

MISSISSIPPI COMMISSION ON WILDLIFE, FISHERIES, & PARKS

Thursday, November 14th, 2024
9:00 AM Education Session
MDWFP Headquarters
1505 Eastover Drive, Jackson, MS 39211

EDUCATION SESSION MINUTES

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

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

The Chairman welcomed everyone to the Educational Session and introduced Jason Thompson, Jeremy Bass, Adam Butler, and Russ Walsh who spoke at the education session.

License Overview and Update

Jason Thompson, Director of Administrative Services, began his presentation with a license sales update and the implications of those sales on the agency's funding. He provided a detailed overview of license sales trends, noting a decline since the COVID bump and comparing data with bordering states. Historical data shows a slight downward trend starting in 2014, with a significant dip in 2019 due to flooding in the Delta. The COVID years (2021-2023) saw a boost in license sales, but 2024 numbers are returning to pre-COVID levels.

Jeremy Bass, Director of Marketing and Communications, explained how the revenue generated from hunting and fishing license sales is used to capture federal matching funds. A basic hunting/fishing license costs \$10, but the federal match adds \$45.42 from the Pittman-Robertson Wildlife Restoration Trust Fund and \$12.25 from the Sportfishing Fund, totaling \$67.67. The decline in license sales can affect both agency revenue and the ability to match or capture the full amount of federal funding apportioned for Mississippi. Historical data shows a decline in license sales quantity, with a notable dip in 2019 due to the Delta flood.

Bass discussed current and future marketing initiatives to promote license sales and conservation. A new license system will go live on February 18th, 2025, with a real-time dashboard and improved customer experience. Bass also introduced the new CRM system, which will enhance communication and gather insights for personalized marketing efforts. The new system will include detailed reporting and better customer experience with the online portal and mobile app.

Adam Butler, formerly the agency's Statewide Wild Turkey Coordinator, has recently accepted a promotion to become the agency's Director of Conservation Development. Butler stated that

one of his missions will be to emphasize the importance of license sales for the agency to be able to perform its mission. The focus will be on understanding data and exploring other opportunities to fund conservation efforts. The department's effort will mirror national efforts to improve reactivation and retention (of license purchasers), focusing on making it easier to access agency resources and simplify rules. The approach includes recruitment, reactivation, and retention with a comprehensive approach to policy, funding, partnership, and outreach.

Bass outlined various marketing campaigns, including email marketing, digital campaigns, and traditional campaigns like radio and print media. The agency is working on educational initiatives for different age groups, from kindergarten to college students. Partnerships with tourism agencies and NGOs are being developed to support the comprehensive approach to outdoor industry engagement. The current license sales campaign includes social media, print, radio, digital advertising, and point-of-sale materials.

Wildlife Bureau Overview

Russ Walsh provided an overview of the Wildlife Bureau's mission and vision, highlighting the work of 95 staff members across 12 primary programs. The bureau focuses on education, engagement, and enhancement, with a robust private lands program and extensive work on WMAs. Challenges include reintroducing fire to landscapes, managing invasive species, disease management, population declines, and engaging future generations. The agency faces challenges in finding new biologists and managers, aging landowners, and rejuvenating the culture of hunting and angling.

Walsh discussed the bureau's engagement efforts including working with private landowners, hunters, conservation partners, policy makers, and the general public. The bureau conducts extensive habitat management work on public and private lands, including prescribed fire, forest management, and invasive species control. The goal is to sustain wildlife populations and manage invasive species such as wild hogs and Cogon grass.

Walsh concluded by emphasizing the bureau's commitment to conservation and the importance of engaging with people to achieve their mission. The bureau faces challenges in managing people, finding future biologists and managers, and ensuring the sustainability of the land base. The agency is dedicated to meeting these challenges and continues to perform its mission of conserving Mississippi's wildlife and critical habitat. The presentation ended with a call for questions and appreciation for the Commission's support.

MISSISSIPPI COMMISSION ON WILDLIFE, FISHERIES, & PARKS

Thursday, November 14th, 2024
10:00 AM Business Session
MDWFP Headquarters
1505 Eastover Drive, Jackson, MS 39211

BUSINESS SESSION MINUTES

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

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

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.

AWARD PRESENTAION

Chairman Coopwood introduced Larry Pugh to present the Mississippi Outstanding Sportsman award. Pugh introduced Mr. Alfred Williams, a prominent figure in competitive bass fishing, and recent inductee into the National Bass Fishing Hall of Fame. Alfred Williams is honored with the Mississippi Sportsman Award for his contributions to fisheries and conservation. Williams expresses his gratitude for the recognition, mentioning recent significant events in his life.

MINUTES

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

ACTION: Upon motion by Commissioner Rhoads and seconded by Commissioner Maloney, the Commission meeting minutes of October 24th, 2024, were unanimously approved.

AGENDA

The Chairman asked Executive Director, Lynn Posey if there were any changes to the proposed agenda. Mr. Posey stated that during Other Business, there needs to be a final adoption of the Proposed Rule request from Jackson County for the designation of a "No Wake" Zone. There would be no need for an Executive Session.

ACTION: Upon motion by Commissioner Rhoads and seconded by Commissioner Maloney, the Commission unanimously approved the meeting agenda for November 14th, 2024.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

The Chairman noted for the record that 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 October 2024. The total revenue for the end of October was down about 5% (\$4,627,877.80) compared to October 2023 (-5.35%).

Highlights of his report are listed below:

- Resident license sales – \$2,106,302.70 (down 2.12%)
- Non-resident license sales – \$2,187,846.10 (down 8.21%)
- Other Licenses – \$87,229.00 (up 1.72%)
- Lifetime License category – \$246,500 (down 8.02%)

FISHERIES

40 Miss. Admin. Code, Part 3, Rule 2.1 Regulations for State Fishing Lakes

Jerry Brown, Director of Fisheries, discussed proposed changes to Rule 2.1- Regulations Regarding State Fishing Lakes. The changes address state fishing lake permits, focusing on simplifying and streamlining the permit process. State lake Fishing and Boat Launch permit prices have not increased since 2004. New prices are proposed, including a \$5 fee for bank fishing and a \$9 fee for boat launching. There are currently 20 permits, and there will be a decrease in permits in efforts to simplify the permit process. Additional benefits include allowing guests of permit holders to fish without extra charges. The new system will also be available through the app, website, and call center for customer convenience.

ACTION: Upon motion by Commissioner Maloney and seconded by Commissioner Rhoads, the Commission voted unanimously to approve the proposed rule for regulations regarding state fishing lakes.

PARKS

40 Miss. Admin. Code, Part 6, Rule 1.1, State Park Fees

Brian Ferguson, Chief of Staff, presented proposed rule changes to Rule 1.1- State Park Fees. The changes update prices and terminology. The term “dynamic pricing” is being changed to “market- based pricing” to align with state lake fees. Nightly rates for cottages are being increased, and new rules are added for alternative lodging such as “tiny houses.” Specific increases are mentioned for entry fees at Buccaneer State Park, to bring it into alignment with current market values along the Gulf Coast.

ACTION: Upon motion by Commissioner Maloney and seconded by Commissioner Rhoads, the Commission voted unanimously to approve the proposed rule for state park fees and change in terminology.

LAW ENFORCEMENT

Law Enforcement Update

Colonel Jerry Carter, Chief of Law Enforcement, reported that during the month of October 2024, a total of 229 citations were issued with “No Resident License” being number one (42), “WMA Check-in/Regs” was number two (24), “Unlawful Possession of Game or Fish” was number three (15), followed by “No Velvet Season Permit (10), and “No WMA Permit” (10).

The Colonel introduced several new officers to report on their recent citation of an angler and seizure of an oversized paddlefish taken in violation of state regulations, and escorting a hunter out of the woods who was trespassing. The report also included a picture of officers helping a stage four cancer patient harvest his first buck and providing him with a uniform, hat, and an honorary badge. The Colonel showed a picture of a collapsed bridge in Simpson county where MDWFP Officers were called to assist in recovery operations. In the month of October MDWFP Officers assisted sheriff/police departments a total of 62 times.

Customer counts for the department’s shooting ranges for the month of October were: Mclvor – 589; Turcotte – 845; and McHenry – 469 customers.

OTHER BUSINESS

40 Miss. Admin. Code, Part 4, Rule 2.7 “No-Wake Zone for Bluff Creek in Jackson County.”

Mr. Lynn Posey asked that Attorney Doug Mann be recognized for an item of “Other Business.” Mr. Mann reminded the Commission that last month they had approved a proposed administrative rule designating a “No Wake Zone” on Bluff Creek which is a tributary of the Pascagoula River. Mr. Mann stated that the proposed rule had been filed with the Secretary of State for 30 days public comment. Mr. Mann stated that no comments had been received and asked the Commission to approve the rule as a final rule, with no changes.

ACTION: Upon motion by Commissioner Rhoads and seconded by Commissioner Maloney, the Commission voted unanimously to adopt the proposed rule for a No Wake Zone on Bluff Creek.

NEXT MEETING DATE

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

Date: Thursday, December 19, 2024
Location: The Graduate Hotel in Oxford – 400 N Lamar Blvd, Oxford, MS 38655
Time: 10:00 AM Business Session

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. Upon motion by Commissioner Rhoads and seconded by Commissioner Maloney. The motion passed unanimously. Chairman Coopwood gavelled the meeting into adjournment.



Scott Coopwood, CHAIRMAN

12/19/24

Date



Gary Rhoads, VICE CHAIRMAN

12/19/24

Date