

MISSISSIPPI COMMISSION ON WILDLIFE, FISHERIES, & PARKS

Thursday, March 6, 2014

2:00 PM

Paul B. Johnson State Park, Hattiesburg, MS



MINUTES OF THE MEETING

PRESENT: Chairman John C Stanley IV, Commissioners Bryan Jones, Charles Rigdon, and William "Billy" Deviney.

ABSENT: Commissioner Clay Wagner.

Among the MDWFP staff attending were: Dr. Sam Polles, Executive Director; Larry Castle, Chris McDonald, Ricky Flynt, Jason Thompson, Col. Steve Adcock, and Doug Mann, Special Assistant Attorney General.

Chairman John C Stanley IV welcomed Mississippi Legislators to the meeting; namely, Representatives Doug McLeod, Randall Patterson, Randy Boyd, and Timmy Ladner.

MINUTES

ACTION: Upon motion made by Commissioner Jones and seconded by Commissioner Rigdon, the minutes of February 3, 2014 were unanimously approved as presented.

TODAY'S AGENDA

Dr. Sam Polles, Executive Director, requested two additions to the agenda; namely, an exemption request for the North Mississippi Fish Hatchery under "Other Business", and Larry Castle, Director of Technical Programs, to comment directly before the floor is opened for "Public Comments".

ACTION: Upon motion by Commissioner Rigdon and seconded by Commissioner Deviney, today's agenda was unanimously approved as amended.

LICENSE SALES REPORT

License Sales Report

Mr. Jason Thompson, License/Boat Registration Division Director, presented the following License Sales Report for the month of February, 2014.

He reported the following cumulative sales (comparing February, 2014 to February, 2013):

- Overall dollar sales are up over \$142,000
- Resident sales down little more than 1%
- 3,000 new exempt licenses sold (Hunter Ed students under 16 years old)
- 280 more senior exempt licenses sold than last year
- Non-resident category up more than 3%, over \$248,000
- Non-resident All Game category up \$136,000
- 7-day license sales up \$65,000
- Other License category up \$13,000 due to Alligator Privileges
- Resident Lifetime license sales down
- Native Son license sales up over 2%

PROPOSED Rule (40 Miss. Admin. Code Part 1, Chapter 8)

- Rule 8.4 Non-resident Hunting & Fishing License & Fee Program
Mr. Thompson explained that the markups presented in Rule 8.4 reflect changes already made in statute. This merely updates the language.

ACTION: Upon motion made by Commissioner Deviney and seconded by Commissioner Jones, the PROPOSED rule above was unanimously approved.

WILDLIFE

Mr. Chris McDonald, Wildlife Bureau Assistant Director, introduced Ricky Flynt, Alligator Program Coordinator. Mr. Flynt presented the following alligator rule changes for Commission consideration and approval. A handout was given to the Commission outlining the changes made to Rules 5.1, 5.2, and 5.3.

PROPOSED Rules (40 Miss. Admin. Code Pt. 2 Chap. 5):

- Rule 5.1 - General Regulations Regarding Alligators
- Rule 5.2 - Alligator Hunting Seasons for Private Lands
- Rule 5.3 - Alligator Hunting Season for Public Waters

ACTION: Upon motion made by Commissioner Jones and seconded by Commissioner Rigdon, the PROPOSED rules above were unanimously approved.

LAW ENFORCEMENT

Citation Report

Col. Steve Adcock, Chief of Law Enforcement, briefed the Commission on citations issued this past month. A handout was included in the Commissioners' notebooks outlining the Citation Report.

OTHER BUSINESS

Legislators' Remarks

Representative McLeod made a statement on behalf of Representative Herb Frierson and other members of the Legislature requesting the Commission not to limit hunting, fishing, or trapping access to public lands. The Commission thanked him for his comments and his support of the agency.

Representative Randy Boyd made suggestions as to how to notify the public of rule changes (in addition to the required filings with the Secretary of State). His first suggestion was to place rule changes in local papers. His second suggestion was to notify state legislators of rule changes and ask them to inform their districts. The Commission thanked him for his comments and his support of the agency.

North Mississippi Fish Hatchery/Enid Lake

Larry Castle presented a request to waive entry fees April 23, 2014 at the North Mississippi Fish Hatchery Visitor Education Center at Enid Lake for a Corps of Engineers' Field Day. Corps of Engineers and their families from the surrounding area reservoirs will be visiting the Visitor Education Center at Enid Lake and enjoying the facilities.

ACTION: Upon motion made by Commissioner Jones and seconded by Commissioner Deviney, the entry fee exemption above was unanimously approved.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

Larry Castle thanked everyone for being at the meeting. He summarized the history regarding unethical hunting practices at the Homochitto National Forest and on surrounding private properties. After ten years of documentation by private landowners, the US Forest Service came to the Commission on Wildlife, Fisheries, and Parks to see if hunting dogs could be saved at the Homochitto. Hunting with dogs had been banned at other national forests in other states. The Commission and department took into consideration the wildlife resource and what was best for the resource. Next, the Commission evaluated how recreational opportunities could be provided to its customers without damaging the resource and without infringing on private property rights. After assessing all these considerations, the Commission decided to regulate hunting dogs through a permit system in order to save it and to continue the tradition. These regulations are continuously being analyzed and may be revised at some future date; however, currently the Commission has **no** plans to change or to expand hunting dog regulations in the Homochitto, or any other area of the state. Substantial documentation would be required before the Commission could evaluate regulation changes and, thus far, documentation has not been received from any other national forest areas.

Chairman Stanley informed the public that it was highly unusual for the Commission to allow public comments on anything that was not on the agenda; however, the Commission would grant an exception for this meeting. Two groups were present, those representing landowners and hunting dog groups to include the Mississippi Hunting Dog Association. The Commission granted each group 15 minutes for comment. To facilitate the process, the Commission recessed for 10 minutes so that each group could designate speakers. Following the recess, the groups were asked to speak.

Landowner's Group

Preston Sullivan, Gary Harden, C. T. Switzer, and Lawrence Mann spoke on behalf of landowners. This group would like to see the dog permit system remain in effect in the Homochitto. A suggestion was made to let the deer rest in the summer and not be harassed by dog training activities. Litter and speeding vehicles were also noted as concerns for local landowners.

Mississippi Hunting Dog Association

David Smith, Matthew Scott, and Dale Trotter spoke on behalf of hunting dog groups in general and the Mississippi Hunting Dog Association in particular. This association supports the use of dog tracking collars. A suggestion was made to assign penalties to landowners for capturing dogs and putting them on their land. A request was made for someone to go hunting with them and see the challenges that face hunters using dogs.

NEXT TENTATIVE MEETING DATE

April Meeting – Wednesday, April 16 – Time TBA @ 1505 Eastover Drive, Jackson

EXECUTIVE SESSION

ACTION: Upon motion made by Commissioner Rigdon and seconded by Commissioner Deviney, the Commission voted unanimously to close the meeting to determine the need for Executive Session. The Commission determined that Executive Session was needed for discussions regarding transactions in land and the relocation of a business or industry. Upon motion made by Commissioner Deviney and seconded by Commissioner Rigdon, the Commission voted unanimously to enter into Executive Session.

Larry Castle informed the Commission of a tract of land of approximately 40 acres which is contiguous to the Indianola WMA and available for purchase. If purchased, the tract would improve access. Mr. Castle requested authority for staff to proceed with appraisals.

Upon motion made by Commissioner Deviney and seconded by Commissioner Rigdon, the Commission voted unanimously to authorize staff to obtain appraisals on the subject tract of land.

Larry Castle updated the Commission on the possible loss of funding for WMAs on lands under the jurisdiction of the Vicksburg District of the Corps of Engineers and the potential impact on the agency's budget and personnel.

No action was required of the Commission.

There was no other business for discussion in Executive Session.

Upon motion made by Commissioner Jones and seconded by Commissioner Rigdon, the Commission voted unanimously to end Executive Session and open the meeting.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business to discuss, Chairman Stanley gaveled the meeting into adjournment.



John C Stanley IV, CHAIRMAN

Date

Bryan Jones, VICE-CHAIRMAN

Date