

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

Wednesday, October 16, 2019  
9:00 a.m. Business Session  
1505 Eastover Drive, Jackson, MS 39211

**No Educational Session this month.**

## **MINUTES OF THE BUSINESS SESSION – 9 AM**

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

Among the MDWFP staff attending were: Dr. Sam Polles, Executive Director; Robert Cook, Deputy Executive Director; Michael Bolden, Jennifer Head, Col. Steve Adcock, Larry Pugh, Russ Walsh, Amy Blaylock, Andre Hollis, Charles Knight, 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 Mounger and seconded by Commissioner Cossar, the minutes of the September 26, 2019 Commission meeting were unanimously approved.

## **AGENDA**

Executive Director Dr. Sam Polles informed the Commission that one item, "MSSP Update", needed to be added to the agenda under Law Enforcement.

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

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## PUBLIC COMMENTS

### University of Georgia Report on Dog-hunting for White-tailed Deer in Mississippi

Warren Strain, Communication Director, introduced **Mississippi Senator Joseph M. Seymour**, District 47, for comment. Senator Seymour presented a handout to the Commission from the Mississippi Hunting Dog Association, Inc. reviewing both the University of Georgia Report, "Evaluating Dog-hunting for White-tailed Deer: Dog Movements, Deer Movements, and the Potential Suitability of National Forest Lands for Dog-hunting in Mississippi" and "The National Forests in Mississippi Executive Summary." A draft of the Executive Summary was distributed to the Commission at the September 26, 2019 Commission Meeting.

Senator Seymour also presented a letter to the Executive Director requesting a copy of the Commission Meeting minutes and vote record which authorized a request for a study by the U. S. Forest Service on Dog Hunting for White-tailed Deer. The Executive Director stated that he was not aware of a request by the Commission for a study; however, this would be investigated and if there was, Senator Seymour would be provided a copy of the minutes and vote record.

### Eagle Lake 2019 Flood Damage Restoration

Warren Strain introduced **Linda and Paul Banchetti**, Eagle Lake property owners, for comment. Linda Banchetti presented a handout to the Commission with pictures of the damage and debris at Eagle Lake. Paul Banchetti came forward and requested that the Commission not reopen the lake at this time until piers have been repaired and debris in the lake and roads have been removed. The Banchettis had been told that the lake would remain at the current level until January, 2020 and saw the Executive Order by the Commission to reopen the lake on October 18, 2019. Access to the only public ramp, which is maintained by MDWFP, is currently blocked by debris in the parking lot.

Larry Pugh, Fisheries Bureau Chief of Staff, came forward to address the Commission on the Executive Order to reopen the lake on October 17, 2019. He stated that this date was not picked by MDWFP. The County Board of Supervisors gave MDWFP that date to reopen the Eagle Lake. MDWFP has had the lake at a holding level of 70 feet so that people could build back their piers. It is MDWFP's intention to keep it at that level during the winter for the purpose of restoration of the damage to the area. He added that MDWFP leases the boat ramp parking lot from the county, which is currently being used as a staging area for debris. The Board of Supervisors stated that the debris on the MDWFP parking lot would be removed by October 17, 2019. Pugh explained that MDWFP has been working with the county; but at some time the lake will have to be re-opened.

The Commission extended their sympathies to the Banchettis and everyone at Eagle Lake.

No decision was made at this time. The Commission will take this information into consideration when the Executive Order to reopen Eagle Lake is brought forward during "Other Business" on the agenda.

### LICENSE SALES REPORT

Jason Thompson, License/Boat Registration Division Director, presented the License Sales Report for the month of September, 2019. The total revenue for the end of September is down 10.93% from last year.

Highlights of his report are listed below:

- Resident license sales – down 10%
- Non-resident licenses – down 12.79%
- Other Licenses category – down 9.80%
- Lifetime Licenses – down 8.28%

#### Auto Renewals

- Since February 2019 a total of 26,063 customers have signed up for Auto Renewal
- 4,801 customers have signed up for Auto Renewal in the month of September

#### License Packages

- As of October 14, 2019 there has been a total of 2,324 license packages sold.

### WILDLIFE

#### Duck Stamp Projects

The following Waterfowl Conservation Groups had representatives present. Houston Havens, Waterfowl Program Coordinator, asked each representative to come forward and voice their requests for 2019-2020 Duck Stamp Funding.

- **Delta Waterfowl – Jeff Howell, Vice President of Development**

Howell requested \$100,000 to fund the Delta's North Dakota Working Wetlands Project to structure Farm Bill implementation and to fund Adopt a Pothole Program in Manitoba.

- **Ducks Unlimited – Ed Penny Director of Public Policy**

Penny thanked the Commission for prior year support and requested \$125,000 on behalf of Ducks Unlimited to be used for the Eastern Saskatchewan Breeding Habitat Project.

- **Mississippi State University, Dept. of Wildlife, Fisheries, & Aquaculture – Dr. Brian Davis, Associate Professor**

Dr. Davis thanked everyone for their continued support of the MSU Waterfowl Program and requested \$40,000 to fund an extension of ongoing post-doctoral work on MDWFP aerial waterfowl survey data and funding to begin study on wood duck nest box production

and female wood duck recruitment. He handed out to the Commission a Project Executive Summary of a previously completed, MDWFP funded project, "Winter Ecology of Radiomarked Female Mallards in Mississippi's Alluvial Valley."

### MDWFP STAFF 2019-2020 DUCK STAMP FUNDING RECOMMENDATIONS

Houston Havens, Waterfowl Program Coordinator, thanked the Waterfowl Conservation groups for their comments and presented the following staff recommendations for distribution of duck stamp proceeds for the full amount requested with a stipulation that we will designate by line item how the funds are to be spent.

<u>Project</u>	<u>Requested</u>	<u>Recommended</u>	<u>Project Description</u>
DU & DU Canada	\$125,000	\$125,000	Continue funding of Eastern Saskatchewan Breeding Habitat Project; funds will be matched 3:1 with other agency and DU funds.
Delta Waterfowl	\$100,000	\$100,000	Continue funding for N. Dakota Working Wetlands initiatives And funding for Adopt a Pothole Program in Manitoba.
MSU Research	\$ 40,000	\$ 40,000	Funding for extension of ongoing post-doctoral work on MDWFP aerial waterfowl survey data and funding to begin study on wood duck nest box production and female wood duck recruitment.

**ACTION: Upon motion made by Commissioner Mounger and seconded by Commissioner Cossar, funds for 2019-2020 Duck Stamp projects for Ducks Unlimited, Delta Waterfowl, and MSU Research were unanimously approved as recommended by staff, contingent upon further discussion with the recipients about, and the recipients' acceptance of, any restrictions on how the funds are to be spent.**

<u>Project</u>	<u>Requested</u>	<u>Recommended</u>	<u>Project Description</u>
WMA Wetland Management & Enhancement Projects	\$130,000	\$130,000	Provide funds to WMAs as needed to supplement annual waterfowl habitat management and infrastructure improvements. Repair or replace well and motor on Malmaison WMA green-tree reservoir. WMA enhancement funds can be used as match on future wetland projects.
Private Lands Wetland Incentive Program	\$ 25,000	\$ 25,000	Funding for 2019-20 enrollments into MS Private Land Wetland Incentive Program through Delta Waterfowl.
Private Land Wetland Habitat Assistance	\$ 30,000	\$30,000	Fund a wetland habitat assistance program by providing water control structures to MS private landowners; similar to past years under the USFWS Partners for Fish and Wildlife Program.
Aerial Waterfowl Surveys	\$ 22,000	\$ 22,000	Continue monitoring of MS Delta waterfowl abundance and habitat; Delta Wildlife also funding.
Waterfowl Program Travel	\$ 9,000	\$ 9,000	Funding for MDWFP staff to attend regional and national meetings related to waterfowl and wetlands (as needed).

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<u>Project</u>	<u>Requested</u>	<u>Recommended</u>	<u>Project Description</u>
Waterfowl Trapping and Banding Supplies	\$ 3,000	\$ 3,000	Purchase items related to trapping and banding of MS waterfowl.
MS Flyway Mtg	\$ 10,000	\$ 10,000	Funding to host the Summer 2020 MS Flyway Council Meeting.
Mississippi Flyway Council Dues & Cooperative Projects	\$ 22,254	\$ 22,254	Annual dues to MS Flyway Council, annual contributions to MS Flyway banding, & other cooperative waterfowl projects.
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$516,254</b>	<b>\$516,254</b>	

**ACTION:** Upon motion made by Commissioner Taylor and seconded by Commissioner Wagner, funds for the remaining 2019-2020 Duck Stamp project were unanimously approved as recommended by staff, contingent upon further discussion with the recipients about, and the recipients' acceptance of, any restrictions on how the funds are to be spent.

### FISHERIES

Larry Pugh, Fisheries Bureau Chief of Staff, informed the Commission that no comments had been received this past month concerning changes to Rule 3.1 and repealing Rules 3.2, 3.4, and 3.5. Therefore, Pugh recommended final adoption.

- FINAL Rule 3.1 – Commercial Fishing Regulations
- FINAL Rule 3.2 – Commercial Paddlefish Harvest Rules
- FINAL Rule 3.4 – Regulations regarding Paddlefish Harvest Management Units, Open Harvest Periods, and Harvest Quotas for the Commercial Harvest of Paddlefish
- FINAL 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 Taylor and seconded by Commissioner Wagner, FINAL Rules 3.1, 3.2, 3.4, and 3.5 were unanimously approved as presented.

### 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 September and officer work details, such as Hunter Education Classes, handling nuisance alligators, and Holmes County career day.

At a previous Commission meeting, the Commission requested that the courts be notified of outstanding Law Enforcement Officer warrants. The courts were notified and, to date, \$39,000 has been collected through the court system. Officers are also searching through citations and issuing warrants on current outstanding citations. As noted before, MDWFP only collects \$5 per citation, the rest of the funds collected go to the counties.

### **Mississippi Scholastic Shooting Program (MSSP) Update**

Michelle Carter, Shooting Sports/MSSP Coordinator, presented a handout to the Commission updating the progress that has been made this past year in recruiting public and private schools into the Mississippi Scholastic Shooting Program.

In May 2019, 305 participants in eight counties and 16 schools were a part of the MSSP program. In September 2019, the program grew to 501 participants with 30 schools in 21 counties and another 552 projected participants in 23 additional schools in nine more counties. With the future addition of a sporting clay at the McHenry Shooting Range, Carter anticipates a huge growth of schools and participants in South Mississippi.

Carter has made great strides with the help of dedicated Conservation Officers who already had built a relationship in these schools and joined her on countless meetings and events to enlist school participation. She has only been a part of MDWFP for 11 months and has spearheaded much interest in the youth of Mississippi to build their skills to become independent shooters.

### **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.

- *Jonathan Dowdy, Pontotoc, MS*  
Dowdy stated that he had a weak moment. He was driving his truck at night and came upon several deer. His friend pulled out a gun and shot a deer from the truck. It turned out to be a mechanical deer. Dowdy stated that he would never do this again. He lost two dogs earlier that day and all he found were their collars. His fines totaled \$2,700.

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 Taylor, Dowdy's license was reinstated by unanimous consent with the stipulation that he will serve the entire three years for a second citation.**

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### OTHER BUSINESS

#### Executive Order – Eagle Lake

Larry Pugh had advised the Commission earlier in the meeting that the Board of Supervisors had given him the date October 18, 2019 to open Eagle Lake for recreational boating and fishing activity by means of an Executive Order. After hearing comments earlier in the current meeting from the Banchettis, the Commission was undecided whether opening Eagle Lake was in the best interest of the public or not. Discussion by the Commission followed on the debris, water safety, and pier construction.

**ACTION:** The Commission voted unanimously to authorize the Executive Director to re-open recreational boating on Eagle Lake at such time as he deemed it appropriate, by motion of Commission Taylor and seconded by Commissioner Mounger.

### NEXT MEETING DATE

Date: Tuesday, November 12, 2019  
Location: 1505 Eastover Drive, Jackson, MS  
Time: 1:00 p.m. Educational Session; 2:00 p.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 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 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 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 to include job performance of specific individuals in specific positions, and budget line items affecting the continued employment of specific employees.

Chief Adcock updated the Commission on current recruiting efforts for a cadet class to be held before the end of the year. Chief Adcock also explained his plan to fill current Law Enforcement management vacancies and his thoughts on the likely candidates. He also pointed out that these positions are eligible for direct appointment by the appointing authority (Executive Director) or could be recruited. In all likelihood, they would be directly appointed.

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

Michael Bolden, Deputy Administrator, and Jennifer Head, Budget Director, then updated the Commission on the agency's current budget request for the State Parks. Current needs for infrastructure and capital improvements dominated the discussion. The dwindling general fund appropriation for Parks over the past few years was emphasized and the effect the budget cuts have had on park assets, amenities, and the ability of the agency to keep parks open, and avoid having a reduction-in-force of parks' personnel.


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 Taylor 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.

  
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Scott Coopwood, CHAIRMAN

11/12/19  
Date

  
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Robert Taylor, VICE CHAIRMAN

11/12/2019  
Date