

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

**Thursday, October 14, 2021**

**9 AM Educational Session      10 AM Business Session**  
**1505 Eastover Drive, Jackson, MS**

## **9 AM EDUCATIONAL SESSION**

**PRESENT:** Commission Chairman William Mounger, Commissioners Scott Coopwood, and Bill F. Cossar, Leonard Bentz, and Gary Rhoads.

Among the MDWFP staff attending were Dr. Sam Polles, Executive Director; Lynn Posey, Deputy Executive Director; Jennifer Head, Brian Ferguson, Col. Jerry Carter, Russ Walsh, Andre Hollis, Charles Knight, Angel Rohnke, Jerry Brown, Doug Mann, and Drew Malone, Special Assistant Attorney General. Chairman welcomed guests attending the meeting: House Representatives Bill Kinkade & Scott Bounds; Kristen Windham, Governor's Office; and Mac Seage, Legislative Budget Office.

### **Nuisance Animal & Predator**

Kenny Prince & Marty Fredrick, MS Trappers Association, brought a large variety of traps and snares to educate the Commission on the pros and cons of each one in trapping and managing nuisance animals & predators. The Mississippi Trappers Association is trying to keep this tradition alive through seminars, workshops, and sponsorship of a large annual fur auction held in Kosciusko the last Saturday of February.

**MISSISSIPPI COMMISSION ON WILDLIFE, FISHERIES, & PARKS****Thursday, October 14, 2021****9 AM Educational Session      10 AM Business Session  
1505 Eastover Drive, Jackson, MS****10 AM  
BUSINESS SESSION MINUTES**

**PRESENT:** Commission Chairman William Mounger, Commissioners Scott Coopwood, and Bill F. Cossar, Leonard Bentz, and Gary Rhoads.

Among the MDWFP staff attending were Dr. Sam Polles, Executive Director; Lynn Posey, Deputy Executive Director; Jennifer Head, Brian Ferguson, Col. Jerry Carter, Russ Walsh, Andre Hollis, Charles Knight, Angel Rohnke, Jerry Brown, Doug Mann, and Drew Malone, Special Assistant Attorney General. Chairman welcomed guests attending the meeting: House Representatives Bill Kinkade & Scott Bounds; Kristen Windham, Governor's Office; Mac Seage, Legislative Budget Office; and Coach Bob Tyler.

**OPENING PRAYER**

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

**OATH OF OFFICE**

**Leonard Bentz**, having been appointed by Governor Tate Reeves to serve the Fifth Congressional District for the remaining term of Commissioner Clay Wagner, beginning September 25, 2021 and ending June 30, 2023, was sworn into office by Notary Sharon Polzin.

**Gary Rhoads**, having been appointed by Governor Tate Reeves to serve the Third Congressional District beginning July 1, 2021 and ending June 30, 2026, was sworn into office by Notary Sharon Polzin.

**ELECTION OF COMMISSION OFFICER**

Chairman Mounger called for nominations for Vice Chairman, due to the resignation of Commissioner Clay Wagner September 24, 2021.

**ACTION:** Commissioner Coopwood nominated Commissioner Bill Cossar to serve as the new Vice Chairman. Commissioner Bentz seconded the nomination. There were no other

nominations. The Commission voted unanimously to approve Commissioner Bill Cossar as Vice Chairman beginning October 14, 2021.

### MINUTES

**ACTION:** Upon motion by Commissioner Coopwood and seconded by Commissioner Cossar, the Commission meeting minutes of September 15, 2021, were unanimously approved.

### AGENDA

**ACTION:** Commissioner Cossar moved to approve the agenda for October 14, 2021, Commissioner Coopwood seconded the motion and the motion carried.

### LICENSE SALES REPORT

Jason Thompson presented the License Sales Report for the month of September 2021. The total revenue for the end of September is down 8% from last year.

Highlights of his report are listed below:

- Resident license sales – down 6%
- Non-resident license sales – down 11%
- Permit category – down 4%
- Lifetime License category – down 4%

Thompson explained that last year MDWFP experienced very high license sales due to the public using their time during the Pandemic lockdown to hunt and fish. Even though our sales this year have dropped from last year, they are actually higher than the two years prior to the Pandemic.

### PUBLIC COMMENTS

Two people came forward with public comments:

Martin Svendson – Baton Rouge, Louisiana. Mr. Svendson grew up in the 1970's hunting and fishing in Woodville, Mississippi at Valhalla Farms. In December 2012, Mr. Svendson purchased Valhalla Farms and since then his property has been plagued with barking dogs and trespassers looking for their dogs. He passed out a profit and loss statement to the Chairman reflecting the operating costs at Valhalla Farms for one year to be \$213,975.

Chairman Mounger explained that Mr. Svendsen should speak with representatives of the Mississippi Legislature who were present at the meeting. This matter is in their jurisdiction and MDWFP has no legal authority over changing the Mississippi Code.

Kenny Prince – Mr. Prince wanted to voice his support of a 3-day Non-Resident Dealer's License which the Commission will be considering later in the meeting.

### WILDLIFE

#### **PROPOSED– 40 Miss. Admin. Code Part 1, Chapter 8 – License, General Regulations applicable to sale and types of licenses to hunt, trap, or fish.**

- Rule 8.4 – Non-Resident Hunting & Fishing License & Fee Program**

Ricky Flynt, Alligator/Furbearer Program, presented staff recommendation for a 3-day fur dealer license, costing \$75, for all non-residents, regardless of age, who buy furbearing animals from trappers and hunters. Such a license shall be valid three (3) days from date of issuance, unless suspended or revoked. Non-resident fur dealers are subject to the statutes and regulations applicable to Mississippi resident fur dealers.

**ACTION:** Commissioner Cossar moved to approve PROPOSED Rule 8.4. Commissioner Rhoads seconded the motion and the motion carried.

### **2021-22 Duck Stamp Projects**

#### **MDWFP STAFF 2021-2022 DUCK STAMP FUNDING RECOMMENDATIONS**

Houston Havens, Waterfowl Program Coordinator, presented the 2021-2022 Duck Stamp Funding requests and staff recommendations for distribution of duck stamp proceeds for the full amount requested with a stipulation that we will designate by line item how the funds are to be spent. Conservation reports from Ducks Unlimited, Delta Waterfowl, and Mississippi State University were distributed to the Commission

<u>Project</u>	<u>Requested</u>	<u>Recommended</u>	<u>Project Description</u>
DU & DU Canada	\$125,000	\$125,000	Continue funding of Eastern Saskatchewan Breeding Habitat Project.
Delta Waterfowl	\$125,000	\$125,000	Continue funding of Adopt a Pothole Program in Manitoba.
MSU Research	\$ 50,167	\$ 50,167	Continue study on wood duck nest box production and female wood duck recruitment.
WMA Wetland Management & Enhancement Projects	\$133,000	\$133,000	Funds for waterfowl habitat management, public waterfowl enhancements, and wetland infrastructure on WMAs as needed.

<u>Project</u>	<u>Requested</u>	<u>Recommended</u>	<u>Project Description</u>
Private Land Wetland Habitat Assistance	\$ 40,000	\$ 40,000	Fund a wetland habitat assistance program by providing water control structures to private landowners
Aerial Waterfowl Surveys	\$ 22,000	\$ 22,000	Continue monitoring of MS Delta waterfowl abundances and distributions: Delta Wildlife also potentially providing funding.
Waterfowl Program Travel	\$ 9,000	\$ 9,000	Funding for MDWFP staff to attend regional and national meetings related to waterfowl and wetlands (as needed).
Waterfowl Trapping and Banding Supplies	\$ 5,000	\$ 5,000	Items related to trapping and banding of waterfowl (as needed).
Mississippi Flyway Council Dues & Cooperative Projects	\$ 21,800	\$ 21,800	Annual dues to MS Flyway Council, annual contributions to MS Flyway banding, & other cooperative waterfowl projects.
MS Flyway Mtg	\$ 10,000	\$ 10,000	Funding to host the Summer 2022 MS Flyway Council Meeting.
Youth Waterfowl Camp - DU	\$ 3,000	\$ 3,000	For continuing the Youth Waterfowl Hunting and Education Camp in partnership with Ducks Unlimited.
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$543,967</b>	<b>\$543,967</b>	

**ACTION:** Upon motion made by Commissioner Cossar and seconded by Commissioner Coopwood, funds for the 2021-2022 Duck Stamp projects were unanimously approved as recommended by staff, contingent upon further discussion with the recipients about, and the recipients' acceptance of, any restrictions on how the funds are to be spent.

### Malmaison/Scatters Update

Russ Walsh, Wildlife Chief of Staff, showed a video of the boundary line markers as a boat traveled from the boat ramp on the south end of the Scatters to the East/West line and the Northeast line. The issue was discussed again on what is a safe distance to hunt from each side of the boundary lines.

Commissioner Cossar suggested appealing to the public to comment on what is a safe distance.

### CWD Update

Walsh presented a PowerPoint presentation on the 2021-2022 Hunting Season as it pertains to Chronic Wasting Disease (CWD). CWD positive detections were listed for the following states: Arkansas - 1,081; Mississippi – 83; and Tennessee – 1,200. MDWFP staff are currently building a CWD Dashboard which will display real-time information on CWD in Mississippi. MDWFP has

enlisted 85 taxidermists to help with CWD collection program this year. A suggestion was made by Commissioner Cossar to recruit deer processors and ask them to provide the same information as the drop off locations. Discussion followed.

## **PARKS**

### **Parks Update**

Andre Hollis, Director of Park Operations, presented a report comparing Parks revenue in September, 2021 with September, 2020. The total revenue for the month of September, 2021 was up \$500,784 from September last year. Reservations for RV camping and cabin rental increased from 14,893 in 2020 to 17,052 in 2021, increasing revenue by \$102,649. The Park app was used by 4,108 smartphone users from Sept, 2020 to August, 2021.

Nucor Steel's Workday at LeFleur's Bluff State Park was a success with volunteers painting grills and playground equipment. Nucor Steel plans to volunteer every three months either at LeFleur's Bluff or Roosevelt State Park. Clarkco State Park had their First Annual Bluegrass in the Park. Plans are to have a "Bluegrass" event every year.

## **MUSEUM OF NATURAL SCIENCE**

### **Museum of Natural Science (MMNS) Update**

Charles Knight, Director of MMNS, presented an Admissions & Revenue Report for the Museum. Highlights of his presentation included:

- All MMNS sales are better than last year. The second wave of COVID has kept admissions from climbing to the pre-pandemic years.
- The annual Mississippi Science Fest was held Saturday, September 18, 2021. This is the 6<sup>th</sup> year that the four museums in the LeFleur Museum District (*Miss. Sports Hall of Fame & Museum, Miss. Agriculture & Forestry Museum, Miss. Children's Museum, and Miss. Museum of Natural Science*) have hosted this event. Guests visited all four museums with a \$10 admission where experts and noted guests from science-based industries across the state provided fun, hands-on educational experiences. A range of careers in innovative science, technology, engineering, art, and mathematics were highlighted to spark participants' curiosity, excitement, and interest.

## **LAW ENFORCEMENT**

### **Law Enforcement Update**

Col. Jerry Carter, Chief of Law Enforcement, reported 565 citations issued for the month of September with "No License" being number one. Firearm safety is one of the things officers teach during one of their Hunter Education classes. Officers documented and monitored several

baited dove fields during September. School presentations were given on the duties of a Conservation Officer. Shooting range customer counts are: McIvor – 433; Turcotte – 584; and McHenry – 570.

### **License Reinstatement Request**

Col. Carter presented the following license reinstatement request. The violator was asked to come forward and state the circumstances of his arrest before the Commission.

- **Elliott Nolan, Diamondhead, MS**

Nolan informed the Commission that he was headlighting and was pulled over by law enforcement. He was charged with headlighting and having a loaded gun in his car.

Col. Carter recommended the Commission restore his license at this time; however, if he receives another citation, he will serve the full three years for a second offense.

**ACTION: By motion of Commissioner Bentz and seconded by Commissioner Coopwood, Nolan's license was reinstated by unanimous consent with the stipulation that he will serve the entire three years for a second offense.**

### **Officer Recognition**

#### **Outstanding Achievement Award**

Col. Carter asked the following officers to step forward to receive an award for outstanding achievement leading to the apprehension and arrest of a known armed subject who was wanted for murder.

- MAJ Jason Young
- LT Ricky Barry (not present at the meeting)
- LT John McFerrin
- MSG Chris Bobo
- MSG Larry Rowan
- CPL Tim Gholson
- CPL Evan McFerrin
- CPL Austin Riggs
- PVT Bradley Starling

#### **Life-Saving Award**

Col Carter asked the following officers to step forward to receive an award for performing prompt life-saving aid and assistance to citizens involved in an ATV accident, gunshot wound, cardiac failure, and drug overdose.

- MSG Daniel Sinclair
- CPL Dustin Vanderslice
- PVT Jacob Williams

**Officer of the Year Award**

Col. Carter presented awards to the following officers who made outstanding achievements in their line of duty during 2020:

- CPL Brian Tallent – North Region Officer of the Year
- SGT Bud Loper – Central Region Officer of the Year
- CPL Joey Herrington – South Region Officer of the Year
- SGT Anthum Braswell – Waterfowl Officer of the Year
- CPL Brian Tallent – Overall Officer of the Year/SEAFWA

A round of applause followed each presentation.

**IHEA-USA Hunter Education Professional Award for 2020**

Capt. Megan Fedrick, Vice President of the International Hunter Education Association USA, asked Steve Parham to step forward to receive the IHEA-USA Hunter Education Professional Award for 2020. Parham has taught hunter education for over 40 years. He has served with state government in various roles, beginning in state parks and moving to Law Enforcement Hunter Education Program in 2013 as a hunter education coordinator. He is a mentor for new hunters and serves tirelessly in various community service roles.

A round of applause followed.

**OTHER BUSINESS****LeFleur's Bluff Education & Tourism Complex Update**

Angel Rohnke, Director of the LeFleur's Bluff Education and Tourism Complex, presented the following updates on the new playground:

- Turf installation for the new playground will be complete by the end of October.
- Shade structures have been completed and lighting fixtures installed.
- Fencing arrived and each play area will be fenced in for safety.
- Landscape structures arrives Oct. 26, 2021.
- November – complete cleaning of fountain structure, sidewalks & equipment.
- November – landscaping and mulching
- December – Ribbon cutting in early December.

**NEXT MEETING DATE**

Date: Thursday, November 18, 2021  
Location: 1505 Eastover Drive, Jackson, MS  
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 Cossar 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 pending litigation.

**ACTION: Commissioner Cossar made a motion to enter Executive Session to discuss job performance of specific employees in specific positions. Commissioner Rhoads 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 job performance of specific employees in specific positions.

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

**There being no further items for discussion in Executive Session, Commissioner Coopwood 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 Cossar, and the motion carried. Chairman Mounger gavelled the meeting into adjournment.

  
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Billy Mounger, CHAIRMAN

  
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Date

  
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Bill Cossar, VICE CHAIRMAN

  
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Date