

MISSISSIPPI COMMISSION ON WILDLIFE, FISHERIES, & PARKS

Thursday December 19th, 2024

10:00 AM Business Session

The Graduate Hotel

400 N Lamar Blvd, Oxford, MS 38655

BUSINESS SESSION MINUTES

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

Among the MDWFP staff attending were Executive Director Lynn Posey, 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 recognized Joey Buchanan for his contributions to hunting and the outdoors, presenting him with the Mississippi Outstanding Sportsman award. Buchanan was first introduced to MDWFP through being a Mississippi Scholastic Shooting Sports Program coach. He now serves as the dedicated manager of MDWFP's Mclvor Shooting Facility in Sardis, Mississippi. His passion for Mississippi's great outdoors shines through in everything he does. Mr. Buchanan was honored to receive the award and thanked the department and Commissioners.

MINUTES

Chairman Coopwood asked the Commission to review the minutes from the November 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 November 14th, 2024, were unanimously approved.

Commission Minutes December 19th, 2024

Page 2

AGENDA

The Chairman asked Executive Director, Lynn Posey if there were any changes to the proposed agenda. Mr. Posey stated that there would be an item to consider in Other Business; however, 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 November 2024. The total revenue for the end of November was down about 1.5% (\$10,107,655.10) compared to November 2024 (-1.48%).

Highlights of his report are listed below:

- Resident license sales – \$3,918,245.40 (down 0.65%)
- Non-resident license sales – \$5,751,516.70 (down 1.82%)
- Other Licenses – \$88,893.00 (up 1.04%)
- Lifetime License category – \$349,000.00 (down 5.42%)

FISHERIES

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

Jerry Brown, Director of Fisheries, discussed changes to 40 Miss. Admin. Code, Part 3 Rule 2.1 Regulations Regarding State Fishing Lakes, noting that we had received no comments from the public. Mr. Brown recommended the rule, along with a few minor wording changes, be adopted as Final.

ACTION: Upon motion by Commissioner Hairston and seconded by Commissioner Rhoads, the Commission voted unanimously to adopt the proposed regulations regarding state fishing lakes as a final rule.

Commission Minutes December 19th, 2024

Page 3

PARKS

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

Brian Ferguson, Chief of Staff, stated that no public comments to proposed changes in 40 Miss. Admin. Code, Part 6, Rule 1.1 State Park Fees, had been received by staff. Therefore he requested that the proposed rule be adopted as Final.

ACTION: Upon motion by Commissioner Rhoads and seconded by Commissioner Hairston, the Commission voted unanimously to adopt the proposed rule for state park fees and change as final.

WILDLIFE

CWD Update

Russ Walsh, Wildlife Bureau Chief of Staff, provided the Commission with a report on the status of Chronic Wasting Disease (CWD) testing and detection, as we are midway through gun season. Mr. Walsh reported that 45 positives have been detected so far, across the state. There are no new counties that are showing positives. There now have been 363 positives since CWD was detected back in 2018, and there are 16 positive counties. One successful way CWD testing has been accomplished is through a program with taxidermists who are willing to participate. Taxidermist-collected samples has resulted in the collection of more samples than hunter-submitted sampling. Detection and tracking are imperative for CWD management.

Walsh next reported on improvement projects currently underway at Howard Miller WMA. He reassured hunters that the improvements would soon be complete. Over the past couple of years, grant dollars have been received, and work has been done in concert with Ducks Unlimited to rework some impoundments within Howard Miller, as well as convert diesel powered irrigation wells to electricity. This season, there has been less farming than has occurred on Howard Miller WMA, and some hunters have raised questions about the farming practices. Walsh stated that since they have been in a transition stage these past couple of years, we hope to be back at full speed on the farming practices within the next couple of seasons. In the coming seasons, Howard Miller should be back to what it was several years ago.

LAW ENFORCEMENT

Law Enforcement Update

Colonel Jerry Carter, Chief of Law Enforcement, reported that during the month of November 2024, a total of 1,044 citations were issued. The top five citations issued included "No Resident
Commission Minutes December 19th, 2024

License” (151), “Hunting from Public Road” (82), “No Federal Stamp” (69), “NO WMA Permit (69), and “Trespassing” (57).

The Colonel continued his report with a presentation showing Captain Lee Harvey advising waterfowl hunters of recent changes to Mahannah regulations prior to a 5 a.m. draw, on opening day. The report also included a picture of officers checking for compliance with deer hunters, two men caught for an illegal supplemental feeding violation in the Central Region, and Officers checking compliance on state WMA's. The report also included MDWFP officers assisting Choctaw County Sheriff's Office searching for a missing child. The child was found safe and unharmed.

Customer counts for the department's shooting ranges for the month of November were: Mclvor – 814; Turcotte – 1103; and McHenry – 941 customers.

License Reinstatements

Colonel Carter brought three individuals before the Commission, requesting to have their hunting license restored.

Jadarius Anderson was asked to address his petition to the Commission. The incident occurred on January 15th, 2023, in Holmes County. An officer received a call that shots were fired in the area. While the officer was investigating, he heard more shots fired. The officer found the vehicle and initiated a stop. The four subjects had gotten out of the vehicle to hide, and the Officer had to call the subjects out. Mr. Anderson stated that he saw a deer while he was in his vehicle, shined his light on it, shot at the deer, and the deer ran away.

The Chairman asked Colonel Carter if Mr. Anderson had satisfied all requirements for reinstatement, to which Colonel Carter responded that he had.

ACTION: Upon motion by Commissioner Rhoads and seconded by Commissioner Hairston, the Commission voted unanimously to reinstate the hunting license of Mr. Anderson.

Ethan Coleman was next to present his request to have his license reinstated. The incident occurred on October 2nd, 2022, in George County around midnight. Mr. Coleman stated he was with an individual he should not have been with, and that alcohol was involved. Shots were fired at a deer and a landowner reported them. The two individuals were taken to jail.

Mr. Coleman stated how much of a finical burden it has been along with embarrassment and that he will never do it again. Mr. Coleman also stated he has followed rules and regulations on how to be a better and more responsible hunter.

After Commissioner Hairston gave Mr. Coleman some advice, Chairman Coopwood called for a motion.

ACTION: Upon motion by Commissioner Hairston and seconded by Commissioner Rhoads, the Commission voted unanimously to reinstate the hunting license of Mr. Coleman.

James Griffin was the last to present his request to have his license reinstated. The incident occurred on December 5, 2021, in Bolivar County. Mr. Griffin stated that he was with a friend he had not seen in a while and that his friend had a farm. His friend had traps set out for hogs and while they were out, a deer ran across the levee. His friend shined a light on the deer, shot the deer, and loaded it up. They saw lights coming closer to them, so they cut their lights off and fled the scene. His friend's truck was recognized by the Game Warden and when asked, Mr. Griffin told the truth about everything.

After some general questioning and discussion from the Commission, Chairman Coopwood called for a motion.

ACTION: Upon motion by Commissioner Hairston and seconded by Commissioner Rhoads, the Commission voted unanimously to reinstate the hunting license of Mr. Griffin.

Recognition Awards

Every year MDWFP likes to recognize Law Enforcement Officers for their hard work and dedication to enforce the laws of the State of Mississippi and protect wildlife. MDWFP appreciates our Officers for going above and beyond the call of duty outside of wildlife law enforcement and serving the community.

Colonel Carter recognized officers for their bravery and dedication, including Master Sergeant Tyler West and Master Sergeant Lee Womack for rescuing a family (four subjects) trapped in a house during a recent flood. The house was surrounded and isolated approximately one mile from dry land. They did not see the house until about 20 minutes into their patrol. They were able to rescue all four people along with the family dog.

Officer Carroll Speights was also recognized for his actions in rescuing a driver trapped in an overturned semi-truck with approximately 400 beehive boxes with swarming bees.

Master Sergeant Gregory Washington and Private Christopher Scott were recognized for rescuing individuals from a stranded vehicle while trying to launch a boat.

Officer Larry Primeaux was recognized for his actions in saving a driver in a vehicle accident where the vehicle went airborne and traveled approximately 40 feet. Primeaux had to break the rear window to gain access, revive the driver, and render first aid until emergency medical personnel arrived.

Corporal Cole Bush was recognized for his actions in rescuing an elderly individual who had fallen out of his wheelchair while hunting and was disoriented and alone for over 2 hours.

Commission Minutes December 19th, 2024

Page 6

A Certificate of Recognition for the National Wild Turkey Federation (NWTF) Officer of the Year was presented to Sergeant Richard Kirk. He is recognized for his outstanding public service and contributions to wildlife conservation.

The Mississippi Flyway Officer of the Year award was presented to Master Sergeant Keith Bond was recognized for his outstanding effort and dedication towards protecting waterfowl resources.

Corporal Cole Bush was recognized as Officer of the Year as well as the SEAFWA Officer of the Year for the State of Mississippi. The Officer of the Year award is presented by the Shikar Safari Club International in recognition of the Meritorious Service in the field of wildlife conservation.

Lastly, the North Carolina Department of Public Safety Division, Emergency Management Regional Coordination Center, presented a North Carolina state flag to Lynn Posey and to MDWFP officers for their response and coordination in support of the citizens of North Carolina impacted by Hurricane Helena. Mr. Posey stated how proud he is of our officers and thanked all the officers who went to North Carolina to help.

In closing, Chairman Coopwood thanked all the Officers for everything they do and for their service.

OTHER BUSINESS

Mr. Posey congratulated Larry Pugh on his retirement and expressed his gratitude for his time and service at MDWFP. Mr. Posey personally thanked Mr. Pugh for staying a few years to help him transition into his role as Executive Director. Chairman Coopwood stated how thankful he was to have Mr. Pugh and how he has been a strong pillar of the agency and a great friend to all the commissioners, along with many others. Chairman Coopwood wished Mr. Pugh the very best in his retirement.

NEXT MEETING DATE

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

Date: Thursday, January 23rd, 2025

Location: The Cotton House- 215 Cotton Row, Cleveland, MS 38732

Time: 10:00 AM Business Session

EXECUTIVE SESSION

The Executive Director stated that there was no need for an Executive Session.
Commission Minutes December 19th, 2024
Page 7

ADJOURNMENT

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

Scott Coopwood, CHAIRMAN Date



Gary Rhoads, VICE CHAIRMAN Date

Gary Rhoads