

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

Monday, February 19, 2018

9:30 a.m. Business Session

Quail Ridge Conference Center, 7811 Hwy 397, Louisville, MS

## **MINUTES OF THE MEETING**

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

Among the MDWFP staff attending were: Dr. Sam Polles, Executive Director; Robert Cook, Deputy Executive Director; Michael Bolden, Larry Castle, Jennifer Head, Lt. Col. Chris Harris, Larry Pugh, Russ Walsh, Jason Thompson, and counsel, Doug Mann, Special Assistant Attorney General.

Chairman Wagner, having noted for the minutes that a quorum was present, gaveled the meeting to order at 9:30 a.m. Appreciation was extended to the Taylor family for allowing the Commission to meet at the Quail Ridge Conference Center. House WFP Committee Chairman Scott Bounds and former Senate WFP Committee Chairman Giles Ward were also thanked for helping to make the arrangements for the Commission meeting.

## **OPENING PRAYER**

Robert Cook, Deputy Executive Director, opened the meeting with prayer.

## **MINUTES**

**ACTION:** Upon motion by Commissioner Cossar and seconded by Commissioner Coopwood, the minutes of the December 12, 2017 special meeting and December 13, 2017 Commission meeting were unanimously approved.

## **AGENDA**

Chairman Wagner stated that the agenda was in need of the following revisions:

- Under WILDLIFE – Add Chronic Wasting Disease (CWD) Update
- Under OTHER BUSINESS – Add Financial Update

**ACTION:** Commissioner Mounger moved to approve the agenda for February 19, 2018, as amended. Commissioner Cossar seconded the motion and the motion carried.

### PUBLIC COMMENTS

There were no members of the general public who wished to address the Commission.

### LICENSE SALES REPORT

Jason Thompson, Director of License/Boat Registration, presented the License Sales Report for the month of January 2018. The total revenue for the end of January is down 2%.

Highlights of Thompson's end of the year, annual report are listed below:

- Resident License Sales – down 4%, quantity sold down 3%
- Youth Exempt Licenses - up 50%
- Resident Waterfowl stamps – quantity sold up 437 more this year
- Non-resident licenses – up \$52,000
- NR Small Game Hunting – up 3%
- NR 7 Day Small Game – up 4%
- NR All Game – up \$60,000
- WMA Permits – up 2%
- Permit category – up \$4,000 which includes Alligator season
- Lifetime Licenses – up 4%, quantity sold up 7%

### WILDLIFE

Russ Walsh, Wildlife Executive Staff Officer, presented a folder to each Commissioner with information on Waterfowl Habitat Project Updates (Sunflower WMA, Delta Waterfowl, and Nanih Waiya WMA), Chronic Wasting Disease (CWD) Response Plan, Cossar State Park Deer Draw Hunt Updates, and a Survey on Dog-Deer Hunting on National Forests and Private Lands commissioned by Rural Property Rights Association of Mississippi. Copies of this packet are on file.

#### Sunflower WMA

Walsh informed the Commission that the U.S. Forestry Service, Ducks Unlimited, and MDWFP met in January 2018, to discuss options for refurbishing the green-tree reservoirs (GTRs) in Sunflower WMA. A follow-up meeting will be held soon to develop a timeline for project activities and a formal partnership agreement. Discussion followed. It was suggested to include in the timeline the acreage for each project.

#### Private Land Waterfowl Habitat Initiative with Delta Waterfowl

In October 2017, the Commission designated a portion of state waterfowl stamp funds for a private land wetland habitat incentive program to increase wetland habitat availability in the Mississippi Delta. Wildlife Bureau staff are currently developing recommendations for priority areas, practices, and

payment rates for this project. Wildlife is moving forward with Delta Waterfowl on this effort and will have delivery of landowner agreements and funds in place by fall 2018.

### **Nanah Waiya WMA**

Walsh gave a quick history of the Nanah Waiya WMA. Prior to being purchased by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, about 6,000 acres of floodplain forest was clear cut with no streamside management zones left to buffer the Pearl River. This resulted in debris and remaining trees along the river banks being washed into the river channel. Beaver populations dramatically increased and many of the drains on the WMA were quickly blocked. Additional damage was caused by the Tallahaga Canal which dumped large amounts of sediment and debris and eventually altered the natural flow of the river. A dam was formed by the sediment load and resulted in the flooding and killing of 600 acres of mature bottomland hardwoods.

MDWFP cleared out this sedimentation and debris several years ago and has restored the bottomland hardwood forests. A major emphasis has been on restoring the floodplain's natural water flow to allow natural regeneration of mixed native species.

### **Cossar State Park Deer Draw Hunt Updates**

No discussion or questions were brought forward. The details of the hunt were provided in the handout.

### **Chronic Wasting Disease (CWD) Response Plan**

Walsh presented a PowerPoint presentation on the actions of MDWFP during the past ten days since test results came back positive for CWD on February 9, 2018. The CWD positive deer was collected in Issaquena County on January 25, 2018. Samples have been collected by MDWFP over the past 16 years and this was the first time an animal tested positive for the disease. A CWD Response Plan was approved by the Commission in September 2017 and was put into immediate action beginning with a Press Release on February 9, 2018. Pursuant to the Order of the Executive Director on behalf of the Commission, supplemental feeding was banned in the following counties: Claiborne, Hinds, Issaquena, Sharkey, Warren, and Yazoo.

Walsh stated that all information reported by the public on deer across the state are taken seriously. Currently this information is being taken by phone. However, a form is being developed for the MDWFP website to aid the public in their reporting efforts. Law Enforcement is assisting the Wildlife Bureau in response to these reports.

Mahannah WMA will be the base operation which is just North of where the CWD positive deer was found. Sixty samples within a five mile perimeter of where the deer was found will be taken beginning next week to see if this is ground zero. Permissions to obtain samples have already been granted by landowners and the Corp of Engineers.

Mr. Mann advised the Commission that the CWD Response Plan was implemented by Executive Order. In order to clarify that the Executive Director was acting on behalf of the Commission, a vote ratifying the Executive Order and the response plan needed to be spread upon the minutes for posterity.

**ACTION: By motion of Commissioner Taylor and seconded by Commissioner Mounger, the Commission unanimously ratified all actions to date on the CWD Response Plan and further authorized the Executive Director to continue to act in furtherance of the CWD Response Plan.**

#### LAW ENFORCEMENT

Lt. Col. Chris Harris, Assistant Chief of Law Enforcement, presented a handout which highlighted citations, shooting range attendance, and McIvor Shooting Range construction update. He attributed more citations being issued during this time period due to an increase of officers in the field and response time being quicker.

In the past few days officers have been collecting samples for CWD testing.

#### OTHER BUSINESS

##### Financial Update

Jennifer Head, Director of Parks, presented a handout to the Commission on the FY17 and FY18 Profit/Loss Statement for MDWFP. No discussion or questions followed. No action was required of the Commission.

##### Copiah County Land Appraisals

Two appraisals were presented to the Commission by Russ Walsh in Copiah County for consideration. Discussion followed.

**ACTION: By motion of Commissioner Mounger and seconded by Commissioner Cossar, the Commission unanimously approved the motion to move forward with an offer for the purchase of this property.**

#### NEXT MEETING DATE

Next Commission meeting date was set for Wednesday, March 21, 2018 at Buccaneer State Park, 1150 South Beach Blvd., Waveland, MS. The Educational Session will begin at 1:30 p.m. and the Business Session at 3 p.m.

**EXECUTIVE SESSION**

The Chairman asked if there was a need for an Executive Session. The Executive Director stated that there was no need for an Executive Session.

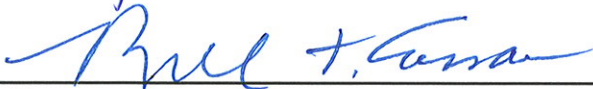
**ADJOURNMENT**

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



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Clay Wagner, CHAIRMAN

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Date



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Bill F. Cossar, VICE CHAIRMAN

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3/22/18  
Date