

MISSISSIPPI COMMISSION ON WILDLIFE, FISHERIES, & PARKS

Thursday, November 19, 2020

None - Educational Session

8:30 AM - Business Session

1505 Eastover Drive, Jackson, MS 39211

MINUTES

BUSINESS SESSION – 8:30 AM

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

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

OPENING PRAYER

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

MINUTES

ACTION: Upon motion by Commissioner Cossar and seconded by Commissioner Wagner, the minutes of the October 13, 2020 Commission meeting were unanimously approved.

AGENDA

The Executive Director requested adding one item to the November agenda: "Trespassing on Private Land during Flood" under Law Enforcement.

ACTION: Commissioner Cossar moved to approve the agenda as amended for November 19, 2020, Commissioner Wagner seconded the motion and the motion carried.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

No public comments were received.

LICENSE SALES REPORT

Jason Thompson, Director of License/Boat Registration Division, reported that the total revenue for the month of October was up 16%.

Highlights of his report are listed below:

- Resident License Sales – up 9%
 - All Game/Freshwater Fishing – up 11%
 - Sportsmen – up 5%
 - Small game – up 13%
 - WMA permits – up 21%
- Non-resident License Sales – up 22%
 - NR Small Game Hunting – up 21%
 - NR All Game Hunting – up 24%
 - NR Freshwater Fishing – up 21%
 - NR 3-day Freshwater Fishing – up 15%
 - NR 1-day Freshwater Fishing – up 4%
 - NR WMA User Permit – up 33%
- Permit category – up 16%
- Lifetime License category – up 25%

A total of 4,810 customers signed up for Auto Renewal and 1,525 license packages were sold during the month of October.

LAW ENFORCEMENT

Law Enforcement Update

Col. Steve Adcock, Chief of Law Enforcement, reported that 244 citations were issued this past month with no license being the number one violation. Officers continued their duties by patrolling the waterways and working baiting/supplemental feeding cases. In-service training was also completed by officers at the Mississippi Conservation Officer Training Academy (MCOTA). All three shooting facilities were open for business with 1,754 customers at Turcotte; 762 at McIvor; and 348 at McHenry. McHenry was closed part of the month due to hurricane damage. Nine MDWFP cadets will be graduating and sworn in today as Conservation officers.

License Reinstatement

Four requests were made for license reinstatement. Col. Adcock stated that each violator had taken his Hunter Education class and paid his fines. Each violator was asked to come forward and state the circumstances of his arrest before the Commission.

- **Jeffrey Mayo, Kosciusko, MS.** Mayo stated he was driving the truck and a friend was headlighting looking for deer. His friend had a loaded gun in the truck but did not fire it. Officers were in the area and arrested them. He regrets being a part of this and will never do it again.

ACTION: Commissioner Wagner made a motion to approve Mayo's reinstatement with the provision that if he receives another citation of any kind during the next 12 months, his license would be suspended for the full three years for a second offense. Commissioner Cossar seconded the motion and the motion carried.

- **Austin McCord, Ecpu, MS.** McCord stated he was driving the truck and a friend was headlighting and shot a buck. He was convicted in 2019. He stated that he had learned his lesson which cost him \$2,500.

ACTION: Commissioner Cossar made a motion to approve McCord's reinstatement with the provision that if he receives another citation of any kind during the next 12 months, his license would be suspended for the full three years for a second offense. Commissioner Coopwood seconded the motion and the motion carried.

- **Hunter Neyman, Hernando, MS.** Neyman stated he and his brother were driving around headlighting in 2018. A game warden pulled them over and arrested them. He is embarrassed and his father is very disappointed in both of them. His wife is angry that he cannot take their son hunting. He said that he had no excuse for what he did.

ACTION: Commissioner Wagner made a motion to approve Neyman's reinstatement with the provision that if he receives another citation of any kind during the next 12 months, his license would be suspended for the full three years for a second offense. Commissioner Cossar seconded the motion and the motion carried.

- **Paxton Work, Potts Camp, MS.** Work stated he was riding around with two other guys when two deer jumped out in front of them. One of the men pulled out his gun and shot one of the deer. He regrets his actions and will not be back again.

ACTION: Commissioner Wagner made a motion to approve Work's reinstatement with the provision that if he receives another citation of any kind during the next 12 months, his license would be suspended for the full three years for a second offense. Commissioner Cossar seconded the motion and the motion carried.

Trespassing over Private Lands during Flood

Col. Adcock passed out a directive received from the Attorney General's Office addressing the issue of trespassing over private lands during a flood. The directive read:

Pursuant to State of Mississippi Attorney General Opinion No.96-0537, **[nothing herein contained shall authorize any person utilizing said public waterways, under the authority granted hereby, to hunt or fish or go on or across any adjacent lands under floodwaters beyond the natural banks of the bed of the public waterway. Floodwater which has overflowed the banks of a public waterway is not a part of the public waterway.]**

Pursuant to Mississippi Code Ann. 51-1-4(2), nothing contained in this section shall authorize anyone utilizing public waterways, under the authority granted by this section, to trespass upon adjacent lands.

Officers who observe individuals clearly trespassing beyond the natural banks onto private property, shall take appropriate enforcement action.

The Commission was informed that a public announcement from MDWFP will be forthcoming with a warning to the public not to trespass on private property during a flood and the additional consequences if fish, wildlife, or fowl are taken while trespassing.

Discussion followed.

OTHER BUSINESS

Introduction of New State Parks Specialty Tag

Jennifer Head, Budget Director, presented a picture of the New State Parks Specialty Tag to the Commission. Pre-orders of the new tag will go live to the public on the MDWFP website November 19, 2020 at noon. Once 300 tags have been pre-ordered the park enthusiasts will be notified to pick up their tag at the tax collector's office in their county of residence. As established by Senate Bill 2288 in the 2020 Legislative Session, the Specialty Tag costs \$30, of which \$20 will be deposited into the Mississippi State Park fund.

Hope Outdoors – License Exemption Request

Russ Walsh, Wildlife Chief of Staff, presented a license exemption request by Hope Outdoors for 11 special need hunters participating in their sponsored events in Mississippi. This is a non-profit organization. A list of the hunters was provided.

ACTION: Commissioner Wagner made a motion to approve, seconded by Commissioner Coopwood and the motion carried.

MDWFP FOREST MANAGEMENT PROGRAM

Stan Priest, Lands Coordinator, recognized Brad Joiner and Carl Branson, who along with himself, make up the Forest Management Program team. Priest pointed out that the PowerPoint presentation was a collaborative effort of this team. Highlights of the current and future MDWFP Forest Management plans are listed below:

- Enhance wildlife habitat on MDWFP-owned lands for a broad suit of species
- Improve growth and vigor of timber stands through proper timber harvesting
- Reforest areas when needed
- Convert timber stands to appropriate timber types when needed
- Control, monitor, and eradicate invasive plants or insects when needed

Future plans include:

- Continued development of Forest Management Plan for Phil Bryant WMA
- Development of a prioritized rolling 5-year Timber Harvesting Plan for WMAs
- Implementation of a prioritized Inventory Monitoring System for WMAs
- Implementation of a more rigorous Inventory, Monitoring, and Control System for Invasive Species

NEXT MEETING DATE

Date: Wednesday, December 16, 2020
Location: 1505 Eastover Drive, Jackson, MS 39211
Time: 2:00 p.m. Business Session

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 or 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, 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, or industry, and discussions regarding employment or job performance of a person in a specific position.

The meeting was closed, and the room cleared.

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, or 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, or industry, and discussions regarding employment or job performance of a person in a specific position.

The Commission entered Executive Session.

Dr. Polles and other staff updated the Commission on Parks and current legislative reviews of park operations; the potential for purchasing lands adjacent to Malmaison WMA, and a Legislative Request for a study on Great River Road State Park.


No action was required on any of the items that were discussed.

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 Wagner moved to adjourn, seconded by Commissioner Cossar, and the motion carried. Chairman Taylor gaveled the meeting into adjournment.



Robert Taylor, CHAIRMAN

Date



Billy Mounger, VICE CHAIRMAN

Date