

MISSISSIPPI COMMISSION ON WILDLIFE, FISHERIES, & PARKS

Wednesday March 16, 2022

2 PM Educational Session 3 PM Business Session
1505 Eastover Drive, Jackson, MS 39211

2:00 PM

EDUCATIONAL SESSION MINUTES

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

Among the MDWFP staff attending were Deputy Executive Director Lynn Posey, Larry Pugh, Col. Jerry Carter, Russ Walsh, Jerry Brown, Andre Hollis, Charles Knight, Angel Rohnke, Jason Thompson, Doug Mann, and Drew Malone, Special Assistant Attorney General.

Mississippi's Inaugural Wild Turkey Summit

Adam Butler, Turkey Program Coordinator, prepared a handout summarizing attendee thoughts and suggestions concerning wild turkey hunting and management in Mississippi. He stated that a video was made of the Turkey Summit and could be made available to the public. The Commission unanimously agreed that the video should be made public.

Butler stated that the summit was well attended with 100 invitations sent out and 75 people attending.

Members of the summit made the following suggestions for improvements in Mississippi's wild turkey management:

- Adoption of a wild turkey stamp. This allows for identification of turkey hunters and complements mandatory harvest reporting. MDWFP currently requires non-residential hunters to purchase a Nonresident Spring Turkey Permit, allowing all nonresident turkey hunters to be known and identifiable. A universal requirement for all turkey hunters would allow for more accuracy in understanding the number of turkey hunters in Mississippi. Proceeds from the wild turkey stamp could be earmarked for wild turkey research and management.
- Initiate a program modeled after DMAP (Deer Management Assistance Program) which assists private landowners in managing their land for turkeys. Utilize public sector research and assets, but also put landowners in contact with one another to share what works and initiate ways to replicate successful applications far and wide.
- Address fines and penalties for wildlife laws. Consider additional restitution to the state per illegal animal taken modeled after the approach of other states.
- Physical tagging to complement harvest reporting.

- Education and outreach. Turkey hunters and landowners are hungry for information. Need to effectively utilize all types of media to engage them in adoption of beneficial practices and backing necessary policy.

Alligator Season Framework

Ricky Flynt, Wildlife Alligator/Furbearer Coordinator, handed out to the Commission the "2021 Alligator Hunting Season Report" booklet. Included in the booklet were all the requirements and procedures for acquiring a hunting permit and harvesting an alligator in 2021. After evaluating each year how many people can safely hunt and not have an adverse effect on the alligator, Flynt still holds firm that 960 permits is the best maximum number.

The number of applicants totaled 6,103 for the 2021 Alligator Permit Drawing. The first draw of 960 resulted in 876 (91.3%) permits being purchased. The second drawing of 134 resulted in 109 permits being purchased. The number of "opt outs" for the second drawing were 78 and the grand total of permits sold were 985 (102.6%).

Eighty-six percent of those drawn participated and 75% of the actual participants harvested an alligator. Overall, it was a successful alligator season.

Pelahatchie Bay Alligator Nests and Complaints

In 2005, when the first alligator season opened the consensus was that hunting near residential areas would not be publicly acceptable to the residents of Ross Barnett Reservoir. However, the Pelahatchie Bay vicinity has historically received a high number of alligator complaint calls. The MDWFP has attempted to manage alligator prevalence by removing over 206 alligators since 2006.

In July 2021, a minimum of 18 active alligator nests were located in the Pelahatchie Bay area. It is estimated that 350-450 alligator hatchlings are being produced annually in this vicinity, which encompasses 400 acres of habitat. The escalating number of alligators in this isolated residential area is creating a chronic nuisance problem and it was the Wildlife Bureau's recommendation to implement a population control plan that also provides opportunities for public hunting to help reduce the adult breeding population in the immediate vicinity. A map was shown on PowerPoint displaying the location of the alligator nests and the "no hunting" zones in the Pelahatchie Bay residential area.

Details of a proposed alligator season for Pelahatchie Bay were outlined by Flynt later in the meeting during the Business Session. This proposed alligator season would not begin until Spring 2023. This would allow ample time for the computer programmers to set up the online application process and draw system.

MISSISSIPPI COMMISSION ON WILDLIFE, FISHERIES, & PARKS**Wednesday March 16, 2022****2 PM Educational Session 3 PM Business Session
1505 Eastover Drive, Jackson, MS 39211****3:00 PM****BUSINESS SESSION MINUTES**

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

Among the MDWFP staff attending were Deputy Executive Director Lynn Posey, Larry Pugh, Col. Jerry Carter, Russ Walsh, Jerry Brown, Andre Hollis, Charles Knight, Angel Rohnke, Jason Thompson, Doug Mann, and Drew Malone, Special Assistant Attorney General. The Chairman welcomed House WFP Committee Chairman Bill Kinkade, Senator Chad McMahan and guests watching the live stream video of the meeting.

The Chairman congratulated Commissioners Leonard Bentz (District 5) and Gary Rhoads (District 3), who were appointed by Governor Tate Reeves in the Fall of 2021 and confirmed by the Senate today, March 16, 2022.

OPENING PRAYER

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

RESOLUTION HONORING DAN HUGHES

Commissioner Bill Cossar read a Resolution honoring the memory of Daniel Clyde "Dan" Hughes, Jr., who passed away on March 11, 2022. Mr. Hughes was an avid hunter and angler. He served as Director and Chairman of the Board of Directors of Delta Waterfowl, a nonprofit, non-governmental organization dedicated to improving waterfowl habitat and nesting/breeding grounds for migratory waterfowl in North America. He was one of the longest-serving chairmen. During his tenure, Delta Waterfowl expanded its mission to include efforts to obtain incentives for landowners in the U.S., and Canada, to preserve wetlands and waterfowl habitat and shape public policy in favor of conserving critical waterfowl breeding grounds.

In recognition of Dan's efforts to promote conservation, the Commission issued this resolution acknowledging his service, honoring his life, and extending their condolences to his family for their loss.

ACTION: By motion of Commissioner Cossar and seconded by Commissioner Coopwood, the Resolution honoring the memory of Dan Hughes was unanimously approved by the Commission. A copy of the Resolution has been appended to the minutes.

CONSERVATION AWARD

Members of the Commission decided in 2019 to begin recognizing individuals who contribute to the great outdoors and promote conservation. Chairman Mounger introduced the Board of Directors of Southern Outdoors Unlimited as recipients of the next conservation award:

Alan Mumbower – President
Van Waites – Vice President
Mike Jarvis – Secretary/Treasurer
Caleb Smith – Board Member

Southern Outdoors Unlimited is a non-profit organization which introduces youth with disabilities to the great outdoors through deer hunts, fishing events, and more recently turkey and alligator hunting. This will be the 15th year of the Super Hunt, one of their biggest events of the year. Super Hunt is a 3-day free event and open to any disabled-child 6-17 years old. This is an action-packed weekend, full of fun activities and hunting adventures across central Mississippi.

The Commission watched a video of Southern Outdoors Unlimited events with countless smiles from the volunteers as well as the youth who enjoyed the rewards of their labor.

Chairman Mounger asked Mumbower, Waites, Jarvis, and Smith to step forward as each was given a framed Conservation Award certificate. A round of applause followed.

MINUTES

ACTION: Upon motion by Commissioner Cossar and seconded by Commissioner Coopwood, the Commission meeting minutes of February 21, 2022 were unanimously approved.

AGENDA

ACTION: Upon motion by Commissioner Cossar and seconded by Commissioner Coopwood, the Commission unanimously approved the meeting agenda of March 16, 2022.

LICENSE SALES REPORT

Jason Thompson, License/Boat Registration Division Director, presented the License Sales Report for the month of February, 2022. The total revenue for the end of February is up around 2%.

Highlights of his report are listed below:

- Resident license sales – down 1%
- Non-resident license sales – up by 5%
- Other Licenses – down 1%
- Lifetime License category – down 6%

Autorenewal licenses are up, and license packages sold are up.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

No public comments were brought forward by the public for the Commission.

WILDLIFE

PROPOSED – 40 Miss. Admin. Code Part 2, Chapter 5 – Alligator

Ricky Flynt, Wildlife Alligator/Furbearer Coordinator, presented the following changes and clarifications to Rules 5.2 and 5.3 and a NEW Proposed Rule 5.4 for Pelahatchie Bay:

- **Rule 5.2 Private Lands Alligator**

Opens 12:00 Noon August 28 – 6:00 a.m. September 21, 2022

Part K, L, & M – Clarifies that all Lifetime License holders are exempt from the (\$25) Alligator Hunting License.

- **Rule 5.3 Public Waters Alligator**

Opens 12:00 Noon August 28 – 6:00 a.m. September 7, 2022

Part B – Adds details about the application process and its requirements.

Part C – Strikes out ambiguity.

Part D – Clarifies the Training Course is now offered online only.

Part E (m.) – Further language necessary regarding prohibition of alcoholic beverage influence.

ACTION: Commissioner Cossar moved to approve PROPOSED Rules 5.2 and 5.3 as recommended by staff. Commissioner Coopwood seconded the motion and the motion carried.

- **Rule 5.4 Pelahatchie Bay Alligator Season (beginning Spring 2023)**

This is a new rule to establish two 3-day Alligator hunting periods at Pelahatchie Bay beginning in the Spring of 2023. This would be during breeding season and prior to the vegetation emergence on the Southeast portion of the Ross Barnett Reservoir. These proposed alligator hunting periods were recently approved by the Pearl River Valley Water Supply District (PRVWSD) at their meeting on February 24, 2022 due to the excessive alligator complaints. Details on Proposed Rule 5.4 are listed below:

1. May 5 – 7 (Friday-Monday) – opens at noon Friday/closes at noon Monday
2. May 12 – 14 (Friday-Monday) – opens at noon Friday/closes at noon Monday
3. Separate application period (online process)
4. Separate drawing (winners notified by email with 48 hours to purchase the permit)
5. Applicants can apply with a named partner. If drawn both permittees must hunt from same vessel.
6. Draw for 6 hunting parties per period (12 permit holders)
7. 12 permit holders per period, 24 total = up to 48 adult alligators harvested
8. Permit cost \$100 + \$25 AHL (all assistants 16 years of age or older required to have an AHL)
9. Alligator Hunting Licenses \$25 effective dates will cover all seasons.
10. Bag Limit: 2 alligators over 6 feet (both may exceed 6 feet long) per Permit Holder.
11. An online harvest report is required nightly.
12. All boats and hunters must launch from Pelahatchie Shore Park boat ramp.

ACTION: Commissioner Cossar moved to approve **PROPOSED Rule 5.4** as recommended by staff. Commissioner Coopwood seconded the motion and the motion carried.

Wildlife Biologist of the Year

Walsh asked Justin Hughes to step forward and receive the Wildlife Biologist of the Year award. This award is given to personnel who have exhibited exceptional performance and work ethic over the past year. Justin was presented with a plaque and gift card in recognition of his efforts. Commission recognition and applause followed.

Youth Waterfowl Camp Presentation

Zeb Hughes, 21, of Wesson, and Gunner Palmer, 16, of Hazlehurst, left home on December 3, 2020, to locate ducks on the Mississippi River. They never returned home.

Gunner Palmer's father is Med Palmer, manager of MDWFP's Copiah Wildlife Management Area. MDWFP law enforcement officers, search crews, and Wildlife Bureau volunteers spent weeks and months looking for Gunner and Zeb on land, water, and air. Their boat was found but

not the young men. This was a loss for the entire Wildlife Bureau staff, and they mourned Gunner's loss along with Med and his family.

The MDWFP Wildlife Bureau wanted to honor Gunner's memory and his love of hunting by presenting the family with a plaque adding Gunner Palmer's name to the MDWFP Youth Waterfowl Camp. This camp teaches youth waterfowl habitat management, dog handling, how to hunt and process game, and much more. Med and his family came forward and accepted the plaque with the "Gunner Palmer Youth Waterfowl Camp" imprinted on it. Med thanked everyone for honoring Gunner's memory in this way. Applause followed.

LEFLEUR'S BLUFF EDUCATION & TOURISM COMPLEX

LeFleur's Bluff Complex Update

Angel Rohnke, LeFleur's Bluff Complex Director, gave a PowerPoint presentation on construction progress and playground attendance and reviews at LeFleur's Bluff during the past month. Highlights are listed below:

- Playground Update – Phase 1A
 - 35,384 visitors since December 9, 2021
 - Awarded "Best New Addition to Jackson" by Jackson Free Press
- Construction – Phase 1B
 - The DEN & Spotter's Adventure Trail – Tentative completion June 14, 2022
- Museum Connector Trail – Phase 1C
 - Will connect downtown Jackson to the LeFleur's Bluff State Park
 - Approximate 5-mile trail connecting 3 parks and 6 museums
- LeFleur's Bluff State Park Entrance – Phase 2
 - Joint entrance between the MDWFP's Museum of Natural Science, MS Children's Museum, the playground, and other activities that will be constructed.
- Lakeland Drive Bridge – Phase 3

PARKS

Parks Update

Andre Hollis, Director of Park Operations, presented the following revenue update on Parks comparing February FY21 to February FY22:

- Reservations (Camping, Cabins, Primitive) – Up \$274,735
- Entrance and Miscellaneous Privilege Fees - Up \$7,683
- Gross Revenue – Up \$1,419,690

On Monday, March 7, 2022 Mississippi State Parks held a ribbon cutting at Clarkco State Park to celebrate the new partnership of Mississippi State Parks and a company called Tentrr. Eight

Mississippi State Parks currently have Tentrr ready-to-go campsites. The Tentrr facilities include a safari-style canvas tent, comfortable queen size mattress, fire pit with chairs, camp table and benches, and more. Fifty people attended the ribbon cutting. Pending public response, other parks may be included in the future.

Other updates:

- Tishomingo State Park - construction of 25 campsites is complete.
- Buccaneer State Park has a 45-campsite renovation which should be complete by May 30th and the splashpad completion date is July 18th.
- Renovation approval and ready to start renovation at Lake Lowndes, Leflore, Tishomingo, & Percy Quinn State Parks.

LAW ENFORCEMENT

Law Enforcement Update

Col. Jerry Carter, Chief of Law Enforcement, reported 212 citations issued for the month of February with "No License" being number one and "Trespassing" was number two. The National Wild Turkey Federation presented the inaugural NWTF CEO/Chairman Award to MDWFP's Officers – Lieutenant Sheila Smith, Master Sergeant Randy Cooley, and Sergeant Major Jake Guess – at their convention held in Nashville, TN on February 18, 2022.

Officer detail included apprehending turkey hunting violators in Forest County and assisting with youth squirrel hunting events.

Shooting range customer counts are: McIvor – 475; Turcotte – 547; and McHenry – 533.

Reinstatement Requests

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

- ***Herman McGehee III, Braxton, MS***

On December 27, 2020 McGehee was arrested for spotlighting on a public road where he had shined his light in a field where a deer and an officer happened to be. He had a loaded gun in his car with intent on shooting but decided not to shoot after he saw the deer.. His fines totaled \$2,400.

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.

MOTION: By motion of Commissioner Cossar and seconded by Commissioner Coopwood, McGehee's license was reinstated by unanimous consent with the stipulation that he will serve the entire three years for a second citation.

- **Joshua Odom, Bailey, MS**

Odom was spotlighting and shot a deer on November 3, 2020. He and his friend could not locate the deer. Officers found the deer and identified the tag on his friend's truck. His \$400 gun was confiscated, and he had the option to pick it up, but he decided not to.

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.

MOTION: By motion of Commissioner Cossar and seconded by Commissioner Bentz, Odom's license was reinstated by unanimous consent with the stipulation that he will serve the entire three years for a second citation.

- **Jackson Vanderford, Eupora, MS**

On November 27, 2020 Vanderford was arrested for spotlighting. Vanderford stated that it was a misunderstanding and that he was looking for hogs at night during deer season. He stated that his fines totaled \$2,700.

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.

MOTION: By motion of Commissioner Cossar and seconded by Commissioner Bentz, Vanderford's license was reinstated by unanimous consent with the stipulation that he will serve the entire three years for a second citation.

OTHER BUSINESS

50th Annual Wildlife & Sport Fish Restoration Program Manager's Meeting

Matt Roberts, Director of Grants Management, informed the Commission that this year Mississippi will be hosting the regional meeting of annual Wildlife & Sport Fish Restoration Program Manager's Meeting in Biloxi on April 18-22, 2022. This is the 50th anniversary meeting of this organization. MDWFP is hosting this in partnership with the Mississippi Department of Marine Resources and the United States Fish and Wildlife Service.

Wildlife Restoration funds are utilized throughout Mississippi and the Nation for hunter education courses, the development and management of public shooting ranges, and providing public access to wildlife resources and management/acquisition of wildlife areas. Sport Fish Restoration funds help to conserve both our freshwater and marine resources, providing

conservation and restoration of sport fish species and their habitats, as well as increasing public boating access and aquatic education.

NEXT MEETING DATE

Date: TBA
Location: TBA
Time: TBA

EXECUTIVE SESSION

The Chairman asked if there was a need for an Executive Session. Deputy Executive Director stated that there was a need for an Executive Session.

ACTION: Commissioner Coopwood made a motion to close the meeting to determine the need for Executive Session. Commissioner Cossar 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. Discussion was held and it was determined that there was a need to enter into Executive Session to discuss personnel matters involving job performance of specific employees in specific positions and the prospective purchase of land.

ACTION: Commissioner Coopwood 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 into Executive Session to discuss personnel matters involving job performance of specific employees in specific positions and the prospective purchase of land.

The Deputy Executive Director updated the Commission on a land encroachment issue at Elvis Presley Lake, where a private landowner has improved property belonging to the State as if it were his. The encroachment arose from a faulty description; however, the landowner is willing to exchange property that he owns nearby to resolve the matter. We are now at the point where we need to obtain appraisals on the tracts to make the exchange. Commissioner Coopwood made a motion to authorize staff to obtain the appraisals and move forward with resolving this matter. Commissioner Bentz seconded the motion and the Commission unanimously voted for the Department to move forward in resolving the encroachment.

The Commission then discussed the applications received to fill the Executive Director position. No action was taken by the Commission.

There being no further items for discussion in Executive Session, Commissioner Cossar made a motion to open the meeting. Commissioner Coopwood 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 was now open and that during Executive Session the Commission authorized the Department to move forward with resolving a land dispute matter.

ADJOURNMENT

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



Billy Mounger, CHAIRMAN

4/21/22

Date

Bill Cossar, VICE CHAIRMAN

Date

**BEFORE THE MISSISSIPPI COMMISSION ON
WILDLIFE, FISHERIES, AND PARKS**

In Re: In Memory of Daniel Clyde “Dan” Hughes, Jr., Conservationist.

RESOLUTION

WHEREAS, Daniel Clyde “Dan” Hughes, Jr., was born on April 30, 1943, in Macon, Mississippi;

WHEREAS, During his formative years, Dan excelled as a student and athlete in Macon, and became an avid hunter and angler. Dan continued his education at the Marion Military Institute and the University of Mississippi, graduating in 1965 with a Bachelor of Business Administration;

WHEREAS, Dan enjoyed a long and successful career as a businessman and entrepreneur, but also had a love for the outdoors. Dan joined Delta Waterfowl, a nonprofit, non-governmental organization dedicated to improving waterfowl habitat and nesting/breeding grounds for migratory waterfowl in North America. He served as a Director, and eventually Chairman of the Board of Directors of Delta Waterfowl, and was one of the longest-serving chairmen. During his tenure, Delta Waterfowl expanded its mission to include efforts to obtain incentives for landowners in the U.S., and Canada, to preserve wetlands and waterfowl habitat and shape public policy in favor of conserving critical waterfowl breeding grounds;

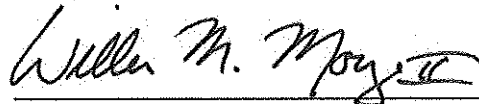
WHEREAS, Following a brief illness, Daniel Clyde Hughes, Jr. passed away on March 11, 2022.

THEREFORE, at its regular meeting of March 16, 2022, the Commission voted unanimously to honor the memory of Daniel Clyde Hughes, Jr., by resolution set forth below.

BE IT RESOLVED: That the Commission on Wildlife, Fisheries, and Parks finds that Daniel Clyde “Dan” Hughes, Jr., has devoted his time and resources to conserving Mississippi’s abundant natural resources and has shown special dedication to promoting conservation for waterfowl habitat and breeding grounds through incentives to landowners to preserve wetlands.

In recognition of Dan’s efforts to promote conservation, the Commission issues this resolution acknowledging his service, honoring his life, and extending our condolences to his family for their loss.

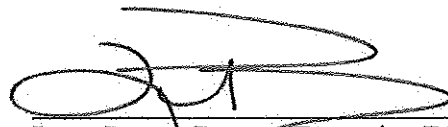
SO RESOLVED, by unanimous vote of the Commission, this the 16th day of March, 2022.



William M. Mounger, II, Chairman
Mississippi Commission on Wildlife,
Fisheries, and Parks

CERTIFICATION

I, **Lynn Posey**, hereby certify that the Resolution set forth above, is a true and correct Resolution of the Commission on Wildlife, Fisheries and Parks, as authorized by a vote taken and spread upon the minutes of the meeting of the Commission, dated March 16, 2022, as duly noticed and conducted by law.



Lynn Posey, Deputy Executive Director
Mississippi Department of Wildlife,
Fisheries, and Parks