

MISSISSIPPI COMMISSION ON WILDLIFE, FISHERIES, & PARKS

Thursday, August 16, 2018
JP Coleman State Park, Iuka, MS
No Educational Session / 8:30 a.m. Business Session

MINUTES OF THE BUSINESS SESSION – 8:30 AM

PRESENT: Commission Chairman Bill F. Cossar, Commissioners Scott Coopwood, Robert Taylor, Billy Mounger, and Clay Wagner.

Among the MDWFP staff attending were: Dr. Sam Polles, Executive Director; Michael Bolden; Lt. Col. Chris Harris; Larry Pugh; Russ Walsh; and counsel, Doug Mann, Special Assistant Attorney General. Chairman Cossar welcomed guest, Senator Mike Seymour.

Chairman Cossar, having noted for the minutes that a quorum was present, gaveled the meeting to order at 8:30 a.m.

OPENING PRAYER

Russ Walsh, Wildlife Executive Staff Officer, opened the meeting with prayer.

MINUTES

ACTION: Upon motion by Commissioner Wagner and seconded by Commissioner Taylor, the minutes of the July 17, 2018 Commission meeting were unanimously approved.

AGENDA

Chairman Cossar asked if there were any changes to the agenda. The Executive Director requested the following items to be added under OTHER BUSINESS:

- Turkey Rules & Regulations
 - Tagging and/or Harvest Reporting
- Surveys
 - Constant Contact
 - Law Enforcement Officer Survey
- Supplemental Feeding

ACTION: Commissioner Wagner moved to approve the agenda for August 16, 2018 as amended, Commissioner Coopwood seconded the motion and the motion carried.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

Senator Seymour presented three questions to the Commission.

1. Was the CWD positive deer from an enclosure or free range?

Answer: Free range

2. Has the 18,000 acre purchase ("Steele Bayou" WMA) been finalized?

Answer: Yes.

3. What was the nature of the agency's involvement in a house fire that occurred in Jones County two weeks ago?

Answer: This matter is under investigation and will be discussed in Executive Session.

LICENSE SALES REPORT

Michael Bolden, Director of Administrative Services, presented the License Sales Report for the month of July 2018. The total revenue for the end of July is down 6.2 %.

Highlights of Bolden's report are listed below:

- Resident license sales – down 8%
- Non-resident licenses – up \$527.30
- Lifetime Licenses – up \$10,500 or 40%

The installment of an automatic renewal license system was implemented last month with an opt-out choice for customers.

WILDLIFE

Chronic Wasting Disease (CWD) Update

Russ Walsh, Wildlife Executive Staff Officer, informed the Commission that MDWFP will host a public meeting to discuss the management of Chronic Wasting Disease and new regulations for the 2018-19 Deer Hunting Season. The meeting will be held at Warren Central High School auditorium Thursday, August 30 at 6 p.m. Presentations by MDWFP staff on the status of CWD and how to deposit samples for testing during the 2018-2019 hunting seasons. Representatives from Wildlife and Law Enforcement Bureaus will be available to answer questions.

Those unable to attend can view the meeting via Facebook Live on the MDWFP Facebook Page. Viewers can ask questions in the comment box during the video.

FINAL – 40 Miss. Admin. Code Part 2, Chapter 1 – Wildlife Management Areas:

- **Rule 1.46 – "Steele Bayou" WMA Regulations**

Walsh stated that there were no changes made to the rule and no comments were received.

ACTION: By motion of Commissioner Mounger and seconded by Commissioner Taylor, the Commission unanimously approved Final Rule 1.46 as presented.

FINAL – 40 Miss. Admin. Code Part 2, Chapter 2 – White-tailed Deer:

- **Rule 2.7 – Prohibition on Cervid Carcass Importation to Protect Mississippi from Chronic Wasting Disease**

Walsh presented the following amendment to the proposed rule from last month.

***Section B.1 Amendment** was made to prohibit importation, transportation, or possession of any portion of a cervid carcass from all states, regardless of CWD occurrence. This amendment would remove disparity with surrounding states' regulations and further safeguard Mississippi from potential exposure through imported infected carcasses. All surrounding states have implemented this same regulation.*

The same exceptions apply as before and this rule does not apply to: (1) meat from cervids that has been completely deboned; (2) antlers, antlers attached to cleaned skull plates or cleaned skulls where no tissue is attached to the skull; (3) cleaned teeth; (4) finished taxidermy and antler products; (5) hides and tanned products; (6) any portions of white-tailed deer originating from the land between the Mississippi River levees in Arkansas.

Discussion followed on **Section B.2** as to the dividing line for islands off the Mississippi shoreline to be included or not in the CWD Management Zone. The Executive Director suggested to hold off until next month when a map pinpointing all the island locations could be provided.

ACTION: By motion of Commissioner Wagner and seconded by Commissioner Coopwood, the Commission unanimously approved Rule 2.7 as proposed with the amendment tabled for discussion at the September meeting. The staff were directed to furnish a map along the Mississippi River with island locations to determine a dividing line for the CWD Management Zone.

FINAL – 40 Miss. Admin. Code Part 2, Chapter 2 – White-tailed Deer:

- **Rule 2.4 – Supplemental Feeding of Wild Animals Outside of Wildlife Enclosure**

Walsh stated that there was one comment from Davis Island to be exempt. Discussion followed as to the location of Davis Island.

Walsh stated that Louisiana originally initiated a feeding ban on their side of the river after Mississippi tested positive for CWD. Louisiana tested simultaneously along with us and after not finding any positive results, they lifted the ban. Walsh stated that their testing included 300 deer for a quick look. He felt like Louisiana needed further testing. Other concerns include an enclosure not far from Davis Island that is being self-

decommissioned. There is still some apprehension with that area and the possible connection with a deer that tested positive in an enclosure in Missouri.

ACTION: By motion of Commissioner Mounger and seconded by Commissioner Wagner, the Commission unanimously approved Final Rule 2.4 as presented with instructions to the staff to present any possible exemptions to this rule at the next meeting for consideration.

FISHERIES

PROPOSED – 40 Miss. Admin. Code Part 4, Chapter 3:

- **Rule 3.1 - Reciprocal Agreement between Alabama and Mississippi**

Larry Pugh, Director of Fisheries Bureau, stated that this was a housekeeping procedure. This will add language to include reciprocity on Pickwick Lake between Alabama and Mississippi so that sport anglers duly licensed or legally exempt from license requirements by either state may legally fish in the Pickwick Lake area.

ACTION: By motion of Commissioner Wagner and seconded by Commissioner Coopwood, the Commission unanimously approved Proposed Rule 3.1 as presented.

PROPOSED – 40 Miss. Admin. Code Part 3, Chapter 3:

- **Rule 3.2 - Commercial Paddlefish Regulations**

Fisheries added a few amendments:

- 1) Clarified net tagging requirements in reciprocal waters
- 2) Added processing agent for Paddlefish transportation
- 3) Clarified Arkansas resident fishing requirements in reciprocal waters
- 4) Allowed sale of ready-to-consume Paddlefish products by individuals having a Commercial fishing license.

- **Rule 3.4 - Paddlefish HMU's Open Periods & Quotes**

Housekeeping procedure to change from 2018 to 2019.

- **Rule 3.5 – Paddlefish Permit Applications**

Housekeeping procedure to change from 2018 to 2019.

ACTION: By motion of Commissioner Wagner and seconded by Commissioner Taylor, the Commission unanimously approved Proposed Rules 3.2, 3.4, and 3.5 as presented.

LAW ENFORCEMENT

Law Enforcement Update

Lt. Col. Chris Harris, Assistant Chief of Law Enforcement, presented a handout which highlighted citations, boating details, banding wood ducks, commercial fishing inspections, Hunter Education classes, shooting range attendance, and McIvor Phase II construction update.

OTHER BUSINESS

Turkey Rules & Regulations

Harvest Reporting and/or Tagging

Michael Bolden presented a handout to the Commission on proposed Turkey Harvest Reporting procedures for 2019. The MDWFP plan included giving hunters one of three ways to report and validate their harvest: MDWFP smart phone app, web portal, or via telephone. A free, downloadable harvest report card could also be printed from different websites or received by mail upon request. This card or phone app could be used until the hunter is able to connect to a phone or internet service. Once the hunter calls in, he would receive a confirmation number that Law Enforcement can immediately confirm. The app could also be used by Law Enforcement to confirm that the harvest has been recorded even though there is no cell service. Once the hunter's phone receives cell service, it will ping and download the harvest information.

Discussion then moved to tagging and issues other states have printing tags.

It was suggested by several members of the Commission to create a virtual tag in lieu of the traditional physical tag and harvest reporting. The virtual tag would be created by using the customer ID plus the year and number for each turkey harvested, such as ID#-T2019-1, ID#-T2019-2, ID# T2019-3. An authorization number would be created that immediately recognizes the customer by ID and how many turkeys have been harvested. That confirmation number becomes a virtual confirmation number. The hunter can write that number down and show Law Enforcement. The virtual tag would act as a Law Enforcement tool and harvest reporting tool. The Commission wanted to stay away from physical tags.

Senator Seymour questioned whether this needed legislative approval. Staff replied that turkey and out-of-state deer harvest reporting are currently authorized by existing statute; only residents taking deer within the state would require legislation.

ACTION: The Commission unanimously requested staff to come back next month with a proposed virtual harvest confirmation for the 2019 turkey season.

Constant Contact Survey

Russ Walsh informed the Commission that the 2017–2018 Deer Hunter Survey was live from July 9 – August 1, 2018 and completed by 15,812 hunters. Of those, 13,217 completed the

survey via an email link and 2,685 completed via social media. Listed below are the summaries from both surveys.

1) Do you hunt white-tailed deer primarily with archery equipment or firearms?

Archery **18%**
Firearms **82%**

2) Do you support the use of supplemental feeding for white-tailed deer?

Archery
 Yes 78%
 No 21%

Firearms
 Yes 79%
 No 20%

3) Currently, regulations pertaining to the feeding of wild animals outside of wildlife enclosures allow above ground covered feeders to be in the line of sight of a hunter, but the feeder must be 100 yards or greater from the hunter. Should the 100-yard distance be:

Archery

Less	60%	} 41%
Greater	6%	
Feeder not in the line of sight	14%	
No change to current regulations	21%	

Firearms

Less	39%	} 61%
Greater	6%	
Feeder not in the line of sight	14%	
No change to current regulations	41%	

Email responses:

Currently, regulations pertaining to the feeding of wild animals outside of wildlife enclosures allow above ground covered ***feeders to be in the line of sight of a hunter, but the feeder must be 100 yards or greater from the hunter. Should the 100-yard distance be:**

Answer	0%	100%	Number of Response(s)	Response Ratio
Less			4893	37.2 %
Greater			747	5.6 %
Feeder not in the line of sight			1712	13.0 %
No change to current regulations			4692	35.7 %
No Response(s)			1083	8.2 %
Totals			13127	100%

Social Media responses:

Currently, regulations pertaining to the feeding of wild animals outside of wildlife enclosures allow above ground covered *feeders to be in the line of sight of a hunter, but the feeder must be 100 yards or greater from the hunter. Should the 100-yard distance be:

Answer	0%	100%	Number of Response(s)	Response Ratio
Less			1323	49.2 %
Greater			117	4.3 %
Feeder not in the line of sight			343	12.7 %
No change to current regulations			793	29.5 %
No Response(s)			109	4.0 %
Totals			2685	100%

Law Enforcement Officer Survey

Law Enforcement officers were polled concerning Archery Hunting (Firearm Hunters were not included in this survey). The questions and answers with significant difference are listed below:

1. Do you agree with the use of supplemental feeding to hunt white-tailed deer?
 32% yes
 66% no

2. Should the Commission prohibit supplemental feeding during turkey season?
 90.3% yes
 8.5% no

3. Do you support removing the "line of sight" restriction to harvest deer from the supplemental feeding regulations?
 51.7% yes
 42.0% no

4. Typically, when a citation is issued for hunting over bait, what is the average distance between the hunter and the bait?
 1.7% <10 yards
 67.0% 10-40 yards
 23.8% 40-80 yards
 2.2% 80> yards

5. Should the distance for archery hunters be less?
 48.2% yes
 46.5% no

Supplemental Feeding

Discussion followed on supplemental survey results from hunters and law enforcement.

ACTION: The Commission requested staff to present a proposed rule to eliminate the 100-yard rule on supplemental feeding during deer season and no supplemental feeding during turkey season at the next meeting.

Discussion followed on aflatoxin-free feed. Walsh informed the Commission that there is a movement in CWD states to require synthetic deer urine. Several states have mandated synthetic deer urine this hunting season or given notice that next year it will be required.

ACTION: The Commission requested staff to present more information on aflatoxin-free feed and proposals for next year to implement synthetic only deer urine for hunting purposes.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

The Chairman asked if there was a need for an Executive Session. The Executive Director stated that there was need for Executive Session to discuss personnel matters.

ACTION: Commissioner Taylor made a motion to close the meeting to determine the need for Executive Session to discuss transactions in real property, ongoing investigations of a law enforcement agency, and personnel matters involving the job performance of specific individuals. Commissioner Mounger seconded the motion and the Commission voted unanimously to close the meeting.

Counsel announced to those present that the meeting was now closed to determine the need for Executive Session to discuss transactions in real property, ongoing investigations of a law enforcement agency, and personnel matters involving the job performance of specific individuals.

The meeting was closed, and the room cleared.

Discussion followed.

ACTION: Commissioner Wagner made a motion to enter Executive Session to discuss transactions in real property, ongoing investigations of a law enforcement agency, and personnel matters involving the job performance of specific individuals. Commissioner Coopwood seconded the motion and the Commission voted unanimously to enter Executive Session.

Counsel announced to those present outside the meeting room that the Commission had entered Executive Session to discuss transactions in real property and personnel matters involving the job performance of specific individuals.

Dr. Polles updated the Commission on the recent purchase of the land tentatively known as Steele Bayou WMA. No action was required of the Commission.

Lt. Col. Chris Harris and Dr. Polles updated the Commission on an ongoing internal investigation into an incident which occurred during a house fire in Jones County, Mississippi. The incident occurred when a conservation officer of the MDWFP was assisting local law enforcement with traffic control at the site of the fire. Without going into too much detail, the officer encountered a situation where he felt compelled to deploy his Taser on an individual who failed to follow his instructions. Lt. Col. Harris reported that the matter was being thoroughly investigated and more information would be provided at the next Commission meeting or meetings. No action was required of the Commission.

Dr. Polles and Lt. Col. Chris Harris updated the Commission on several supervisory positions (in Law Enforcement) that were being recruited.

A brief discussion followed.

No action was required of the Commission.

ACTION: There being no further items for discussion in Executive Session, Commissioner Wagner made a motion to open the meeting. Commissioner Taylor seconded the motion and the Commission voted unanimously to open the meeting.

Counsel announced to any members of the public outside the meeting that the Commission had exited Executive Session and opened the meeting. No votes were taken.

NEXT MEETING DATE

Next Commission meeting date was set for Wednesday, September 19, 2018. The Educational Session will begin at 8:30 a.m. followed at 9:30 a.m. with the Business Session. These events will take place at 1505 Eastover Drive, Jackson MS 39211.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business before the Commission, Chairman Cossar gaveled the meeting into adjournment.



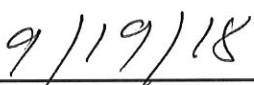
Bill F. Cossar, CHAIRMAN



Date



Scott Coopwood, VICE CHAIRMAN



Date