

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

**Thursday, August 22, 2024**  
**10:00 AM Education Session**  
**MDWFP Headquarters**  
**1505 Eastover Drive, Jackson, MS 39211**

## **EDUCATION SESSION MINUTES**

**PRESENT:** Chairman Scott Coopwood and Commissioners Gary Rhoads, Billy Mounger, Todd Hairston and Colin Maloney.

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

The Chairman welcomed everyone to the Educational Session and asked Larry Pugh to introduce the presentation.

### **AIMS: Archery in Mississippi Schools**

Larry Pugh introduced Craig Beeding to the Commission. Mr. Beeding has been the head of the Archery in Mississippi Schools (AIMS) program since the passing of former director, Waldo Cleland.

Mr. Beeding gave the Commission a brief overview of AIMS. AIMS is associated with the National Archery in Schools Program (NASP). This body governs competitive archery programs in public and private schools at all age levels. As many schools have scaled back or even dropped physical education from their curricula, archery provided a low-cost alternative to traditional in-school sports. Matthews Archery, one of the largest manufacturers of bows and ancillary archery equipment in the world, provides a "universal" adjustable compound bow that adapts to almost all body sizes and strength levels which allows the participants to compete on a level playing field. These bows are offered to participating schools at a deep discount, making the program affordable. The NASP offers instructor training courses to certify faculty members to conduct the program in the schools.

Currently, AIMS offers four (4) different types of competition: 1) traditional bullseye and "Bullseye All-Stars" shot on the traditional archery target at distances of 10 and 15 meters – the top shooters go on to compete in the All-Stars; 2) NASP 3D which is also shot at 10 and 15 meters but a realistic animal shaped targets; 3) AIMS EXTREME which is shot at a flat faced animal picture target at the 10 and 15 meter ranges; and 4) AIMS OUTDOOR which is shot on the animal picture flat targets, but at unknown distances from 10 to 15 meters and generally requires the shooter to walk from shooting point to shooting point, locate the target, and engage.

Currently, AIMS has approximately 600 schools participating which represents over 6000 student archers. Competition lasts about nine months out of the year. Due to the support for AIMS from the MDWFP and the MDWFP Foundation, these programs continue to provide an affordable option for schools to have students engaged in an extracurricular activity that promotes health, outdoor recreation and natural resource/wildlife conservation. This investment in school-aged youth can result in a revenue stream for the MDWFP as many AIMS participants will choose to purchase hunting licenses to hunt or simply to support conservation.

A general discussion followed with several of the Commissioners offering personal examples of children or grandchildren participating in these competitions. Commissioners also requested that information regarding how to establish an AIMS program in a local school can be obtained.

Handouts from Mr. Beeding's presentation are appended to these minutes.

Chairman Coopwood thanked Mr. Beeding for his work with AIMS and for his presentation. The education session was recessed until time for the Business Session.

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

**Thursday, August 22, 2024  
1:00 PM Business Session  
MDWFP Headquarters  
1505 Eastover Drive, Jackson, MS 39211**

### **BUSINESS SESSION MINUTES**

**PRESENT:** Chairman Scott Coopwood and Commissioners Gary Rhoads, Billy Mounger, Todd Hairston and Colin Maloney were in attendance.

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.

### **OUTSTANDING MISSISSIPPI SPORTSMAN AWARD**

Before beginning the day's agenda, Chairman Coopwood recognized Commissioner Billy Mounger. Commissioner Mounger addressed the audience. Commissioner Mounger noted that several years ago, the Commission had initiated the Outstanding Mississippi Sportsman Award as a way of recognizing Mississippi hunters, anglers and conservationists who had made significant or noteworthy efforts to promote hunting, fishing, and natural resource conservation in the State of Mississippi. To that end, Commissioner Mounger was proud to present the award to Becky and Brian Clark of B&B Archery in Pearl, Mississippi.

The Clarks purchased "Bill's Archery" in Pearl, MS in 2010. Since then, they have expanded the facility to include an indoor archery range where they provide instruction. They are also a retail archery shop and can customize a bow to fit the customer. Since the inception of AIMS, they have provided technical assistance to Rankin County Schools participating in the program. B&B Archery is committed to promoting ethical hunting and conservation in Mississippi.

The audience gave a warm round of applause for the Clarks.

## MINUTES

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

**ACTION: Upon motion by Commissioner Rhoads and seconded by Commissioner Hairston, the Commission meeting minutes of July 25, 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; however, there would be a need for an Executive Session.

**ACTION: Upon motion by Commissioner Rhoads and seconded by Commissioner Mounger, the Commission unanimously approved the meeting agenda for August 22, 2024.**

## PUBLIC COMMENTS

No members of the general public had requested to address the Commission.

## LICENSE SALES REPORT

Jason Thompson, Director of Administrative Services, presented the License Sales Report for the month of July 2024. The total revenue for the end of July was down about 5% (\$416,787.40) compared to July 2023.

Highlights of his report are listed below:

- Resident license sales – \$224,563.10 (down 7.52%)
- Non-resident license sales – \$141,523.30 (down 7.42%)
- Other Licenses – \$2,701.00 (down 23.40%)
- Lifetime License category – \$48,000.00 (up 17.07%)

**ACTION: Upon motion by Commissioner Rhoads and seconded by Commissioner Maloney, the Commission unanimously accepted the License Sales report for July of 2024.**

## LAW ENFORCEMENT

### License Reinstatements

Colonel Jerry Carter began the Law Enforcement Bureau's presentation by bringing three (3) individuals before the Commission, requesting to have their hunting licenses restored.

Samuel Jenkins of Bush, Louisiana and Ernest Porche of Covington, Louisiana, were asked to address their requests to the Commission. Mr. Porche stated that he and Mr. Jenkins were enroute to a friend's hunting camp in Claiborne County on the evening in question. As they were driving to the camp, they took the opportunity to look for deer by pointing the truck lights into the adjacent fields and using a thermal imaging monocular to scan the tree line. Master Sergeant Terry Miles was staked out nearby and observed their actions. After stopping the young men, MSgt. Miles discovered that they had two crossbows in the vehicle and they admitted that if an opportunity to take a deer had presented itself, they would have shot.

The Commissioners questioned them about fines paid and if they would do anything like this again. Both assured the Commission that they had learned their lesson.

The Chairman asked Colonel Carter if the young men had satisfied all requirements for reinstatement, to which Colonel Carter responded that they had.

**ACTION: Upon motion by Commissioner Rhoads and seconded by Commissioner Mounger, the Commission voted unanimously to reinstate the hunting licenses of both Mr. Jenkins and Mr. Porche.**

Jacob Eaton of Corinth, Mississippi was next to present his request to have his license reinstated. Mr. Eaton was riding at night with a group of friends in Alcorn County. While driving, they came across some deer in a field. One or more of the parties dared Mr. Eaton to take a shot at the deer, which he did. Shortly thereafter the vehicle was stopped and Mr. Eaton admitted he had shot. He was cited for headlighting.

After some general questioning from the Commission, Chairman Coopwood asked Colonel Carter if Mr. Eaton had satisfied all requirements for reinstatement. Colonel Carter responded that Mr. Eaton had satisfied the requirements.

**ACTION: Upon motion by Commissioner Hairston and seconded by Commissioner Maloney, the Commission voted unanimously to reinstate the hunting license of Jacob Eaton.**

### **Law Enforcement Update**

Next, Colonel Carter reported that during the month of July, 2024, a total of 512 citations were issued with "No Resident License" being number one (81), "No Personal Floatation Device" was number two (69), followed by "No Boat Registration" (49), No Non-Resident License (34) and Trespassing was cited twenty-one (21) times.

The Colonel reported several occasions where conservation officers conducted boat and water safety classes as well as participated in other community activities.

The recently formed K-9 (canine) Unit was recognized for helping to find three little girls who wandered off from their back yard in Monroe County. K-9 "Charlie" and his handler, Officer

Bradley Starling were contacted by the Monroe County Sheriff's Office to assist in the search. After arriving at the scene, K-9 Charlie was able to pick up the scent trail and locate the girls.

A brief ceremony acknowledging and commending K-9 Charlie and Officer Starling followed.

### **2024 LawFit Team Awards**

The Colonel acknowledged the Department's LawFit Team which won several awards in the recent competition, as follows:

4Man Team  
2nd Place - Starling, Reynolds, Marascalco & Riggs  
2Man Team  
3rd Place – Starling & Reynolds  
2Female Team  
3rd Place – McDaniel & May  
Mixed Pair  
1st Place – Starling & May  
3rd place - McDaniel & Reynolds  
Bench Press  
2nd Place - Marascalco  
Sit & Reach  
1st Place - Long  
2nd Place - May  
Pull-ups  
1st Place - Starling  
3rd Place - Marascalco  
1.5 Mile Run  
1st Place - Reynolds  
Obstacle Course  
1st Place - Richards

Colonel Carter advised the Commission that Shooting range customer counts for July were as follows:

Mclvor – 603; Turcotte – 1,005, and McHenry – 571.

In closing, Colonel Carter advised the Commission that subject to an ongoing investigation, conservation officers had served search warrants across three counties for numerous violations for headlighting and unlawful taking of wild turkey. As the investigation was ongoing, no further information was available at this time.

### **OTHER BUSINESS**

There was no other business to come before the Commission.

### NEXT MEETING DATE

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

Date: Wednesday, September 18, 2024

Location: Jackson Headquarters – 1505 Eastover Drive

Time: 10:00 AM Education Session and 11:00 AM Business Session

### EXECUTIVE SESSION

The Executive Director stated that there was a need for an Executive Session to discuss transactions in real property, personnel matters including job performance of specific individuals/employees, and investigative reports of a law enforcement agency.

**ACTION: Commissioner Rhoads made a motion to close the meeting to determine the need for an Executive Session to discuss transactions in real property, personnel matters including job performance of specific individuals/employees, and investigative reports of a law enforcement agency. Commissioner Mounger seconded the motion and the Commission voted unanimously to close the meeting.**

The Meeting was closed and the room was cleared. Counsel made the announcement to the public outside the meeting room that the meeting was closed to determine the need for Executive Session.

Discussion followed.

**ACTION: Commissioner Mounger made a motion to enter Executive Session to discuss transactions in real property, personnel matters including job performance of specific individuals/employees, and investigative reports of a law enforcement agency. Commissioner Hairston seconded the motion and the Commission voted unanimously to enter Executive Session.**

Art Kennard informed the Commission about a tract of land that had become available adjacent to the Pascagoula WMA. This tract would provide access to the "land between the creeks" that had been acquired in the recent past.

The Commission authorized Mr. Kennard to move forward by acclamation.

Counsel Drew Malone and Major Calvin Fulton next addressed the Commission. Mr. Malone informed the Commission that under Miss. Code Ann. §49-4-31, should an investigation of a hunting accident produce evidence sufficient to suggest that criminally culpable negligence was involved, the Commission was to refer that case to the appropriate District Attorney for consideration for prosecution. In the case that the Commission was being asked to review, the District Attorney had already determined that he would present the matter to the Grand Jury. Out of an abundance of caution and to remove any potential grounds for appeal, the Law

Enforcement Bureau was requesting that the Commission review the matter and forward their recommendation to the DA for prosecution.

Discussion followed.

**ACTION: Upon motion by Commissioner Rhoads and seconded by Commissioner Mounger, the Commission voted unanimously to refer a finding of probable cause that the death occurred as a result of culpable negligence of the alleged perpetrator to the District Attorney of the appropriate Circuit Court District.**

Executive Director Lynn Posey informed the Commission that by statute (Miss. Code Ann. §49-1-9, the Commission had the authority to set the salary for the Chief of Law Enforcement. Inasmuch as salary adjustments for most employees had been approved in the recent legislative session, Mr. Posey was requesting that the Commission adjust the Chief's salary to \$ 100,685.10 per year, which reflects a 5% increase.

**ACTION: Upon motion by Commissioner Hairston and seconded by Commissioner Mounger, the Commission voted unanimously to set the salary of the Chief of Law Enforcement at \$100,685.10 per year.**

There were no further matters for Executive Session.

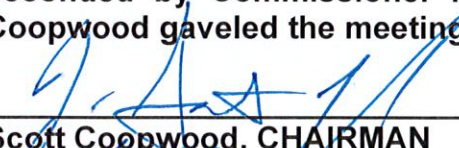
**ACTION: Upon motion by Commissioner Maloney and seconded by Commissioner Hairston, the Commission voted unanimously to exit Executive Session.**

The Meeting was opened.

Counsel announced to the remaining members of the general public that the Commission had authorized pursuing the purchase of lands adjacent to the Pascagoula Wildlife Management Area; authorized a 5% salary increase for the Chief of Law Enforcement; and referred a hunting accident investigation report to a local District Attorney for possible prosecution.

**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 Maloney. The motion passed unanimously. Chairman Coopwood gavelled the meeting into adjournment.

  
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Scott Coopwood, CHAIRMAN

9-18-24  
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Date

  
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Gary Rhoads, VICE CHAIRMAN

9-18-24  
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Date