

MISSISSIPPI COMMISSION ON WILDLIFE, FISHERIES, & PARKS

Wednesday, January 21, 2015

2:30 p.m.

1505 Eastover Drive, Jackson, MS 39211



MINUTES OF THE MEETING

PRESENT: Chairman Bryan Jones, Commissioners Charles Rigdon, William "Billy" Deviney, Clay Wagner, and Bill F. Cossar

Among the MDWFP staff attending were: Dr. Sam Polles, Executive Director; Robert Cook, Deputy Executive Director; Larry Castle, Michael Bolden, Chad Dacus, Larry Pugh, Col. Steve Adcock, Ed Penny, Jason Thompson, and counsel, Doug Mann and Drew Malone, Special Assistant Attorneys General.

Chairman Jones gavelled the meeting to order and welcomed newly appointed Senate Wildlife, Fisheries, and Parks Committee Chairman, Philip Moran, along with Kenny Ellis from the Lieutenant Governor's Office.

OPENING PRAYER

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

MINUTES

ACTION: Upon motion made by Commissioner Cossar and seconded by Commissioner Rigdon, the minutes of December 17, 2014 were unanimously approved as presented.

TODAY'S AGENDA

ACTION: Upon motion by Commissioner Wagner and seconded by Commissioner Cossar, today's agenda was unanimously approved.

LICENSE SALES REPORT

License Sales Report

Jason Thompson, License/Boat Registration Division Director, presented the License Sales Report for the month of December, 2014. He informed the Commission that total revenue for December was

down 1% from last year. However, the most recent report generated on January 18 shows revenue down only .4%. The trend indicates that sales each month are improving.

His report included the following cumulative sales (comparing December, 2014 to December, 2013):

- Resident License - sales are down only .8%. Small game license sales are up close to 2%. The annual range permit is up \$25,000 from last year and the senior and youth exempt licensing are up from last year.
- Non-resident Licenses - sales are down .8%. Waterfowl is up 9%.
- Other Licenses – revenue is up 1% in the Permits category.
- Lifetime Licenses – The total number of lifetime licenses sold are down 2% from last year.

Over 1,000 customers have renewed their licenses since renewal notices were emailed in the fall.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

Paul Johnson, Magnolia Crappie Club, informed the Commission that three years ago Ron Garavelli, former Fisheries Bureau Director, met with the Corps of Engineers concerning fishing regulations on the Corps lakes at Grenada, Sardis, Arkabutla, and Enid. Johnson stated that when renewing a license, instead of a two-page letter outlining MDWFP fishing regulations, each fisherman is now handed a six-page letter with Corps of Engineers fishing regulations. This issue has returned. It is Mr. Johnson's understanding that the Corps of Engineers does not have the authority to issue fishing regulations in the State of Mississippi. MDWFP assistance was requested.

ACTION: The Commission informed Mr. Johnson that someone from MDWFP would discuss this matter with the Corps of Engineers.

WILDLIFE

Wildlife Bureau Awards

Chad Dacus, Wildlife Bureau Director, presented the Wildlife Bureau awards to the following employees who have shown exemplary abilities, passion, and work ethic this past year. The Foundation also provided gift cards to each:

- Wildlife Biologist of the Year – Scott Edwards
- Wildlife Manager of the Year – Doyle Bond

The Commission and staff gave a round of applause following each presentation.

Wounded Veteran Deer Hunt at Canemount WMA

Chad Dacus informed the Commission that four veterans would be participating in the Wounded Veteran Deer Hunt this Friday, Saturday, and Sunday (January 23-25) at Canemount WMA. The

Foundation for Mississippi Wildlife, Fisheries, & Parks will be providing food for the event and the hunters were selected through Wounded Warriors of Mississippi. Chairman Jones commented that he had heard great things about a similar hunt held in Raymond, MS.

No action was taken by the Commission as this was for information only.

WMA Harvest Report

Chad Dacus distributed a Wildlife Management Area Harvest Report for Deer, Waterfowl, and Squirrel. He informed the Commission that fewer people have been hunting deer so far this year. The final report will come out in March after deer season closes. On average, duck hunters harvested 0.3 ducks less than last year during this time period. While the volume of hunters is down overall for all species, the harvest rates are relatively the same as last year. He was uncertain if this trend was weather related.

FISHERIES

SEAFWA Biologist of the Year Award

Larry Pugh, Fisheries Bureau Director, recognized Keith Meals who was named "Fisheries Biologist of the Year" by the Southeastern Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies (SEAFWA). Meals was presented the award at the Association's 68th annual meeting in October, 2014. Pugh listed many of the outstanding accomplishments during Meals' 28 years with MDWFP.

The Commission and staff gave a round of applause following the presentation.

LAW ENFORCEMENT

Citation Report

Col. Steve Adcock, Chief of Law Enforcement, briefed the Commission on 956 citations issued statewide between December 11, 2014 and January 15, 2015. Top five violations were No License, Baiting and Supplemental Feeding, Trespassing, Hunting from a Public Road, and No Hunter Orange. Officers also assisted with man hunts in Marion, Lawrence, and Forrest Counties.

Reinstatement Request

Col. Adcock brought before the Commission one request for reinstatement. The violator was asked to come forward and state why his license had been revoked.

- Matthew Neal, Myrtle, MS

Neal shot a decoy deer after dark and was fined \$2,500.00. He stated that he had never been in trouble before and realized his mistake after shooting the deer. He went to a Hunter Education Class and told his story so that others would learn from his mistake.

ACTION: Upon motion made by Commissioner Deviney and seconded by Commissioner Wagner, the Commission voted unanimously to reinstate Mr. Neal's license.

PARKS

Parks Update

Libby Hartfield, Director, Education and Recreational Services, presented a PowerPoint update on Mississippi's 25 State Parks, 19 State Park Lakes, 3 Corps of Engineer Reservoirs (Grenada, Enid, & Sardis) and one state park on TVA Pickwick Lake. Highlights included:

- 9 Civilian Conservation Corps parks are designated as State Landmarks by Archives and History.
- Tishomingo State Park (SP) - Best disc golf course. There are 16 Disc Golf Courses statewide.
- Clark Creek – Smallest park with day use hiking trail, which includes 13 larger waterfalls and 27 smaller waterfalls. There are 21 hiking trails in the park system.
- Buccaneer SP – Great playground
- Roosevelt SP – Fantastic water park with visitation of 6,450 in FY14
- Paul B Johnson SP and Clarkco SP – Splash pads
- Buccaneer SP – Wave pool, water slide, kiddie pool, and wading pool. Visitation for FY14 was 20,033. Largest revenue provider for the park system.
- Visitation at Mississippi State Parks for FY14 was over 1 million.
- Requesting funds from the Legislature to help with high hazard dams at Roosevelt SP and Simpson County Lake, roof repairs on park structures, as well as infrastructure upgrades needed for 85 miles of paved roads, water and electrical systems, and wastewater treatment systems in order to comply with health department regulations.
- Bureau of Buildings has developed a comprehensive, master plan for the state park system.
- Parks oversees 251 Federal Highway Federation Recreational Trail projects funded with federal grants.
- National Park Service has 571 land and water conservation fund projects (many are on our parks) which Parks monitors, inspects, and coordinates with communities.

Chairman Jones requested a list of showing which parks are profitable and which ones are not. Hartfield will email a list to all the Commissioners.

OTHER BUSINESS**Golf Update**

Randy Watkins, Golf Consultant, introduced Mike Taggart who will be assisting him with three of the state's four golf courses. His report included the following golf courses:

- **Mallard Point (John Kyle SP)** – Has been leased for seven years to an operator from Holly Springs. The greens were redone last year. The operator covered them from December 12, 2014 – January 18, 2015 to protect them from the weather. 2,500 – 3,000 rounds were played last year.
- **Lefleur's Bluff (Lefleur's Bluff SP)** – Greatest asset is that the 9 holes can be played during lunch. Improvements include over seeding the greens in October and promoting Jr. Camps in the summer. He does not suggest going down on the price even though we are competing with 18 hole golf courses.
- **Quail Hollow (Percy Quinn SP)** – A manager has been hired. The play is starting to come back. The golf shop and restaurant will be combined. Watkins will be reviewing a more competitive price this spring on the Season Pass. The Season Pass fee will be increased but the Daily Rate will remain the same.
- **New Brochure** - Currently working on a new brochure to encourage North Louisiana residents to play golf in Mississippi. Louisiana golfers come for the day and are not in a hurry to go home. They enjoy eating and spending the night at our facilities while enjoying their golf activities.

Malmaison State Wildlife Management Area

Doug Mann, Special Assistant Attorney General, informed the Commission that the Secretary of State's Office has requested the agency's assistance in curing a vague description in the deed from Mr. Frank Weir to the state, transferring land to be included in Malmaison Wildlife Management Area. Pursuant to Miss. Code Ann. §49-1-47, the Commission has the authority to issue deeds to clear up such ambiguities or settle boundary disputes. Mr. Mann requested that the Commission issue an order directing the Executive Director to execute a quitclaim deed that will cure the description defect.

ACTION: By motion of Commissioner Wagner and seconded by Commissioner Rigdon, the Commission voted unanimously to issue the order to execute a quitclaim deed to cure the description in the Frank Weir deed.

NEXT MEETING DATE

Monday, February 9, 2015 @ 9:30 a.m., Quail Ridge Conference Center, Louisville, MS

EXECUTIVE SESSION

ACTION: Upon motion made by Commissioner Deviney and seconded by Commissioner Rigdon, 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 real property, ongoing criminal investigations, relocation of a business or industry, and budget line items which may affect the continued employment of specific employees. Upon motion made by Commissioner Rigdon and seconded by Commissioner Deviney, the Commission voted unanimously to enter into Executive Session.

Dr. Polles and Randy Spencer, Federal Aid Coordinator, addressed the Commission on a need to expend certain funds that are being held as program income, to satisfy the requirements of the USFWS on the use of such funds. In the past, the agency had been allowed to spend any income earned from a project managed with Federal dollars, for management costs associated with the project that generated the funds. Recently, the agency was informed that this would no longer be allowed. In the alternative, the agency could use the money to purchase land for outdoor public hunting, fishing, and recreation. Mr. Spencer also noted that these funds, once spent, would be eligible for reimbursement under the Federal Aid guidelines.

Following up on Mr. Spencer's remarks, Dr. Polles updated the Commission on a tract of land of approximately 3,200 acres in Montgomery County that could easily be managed as a WMA.

Discussion followed.

Based upon the discussion that more information was needed, the Commission acted as follows:

ACTION: By motion of Commissioner Wagner and seconded by Commissioner Cossar, the Commission voted unanimously to authorize the Executive Director to move forward with obtaining appraisals on the land in Montgomery County, less approximately 126 acres containing the lodge house and outbuildings, and contingent upon the determination that no conservation easements or other encumbrances are currently on the property.

Dr. Polles updated the Commission on a couple of other potential land acquisitions that could come on the market in the near future. No action was required on those items.

Next, Chad Dacus, Director of the Wildlife Bureau, presented a draft "enclosure decommissioning plan" to the Commission for its review. The plan outlines a protocol to be followed by the agency and any owner of a high-fenced enclosure who wishes to remove the fence and no longer be a permitted facility.

Discussion followed.

The Commission indicated that more information was needed before moving forward with promulgating a protocol for decommissioning. Mr. Dacus agreed and stated that the staff would

conduct additional research to provide answers to the various questions raised during the discussions. No further action was required of the Commission at this time.

Finally, Dr. Polles presented the Commission with information regarding the agency's proposed budget for Fiscal Year 2016, which will be presented during the current legislative session. The presentation was mostly informational with some specific discussion regarding Law Enforcement PINs and related issues. No Commission action was required.

There was no other business for discussion in Executive Session.

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

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business to discuss, Chairman Jones gavelled the meeting into adjournment.



Bryan Jones, CHAIRMAN



Date



Charles Rigdon, VICE CHAIRMAN



Date