

# MISSISSIPPI COMMISSION ON WILDLIFE, FISHERIES, & PARKS

**Thursday, July 15, 2021**

**9 AM Educational Session      10 AM Business Session**

**1505 Eastover Drive, Jackson, MS**

**9:00 a.m.**

## **EDUCATIONAL SESSION**

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

Among the MDWFP staff attending were Dr. Sam Polles, Executive Director; Lynn Posey, Deputy Executive Director; Larry Pugh, Jennifer Head, Col. Jerry Carter, Amy Blaylock, Andre Hollis, Doug Mann, and Drew Malone, Special Assistant Attorney General. Chairman welcomed guests attending the meeting: Senator Mike Seymour; Robert Taylor, and Jeff North, *Northside Sun*.

### **2022 Turkey Season**

Adam Butler, Turkey Program Coordinator, informed the Commission that new developments have occurred concerning wild turkey hunting since his last presentation in March 2021. Highlights of his presentation are listed below:

- Problem is that too many people are hunting on a limited amount of land. Non-resident turkey hunters have doubled in the last two years, partly because social media has made it very fashionable to travel to all 48 contiguous states to hunt one of each of the turkey subspecies. Recently, Alabama and Georgia have moved their seasons back and only two states, Mississippi and South Florida, have an early Turkey Season; thus, making Mississippi a hot spot to hunt early in the season.
- Non-resident hunters are good for our economy, and we do not want to ban them but limit the number to 1,100 non-resident hunters, which will conform with historic norms and keep them at a sustainable level.
- MDWFP recommendation was made to cap the number of nonresidents on public lands by having turkey draw-hunts, much like the alligator draw-hunts. Under this proposal, non-residents would not be eligible to hunt open public lands during the season's initial 14 days without first receiving a special, no-cost license endorsement. This new license privilege will be offered only in limited numbers via a draw-hunt system. Hunters desiring to hunt Wildlife Management Areas (WMAs) during the existing, permit-only season (March 15-28) may still apply for these hunts.
- Other states with turkey draw-hunts or lotteries are Delaware, Iowa, Illinois, Wisconsin, and Wyoming.

- A change in the bag limit was not recommended since only 2% of turkey hunters reach the current bag limit.
- This proposal, and its license requirement, does not apply to non-residents hunting on private land.
- MDWFP is also lagging behind other states on license fees. Recommendation was made to increase the license sales fees for 3 and 7-day All Game Hunting from \$125 to \$150 and Spring Turkey Permit from \$20 to \$50. This increase in revenue would offset the lower number of non-resident hunters.
- Zones may be added at a later time like the alligator draws. Recommendation was to make this first change simple and to review the data.

### **2021 Waterfowl Survey**

Houston Havens, Waterfowl Program Coordinator, presented a new Waterfowl Survey which will be sent by email to everyone who purchased a state waterfowl stamp this past year. This survey will provide MDWFP with information on hunter satisfaction and preferences, which will help guide future management decisions.

**MISSISSIPPI COMMISSION ON WILDLIFE, FISHERIES, & PARKS****Thursday, July 15, 2021****9 AM Educational Session      10 AM Business Session****1505 Eastover Drive, Jackson, MS****10 a.m.****BUSINESS SESSION MINUTES**

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

Among the MDWFP staff attending were Dr. Sam Polles, Executive Director; Lynn Posey, Deputy Executive Director; Larry Pugh, Jennifer Head, Col. Jerry Carter, Amy Blaylock, Andre Hollis, Doug Mann, and Drew Malone, Special Assistant Attorney General. Chairman welcomed guests attending the meeting: Representative Bill Kinkade, House Wildlife, Fisheries, and Parks Committee Chairman; Senator Mike Seymour; Agriculture Commissioner Andy Gipson; Jeff North, *Northside Sun*; Robert Taylor; and Primos family members.

**OPENING PRAYER**

Robert Taylor, former Chairman of the Commission on Wildlife, Fisheries, and Parks opened the meeting with prayer.

**CONSERVATION AWARD**

Chairman Billy Mounger came forward and introduced MDWFP's next Conservation Award recipient, Will Primos. Primos is the founder of Primos Hunting, American's top-selling brand of game calls and hunting accessories. In 1983 Primos ventured into media with an instructional turkey hunting audiotape, following by his first video in 1986. That success led to the Primos TRUTH video series, with annual titles specifically focused on hunting turkey, deer, elk, predators, and waterfowl. In 1999 "Primos TRUTH about Hunting," a weekly program on the Outdoor Channel, boosted Primos brand visibility.

Jimmy Primos, Will's first cousin, came forward and entertained the Commission with stories of how he and Will began a partnership with Primos Hunting. MDWFP Law Officer, Capt. Chris Clark, also came forward and gave a testimony of how Will Primos' videos taught he and his sons how to hunt and encouraged their great passion for the outdoors. He thanked Mr. Primos for being such a great Conservationist, teacher, and spokesperson for all the sportsmen and women, young and old alike. A copy of Capt. Clark's comments has been appended to the minutes.

Chairman Mounger asked Will Primos, his family, and team to come forward. Primos requested that his entire team and family be included in the acceptance of the award. Mounger presented the framed award and applause followed.

### **MINUTES**

**ACTION:** Upon motion by Commissioner Cossar and seconded by Commissioner Coopwood, the minutes of the June 16, 2021, Commission meeting were unanimously approved.

### **AGENDA**

Executive Director Dr. Sam Polles stated that the following changes needed to be made to the July 15 agenda:

- Under "Law Enforcement" – Add: Oath of Office and Pinning  
Add: Presentation to Former Chief of Law Enforcement
- Under "Other Business" – Add : Wildlife – 2022 Wild Turkey Season – Proposed Rules  
Add: License Fee Changes – Proposed Rule

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

### **LICENSE SALES REPORT**

Jason Thompson presented the License Sales Report for the month of June 2021. The total revenue for the end of June is up 10% (\$1.8 million) from last year.

Highlights of his report are listed below:

- Resident license sales – up 5%
  - Res Sportsman – up 7%
  - Res WMA User Permit – up 15%
- Non-resident license sales – up 15%
  - NR Freshwater Fishing – up 14%
  - 3-day Freshwater Fishing – up 35%
  - NR All Game – up 13%
  - NR Arch-Prim Weapons – up 19%
  - NR Small Game – up 10%
- Permit category – up 3%
- Lifetime License category – up 28%

Auto renewal customers increased by 15,000 users from last year for a total of 61,655 users. License Packages sold increased by 11,000 from last year for a total 24,657 licenses.

## **PUBLIC COMMENTS**

One written comment was received during this past month:

- Jeff North, writer for the *Northside Sun*, came forward as a concerned wild turkey hunter. He has noticed the large number of non-resident (NR) tags during his hunts and requested limiting the number of NR hunters. He made several suggestions including reducing the bag limit, end hunting at 1 p.m., and delaying turkey season until April.
- Mississippi Hunting Dog Association sent a written comment by email on July 7, 2021. A copy was placed in the Commissioners' notebooks for the July 15 Commission meeting.

Larry Pugh, Director of Technical Services, came forward and stated that the MS Hunting Dog Association had requested MDWFP to livestream the Commission meetings each month and/or post a draft of the meeting minutes within (5) five business days for public view. Mr. Pugh stated that MDWFP plans to livestream the Commission meetings but Counsel has advised MDWFP that a draft of the minutes may not be placed online for public view before approval of the Commission at the following meeting. There was no further comment or discussion.

## **PARKS**

### **Parks Update**

Andre Hollis, Director of Park Operations, updated the Commission on progress made on several state park projects and the completion dates. He also handed out a Parks Revenue FY21 sheet for their review.

## **COMMUNICATION & OUTREACH**

### **Communication & Outreach Update**

Jennifer Head presented a handout for the Commission. Highlights of her presentation included:

#### **MS SCHOLASTIC SHOOTING SPORTS (MSSP):**

- Michelle Carter met with Saint Andrews Episcopal School for MSSP recruitment.
- Held MSSP Coaching Certification Classes at Mclvor and McHenry Shooting Ranges.

#### **MARKETING**

- Filmed commercial at Mclvor Shooting Facility. Promotion begins July 13<sup>th</sup>.
- Designing a mailer for MS State Parks tag. A sample mailer was distributed to the Commission.
- Head and Hollis' interview with WLBT will be broadcast on Friday, July 16<sup>th</sup> at 6 p.m. concerning the PEER Report on Parks.

**OUTREACH**

- Research on Urban Fishing as potential outreach
- Captain Fedrick on YPI Grants for 2021-2022
- July promotion for national Shooting Sports Month (August)
- Women's Outreach emphasis on MDWFP's webpage & social media
- Jennifer Shows, new social media manager, came on board July 1<sup>st</sup>
- Goals going forward:
  - Capitalize on the 18–24-year-old audience that is under-represented as MDWFP followers.
  - Use new social media features including: Reels (short form videos) Guide Books (Tour guide style posts), and Facebook events to better reach our target audience.
  - Adapt our social media platforms and posts to align to better reach our audience.

**Commissioners offered their assistance in promoting items to the public which are emailed to them by the Communications & Outreach Bureau.**

**LAW ENFORCEMENT****Law Enforcement Update**

Lt. Col. Jerry Carter, Assistant Chief of Law Enforcement, reported 309 citations issued for the month of June with "No License" being number one. During the Fourth of July Weekend, a national campaign was underway to enforce boating laws. Law enforcement detail checked 1,845 registered boats and 253 canoes, kayaks, etc. Officers issued a total of 272 citations related to boating enforcement. Officers participated in overland search training at MCOTA. Shooting range customer counts are: McIvor – 390; Turcotte – 544; and McHenry – 380.

Capt. Scottie Jones came forward and presented an aerial map of McHenry Shooting Facility with a drawing of the proposed ponds to block off the sporting clay range from public access. This sporting clay range will mirror McIvor and Turcotte. Plans are to open the McHenry Sporting Clay Range August 2022.

**Oath of Office and Pinning**

Lt. Col. Jerry Carter was sworn into office as Chief of Law Enforcement by Notary Sharon Polzin and his rank was changed to Colonel. Col. Carter is the first African American to become Chief of the Law Enforcement Bureau since the creation of the agency in 1932. Applause followed.

Col. Carter accredited his achievement first to God; secondly to his mother, who taught him to treat others as he wanted to be treated; and last to his friends, colleagues, past and present, and the sporting public of Mississippi.

Former Chief of Law Enforcement, Col. Steve Adcock, came forward and pinned Carter's new rank and badge. Applause followed.

**Presentation to Former Chief of Law Enforcement**

Col. Carter, on behalf of MDWFP, presented Former Chief of Law Enforcement Steve Adcock with a framed picture and retirement gift from the Law Enforcement staff. Adcock thanked his friends and colleagues and gave a special thanks to Executive Director Dr. Sam Polles. Applause followed.

**OTHER BUSINESS****Wildlife – 2022 Wild Turkey Season**

Adam Butler came forward with the following Proposed Rule changes for wild turkey season. These changes reflect his recommendations presented at the Educational Session.

- **PROPOSED 40 Miss. Admin. Code Part 2, Chapter 3: Turkey**

**Rule 3.1 –2021-22 Wild Turkey Seasons and Bag Limits**

Language added:

B. Non-Resident Draw Hunt for Wild Turkey Seasons.

1. All non-residents must be drawn to hunt open public lands from March 15 – March 28.
2. Open public lands include National Forests, National Wildlife Refuges, Corps of Engineers lands, etc., that have statewide seasons without special regulations. This includes MDWFP-operated Wildlife Management Areas (WMA) that are open with no special season or draw hunts during this time.

**ACTION:** Commissioner Wagner moved to approve PROPOSED Rule 3.1 as recommended by staff, seconded by Commissioner Cossar, and the motion carried.

- **PROPOSED 40 Miss. Admin. Code Part 2, Chapter 1 – Wildlife Management Areas (WMA)**

Language added to each WMA below for Turkey Season:

TURKEY – Mar. 15-Mar.28 – Non-Residents by permit only through the Non-Resident Public Land Draw.

- **Rule 1.2 – Non-State Owned, Non-CEO WMA Regulations 2021-22**
- **Rule 1.15 – Okatibbee WMA Regulations**
- **Rule 1.17 – Old River WMA Regulations**
- **Rule 1.18 - Pascagoula River WMA Regulations**
- **Rule 1.19 – Pearl River WMA Regulations**
- **Rule 1.27 – Nanih Waiya WMA Regulations**

**ACTION:** Commissioner Wagner moved to approve PROPOSED Rules 1.2, 1.15, 1.17, 1.18, 1.19, and 1.27 as recommended by staff, seconded by Commissioner Cossar, and the motion carried.

### **License Fee Changes**

#### **PROPOSED 40 Miss. Admin. Code, Part 1, Chapter 8: License.**

##### **Rule 8.4 Non-Resident Hunting and Fishing License and Fee Program**

Jason Thompson came forward to request Commission approval to amend *Rule 8.4, Non-Resident License and Fee Program*, as recommended by Adam Butler at the Educational Session:

- 3-day All Game Hunting                      Increase from \$125 to \$150
- 7-day All Game Hunting                      Increase from \$125 to \$150
- Spring Turkey Permit                      Increase from \$20 to \$50
- Youth All Game Hunting                      Remove
- Youth 7-Day All Game Hunting              Remove

**ACTION:** Commissioner Wagner moved to approve PROPOSED Rule 8.4 as recommended by staff. Commissioner Cossar seconded the motion which passed unanimously.

### **NEXT MEETING DATE**

Date:      Wednesday, August 18, 2021

Location: 1505 Eastover Drive, Jackson, MS 39211

Time:      9 a.m. Educational Session; 10 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 a need for an Executive Session.

**ACTION:** Commissioner Wagner made a motion to close the meeting to determine the need for Executive Session. Commissioner Coopwood seconded the motion and the Commission voted unanimously to close the meeting.

Drew Malone, Special Assistant Attorney General, announced to those present that the meeting was now closed to determine the need for Executive Session.



The meeting was closed, and the room cleared. Discussion was held and it was determined that there was a need to discuss personnel matters involving job performance of specific employees in specific positions, and the prospective purchase of land.

**ACTION: Commissioner Wagner made a motion to enter Executive Session to discuss personnel matters involving job performance of specific employees in specific positions, and the prospective purchase of land. Commissioner Cossar seconded the motion and the Commission voted unanimously to enter Executive Session.**

Mr. Malone announced to those present outside the meeting room that the Commission had entered Executive Session to discuss personnel matters involving job performance of specific employees in specific positions, and the prospective purchase of land.

Dr. Polles updated the Commission on personnel matters within the Department. No action was required of the Commission at this time.

Dr. Polles updated the Commission on certain tracts of land which have been identified as being for sale, the purchase of which would benefit existing WMAs in the areas where the properties are located. Discussion followed. No action was required of the Commission at this time.

**There being no further items for discussion in Executive Session, Commissioner Wagner made a motion to open the meeting. Commissioner Cossar seconded the motion and the Commission voted unanimously to open the meeting.**

Mr. Malone announced to those individuals located outside the Commission Room that the meeting had re-opened.

#### ADJOURNMENT

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

  
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Billy Mounger, CHAIRMAN

  
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Date

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Clay Wagner, VICE CHAIRMAN

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Date

**CONSERVATION AWARD**

**"What Will Primos has meant to my sons and I" - by Capt. Chris Clark, MDWFP Law Enforcement**

Recently, I was asked how long I had known Will Primos? I have known him since I was around 15 but only met him about four years ago. That got me a sideways look. To clarify this odd tidbit, I must start at the beginning and tell you a little bit about my sons and me.

My father is a deer hunter but not a turkey hunter. He knew at an early age that I held a great passion for the outdoors, so he asked my Uncle Gary, his brother, to take me turkey hunting when I was 13. That morning the woods were alive. That day I killed my first turkey. That hunt fueled a fire that just kept growing. I could not wait to get back in the woods. The next week I asked my uncle to take me again. He told me he had gotten me one and now it was time for me to learn how to get my own. After that I would take off to the woods every chance that I could. I thought the turkeys were teaching me how to hunt them, but I soon realized that I was only educating them. When I was around 15, I got my hands on something that would change turkey hunting for me for the rest of my life, Primos' video series "Speak the Language, The Truth". This series was full of lessons explaining everything from how to call with a mouth call to how to miss a turkey. That was the first time I met Mr. Will Primos. He was like a turkey hunting father figure. He taught me not only how to be a better hunter but all-around sportsman. Watching them sitting on the porch at Copperhead made the viewer feel like they were sitting on that porch with them. They became a part of my life right from the first episode. They were all real people; just like me, they even missed turkeys, too! By this time, I had already experienced several of those encounters. The more I watched, the more I learned.

I introduced my sons, Cole and Cody, to the wonders of the woods at a young age. Both are avid sportsmen but especially turkey hunters. I guess life has a way of coming full circle. With my chosen career path that I love I was rarely able to take my sons hunting so that I could teach them the things I had learned about turkey hunting. However, Mr. Will Primos and his crew stepped in and took over just like they did for me. They were still there to help teach my sons with the videos I used, plus many more. My youngest son, Cody, taught himself to call with his natural voice while watching those videos. One day he told me that he wanted to go turkey hunting with Mr. Will Primos. He didn't want to take a gun. He just wanted to call him up a turkey. Cody did have one stipulation, Mr. Will couldn't miss when he called one up. Of course, I laughed but I told him to mail a letter and ask him. Cody did just that. To my surprise Mr. Will responded with a very nice letter. That response meant the world to my son. A few years later I had the privilege of meeting Mr. Will. I expressed my thanks and appreciation for the letter he sent my son. Mr. Will said he would like to meet him. They were eventually able to connect and meet.

Although neither my sons nor I have ever been able to experience the privilege of hunting with Mr. Will in person, those videos have left a lasting impression on each of us. He has taken us across the State of Mississippi enjoying hundreds of hunts and learning life lessons to boot. Mr. Will, I know all the hard work you and your crew have put into building calls and growing your business has taken you away from your families. This sacrifice to bring the woods into the homes of so many has left a lasting impression for so many families, just like mine. I have no doubt this is just one story out of thousands like it across this country. Mr. Will, thank you for being such a great Conservationist, teacher, and spokesperson for all the sportsmen and women; young and old alike. Most of all thank you for just being a friend.