissioner Wagner and seconded by Commissioner Mounger, Rules 3.2, 3.4, and 3.5 were unanimously approved to be repealed. These rules will be shown as PROPOSED Rules during the 30-day comment period.

State Fishing Lakes

Pugh distributed a booklet to the Commission entitled, FISHERIES BUREAU: FY19 State Fishing Lakes. The booklet highlighted revenue, facility improvements, and fish records during the past year.

PARKS

André Hollis, Director of Operations, asked Toney Fleming to come forward. Hollis presented Fleming with the 2019 Park Manager of the Year Award. Fleming has been Park Manager at Clarkco State Park since May 2016. A round of applause followed.

Executive Director Polles introduced André Hollis to the Commission, now serving as the new Parks Director of Operations. He was Park Administrator at Roosevelt State Park prior to coming to the Jackson Office.

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 August and officer work details, such as compliance checks on vessels at Pickwick Lake, commercial license checks on the Pearl River, illegal fishing equipment and fish shocking in Marion County, wood duck banding, and enlisting schools in the MSSP program.

40 MS Admin. Code Part 2, Chapt 2: White-tailed Deer

- **FINAL Rule 2.7 – Prohibition on Cervid Carcass Importation/Exportation to Protect Mississippi from Chronic Wasting Disease**

No comments were received, and this rule was recommended for FINAL adoption.

ACTION: Upon motion by Commissioner Wagner and seconded by Commissioner Mounger, FINAL Rule 2.7 was unanimously approved as presented.

NEXT MEETING DATE

Date: Wednesday, October 16, 2019

Location: 1505 Eastover Drive, Jackson, MS

Time: 8:30 a.m. Educational Session; 9:30 a.m. Business Session

EXECUTIVE SESSION

The Chairman asked if there was a need for an Executive Session. Polles stated that there was a need for an Executive Session to discuss personnel matters to include job performance of specific individuals in specific positions and budget line items affecting the continued employment of specific employees.

ACTION: Commissioner Wagner made a motion to close the meeting to determine the need for Executive Session for discussion on personnel matters to include job performance of specific individuals in specific positions and budget line items affecting the continued employment of specific employees. Commissioner Cossar 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 personnel matters to include job performance of specific individuals in specific positions and budget line items affecting the continued employment of specific employees.

The meeting was closed, and the room cleared.

ACTION: Commissioner Wagner made a motion to enter Executive Session to discuss personnel matters to include job performance of specific individuals in specific positions, and budget line items affecting the continued employment of specific employees. Commissioner Mounger 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 to include job performance of specific individuals in specific positions, and budget line items affecting the continued employment of specific employees.

Dr. Polles and Mr. Cook updated the Commission on agency personnel needs due to ordinary attrition. More specifically, several management positions in Law Enforcement need to be filled and a new cadet class is being recruited. Dr. Polles also mentioned several positions that could be affected by budget issues.

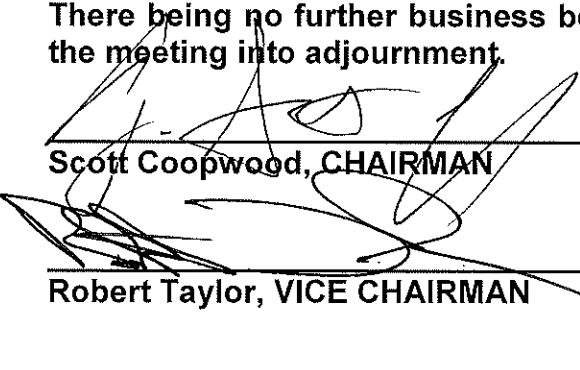
Discussion followed; however, no action was required of the Commission, at this time.

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

Counsel announced that the meeting had re-opened and no action had been taken by the Commission.

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