

MISSISSIPPI COMMISSION ON WILDLIFE, FISHERIES, & PARKS

Thursday January 23rd, 2025
10:00 AM Business Session
The Cotton House
215 Cotton Row, Cleveland, MS 38732

BUSINESS SESSION MINUTES

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

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 Bill Lester for his remarkable dedication as an educator and promoter of Mississippi's cultural and sporting heritage. Through over four decades of Mr. Lester teaching art at Delta State University, his residency at historic Dockery Farms, and his craftsmanship in creating renowned turkey calls, he has exemplified a commitment to conservation, tradition, and the natural beauty of our state. Mr. Lester's enduring legacy was acknowledged with the Outstanding Mississippi Sportsman Award.

MINUTES

Chairman Coopwood asked the Commission to review the minutes from the December 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 December 19th, 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 there is a change in the agenda, which was for Drew Malone to present a request for the extension for deer season.

ACTION: Upon motion by Commissioner Rhoads and seconded by Commissioner Mounger, the Commission unanimously approved the meeting agenda for January 23rd, 2025.

Deer Season Extension

Drew Malone presented the request to extend the 2024-2025 deer season through thirty minutes after sunset on Sunday, February 2, 2025. Through MISS. CODE ANN. §49-7-31(1)(g), "when the open season on deer ends on a Friday, the Commission shall have the authority to extend the season until thirty (30) minutes after sunset on the following Sunday." Mr. Posey requested that the Commission exercise this authority and extend the season.

ACTION: Upon motion by Commissioner Rhoads and seconded by Commissioner Mounger, the Commission unanimously approved the 2024-2025 deer season extension.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

The Chairman noted for the record that the general public has requested to address the Commission with public comments.

Delta Wildlife

Ron Selby with Delta Wildlife introduced Tommy Goodwin, the Chairman of Delta Wildlife, to present. Mr. Goodwin shared his background and connections with the commissioners and other attendees. Mr. Goodwin discussed the mission and activities of Delta Wildlife, including conservation, and restoration of native wildlife habitats. Mr. Goodwin stated that Delta Wildlife is a service organization that provides plans with deer, turkey, bears, small game, other species, and even backyard birds. Mr. Goodwin also highlighted the organization's efforts in trapping feral swine and providing comprehensive wildlife habitat services. Mr. Goodwin stated the importance of the partnership between Delta Wildlife and MDWFP.

Ron Selby closed by stating how he looks forward to continuing to work in partnership with the MDWFP to protect and conserve our natural resources.

Louisiana Commissioner

Andy Brister, Commissioner for the Louisiana Wildlife and Fisheries Commission, shared insights on wildlife management and the black bear hunt in Louisiana. Commissioner Brister discussed the challenges of invasive carp and the importance of the Mississippi River Fisheries

Commission. Commissioner Mounger asked about the use of drones and the regulations in Louisiana. Commissioner Brister said drones can be used to survey wildlife and as of now there are no clear regulations to survey deer. Commissioner Brister said there are Federal laws against using drones to scout deer, identify deer, and find wounded deer. Commissioner Brister closed by thanking the Mississippi Commissioners for their time and stated the importance of working with the Louisiana Commission.

LICENSE SALES REPORT

Jason Thompson, Director of Administrative Services, presents the License Sales Report for the month of December 2024. The total revenue for the end of December was down about 2% (\$14,013,491.50) compared to December 2024 (-2.26%).

Highlights of his report are listed below:

- Resident license sales – \$5,098,365.30 (down 1.47%)
- Non-resident license sales – \$8,339,567.20 (down 2.83%)
- Other Licenses – \$91,059.00 (up 1.58%)
- Lifetime License category – \$484,500.00 (down 1.42%)

WILDLIFE

Exemption License Request

Russ Walsh, Wildlife Bureau Chief of Staff, discussed a license exemption request for Hope Outdoors, with some participants being out of state.

ACTION: Upon motion by Commissioner Rhoads and seconded by Commissioner Maloney, the Commission unanimously approved a license exemption for Hope Outdoors in 2025.

40 Miss. Admin. Code, Part 2, Rule 5.2, Rules for Hunting Alligators on Private Lands:

Andrew Arnett proposed a rule change to Rule 5.2, Alligator Hunting Season for Private Lands, for the alligator program. The proposed change would move the application process online.

ACTION: Upon motion by Commissioner Mounger and seconded by Commissioner Hairston, the Commission unanimously approved the proposed rule change in the alligator program to move the application process online.

LAW ENFORCEMENT

Law Enforcement Update

Colonel Jerry Carter, Chief of Law Enforcement, reported that during the month of December 2024, a total of 1,042 citations were issued with "No Resident License" being number one (179), "Trespassing" was number two (77), "Hunting from Public Road" was number three (71), number four "Unlawful Possession" (70), and "Supplemental Feeding" (66) as number five.

The Colonel continued his report with a presentation which showed officers encountering two hunters in violation of the supplemental feeding law and No Hunting License in Marion County WMA. The next slide showed officers in Pike County encountering numerous Non-Residents hunting with No License and Illegal Possession. The next slide in the presentation showed officers in Tippah County making a headlight arrest.

Customer counts for the department's shooting ranges for the month of December were: McIvor – 485; Turcotte – 1042; and McHenry – 974 customers.

Award Recognition

The Boating Officer of the Year 2024 Award was presented to Corporal Dominique Williams. Corporal Williams was recognized for his strong work ethic and commitment to his duties. He is also a part of the SRT and the Dive Team.

License Reinstatements

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

Hunter Smith and Peyton Estes were asked to present their request to have each of their licenses reinstated. The incident was a cold case which occurred a year and ten months ago. Our law enforcement received a tip about a headlighting incident that occurred in Montgomery County. Throughout the investigations, this case was made through discovery of data information which led to an interview where the two individuals confessed. The two individuals stated that they and some friends were riding around and stopped on the side of the road. After stopping, they saw a deer run across the road and to get a better look at the deer they shined the car's headlights at the deer. A landowner took a picture of the truck and turned it in.

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

ACTION: Upon motion by Commissioner Maloney and seconded by Commissioner Mounger, the Commission voted unanimously to reinstate the hunting license of Mr. Smith and Mr. Estes.

Jacob Boyer was next to present his request to have his license reinstated. Mr. Boyer stated that he had just dropped his girlfriend off and went riding around looking for deer in Covington County. He got off on a backroad and shined his light after a deer that ran across the road. Mr. Boyer stated he did not attempt to shoot the deer. He said as he was shining his light, an officer pulled up and started questioning him and he was cited.

Colonel Carter stated Mr. Boyer had satisfied all requirements for reinstatement.

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

James Edwards was last to present his request to have his license reinstated. An officer had received claims about illegal hunting activity in Tate County. Mr. Edwards stated he and a friend were riding around and shined a spotlight at a deer. After they shined the spotlight, law enforcement stopped them and cited them. After conviction, both individuals spent two nights in jail in addition to fines and assessments.

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

ACTION: Upon motion by Commissioner Mounger and seconded by Commissioner Maloney, the Commission voted unanimously to reinstate the hunting license of Mr. Edwards.

Colonel Carter closed his report by thanking all the sportsman and residents who have utilized the 1800-BE- SMART phone number to report violations.

NEXT MEETING DATE

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

Date: Wednesday, February 12th, 2025
Location: MDWFP Headquarters – 1505 Eastover Drive
Time: 10:00 AM Business Session (Teleconference)

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 Rhoads made the motion to adjourn which was

seconded by Commissioner Hairston. The motion passed unanimously. Chairman Coopwood gavelled the meeting into adjournment.



Scott Coopwood, CHAIRMAN

2/12/25

Date



Gary Rhoads, VICE CHAIRMAN

2/12/25

Date