

MISSISSIPPI COMMISSION ON WILDLIFE, FISHERIES, & PARKS

Thursday, August 11, 2022

9 AM Educational Session 10 AM Business Session
1505 Eastover Drive, Jackson, MS 39211

EDUCATIONAL SESSION

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

Among the MDWFP staff attending were Deputy Executive Director Lynn Posey, Larry Pugh, Angel Rohnke, Charles Knight, Col. Jerry Carter, Russ Walsh, Amy Blaylock, Jerry Brown, Carey Spence, Jason Thompson, and Drew Malone, Special Assistant Attorney General. The Chairman welcomed guests watching the live stream video and special guests attending.

1. Proposed FY24 MDWFP Budget

Daphonie Daniel, Budget Officer, presented a summary of the FY2024 MDWFP Budget Request. Staff answered questions brought forward by the Commission. Discussion followed. No formal approval by the Commission was needed.

2. State Fishing Lake Program

Jerry Brown, Director of Fisheries, presented a PowerPoint presentation on the 20 Mississippi State Fishing Lakes. Highlights of his presentation included:

- A. State Lake Revenue from Fishing, Camping, & Pavilion increased 2% from FY21 for a total of \$582,504
- B. Bogue Homa, Mary Crawford, & Lamar Bruce were the top three fishing revenue lakes
- C. Kemper, Calling Panther, & Neshoba were the top three camping revenue producers
- D. Prentiss Walker, Bogue Homa, & Mary Crawford produced the top three in pavilion revenue
- E. Current renovations are underway at (1) Simpson County Lake – to reopen in 2023; (2) Holmes County State Park Lake – to reopen in 2024; & (3) Elvis Presley Lake – to reopen in 2024.

Lake Record Fishing Certificates are being offered as fishing incentives at MDWFP lakes. When a catch is certified by MDWFP staff as a lake record fish, a certificate is issued to that angler and publicized in on the agency's website.

3. Non-Resident Fishing License Discussion

Jason Thompson, Director of License/Boat Registration Division, presented a handout comparing fishing license fees for Mississippi, Alabama, Tennessee, Arkansas, Louisiana, Texas, Florida, and Missouri.

Mississippi has a Reciprocal License Agreement with Louisiana that if one state raises their license fees, the respective state will be notified. This agreement is not binding but more of a Gentlemen's Agreement. Discussion followed concerning the increase in the Louisiana Annual Freshwater and Saltwater license fees. The Commission has authority to set the freshwater license fees; however, a question was presented for the attorney to address if the Bureau of Marine Resources sets the Mississippi saltwater license fees.

Different fee alternatives were discussed by the Commission, but no action was taken.

BUSINESS SESSION MINUTES

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

Among the MDWFP staff attending were Deputy Executive Director Lynn Posey, Larry Pugh, Angel Rohnke, Charles Knight, Col. Jerry Carter, Russ Walsh, Amy Blaylock, Jerry Brown, Carey Spence, Jason Thompson, and Drew Malone, Special Assistant Attorney General. The Chairman welcomed guests watching the live stream video and special guest attending House Wildlife, Fisheries, and Parks Committee Chairman Bill Kinkade.

OPENING PRAYER

Jason Thompson opened the meeting with prayer.

OATH OF OFFICE

William M. Mounger II, having been re-appointed by Governor Tate Reeves to serve a new five-year term beginning July 1, 2022 and ending June 30, 2027, was sworn into office by Notary Sharon Polzin.

MINUTES

ACTION: Upon motion by Commissioner Coopwood and seconded by Commissioner Bentz, the Commission meeting minutes of June 22, 2022, were unanimously approved.

ACTION: Upon motion by Commissioner Coopwood and seconded by Commissioner Mounger, the Commission meeting minutes of July 27, 2022, were unanimously approved.

AGENDA

ACTION: Upon motion by Commissioner Bentz and seconded by Commissioner Mounger, the Commission unanimously approved the meeting agenda of August 11, 2022.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

- *Mike Rouse, Morton* – Mr. Rouse came before the Commission to propose opening senior adult (age 65+) deer hunting privileges for three or four days during the work week on select WMAs during weapon of choice season, if possible.
- *Robert Abbot, Flora* – Mr. Abbot came with Mr. Rouse to support the idea of WMA Senior Adult Deer Hunts. He stated three reasons this would be good for Mississippi: (1) By submitting articles to local and national magazines on what Mississippi is doing for its senior citizens; (2) While senior citizens do not have to buy a hunting license, Mr. Abbot believes senior citizens would not object to buying a Sr. Adult Hunting License; (3) This would increase license sales.
- *Ben Christmas, Brandon* – Mr. Brandon came to rally support for the WMA Senior Adult Deer Hunts, too. He is 74 years old and volunteers with MDWFP for the Youth Squirrel Hunts.

Discussion followed.

The Commission requested that MDWFP staff look at current hunting dates and regulations, then report back to the Commission at the next meeting to see if there are opportunities for Senior Adult Hunts.

The Commission thanked Mr. Rouse, Mr. Abbot, and Mr. Christmas for coming.

- *Bruce Thornton, Grenada* – Mr. Thornton is a crappie fishing guide in Mississippi. He informed the Commission that with the new fishing technology, LIVE SCOPE, finding and catching crappie is much easier and he fears the trophy fish resource will be depleted. Mr. Thornton proposed a license for guides, such as himself. He polled other guides, and they did not have a problem with a license fee of \$1,000 - \$2,500 for in-state guides and \$2,000 - \$5,000 for out-of-state guides. This would establish a cap on how many guides Mississippi can support. Many other states require guide licenses. He also suggested a crappie slot limit of 12-15 inches with only one fish over 15 inches per person, per day. He suggested that if a fisherman catches more than one, to video the fish and include a video of the trophy fish being thrown back.

Discussion followed on the best way to preserve Mississippi's resource. House WFP Committee Chairman Kinkade and Larry Pugh have been working on legislation that would change the rules for license fee increases. The maximum license fee amount that the Commission currently can approve is \$150. Pugh stated that Mississippi has some of the most restrictive crappie regulations in the country.

The Commission thanked Mr. Thornton for coming.

LICENSE SALES REPORT

Jason Thompson, License/Boat Registration Division Director, presented the License Sales Report for the month of July 2022. The total revenue for the end of July was down 3% compared to July 2021. Even though this past month was down, FY22 ended as the best year MDWFP has ever had.

Highlights of his report are listed below:

- Resident license sales – down 2%
- Non-resident license sales – down 10%
- Other Licenses – down 53%
- Lifetime License category – up 20%

WILDLIFE

2022-2023 WMA Waterfowl Draw Procedures for Enforcing as WMA Regulations

Houston Havens, Waterfowl Program Coordinator, informed the Commission of the following WMA Waterfowl Draw Procedures, which have been used in the past and posted on our website, but never formally included in the WMA Regulations.

1. All drawn waterfowl hunters and their guests shall sign in on the Reservation Holder sign in sheet by 5:00 am at the WMA headquarters the morning of their hunt and will proceed to their hunting unit. If drawn hunters DO NOT sign in by 5:00 am, their hunt unit shall be immediately forfeited and shall be available in the stand-by draw.
2. All stand-by waterfowl hunters shall sign in on the Stand-by sign in sheet by 5:00 am at the WMA headquarters the morning of the hunt.
3. An individual's name may only appear in one hunting group per day and hunters must hunt with the group with which they are signed in. Once the day's draw process begins, no changing of hunting parties will be allowed. If an individual's name appears in more than one hunting group, they shall immediately forfeit the opportunity to hunt for that day.
4. Hunters who arrive after the morning's draw process has started must wait until the entire draw process has been completed and then may sign in and may take any available hunting unit.
5. Once the drawings have been completed, hunters shall only hunt from their designated hunt unit.
6. Only those hunters who have been drawn (pre-drawn or standby) by the regulations described in numbers 1-5 shall be allowed in/on the waterfowl hunt units during the legal hours of waterfowl hunting on that day. All other hunters and/or WMA users are strictly prohibited from entering or interfering with a WMA waterfowl hunt in progress. This section does not apply to Law Enforcement or other Agency personnel engaged in official business.

ACTION: Upon motion made by Commissioner Mounger and seconded by Commissioner Rhoads, the Commission unanimously approved the WMA Waterfowl Draw Procedures to be included in the WMA Regulations.

PARKS

Parks Update

Cary Spence, Parks Administrator, gave the following report for June (FY2022) and July (FY2023):

June, 2022 Compared to June, 2021

Reservations (RV Camping, Cabins, Primitive)	down \$ 27,596
Privilege (Entrance fee, Bank Fishing, Boat Launch, Other Day Use Fees)	up 75,577
Gross Monthly Total	up 47,981

The year-end total FY2022 compared to FY2021 showed a gross revenue increase of \$1,831,337.

July, 2022 Compared to July, 2021

Reservations (RV Camping, Cabins, Primitive)	down \$113,200
Privilege (Entrance fee, Bank Fishing, Boat Launch, Other Day Use Fees)	down 19,697
Gross Monthly Total	down 152,897

Spence attributed the downward revenue curve in July due to the skyrocketing price of gasoline this summer resulting in people staying at home.

Park Hosts have been reinstated in the State Parks. Park Hosts receive background checks and work 24 hours per week. They may stay at the RV Park free in exchange for working ten job duties as part of their 24 hours.

Pictures of the new Children's Splash Zone at Buccaneer State Park were handed out for the Commission to review.

LEFLEUR'S BLUFF EDUCATION & TOURISM COMPLEX

LeFleur's Bluff Complex Update

Angel Rohnke, Director of the LeFleur's Bluff Complex, reported that a concession stand was opened near the playground on June 30th with 21% of attendees making a purchase. Spotter the Otter hats and shirts have been added to the store inventory. The children's playground is staying open until 7 p.m. during the summer. Extra security is on hand after hours and new cameras are being installed.

Ribbon Cuttings tentatively set for Friday, September 30th:

- Spotters Adventure Trail
- Outdoor Amphitheater–The Den

Phase II - Coming in May, 2023:

- Museum Connector Trail
- New Joint Entrance/Gatehouse

Phase III - Lakeland Drive Bridge:

- \$1M secured for planning
- Request submitted by Senator Cindy Hyde-Smith to DOT for a total of \$12M
 - Bridge Construction (\$4M) and Construction of Ramps (\$8M)

MARKETING & MEDIA

Marketing & Media Update

Josh Carver, Marketing & Media Manager, informed the Commission that in 2018 MDWFP implemented several digital marketing tactics to better target and gain insight into the effectiveness of specific marketing efforts. Since 2018, these tactics have resulted in over \$765,000 in direct online revenue including more than 33,500 license privileges sold. \$262K were tracked for FY22, compared to \$198K in FY21. Examples of trackable online license revenue include monthly newsletters, seasonal updates, social media ads, video pre-roll ads, and geo-fenced ads.

The Marketing & Media team manages six separate social media accounts for MDWFP. The "People Reach" which includes the number of people who saw our posts at least once, totaled 63.7M total for FY22 compared to 1.1M in FY21. For April, May, and June, MDWFP experienced record people reach numbers, mostly due to the most viral post in MDWFP history, which was the "Record Catfish" post in April.

Mississippi Outdoors Magazine currently has 43,500+ subscribers (38.6% print & 6.4% Digital).

Upcoming plans are to:

1. Establish a multi-year agency marketing plan
2. Adapt agency YouTube account to gain more exposure
3. Use industry leaders to further promote outdoor recreation

The Commission suggested adding members of the Mississippi Legislature to our marketing lists if they are not already included.

LAW ENFORCEMENT

Law Enforcement Update

Col. Jerry Carter, Chief of Law Enforcement, reported for the month of June and July, there were a total of 1,168 citations issued with "No License" being number one, "Trespassing" was number two, and "No Boat Registration" was a close third.

Operation Drywater Weekend report for July 2-4th was reviewed. MDWFP Conservation Officers did an outstanding job enforcing the law. The Officers interacted with over 6,458 boaters during that time. Total citations issued over the weekend were 399 with registration violations being number one. The Officers issued 25 BUI citations. In preparation for Operation Drywater, the Conservation Officers participated in a BUI refresher course.

Other announcements included: McHenry Sporting Clay Trail is scheduled to open on Friday, August 19th. North Region officers assisted with the Corinth High School career camp for 7th-8th grades at Pickwick Lake.

The shooting range customer counts for July were:
Mclvor – 711; Turcotte – 913; and McHenry – 695.

License Reinstatements

Col. Carter presented two license reinstatement requests. The violators were asked to come forward and state the circumstance of their arrest before the Commission.

- **Brandon Hogue, Bay St. Louis**

Hogue said that he was hauling two deer killed earlier in the back of his truck while he and his little brother were shining lights to look for wild hogs. He had an opportunity to shoot a deer with the projected lights, but no shot was fired. This arrest cost him around \$2,000.

ACTION: By motion of Commissioner Mounger and seconded by Commissioner Coopwood, the majority of the Commission voted to reinstate Brandon Hogue's license with the stipulation that he will serve the entire three years for a second offense. Commissioner Bentz was recorded as voting "no".

- **James Winn, Oxford**

Winn stated that he shined his headlights and shot a deer. A neighbor called and reported him. He took the officer to the deer's location. He apologized for his actions.

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

MDWFP LawFit Team

Conservation Officers from the Mississippi Department of Wildlife, Fisheries, and Parks (MDWFP) claimed the title of "Fittest in the Nation" once again as they took the top spot at the 20th annual National LawFit Challenge held July 14-17 in Desoto County, MS. Over 75 law enforcement officers from around the country (Texas, Oklahoma, Alabama, Tennessee, Virginia,

New Jersey, and more) competed in this year's challenge, testing officers in six different events: bench press, 1.5-mile run, sit-ups, flexibility, pull-ups, and a suspect pursuit course.

Lt. Marcus Christon came forward to present the team and announce the following awards won this year. The 2022 MDWFP LawFit team consisted of the following officers: Lt. Marcus Christon, Lt. Justin Gates, SGM. Derick Scott, Pvt. Bradley Starling, Pvt. Martin Evans, Pvt. Braeden Reynolds, and Pvt. Beverly Marcellus.

Overall Individual Male

1st place Derick Scott
3rd place Marcus Christon
4th place Justin Gates

2Man Team

1st place Marcus Christon & Derick Scott
4th place Justin Gates & Bradley Starling

Mixed Pair

2nd place Derick Scott & Beverly Marcellus

4Man Team

2nd Place Christon, Gates, Scott, and Starling

Bench Press

1st place Justin Gates
3rd place Derick Scott

Sit-ups

2nd place Derick Scott
4th place Marcus Christon

Pull-ups

1st place Derick Scott
5th place Justin Gates

1.5 Mile Run

2nd place Derick Scott

Obstacle Course

1st place Derick Scott
2nd place Marcus Christon

Sit & Reach

5th place Beverly Marcellus

The Commission and viewers gave a round of applause for their outstanding achievements.

OTHER BUSINESS

Resolution

Daphonie Daniel presented a Resolution transferring funds from the Wildlife Heritage Fund to a State Treasury account for the Natural Heritage Program of the Museum of Natural Science. A copy of this resolution has been appended to the minutes.

ACTION: Upon motion made by Commissioner Mounger and seconded by Commissioner Bentz, the Commission unanimously approved the transfer of Wildlife Heritage Funds to a State Treasury account for the Natural Heritage Program of the Museum of Natural Science.

NEXT MEETING DATE

Date: Tuesday, September 13, 2022
Location: Mclvor Shooting Facility, 4216 Davis Chapel Road, Sardis 38666 (Panola Co.)
Time: 10:00 AM Business Session

EXECUTIVE SESSION

The Deputy Executive Director stated that an Executive Session was not needed.

ADJOURNMENT

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



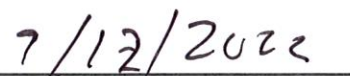
Bill Cossar, CHAIRMAN



Date



Scott Coopwood, VICE CHAIRMAN



Date

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

In Re: Authorizing expenditure/transfer of funds from the Wildlife Heritage Fund to a State Treasury account for the Natural Heritage Program of the Museum of Natural Science.

RESOLUTION and ORDER

WHEREAS, Pursuant to the terms of MISS. CODE ANN. §49-5-61, the Commission on Wildlife, Fisheries, and Parks (the “Commission”) has become the successor to the Wildlife Heritage Committee, and in that capacity, is desirous of moving funds attributable to the Natural Heritage program of the Mississippi Museum of Natural Science, into the State Treasury to help defray the costs of that program;

WHEREAS, at its regular meeting of August 11, 2022, the Commission, voted unanimously to issue a check payable to the State Treasury, Fund # 3346300000 for the Mississippi Museum of Natural Science, Natural Heritage Database Program.

THEREFORE, Pursuant to the authority contained in MISS. CODE ANN. §49-5-83, the Commission has directed the preparation of this resolution, documenting its actions as to this specific transaction, and as a directive and/or “warrant” to make an expenditure from the Wildlife Heritage Fund, as follows:

BE IT RESOLVED: That the Commission on Wildlife, Fisheries, and Parks finds that the proposed transfer of funds is necessary to reconcile the accounts of the Wildlife Heritage Fund versus the Natural heritage Database program. This reconciliation of accounts is in the best interest of the State of Mississippi; and that this Resolution shall serve to certify compliance with all applicable statutes pertaining to the expenditures from the Wildlife Heritage Fund. Further, this resolution shall serve as a “warrant” as provided in MISS. CODE ANN. §49-5-83, “signed by the

chairman of the commission and countersigned by the executive director of the department,” directing the approved state depository to disburse funds from the Wildlife Heritage Fund, for the purpose set forth above; and

BE IT ORDERED: That, by copy of this Resolution, Trustmark Bank, approved state depository for the Wildlife Heritage Fund, is hereby authorized to make a disbursement, by certified cashier’s check or electronic transfer of funds, in the amount of Two Hundred, Sixty-Five Thousand, Eight Hundred Dollars and Sixty-eight Cents (\$265,800.68), payable to State Treasury Fund # 3346300000, in order to reconcile said accounts.

IT IS THE INTENT OF THE COMMISSION, that this resolution shall serve to document compliance with the terms and provisions of MISS. CODE ANN. §49-5-83.

SO RESOLVED AND ORDERED, by unanimous vote of the Commission, this the 11th day of August, 2022.



Bill F. Cossar, Chairman
Mississippi Commission on Wildlife,
Fisheries, and Parks

CERTIFICATION

I, **Lynn Posey**, hereby certify that the Resolution and Order set forth above, is a true and correct Resolution and Order 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 August 11, 2022, as duly noticed and conducted by law.



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