

MISSISSIPPI COMMISSION ON WILDLIFE, FISHERIES, & PARKS

Monday, February 15, 2021

None - Educational Session

9:30 AM - Business Session

Virtual Meeting due to Inclement Weather Conditions

MINUTES

BUSINESS SESSION – 9:30 AM

PRESENT (Virtually): Commission Chairman Robert Taylor, Commissioners Billy Mounger, Scott Coopwood, and Bill F. Cossar.

ABSENT: Commissioner Clay Wagner.

Among the MDWFP staff attending virtually were: Dr. Sam Polles, Executive Director; Larry Pugh, Jennifer Head, Col. Steve Adcock, Russ Walsh, Jason Thompson, André Hollis, Brian Byrd, and Drew Malone (Special Assistant Attorney General).

OPENING PRAYER

Russ Walsh, Wildlife Chief of Staff, opened the meeting with prayer.

MINUTES

ACTION: Upon motion by Commissioner Mounger and seconded by Commissioner Cossar, the minutes of the November 19, 2020 Commission meeting and February 1, 2021 Special Teleconference Commission meeting were unanimously approved.

AGENDA

The Executive Director requested making the following changes to the February 15 Agenda:

- Add under "Public Comments" - Written Comment from Mike Gordon.
- Remove under "Law Enforcement" - Officer Recognition
- Add under "Other Business" – Legislative Update

ACTION: Commissioner Cossar moved to approve the agenda as amended for February 15, 2021, Commissioner Mounger seconded the motion and the motion carried.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

The attorney, Drew Malone, read the written comment received from Mike Gordon concerning supplemental feeding in CWD positive zones of the state.

No other comments were received.

LICENSE SALES REPORT

Jason Thompson, Director of License/Boat Registration Division, reported that the total revenue for the month of January was up 12%.

Highlights of his report are listed below:

- Resident License Sales – up 10%
 - All Game/Freshwater Fishing – up 4%
 - Sportsmen – up 8%
 - Archery/Crossbow – up 10%
 - Small game – up 12%
 - 3-day Freshwater Fishing – up 12%
 - WMA permits – up 19%
- Non-resident License Sales – up 13%
 - NR Small Game Hunting – up 10%
 - NR All Game Hunting – up 13%
 - NR Freshwater Fishing – up 21%
 - NR 3-day Freshwater Fishing – up 16%
 - NR 1-day Freshwater Fishing – up 5%
 - NR WMA User Permit – up 25%
- Permit category – up 14%
- Lifetime License category – up 38%

A total of 5,219 customers signed up for Auto Renewal and 1,371 license packages were sold during the month of January.

WILDLIFE

CWD Update

Russ Walsh, Wildlife Chief of Staff, presented a PowerPoint “CWD Surveillance Report” to the Commission. Highlights of his presentation include:

Total CWD-positive detections:

- Mississippi 82 (64 bucks/18 does)
- Tennessee 1,280
- Arkansas 1,060

Total samples collected from July 1, 2020 through February 11, 2021 are 6,288. During that time period 28 CWD-positive samples were received bringing the new total to 82 in Mississippi. Even though sample collection is down in Mississippi and other states due to COVID, Walsh still considered it a success since the public is submitting samples voluntarily. Around 467 CWD DMAP tags were issued to hunters in the 3-mile hot zone circles and around 152 were received back with 9 CWD-positive detections.

Maps were shown of the Hot Zones where deer have tested positive for CWD in the tri-state area (MS, TN, and AR). A nationwide map was also shown displaying CWD-positive locations in the United States and Canada for 2021.

Since Mississippi's CWD Response Plan was originated in 2016 before any CWD-positive samples were received, the Wildlife Bureau felt it was time to re-evaluate the plan and update it with current conditions and insights. MDWFP staff are working on transitioning from a CWD Response Plan to a CWD Management Plan. After further study of CWD Management Plans in Missouri, Tennessee, Arkansas, and Wisconsin, MDWFP staff recommended the following proposed changes:

- CWD Management Zone model recommended would enact a CWD Management Zone that includes all counties within 10 miles of a CWD-positive detection. This is a reduction from the current 25-mile radius. A map was shown with the new 10-mile zone based on the current positive detections. The new model would transition the North MS CWD Management Zone to 11 counties, reducing the CWD Management Plan area by eight counties.
- These changes in CWD Management are currently in the working stage and nothing was presented to the Commission to be voted on at this time.

More samples will be forthcoming in the next two weeks in the Southeast and Walsh will update the Commission of any significant changes.

PARKS

PROPOSED – 40 Mississippi Administrative Code Part 6, Chapter 1 – General Regulations for Mississippi State Parks

- Rule 1.1 – State Park Fees

Andre Hollis, Director of Park Operations, evaluated what other states are charging and recommended the following rate increases:

- General Entrance Fee – Change to \$2.00 per person (5 years & older) and \$10 maximum charge for special events per vehicle.
- Camping fees:
 - Premium - \$32 nightly/\$640 monthly @ Buccaneer State Park only
 - Full - \$28 nightly/\$560 monthly
 - Standard - \$25 nightly/\$500 monthly
 - Primitive - \$17 nightly
- Marinas (Re-opening Date June 29, 2021):
 - Dock B – delete \$112 monthly for 64-foot slip without electricity.
 - Dock B - \$250 monthly for covered 36-foot slip without electricity covered (32-foot slip was changed to 36 feet on all Dock B charges)
- Golf Carts
 - Currently no charges and tracking of golf cart use.
 - Registration and \$10 per cart charge required with valid Driver's License.
 - Annual Golf Cart Permit - \$100 per cart/per licensed driver

ACTION: Commissioner Cossar moved to approve Proposed Rule 1.1 as presented, Commissioner Mounger seconded the motion and the motion carried. Chairman Taylor requested that Hollis provide the Commission and House/Senate WFP Chairmen the proposed revenue which would be generated to the Parks budget from these increases.

Parks Update

Highlights from Hollis' presentation to the Commission:

- Motels at three parks (J.P. Coleman, Percy Quin, and Roosevelt) will be opening at 50% capacity beginning March 1. They have been shut down since COVID outbreak last March 2020.
- New reservation kiosks have been added at LeFleur's Bluff and Lake Lincoln for quick customer access. Hopefully, other parks will have reservation kiosks soon.
- 5,000 Park App downloads have been made to phones. Good feedback on the app from the public.
- AmeriCorps worked three weeks ago at Paul B. Johnson painting cottages.
- Percy Quin's Lodge is currently under renovation; as well as updates to 32 camping sites (50-amp hookups and pads extended 45 feet or more).
- Camping pads at all big state parks have been renovated to 50 amp. The smaller parks will be updated to 50 amps and more pads added when funding is made available.
- Bath houses are being renovated at Wall Doxey. Next on the list will be Hugh White and Lake Lowndes. Other parks will be undergoing renovation in the future.

LAW ENFORCEMENT

Law Enforcement Update

Col. Steve Adcock, Chief of Law Enforcement, reported that 828 citations were issued in November 2020; 1,338 in December 2020; and 1,020 in January 2021 with "No License" being the number one violation, "Hunting from a Public Road" was second, "Trespassing" was third, and "Supplemental Feeding" was fourth. Over 150 "Headlighting" citations were also issued during the past three months.

Officers continued their duties by conducting compliance checks targeting road hunting and waterfowl hunting. Officers have also responded to numerous calls on injured wildlife. During the past three months all three shooting facilities were open for business with 1,688 customers at Turcotte; 953 at McIvor; and 1,432 at McHenry.

OTHER BUSINESS

Legislative Session Update

Larry Pugh, Director of Technical Programs, updated the Commission on the following bills which are still alive and being considered by the House and Senate:

House Bills referred to the Senate:

- HB 148 – MS Dev. Authority – Advertisement Funds for State Parks
- HB 382 – CWD Testing in Enclosures
- HB 1154 – MS Outdoors – Special Funds (Gifts & Grants) from Private Sources
- HB 1231 – Conservation Funding

Senate Bills referred to House:

- SB 2035 – Legalize Pre-charged Pneumatic Weapons on Private Lands
- SB 2075 – Changes name of Natchez State Park to Bob M. Dearing Natchez State Park
- SB 2486 – Study Committee on State Parks to Bring Recommendations Next Year
- SB 2787 – Waterskiing without an Observer
- SB 2820 – MS Tourism Reorganization Act

NEXT MEETING DATE

Date: Thursday, March 18, 2021
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 Executive Session. The Executive Director stated that there was no need for Executive Session.

ADJOURNMENT

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



Robert Taylor, CHAIRMAN

Date



Billy Mounger, VICE CHAIRMAN

Date