

MISSISSIPPI COMMISSION ON WILDLIFE, FISHERIES, & PARKS

Thursday, July 25, 2024

1:00 PM Business Session

MDWFP Headquarters

1505 Eastover Drive, Jackson, MS 39211

BUSINESS SESSION MINUTES

(There was no Education Session prior to the business session this month)

PRESENT: Chairman Scott Coopwood and Commissioner Gary Rhoads. Newly-appointed Commissioners Todd Hairston and Colin Maloney were also present, and Commissioner William Mounger II, was attending via telephone.

Among the MDWFP staff attending were Executive Director Lynn Posey, Larry Pugh, Curtis Thornhill, Brian Ferguson, Col. Jerry Carter, Lt. Col. Scottie Jones, Russ Walsh, Amy Blaylock, Jerry Brown, Jason Thompson, Andre´ Hollis, Doug Mann, and Drew Malone, General Counsel.

The Chairman gaveled the meeting into order and welcomed guests, both those watching the live stream video and those attending in person.

OPENING PRAYER

Chairman Coopwood requested that Jason Thompson, Director of Administrative Services, open the meeting with prayer.

Following the opening prayer, Chairman Coopwood took the opportunity to note for those present that this was his second time to serve as chairman and that he was entering his tenth (10th) year as a Commissioner. He expressed his pride at the many accomplishments of the Department and Commission during the past ten years and expressed hope for more and better times to come.

SWEARING-IN CEREMONY

The Chairman called for the next item on the agenda which was the swearing-in of the newly appointed Commissioners, Todd Hairston and Colin Maloney. The oath of office which may be found in Section 268 of the Mississippi Constitution of 1890, was administered to each Commissioner by Mrs. Tara Yount, of the Executive Staff. Having taken the oath, the new Commissioners took their seats and began their official duties.

MINUTES

Chairman Coopwood asked the Commission to review the minutes from the June meeting and when done called for a motion to approve the minutes.

ACTION: Upon motion by Commissioner Rhoads and seconded by Commissioner Mounger, the Commission meeting minutes of June 19, 2024, were unanimously approved.

AGENDA

The Chairman asked Executive Director Posey if there were any changes to the proposed agenda. Mr. Posey stated that there were no changes and that there would not be a need for an Executive Session.

ACTION: Upon motion by Commissioner Rhoads and seconded by Commissioner Hairston, the Commission unanimously approved the meeting agenda for July 25, 2024.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

Mark Clark – Mr. Clark is a tournament bass fisherman who requested to address the Commission regarding, in his opinion, the lack of opportunities for fishing tournaments in Mississippi. Mr. Clark's comments centered around the fact that bass population seemed to be low and the number of trophy bass seemed to be particularly low. Furthermore, it did not appear to him that many of our lakes were being managed and/or stocked as needed to produce tournament quality fish. Mr. Clark requested that the agency consider changing fishery management practices to produce more tournament-worthy fish.

LICENSE SALES REPORT

Jason Thompson, Director of Administrative Services, presented the License Sales Report for the month of June 2024. The total revenue for the end of June was up 2% (\$453,378.38) compared to June 2023.

Highlights of his report are listed below:

- Resident license sales – down \$61,850.30
- RES WMA User Permit – up 1%
- RES Senior Exempt – down 6%
- Non-resident license sales – up 4% (\$497,607.60)
- NR All Game – down \$269,700.00
- NR Small Game Hunting Annual – down 8%
- NR 7-day Small Game – up 1%
- NR WMA User – down 4%
- NR Freshwater Fishing – up \$14,960.00
- Other Licenses – up 3%
- Lifetime License category – up 1%

The sales of license packages were up 1,658 compared to this time last year.

Mr. Thompson then updated the Commission on the agency's efforts to obtain a new point-of-sale license sales system. Briefly, Mr. Thompson informed the Commission that a vendor had been selected and negotiations were underway to finalize the agreement with the vendor. Negotiations were being conducted under the auspices of the Department of Information and Technology Services (MDITS). Part of the negotiations concerned the administrative fees for processing the electronic sales. Mr. Thompson asked Mr. Malone, general counsel, to explain further.

Mr. Malone explained that Miss. Code Ann. §49-7-17(4) authorizes the Commission to set and collect any fees or surcharges required to offset the cost of the electronic transactions. Mr. Thompson added that these fees formerly were an additional \$1.29 per each Resident License sold and an additional \$3.54 per nonresident license. The current negotiations had those numbers increasing to \$2.49 per Resident and \$4.42 per nonresident license. Mr. Thompson asked the Commission to approve the additional fees/surcharges for electronic license sales once negotiations are complete.

ACTION: Upon motion by Commissioner Rhoads and seconded by Commissioner Maloney, the Commission unanimously approved the final negotiated increase in administrative fees/surcharges to offset the costs of electronic license sales.

LAW ENFORCEMENT

Law Enforcement Update

Colonel Jerry Carter, Chief of Law Enforcement, reported that during the month of June, 2024, 474 citations were issued with "No Resident License" being number one (120), "No Personal Floatation Device" was number two (55), followed by "No Boat Registration" (52). Various boating violations for equipment deficiencies were cited (35) and reckless operation of a vessel was cited thirty-two (32) times.

The Colonel went on to report several occasions where conservation officers were requested to assist other law enforcement agencies in performance of their duties such as a request from the Calhoun County Sheriff's Office for assistance in a manhunt for fugitives, and a rescue operation in Greene County for boaters stranded on the Chickasawhay River.

The Colonel acknowledged the Department's LawFit Team which won several awards and will be the subject of a more in-depth report at an upcoming meeting.

The Department's current cadet class is in their third week at MLEOTA. The Colonel noted that graduation for these cadets from MLEOTA will be on September 19th of 2024, after which they will return to MCOTA for their final phase of training. Graduation from MCOTA is currently scheduled for October 17, 2024.

Shooting range customer counts:

Mclvor – 528; Turcotte – 623 and McHenry – 647.

License Reinstatement

Colonel Carter introduced Mr. Trenton Dickerson of Lucedale, MS to the Commission. Mr. Dickerson had been convicted of headlighting in March of 2022. The Colonel reported that Mr. Dickerson had met all the requirements for reinstatement of his license.

Mr. Dickerson expressed his apologies to the Commission for having committed the offense of headlighting and expressed remorse for his actions. The Department had received reports from the local residents that shots were heard at night. Officer Munter of George County staked the area out and caught Mr. Dickerson shining while driving in the area with a loaded gun on the backseat.

Colonel Carter reiterated that Mr. Dickerson had satisfied all requirements for reinstatement and recommended that his privileges be reinstated.

ACTION: Upon motion by Commissioner Rhoads and seconded by Commissioner Mounger, the Commission voted unanimously to reinstate Mr. Dickerson's license privileges.

PARKS

Brian Ferguson delivered the Parks report for June. Mr. Ferguson reported on the numerous remodeling and renovation projects currently underway and/or nearing completion across the State Park System. Currently, the Parks are about three years into a five-year renovation, remodeling, and reconstruction plan, representing an Eighty Million Dollar investment. Mr. Ferguson stated that he would give some highlights of projects nearing completion, beginning with Percy Quin State Park in McComb, Mississippi.

Mr. Ferguson noted that the campground and other facilities at Percy Quin State Park had achieved substantial completion. This included 102 RV campsites, 9 new cabins with plans to renovate 19 existing cabins, a new camp store, and a new bridge that was recently completed with assistance from the City to create more tourism opportunities for the Park and surrounding areas. These projects will be the subject of a Grand (Re) Opening Ceremony on August 2, 2024. Lodging for the reopening weekend is already 100% booked.

Roof repairs and cabin repairs for cabins and other buildings are almost complete at Roosevelt State Park. There are also over 100 campsites undergoing upgrades and repairs and re-opening of these facilities should occur before the year end.

ClarkCo State Park has 6 cabins nearing substantial completion by the end of the month and the contract for a complete renovation of the campgrounds there was awarded last week.

As for other parks and projects, Paul B. Johnson State Park is currently undergoing cabin and campground renovations as well as a new gatehouse and two new camp stores. Future plans for hotel renovations are planned for J.P. Coleman State Park, Percy Quin, and Roosevelt. In

addition, Percy Quin is scheduled to receive Wi-Fi coverage for park guests this coming Fall. These are just a few highlights from the many projects underway and nearing completion.

Discussion followed. Chairman Coopwood praised the staff for their efforts to bring these projects forward. Commissioner Rhoads noted that when he first came on the Commission, the Parks were in dire need of repair and updating. Mr. Rhoads went on to thank the State Legislature for their generosity in funding the current renovation and remodeling projects.

A spreadsheet containing more detailed information on these projects is attached to these minutes as an exhibit.

OTHER BUSINESS

The Chairman recognized General Counsel Drew Malone for an announcement. Mr. Malone announced that there would be a luncheon presentation following the meeting by Ducks Unlimited to update the Commission on projects funded by Duck Stamp monies to improve habitat and increase waterfowl numbers. The presentation would be informal and was for informational purposes only. The public was welcome to stay for the presentation and that there would be no actions taken by the Commission pertaining to the presentation or on any other matters.

NEXT MEETING DATE

Executive Director Posey announced the proposed date and time for the next meeting as follows:

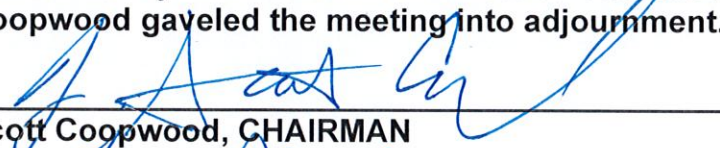
Date: Thursday, August 22, 2024
Location: Jackson Headquarters – 1505 Eastover Drive
Time: To Be Determined

EXECUTIVE SESSION

The Executive Director stated that there was no need for an Executive Session.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business before the Commission, Chairman Coopwood called for a motion to adjourn. Commissioner Hairston made the motion to adjourn which was seconded by Commissioner Rhoads. The motion passed unanimously. Chairman Coopwood gavelled the meeting into adjournment.



Scott Coopwood, CHAIRMAN

8/22/24

Date



Gary Rhoads, VICE CHAIRMAN

Date