

MISSISSIPPI COMMISSION ON WILDLIFE, FISHERIES, & PARKS

Monday, February 17, 2020

9:30 a.m. Business Session

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

MINUTES OF THE BUSINESS SESSION – 9:30 AM

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

Among the MDWFP staff attending were: Dr. Sam Polles, Executive Director; Robert Cook, Deputy Executive Director; Michael Bolden, Col. Steve Adcock, Larry Pugh, Russ Walsh, and counsel, Doug Mann, Special Assistant Attorney General. The Chairman thanked Commissioner Taylor for allowing the Commission to meet at his facility. He also welcomed Senator Neil Whaley, Chairman of Senate Committee on Wildlife, Fisheries, and Parks; and Representative Bill Kinkade, Chairman of House Committee on Wildlife, Fisheries, and Parks.

OPENING PRAYER

Deputy Executive Director Robert Cook opened the meeting with prayer.

MINUTES

ACTION: Upon motion by Commissioner Mounger and seconded by Commissioner Wagner, the minutes of the January 15, 2020 Commission meeting were unanimously approved.

AGENDA

The Chairman stated that the following two items need to be added to the agenda under "Other Business":

- Executive Order ratification: Canal Section Closure & Extended Deer Season Clarification
- Private Property Rights on Flooded Areas (discussed in January meeting under Public Comments)

ACTION: Upon motion by Commission Cossar and seconded by Commissioner Taylor, the agenda was unanimously approved as amended.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

Michelle Carter, Director of Outreach Programs, asked Kelly Jo Brewer to come forward. Ms. Brewer requested permission to speak to the Commission concerning hunting safety issues.

Kelly Jo Brewer (*Benton County*) – Ms. Brewer and family live in Blue Mountain and have property in Benton County. She came representing Benton County landowners whose property runs alongside the Holly Springs National Forest. These landowners fear for their safety due to unethical dog deer hunters. There are 39 dog hunting days each year in the Mississippi National Forests. During these 39 days, if a landowner approaches a dog hunter they are met with intimidation, retaliation, and bullying. One landowner received a threat to be burned out of his home. She stated that many of the issues presented can only be resolved by Legislation so that is why she wrote Senator Mike Seymour a letter last week. Copies of that letter were available for distribution to the Commission.

Brewer emphasized that the landowners do not want to ban the sport of dog hunting, just reach a peaceful compromise. She is asking the Commission to consider the dog permit system that is used in the Homochitto National Forest as a small step in the right direction.

Discussion followed and suggestions were made. The Commission thanked Mrs. Brewer for coming.

LICENSE SALES REPORT

Michael Bolden, Deputy Administrator, presented the License Sales Report for the month of January 2020. The total revenue for the end of January is down 3%.

Highlights of his report are listed below:

- Resident license sales – down 1.6%
- Non-resident licenses – down 3.6%
- Other Licenses – down 8.8%
- Lifetime Licenses – down 8.8%

Fall turkey permits - 434 more were sold this past season vs last year
Spring turkey permits – up 17%

Auto Renewals

- Since February 2020 a total of 46,768 customers have signed up for Auto Renewal
- 6,539 customers have signed up for Auto Renewal in the month of January.

License Packages

- As of February 2020, there has been a total of 5,960 license packages sold.

WILDLIFE

Special Extended Deer Season Update

Russ Walsh, Wildlife Chief of Staff, informed the Commission that the special 2-day hunting season (February 8-9) in the counties located in the North MS CWD Management Zone was a success. A final tally figure was not yet available; however, over 632 samples were collected with a few more dropped off last week during this special deer season.

CWD Surveillance Report

Walsh presented a handout which revealed 7,575 CWD test samples have been collected between July 1, 2019 and February 14, 2020. Jackson and Sharkey Counties had the least number of deer samples collected in the state with only nine deer samples in each county. Overall it was a good year for collecting samples.

A total of 51 CWD-positive deer have been detected in the past three hunting seasons; first year (2017-2018) 1 CWD-positive deer; the second year (2018-2019) 18 CWD-positive deer; and this past hunting season yielded 32 CWD-positive deer results. It looks like this hunting season will end with no new counties yielding CWD-positive results.

Walsh stated that CWD carcass disposal is one of the biggest challenges. Tennessee has detected more than 400 CWD-positive deer just this past deer season. One of the best practices is their mandatory testing on certain weekends and dates. They can also take samples to processors on certain dates. Tennessee has collected over 12,000 samples, which is twice what we have, but our voluntary collection is working out very well.

Discussion followed on carcass disposal. No state has come up with a solid solution because of the sheer volume of deer. Tennessee is looking at an incinerator in one of their waste stations in Fayette County which will cost close to one million dollars. The solution still brings a lot of challenges with it.

LAW ENFORCEMENT

Law Enforcement Update

Col. Steve Adcock, Chief of Law Enforcement, presented a handout to the Commission which highlighted license violations for the month of January. He stated that 20 officers have been working flood water details this past week in the Jackson area. Officers concerned with the spread of CWD implemented the Plain View doctrine, such as a non-deboned deer departing the North Region CWD Management Zone was apprehended in the back of a truck. An arrest was made on an individual for hunting on a public road which resulted in a motorized vehicle on the roadway being hit by buckshot. Luckily there were no injuries in the vehicle.

Outreach Program Update

Michelle Carter, Director of Outreach Programs, presented a handout to the Commission highlighting school contacts during the past month. She has met with 13 new schools and five school superintendents concerning MSSP programs. Two School Board approvals were received from Scott and Carroll Counties. She has received 16 verbal commitments by schools to join MSSP for the next school year and 29 schools in active discussion. One Home School Association and one County 4-H Administrator are also in discussion. Meetings with 14 schools and 4 school district superintendents have been scheduled before spring break. She has also met with the South Region Command Staff and plans are being made to startup MSSP in the Southern District schools in 2021.

Cadet recruitment will begin next week with a Career Fair in Coahoma Community College, followed by seven other community colleges. Two officers will be on hand to personally assist anyone wanting to learn how to navigate the State Personnel Board's website and apply for a MDWFP position. At the close of each career fair, presentations will be made by Carter at each of the Criminal Justice Department's classrooms in hopes of recruiting new cadets.

Carter is also coordinating strategies with each bureau to see what is most needed to produce anglers and hunters through existing and future programs.

OTHER BUSINESS

Executive Orders

Legal Counsel explained that the following Executive Orders had been issued by Executive Director Polles on behalf of the Commission:

- **Clarify Special Extended Deer Season**
- **Emergency Closure of Canal Section WMA**

ACTION: Upon motion made by Commissioner Wagner and seconded by Commissioner Cossar, the Commission unanimously ratified the Executive Orders issued in February. A copy of each Executive Order has been appended to the minutes.

Private Property Rights on Flooded Areas

At the January 15, 2020 Commission meeting discussion concerning private property rights on areas where the river has flooded onto private land was not resolved. To follow up on this discussion, the Commission made the following motion at the February 17, 2020 meeting:

ACTION: Upon motion by Commissioner Mounger and seconded by Commissioner Wagner, the Commission unanimously moved to charge the staff with making recommendations on how to determine the boundaries of private land in flood situations for law enforcement, private land owners, and the general public, so as to clarify when trespassing occurs on private land vs. public waterways. Also included in this motion was a charge for the staff to research what other states are doing in this regard; namely, Louisiana, Arkansas and Tennessee. Commissioner Cossar seconded the motion and it was adopted by unanimous vote of the Commission.

CONSERVATION AWARDS

Commissioner Robert Taylor came forward to present Conservation Awards this month. The first award went to Robert Higginbotham who has been a long-time component of Mississippi Wildlife Turkey Federation (MWTF). He has served on the MWTF Board of Directors, two terms as their Vice President and also as President until he was elected to serve on the National Wildlife Turkey Federation Board (NWTF). He has served on the NWTF as Secretary/Treasurer, and is currently serving as Vice President. Higginbotham is one of the best promoters and we are blessed to have him in Mississippi. Applause followed as Commissioner Taylor presented his award.

The second award went to one of Mississippi's greatest outdoor celebrities who is a hero for conservation, Ronnie "Cuz" Strickland. Strickland has promoted conservation through various means; such as media/production, outdoor magazine articles, author of three books of humor and instruction on turkey hunting, and in 2010 was recognized as the National Wild Turkey Federation's (NWTF) Communicator of the Year. As co-founder of Mossy Oak's Media/Productions Department, he built a large series of retail video titles and the company's first broadcast television offering with Mossy Oak's *Hunting the Country* on The Nashville Network (TNN). Today he is the Senior Vice President of Mossy Oak and oversees media efforts that have expanded to include both traditional and online video. Applause followed as Strickland received his award.

NEXT MEETING DATE

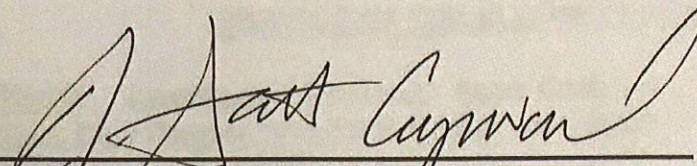
Date: Thursday, March 19, 2020
Location: 1505 Eastover Drive, Jackson, MS 39211
Time: 8:30 a.m. Educational Session; 9:30 a.m. Business Session

EXECUTIVE SESSION

The Executive Director stated that there was no need for Executive Session.

ADJOURNMENT

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



Scott Coopwood, CHAIRMAN

Date

Robert D.
Taylor, Sr

Digitally signed by Robert D. Taylor, Sr
DN: cn=Robert D. Taylor, Sr, o=MDWFP,
ou=Vice Chairman,
email=rtaylor@taylorbigred.ocm, c=US
Date: 2020.05.04 19:58:15 -05'00'

Robert Taylor, VICE CHAIRMAN

Date

MISSISSIPPI DEPARTMENT OF WILDLIFE, FISHERIES, & PARKS

EXECUTIVE ORDER:

**TO CLARIFY LAWFUL WEAPONS FOR USE DURING
THE SPECIAL EXTENDED DEER SEASON IN THE NORTH CWD
MANAGEMENT ZONE, ON BOTH PUBLIC AND PRIVATE LANDS**

PURSUANT TO the authority set forth in MISS. CODE ANN. §49-1-29 and supplementary to that certain Conservation Order of the Commission on Wildlife, Fisheries, and Parks (the "Commission"), the Executive Director of the Mississippi Department of Wildlife, Fisheries, and Parks (MDWFP), hereby finds that the question of what weapons may be lawfully used during the Special Season set by the Conservation Order, needs further explanation and clarification.

The Executive Director finds that the following weapons may be used by hunters participating in the Special Deer Season designated for additional sample collection in the North CWD Management Zone, as follows:

On private lands within the North CWD Management Zone:

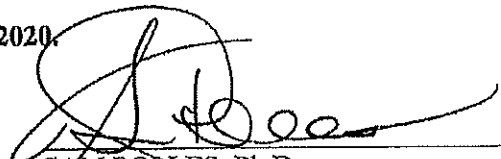
- Any weapon of his or her choosing, which is capable of humanely taking a white-tailed deer.

On public lands within the North CWD Management Zone:

- For Graham Lake, Hell Creek, Malmaison, O'Keefe, Tuscumbia Unit 1, and Upper Sardis Wildlife Management Areas (WMAs), the Holly Springs National Forest and Open Public Lands: Hunters may use primitive weapons only.
- For Charles Ray Nix and Tuscumbia Unit 2 Wildlife Management Areas: Hunters may use the firearms specified as appropriate for "Muzzleloader and Youth Hunts" on those WMAs.
- No other Wildlife Management Areas are open for hunting deer during this Special Season.

All other provisions of the original Conservation Order relating to Still Hunting and Bag Limits shall remain in full force and effect, and are incorporated herein by reference as if reproduced in their entirety.

SO ORDERED, this the 3rd day of February, 2020.



SAM POLLES, Ph.D.
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

MISSISSIPPI DEPARTMENT OF WILDLIFE, FISHERIES, AND PARKS

In Re: Closing of Hunting Season(s) in Areas Affected by Rising Floodwaters at Canal Section WMA.

EXECUTIVE ORDER

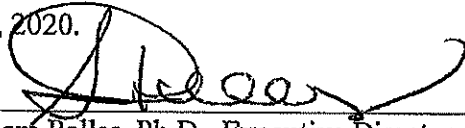
DUE TO recent, extraordinarily heavy rainfall, the Executive Director of the Mississippi Department of Wildlife, Fisheries, and Parks ("MDWFP"), has determined that the rising floodwaters of the Tombigbee River, having risen above sixteen (16) feet at the Fulton Gauge, has created an exigent circumstance that requires closing all open hunting seasons at Canal Section Wildlife Management Area, in order to safeguard the health, safety, and welfare of local sportsmen.

THEREFORE, pursuant to the authority set forth in 40 MISS. ADMIN. CODE, Part 2, Rule 1.7.B.3., all currently open hunting seasons (small game) shall be closed as of this date and shall remain closed until the level of the Tombigbee River shall fall below sixteen (16) feet on the Fulton, MS Gauge.

The MDWFP will increase its law enforcement presence in the affected areas to ensure public safety in the areas affected by rising waters, and to enforce wildlife laws that protect animals displaced by floodwaters.

This order may be amended, superseded, or rescinded, in whole or in part, as floodwaters rise or recede.

SO ORDERED, this the 13th day of February, 2020.



Sam Polles, Ph.D., Executive Director
Mississippi Department of Wildlife,
Fisheries, and Parks