

MISSISSIPPI COMMISSION ON WILDLIFE, FISHERIES, & PARKS

Thursday, September 17, 2020

8:30 a.m. Educational Session

9:30 a.m. Business Session

1505 Eastover Drive, Jackson, MS 39211

EDUCATIONAL SESSION – 8:30 AM

Changes to WMA Waterfowl Draw Hunts for 2020-2021 Season

Walsh presented a handout with several new procedural changes to the waterfowl draw hunts on Wildlife Management Areas for the 2020-21 hunting season. These changes were made to limit close interactions between individuals (in compliance with COVID-19 health concerns) who would be visiting or working in these areas.

1. All waterfowl draw hunt applications (5 draw periods per WMA) will be open concurrently from Oct 1 to Oct 15. All drawings and notifications will be completed by Nov 1.
2. Drawn hunters will have 48 hours to confirm their reservation online before it goes back into a second re-fill drawing.
3. Applicants who are not initially drawn will be entered into the re-fill drawing for a change to fill any hunting positions that were not confirmed.
4. Waterfowl hunters must be drawn to hunt on WMA waterfowl draw hunts.
 - a. There will only be “stand-by” opportunity on Mahannah, Howard Miller, and Muscadine Farms WMAs for non-drawn hunters to show up the day of a hunt for a chance to fill a vacant spot (no shows).
 - b. Hunting units will be assigned when drawn winners are notified by email.
 - c. Drawn hunters and their guests will be allowed to access their designated hunting unit beginning at 5 a.m. on the morning of their hunt.
5. Applications for WMA draw hunts will be found online at:
<https://xnet2.mdwfp.com/drawings/public/WmaDrawingsV3.aspx>.
6. Hunters will be reminded that not all WMAs with waterfowl hunting opportunity require a draw permit to hunt, and specific regulations for each WMA should be reviewed prior to hunting.

Several advantages were pointed out with the new changes, one being that the drawn hunters will have a 30-day advance notice of the hunt to scout their location and the lay of land. Another advantage being no long lines the day of the hunt. The hunter simply checks in and enters the WMA, beginning at 5 a.m.

CWD Sampling for 2020-2021 Season

Russ Walsh, Wildlife Chief of Staff, gave a review of CWD this past year. Some highlights from his PowerPoint presentation were:

- 56 deer tested positive for CWD in Mississippi (6 counties)
- 700 deer tested positive in Tennessee
- 8,488 samples were tested in FY20
- Achieved goal of testing in 52 counties

2020-2021 Goals

- Target of 10,000 samples statewide
- Rely on hunter deer harvest as primary method
- Collection methods: 46 drop off locations, taxidermists, check stations, DMAP clubs, CWD DMAP, WMAs, reported diseased deer
- Map books will be available for hunters at freezer sites to pinpoint location where deer are harvested for better reporting

CWD DMAP

- 19 properties in Marshall, Benton, & Tallahatchie Counties (within 3 miles of CWD-positive detection)
- Total of 114 tags have been requested
- Total 10,794 acres
- Mandatory sample submission

Mandatory Sampling

- 3 hunting weekends to harvest deer and submit samples
- Submit by 10 p.m. on day of harvest
- Temporary freezers for drop off
- Check stations

CWD Research

- Flooding impacts on deer density
- RT-quick testing method – sensitive test on soil, blood, urine
- CWD Strain Typing – testing like for strains of flu
- Novel generic resource – to distinguish what gene types are more susceptible; a map will be made of different deer DNA
- CWD Research Consortium Meetings – different states share information

William McKinley, Deer Program Coordinator, shared information from the Wisconsin CWD Research Consortium meeting this year.

MINUTES

BUSINESS SESSION – 9:30 AM

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

Among the MDWFP staff attending were: Dr. Sam Polles, Executive Director; Robert Cook, Deputy Executive Director; Jennifer Head, Larry Pugh, Col. Steve Adcock, Russ Walsh, Doug Mann, Chip Ward, and Drew Malone (Special Assistant Attorney General).

Chairman Taylor welcomed guests online who were watching the meeting. No guests were present at the meeting.

OPENING PRAYER

Deputy Executive Director Robert Cook opened the meeting with prayer.

MINUTES

ACTION: Upon motion by Commissioner Coopwood and seconded by Commissioner Cossar, the minutes of the August 20, 2020 Commission meeting were unanimously approved.

AGENDA

ACTION: Commissioner Wagner moved to approve the agenda for September 17, 2020, Commissioner Mounger seconded the motion and the motion carried.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

No comments were received from the public.

LICENSE SALES REPORT

Jason Thompson, Director of License/Boat Registration Division, reported that the total revenue for the month of August was down 1%. However, revenue August through September 15, 2020

was up 14%. This burst of revenue was due to the first weekend of Dove season falling at the end of the first week in September.

With the Commission's permission, Thompson's report below revealed license sales through September 15:

- Resident license sales – up 10%
 - Sportsman license sales – up 6%
 - All Game/Freshwater Fishing – up 7%
 - Small game – 10%
 - WMA permits – up 18%
- Non-resident license sales – up 20%
 - NR Freshwater Fishing – up 28%
 - NR 3 day Freshwater Fishing – up 19%
 - NR 1 day Freshwater Fishing – up 5%
- Permit category – up 15%
- Lifetime License category – up 21%

A total of 4,162 customers signed up for auto renewal in the month of August.

Chairman Taylor make a request, on behalf of the Foundation, to ask customers for a Foundation donation when a license is purchased over the phone.

WILDLIFE

Alligator 2020 Season Update

Ricky Flynt, Wildlife Alligator/Furbearer Coordinator, gave a preliminary summary of the 2020 Alligator Hunting Season since private lands alligator hunting will end in four more days. No record-breaking alligators have been reported in 2020. However, a record 5,548 applicants came seeking the prized permits for the alligator hunting draw. Total permits issued were 986 with 85% participation from the permit holders in the hunt. Of the 3,266 hunters who purchased an alligator license, 4.27% were first time MDWFP license holders.

A total of 941 alligators were harvested to date and 2,070 alligators were captured and released. Only 30% of the alligators harvested were female, which is what MDWFP wants to preserve the species. Law Enforcement checked 1,680 alligator hunters and citations were less than 59, which was almost half as many as last year.

As a result of COVID-19, the Alligator Hunting Course is now an on-line course with 11 episodes.

PROPOSED – 40 Miss. Admin. Code – Part 2, Chapter 8 – Enclosures

• **Rule 8.2 – Regulations for Enclosures Preventing the Free Ingress and Egress of White-tailed Deer**

At the August Commission meeting language was added to Rule 8.2 to reflect the statutory change that went into effect on July 1, 2020, by Senate Bill 2722, mandating that all deer harvested inside a high-fenced enclosure shall be tested for Chronic Wasting Disease. At the August meeting a request was made for the staff to investigate the minimum number of deer which need to be tested at each enclosure, since some enclosures do not plan to harvest any deer,

At the September Commission meeting Walsh recommended changing the deer harvesting language in Rule 8.2 to include:

One (1) deer per 100 acres must be tested annually for CWD. If no samples are submitted, MDWFP will coordinate the sampling of required deer with the enclosure owner.

Discussion followed

ACTION: A motion was made by Commissioner Coopwood and seconded by Cossar, to table until further information is provided on PROPOSED Rule 8.2 and the motion carried. (Further action was taken on this rule later in the meeting.)

PROPOSED – 40 Miss. Admin. Code – Part 2, Chapter 9 – Regulations for the Opening and Closing of Hunting Seasons

• **Rule 9.1 – Opening and Closing Days for Hunting Seasons**

On July 1, 2020, Senate Bill 2723 of the 2020 Regular Legislative Session amended Miss. Code Ann. §49-7-31, §49-7-31.2, §49-7-31.3, §49-7-31.4, granting the Commission on Wildlife, Fisheries, and Parks the authority to extend open hunting seasons for deer, bobwhite quail, wild turkey, small game and fur-bearing animals (including any additional open season on raccoon). When these open hunting seasons end on a Friday, each season may be extended until thirty (30) minutes after sunset on the following Sunday by Commission authority.

Walsh presented PROPOSED Rule 9.1 reflecting these statutory hunting season changes for Commission approval.

ACTION: Upon motion by Commission Cossar and seconded by Commissioner Mounger, the Commission unanimously approved PROPOSED Rule 9.1 as presented.

PROPOSED – 40 Miss. Admin. Code – Part 2, Chapter 8 – Enclosures

- **Rule 8.2 – Regulations for Enclosures Preventing the Free Ingress and Egress of White-tailed Deer**

At this point, Executive Director Polles raised a point of order and was recognized. Dr. Polles asked Executive Staff Officer, Doug Mann to state the point of order.

Mr. Mann asked the Commission to clarify its position on Rule 8.2 which they had voted earlier in the meeting to lay on the table subject to call. Mr. Mann pointed out that, under the Administrative Procedures Act, the proposed rule had already been out for comment for thirty days. While the rule could remain in that status, the Commission had already called for one change and now it appeared that more changes could follow. Mr. Mann suggested that the Commission consider withdrawing the version of Rule 8.2 which had been filed in August, then file a newer proposed version of Rule 8.2 when it is ready.

Upon motion by Commission Cossar and seconded by Commissioner Coopwood, the Commission voted unanimously to withdraw PROPOSED Rule 8.2 as presented at the August Meeting, and re-visit a new proposed version at a later date.

LAW ENFORCEMENT**Law Enforcement Update**

Col. Steve Adcock, Chief of Law Enforcement, reported that 308 citations were issued this past month with no license being the number one violation. Law Enforcement patrolled the waterways checking on hunters during alligator season, while other officers were banding wood ducks, documenting baited dove fields and assisted with youth dove hunts at Black Prairie and Muscadine WMAs. All three shooting facilities were open for business with 888 customers at Turcotte; 583 at McIvor; and 472 at McHenry.

OTHER BUSINESS

There was no other business.

NEXT MEETING DATE

Date: TBA
Location: TBA
Time: TBA

EXECUTIVE SESSION

The Chairman asked if there was a need for an Executive Session. Executive Director Polles stated that there was a need for an Executive Session to discuss transaction of business and discussion regarding the prospective purchase, sale or leasing of lands, strategy sessions or negotiations with respect to prospective litigation, investigative proceedings by any public body regarding allegations of misconduct or violation of law, discussions or negotiations regarding the location, relocation or expansion of a business, medical service or an industry, and discussions regarding employment or job performance of a person in a specific position.

ACTION: Commissioner Wagner made a motion to close the meeting to determine the need for Executive Session for discussing transaction of business and discussion regarding the prospective purchase, sale or leasing of lands, strategy sessions or negotiations with respect to prospective litigation, investigative proceedings by any public body regarding allegations of misconduct or violation of law, discussions or negotiations regarding the location, relocation or expansion of a business, medical service or an industry, and discussions regarding employment or job performance of a person in a specific position. Commissioner Coopwood 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 for the discussion of transaction of business and discussion regarding the prospective purchase, sale or leasing of lands, strategy sessions or negotiations with respect to prospective litigation, investigative proceedings by any public body regarding allegations of misconduct or violation of law, discussions or negotiations regarding the location, relocation or expansion of a business, medical service or an industry, and discussions regarding employment or job performance of a person in a specific position.

The meeting was closed, and the room cleared.

Discussion followed.

ACTION: Commissioner Wagner made a motion to enter Executive Session to discuss transaction of business and discussion regarding the prospective purchase, sale or leasing of lands, strategy sessions or negotiations with respect to prospective litigation, investigative proceedings by any public body regarding allegations of misconduct or violation of law, discussions or negotiations regarding the location, relocation or expansion of a business, medical service or an industry, and discussions regarding employment or job performance of a person in a specific position. Commissioner Coopwood seconded the motion and the Commission voted unanimously to enter Executive Session.

Counsel announced to those very few remaining outside the conference room that the Commission had entered Executive Session to discuss transaction of business and discussion regarding the prospective purchase, sale or leasing of lands, strategy sessions or negotiations with respect to prospective litigation, investigative proceedings by any public body regarding

allegations of misconduct or violation of law, discussions or negotiations regarding the location, relocation or expansion of a business, medical service or an industry, and discussions regarding employment or job performance of a person in a specific position.

Dr. Polles updated the Commission on several tracts of land that had been presented for the Commission's consideration for purchase. It was noted that the third and final installment of the Phil Bryant WMA purchase was to be consummated in 2021. Several tracts adjoining existing WMAs are now available for consideration. The presentation was well received and the Commission asked for more information.

No action was required of the Commission.

Colonel Adcock updated the Commission on deer enclosures that were currently out of compliance with the regulations. Most of these facilities are under administrative quarantine, but the operators are working with staff to come into compliance.

Colonel Adcock also updated the Commission on several criminal investigations which may result in Lacey Act cases with the US Fish & Wildlife Service.

No action was required of the Commission.

Dr. Polles and Drew Malone updated the Commission on a matter which could result in litigation.

No action was required of the Commission.

Dr. Polles informed the Commission of a study that was being planned by the Legislature on the feasibility of taking the State Parks out of the agency and either making it a free-standing state agency or placing it under another agency.

Discussion followed.

No action was required of the Commission.

Finally, Dr. Polles updated the Commission on several retirements, resignations, and movement of existing employees into new roles within the agency.

No action was required of the Commission.

There being no further items for discussion in Executive Session, Commissioner Wagner made a motion to open the meeting. Commissioner Coopwood 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.

ADJOURNMENT

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



Robert Taylor, CHAIRMAN

10/13/2020

Date

Billy Mounger, VICE CHAIRMAN

Date