

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

Wednesday, June 17, 2020

2 p.m. Business Session

1505 Eastover Drive, Jackson, MS 39211

## **NO EDUCATIONAL SESSION**

### **MINUTES OF THE BUSINESS SESSION – 2 PM**

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

Among the MDWFP staff attending were: Dr. Sam Polles, Executive Director; Robert Cook, Deputy Executive Director; Jennifer Head, Michael Bolden, Curtis Thornhill, Col. Steve Adcock, Russ Walsh, Jason Thompson, Chip Ward, and Drew Malone (Special Assistant Attorney General).

Chairman Coopwood welcomed Representative Scott Bounds (former Chairman of the House Wildlife, Fisheries, and Parks Committee).

## **OPENING PRAYER**

Deputy Executive Director Robert Cook opened the meeting with prayer.

## **MINUTES**

**ACTION:** Upon motion by Commissioner Wagner and seconded by Commissioner Cossar, the minutes of the May 14, 2020 Commission meeting were unanimously approved.

## **AGENDA**

**ACTION:** Commissioner Wagner moved to approve the agenda for June 17, 2020, Commissioner Cossar seconded the motion and the motion carried.

## **PUBLIC COMMENTS**

**David Smith, President, MS Hunting Dog Association.** Mr. Smith came forward with questions concerning the annual Mississippi Resident and Nonresident Hunter Harvest Survey. The Commission advised Mr. Smith that this survey has been used since 1974 and is administered on a random basis by phone in order to evaluate trends in hunting and harvesting

which guides MDWFP decision-making processes for game management, and helps monitor the use of public trust resources.

Mr. Smith's second area of concern was that of missing hunting dogs at the Theodore Mars Management area. The hunting dogs are being captured, sold on the internet, and shipped out-of-state where the owners have no legal authority. He asked MDWFP for help in monitoring these abductions.

**Preston Sullivan, Rural Property Rights Association.** Mr. Sullivan came forward and stated that he supported the random sampling Game Harvest Survey.

**Thomas Pitts, Rural Property Rights Association.** Mr. Pitts gave the Commission a flyer with the Mission Statement for the Rural Property Rights Association of Mississippi. He came forward to represent 74 individuals in Janice, Mississippi, which is a hot spot for public land hunting. Mr. Pitts stated that they have a problem in his area with people running hunting dogs. There are 12 hunting groups in this area (10 of these groups lease their camp sites). He stated that he had no problems with the people living in the county but others coming from outside the county continue to trespass, block driveways, intimidate women and the elderly. He is not asking for new laws but that the current laws be enforced. Dogs are being run on the DeSoto National forests year-round, not just during hunting season. Litter is left everywhere after they leave. Mr. Pitts requested a survey of residents near DeSoto National forests concerning running dogs year-round.

**Chad Edmonson, Rural Property Rights Association.** Mr. Edmonson's family has lived next to the DeSoto National Forests for 200 years. He said that for 39 days during the year, his property is overrun with dogs. He asked for tools to regulate dogs on his property.

**Chris Winter, VP, MS River Landowners Alliance.** Mr. Winter came representing individuals and clubs owning several hundred thousand acres of land along the Mississippi River. They strongly oppose Proposed Rule 1.5, which would close turkey season during a flood, and asked that this item be tabled to allow for further discussion with stakeholders since there is no urgency to finalize this rule at this time.

### LICENSE SALES REPORT

Jason Thompson, Director of License/Boat Registration Division, presented the License Sales Report for the month of May 2020. The total revenue for the end of May is up \$86,000 from last year.

Highlights of his report are listed below:

- Resident license sales – up \$271,000
  - Small Hunt/Freshwater Fishing – up 22%
  - 3 day Freshwater Fishing – up 45%
  - Res WMA user permits – up 10%
  - Commercial Fishing – up 29%

- Non-resident license sales – down 2%
  - NR Freshwater Fishing – up 11%
  - NR 1 day Freshwater Fishing – up 13%
  - NR WMA user Permits – up 3%
- Permit category – down 6%
- Lifetime License category – down 4%

Total WMA App Downloads – 29,000

As of June 4, 2020 there have been a total of 8,208 license packages sold.

### WILDLIFE

#### FINAL – 40 Miss. Admin. Code – Law Enforcement Part 4, Chapter 1

- **Rule 1.5 – Regulations regarding the Taking, Catching, or Killing of any Wild Bird, or Wild Animal on Lands affected by Flood Waters**

Rule 1.5 was tabled at the April meeting in order for staff to amend the language on spring turkey season and feral hog hunting during flooding. The Commission at its May meeting approved the PROPOSED Rule 1.5 as amended with the following language:

- Automatic closure of spring turkey season when lands along the MS River are affected by flooding.
- Allows wild hogs to be hunted or trapped by landowners, leaseholders, or their designated agents between October 1 and May 1 in a closed zone with an Animal Control Permit issued by the Mississippi Department of Wildlife, Fisheries, and Parks.

Russ Walsh, Wildlife Chief of Staff, recommended that FINAL Rule 1.5 be tabled until a later time, to allow for an additional 30 days of comment based on comments received.

**ACTION: Commissioner Cossar made a motion to table FINAL Rule 1.5 for an additional 30 days, or until the next Commission meeting. Commissioner Taylor seconded the motion and the motion carried. FINAL Adoption of Rule 1.5 was laid on the table, subject to call.**

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

- **Rule 2.7 – Cervid Carcass Importation/Exportation**

Walsh recommended that adoption of FINAL Rule 2.7, also be tabled to allow for an additional 30 days of comment since this rule change incorporates terms that correspond with PROPOSED Rule 2.9.

**ACTION: Commissioner Cossar made a motion to table further consideration of Rule 2.7 an additional 30 days, or until the next Commission meeting.**

Commissioner Wagner seconded the motion and the motion carried. Further consideration of FINAL Rule 2.7 was laid on the table, subject to call.

### **PROPOSED – 40 Miss. Admin. Code – Part 2, Chapter 2 – White-tailed Deer**

- **Rule 2.9 – CWD Management Zone Delineation**

At the May meeting the Commission discussed formalizing the designation and definition of critical disease management zones associated with the containment of Chronic Wasting Disease (CWD). The Commission voted to direct staff to produce a model that was understandable and enforceable regarding activities that are either allowed or prohibited within the zones – and define the zones as being within and around the location of the discovery of an infected animal. Pursuant to this directive, Russ Walsh presented PROPOSED Rule 2.9 which defines the minimize size and specific regulations for CWD Management Zones and CWD Surveillance Zones, in order to invite public comment relating to the establishment of the zones and the restrictions on activities within the zones.

**ACTION: Commissioner Taylor made a motion to approve PROPOSED Rule 2.9 as presented by staff. Commissioner Wagner seconded the motion and the motion carried.**

### **WILD TURKEY HARVEST REPORT**

Adam Butler, Turkey Program Coordinator, presented the Spring Season Wild Turkey Harvest Report. Highlights of his report are noted below:

- Game Check, mandatory turkey harvest reporting, was in its second year.
- Through Game Check, hunters had three options to report their harvest: smartphone app, website, or by calling 1-800-BE-SMART. Hunters on WMAs had two options: smartphone app or physical check station. Both user groups overwhelmingly chose reporting via smartphone app (81% used the app with Game Check and 84% on WMAs).
- A total of 8,069 users reported 12,005 turkey harvests to Game Check during the 2020 spring season.
- Several different post hoc estimates suggest Game Check is capturing just below 50% of all harvests, which would indicate the true total statewide harvest is near 25,000 turkeys.
- Like 2019, the average Game Check user in 2020 was 39 years of age.
- Nine percent of harvests reported to Game Check were by nonresidents.
- The percentage of successful Game Check users who reported the 3-bird state bag limit increased approximately twenty percent to 11.5% of all hunters in 2020.
- For the second year, the opening day of the regular season (March 14th) received more reported harvest than any other day (921).

- The top five counties for total harvest in 2020 were nearly identical to those in 2019. They were Attala (333), Lafayette (324), Copiah (310), Marshall (302), and Adams (273).

## LAW ENFORCEMENT

### Law Enforcement Update

Col. Steve Adcock, Chief of Law Enforcement, reported that 733 citations were issued this past Month. Law Enforcement has also been called in this past month to patrol public waterways, work nuisance alligators, animal damage to property, releasing rehabilitated Bald Eagle in Tishomingo County, and the SRT Team tracked and located an individual who had shot and killed a Mississippi Deputy. Shooting ranges were re-opened June 4<sup>th</sup>.

### Outreach Programs Update

Col. Adcock presented the Outreach Programs Report on behalf of Michelle Carter, Director of Outreach Programs. Over the past year the Mississippi Scholastic Shooting Program (MSSP) has grown from 8 to 25 counties. Another 23 counties have indicated an interest and are awaiting board approval. For the first time, public schools have exceeded private schools in applications. The MSSP State School June 24-25 Shoot is scheduled for Mclvor.

### Reinstatement Requests

Col. Adcock had three requests for license reinstatement. Each violator was asked to come forward and state the circumstances of his arrest before the Commission.

- **Joseph Golson, West Point.** Goldson stated that he was riding around in his vehicle after dark, stopped, and shot a deer. His fines totaled \$2,280. This was his first offense. Adcock added that Golson was respectful and honest with officers.

**ACTION: Commissioner Wagner made a motion to approve reinstatement with the provision that if he receives another citation the next 12 months, he will serve the full three years for a second offense. Commissioner Taylor seconded the motion and the motion carried.**

- **Jake Glusenkamp, West Point.** Glusenkamp stated that he stopped after dark and shot a deer with use of his headlights. He was in the vehicle with Golson and did the shooting. He was 16 years old when it happened. This was his first offense.

**ACTION: Commissioner Wagner made a motion to approve reinstatement with the provision that if he receives another citation the next twelve months, he will serve the full three years for a second offense. Commissioner Cossar seconded the motion and the motion carried.**

- **Daniel Gill, Jr., Hernando.** Gill stated that he was riding around with two females after dark. He saw a deer, stopped, and shot the deer. Law Enforcement officers handcuffed him and fined him \$2,100. Females were not charged since they did not get out of the vehicle and did not have a weapon or spotlight.

**ACTION: Commissioner Wagner made a motion to approve reinstatement with the provision that if he receives another citation the next twelve months, he will serve the full three years for a second offense. Commissioner Cossar seconded the motion and the motion carried.**

### **OTHER BUSINESS**

#### **Election of Commission Officers**

Chairman Coopwood called for nominations for Commission officers for the 2020-2021 year.

**ACTION: Commissioner Cossar nominated Commissioner Robert Taylor as the new Commission Chairman and Commissioner Billy Mounger as Vice Chairman. Commissioner Wagner seconded the nominations. There were no other nominations. The Commission voted unanimously to approve Robert Taylor as Chairman and Billy Mounger as Vice Chairman, beginning July 1, 2020.**

### **NEXT MEETING DATE**

Date: Thursday, July 16, 2020  
Location: 1505 Eastover Drive, Jackson, MS 39211  
Time: 8:30 a.m. Educational Session  
9:30 a.m. Business Session

### **EXECUTIVE SESSION**

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

Chairman Coopwood thanked the Commission for the past five years serving on this Board. He stated that his service here marked one of the highlights of his life. A round of applause followed. Coopwood called for Robert Cook to come forward and give a closing prayer.

**ADJOURNMENT**

There being no further business before the Commission, Commissioner Cossar moved to adjourn, seconded by Commissioner Wagner, and the motion carried. Chairman Coopwood gavelled the meeting into adjournment.

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Scott Coopwood, CHAIRMAN

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Date



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Robert Taylor, VICE CHAIRMAN

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7/16/2020

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Date