

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

**Thursday, March 23, 2023**

**9:00 AM Educational Session      10:00 AM Business Session**  
**1505 Eastover Drive, Jackson, MS 39211**

## **MINUTES - EDUCATIONAL SESSION**

### **PRESENT:**

Chairman Bill F. Cossar  
Commissioner Scott Coopwood  
Commissioner William Mounger II  
Commissioner Gary Rhoads  
Commissioner Leonard Bentz

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

### **MS USDA APHIS Wildlife Services**

Kris Godwin is the Director for the MS USDA APHIS Wildlife Services Program. APHIS is an acronym for Animal and Plant Health Inspection Services. The APHIS Wildlife Services program in Mississippi helps citizens, organizations, industries, and government agencies resolve conflicts with wildlife to protect agriculture, other property, natural resources, and to safeguard the safety of people.

Godwin gave a PowerPoint presentation outlining the many aspects of the Mississippi Wildlife Services program. She has served as State Director for the past 24 years.

Highlights of Godwin's presentation included:

- Beaver management
- High Pathogenic Avian Influenza surveillance - to protect the MS Poultry Industry
- Aerial Operations Program – used to reduce the invasive Feral Swine species.
- First Responders - emergency oil spills, hurricanes, and other natural disasters.
- Airport and Airplane Protection - provided daily to reduce wildlife strikes.
- Canada Geese, Pelicans, and Vultures – becoming problematic in Mississippi.

The Commission thanked Godwin for the highly informative presentation and for the cooperative relationship between MDWFP and USDA APHIS Wildlife Services.

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Chairman Bill F. Cossar  
Commissioner Scott Coopwood  
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Commissioner Leonard Bentz

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

The Chairman welcomed guests watching the live stream video and recognized special guests attending: House WFP Committee Chairman Bill Kinkade, Kris Godwin (Director for MS USDA APHIS Wildlife Services Program), and Annabel Watkins (Belhaven College nursing student).

**OPENING PRAYER**

Jason Thompson, License/Boat Registration Division Director, opened the meeting with prayer.

**MINUTES**

**ACTION:** Upon motion by Commissioner Coopwood and seconded by Commissioner Mounger, the Commission meeting minutes of February 15, 2023 were unanimously approved.

**AGENDA**

The Chairman asked if any changes to the agenda were needed. Executive Director Posey stated that Allan Sullivan could not attend the meeting and that his name should be removed from the list of individuals requesting Hunting License Reinstatement and that there was a need to go into Executive Session to discuss land acquisition and personnel matters.

**ACTION:** Upon motion by Commissioner Coopwood and seconded by Commissioner Mounger, the Commission unanimously approved the meeting agenda of March 23, 2023, as amended.

### PUBLIC COMMENTS

#### E-bikes on WMAs

- *Robert Abbott, Flora* – Mr. Abbott petitioned the Commission for consideration to allow E-bikes on the WMA “trails” where motorized vehicles are not allowed. E-bikes are considered a motorized vehicle, along with ATVs. Senior adults cannot physically pull a deer out of the woods without the assistance of an E-bike equipped with a cart on the back. MDWFP has advised him that there have been problems in the past with ATVs riding through the woods and not staying on the trails. Abbott stated that the E-bikes cannot go through the woods because the chain is so low, the underbrush would pull it off and they do not handle water well. Unlike ATVs, the E-bike is not noisy and will not unsettle wildlife.
- *Mike Rouse* – Did not attend the meeting due to a medical condition.
- *Jimmy Hodges* – He has had an E-bike for a long time and relies on them to help him get his deer out of the woods. He requested the Commission to consider changing the WMAs’ rule.

Discussion followed.

The Chairman asked Russ Walsh, Wildlife Chief of Staff, to comment. Walsh stated that E-bikes are allowed on 48 of the 52 WMAs.

The Chairman requested for the MDWFP staff to look into this matter and make a recommendation to the Commission at the next meeting.

### LICENSE SALES REPORT

Jason Thompson, License/Boat Registration Division Director, presented the License Sales Report for the month of February 2023. Thompson reported that total revenue this past month is up 5%.

Highlights of his report are listed below which compare February 2022 with February 2023:

- Res License Sales                      up \$55,000
- Res Sr Exempt                            up 6%
- Res WMA User Permit                  up 3%
- Res Small Game/Fishing                same as last year
- NR license                                up 9%
- NR 7-day small game                   up 7%

- NR Small Game Hunting up 7%
- NR WMA Permits up 3%
- Lifetime License down 2%
- Permit category up 5%
- License packages sold up 170 packages

### **WILDLIFE BUREAU AWARDS**

Wildlife Bureau awards were presented by Russ Walsh, Wildlife Chief of Staff, to the following employees who have shown exemplary abilities, passion, and work ethic this past year.

- **Pierce Young - 2022 Wildlife Biologist of the Year**
- **Donald Reynolds - 2022 WMA Manager of the Year**

Each recipient came forward and received a framed certificate and gift card. Applause followed each presentation.

### **PARKS**

#### **Parks Update**

Brian Ferguson, Parks Chief of Staff, thanked the Parks staff for collaborating with community volunteers in a group effort to restore the grounds surrounding Percy Quin and Lake Lincoln State Parks.

The new reservation service has been in operation for the past 22 days, posting \$1.3 million in sales. Natchez State Park and Percy Quin currently have cabins under renovation. Bids should be in soon for cabin renovation at Clarko and Roosevelt.

MS Department of Archives and History is researching historical markers of interest concerning our state parks. This information will be developed and shared with park guests.

### **PROPOSED 40 Miss. Admin. Code Part 6, Chapter 1: General Regulations for the MS State Parks**

Ferguson presented the following Proposed Rule changes:

- **Rule 1.1 – Park Fees**

Proposed to change General Entrance fees from \$2-\$4 to \$0-\$4. This would allow the gates to be open free of charge for certain occasions.

The proposed senior adult age change from 65 to 62. A clause was added which would require that senior adults show proof of status to receive the senior rate discount as they enter the park.

**ACTION:** Upon motion by Commissioner Coopwood and seconded by Commissioner Bentz, the Commission unanimously approved PROPOSED Rule 1.1 as presented.

- **Rule 1.2 – Rules & Regulations for State Parks**

This change would add a transfer fee of \$8 per reservation, if made within the 7-day cancellation policy.

**ACTION:** Upon motion by Commissioner Bentz and seconded by Commissioner Mounger, the Commission unanimously approved PROPOSED Rule 1.2 as presented.

## **LAW ENFORCEMENT**

### **Law Enforcement Update**

Col. Jerry Carter, Chief of Law Enforcement, reported for the month of February there were a total of 359 citations issued with "No License" being first on the list, "Trespassing" second, "Unlawful Possession" third, "No Boat Registration" fourth, and "PFD Violation" fifth.

On February 14<sup>th</sup> SRT officers assisted the U.S. Marshal Service with a fugitive capture near Grenada. The MDWFP drone provided coverage and assisted officers in locating the fugitive.

The shooting range customer counts for December were:  
McIvor – 469; Turcotte – 845; and McHenry – 726.

### **License Reinstatements**

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

- **Hunter Smith, Brandon, MS**

In November, 2022, Smith was in a truck with some other friends. Five deer were shot off Trickhambridge Road in Brandon and the carcasses were dumped near a subdivision in the Brandon City Limits. Two of his friends came last month before the Commission. He was arrested for headlighting, and his fines totaled approximately \$5,000. He apologized to the Commission.

**ACTION:** By motion of Commissioner Bentz and seconded by Commissioner Mounger, Smith's license was reinstated by unanimous consent.

- **Timothy Raines, Richland**

On January 13, 2022 Raines and a friend were riding back from deer camp and spotted a doe at dusk. His friend pulled Raines' gun from the back seat and shot the deer. They pulled off the road and put the deer in the back of Raines' truck. The landowner was driving by and followed them as they left. The landowner reported the tag number to law enforcement. The MDWFP Communication Room got the tag owner's phone number and law enforcement called Raines while he was driving down the road. Raines cooperated with law enforcement and told them the truth. Raines was charged with headlighting and shooting from a public road. Raines stated that he did not pull the trigger, but he did stop it from happening. He regretted his part in this incident and will never do it again. Raines was fined \$2,000. His gun was returned to him since he cooperated with the officer.

Col. Carter commended the staff in the Communication's Room which assisted law enforcement in the apprehension of these violators.

**ACTION: By motion of Commissioner Rhoads and seconded by Commissioner Bentz, Raines' license was reinstated by unanimous consent.**

- **Wyatt Duncan, Poplarville**

Duncan and a friend were arrested on November 7, 2020 for headlighting and shooting from a public road. His friend fired a shot which went between two houses. He was a minor and alcohol was involved. He apologized to the Commission and stated that he had matured a lot since that time and now has a child of his own. His fines totaled between \$2,000 - \$3,500.

**ACTION: By motion of Commissioner Bentz and seconded by Commissioner Rhoads, Duncan's license was reinstated by unanimous consent.**

- **Alan Sullivan, Magee, MS**

This is the second month that Sullivan has not appeared before the Commission due to not paying his fines.

Commissioner Bentz thanked Col. Carter and Lt. Col. Scottie Jones for their assistance in House Bill 979 which helps hunters locate mortally wounded deer after dark. He also thanked the Attorney General's Office for their assistance in investigating a pending criminal matter involving a conservation Officer.

### **OTHER BUSINESS**

Executive Director Lynn Posey congratulated Commissioner William Mounger II on his Appointment Confirmation by the Mississippi State Senate to serve another five-year term with the Commission on Wildlife, Fisheries, and Parks. Applause followed.

### **NEXT MEETING DATE**

Date: Thursday, April 13, 2023

Location: Cossar State Park, 165 County Road 170, Oakland, MS 38948

Time: 10:00 AM Business Session

### **EXECUTIVE SESSION**

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

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

The attorney announced to those present that the meeting was now closed to determine the need to go into 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 the prospective purchase of land and personnel matters.

**ACTION: Commissioner Coopwood made a motion to enter into Executive Session to discuss the prospective purchase of land and personnel matters. Commissioner Rhoads seconded the motion and the Commission voted unanimously to enter Executive Session.**

The attorney announced to those present that the Commission had entered into Executive Session to discuss the prospective purchase of land and personnel matters.

Art Kennard, MDWFP Lands Coordinator, updated the Commission on appraisals received on the tracts of land under consideration at last month's meeting. Discussion followed. There was also a discussion of the need to authorize the Department to bid on a certain tract of land located within the Pascagoula Wildlife Management Area consisting of 16<sup>th</sup> section land.

**Upon motion by Commissioner Mounger and seconded by Commissioner Rhoads the Commission unanimously voted to authorize the Department to enter into negotiations to purchase land and authorize the use of funds from the Heritage Fund if needed.**

Director Posey presented a Resolution authorizing the expenditure of funds from the Wildlife Heritage Fund to purchase lands in Scott County, if needed. The Chairman signed the resolution. A copy of this signed resolution has been appended to the minutes.

Upon motion by Commissioner Bentz and seconded by Commissioner Mounger the Commission unanimously voted to authorize the Department to bid on that certain tract of land located within the Pascagoula Wildlife Management Area consisting of 16<sup>th</sup> Section land.

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

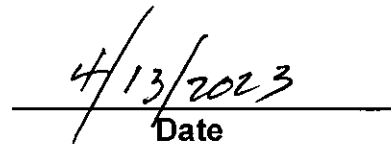
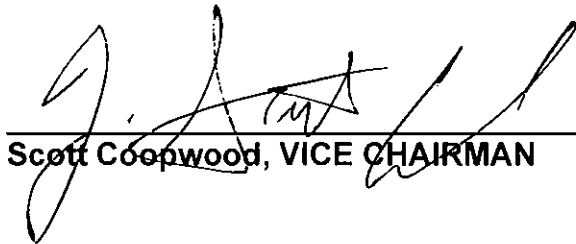
The attorney announced to the public that the meeting was now open and that during Executive Session the Commission voted to authorize the Department to purchase a certain tract of land using Heritage Fund monies for all or part of the purchase, and to bid on a certain tract of 16<sup>th</sup> Section land located in an existing WMA.

#### ADJOURNMENT

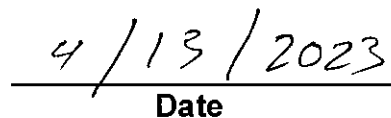
There being no further business before the Commission, Commissioner Bentz moved to adjourn, seconded by Commissioner Mounger, and the motion carried. Chairman Cossar gavelled the meeting into adjournment.



Bill Cossar, CHAIRMAN

  
Date

Scott Coopwood, VICE CHAIRMAN

  
Date



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

**In Re:            Authorizing expenditures from the Wildlife Heritage Funds to purchase lands  
                     in Scott County, and for related purposes.**

**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 purchasing certain lands located in Scott County, Mississippi and contiguous to Roosevelt State Park, through the partial use of funds in the Wildlife Heritage Fund, and from other Parks funds. Once acquired, the lands will be managed as part of both Roosevelt State Park, and a (pilot) urban wildlife management area of the Mississippi Department of Wildlife, Fisheries, and Parks (“MDWFP”);

WHEREAS, Pursuant to the terms of MISS. CODE ANN. §49-5-71, the MDWFP has established the fair market value of the subject property by calculating the average of two (2) real property appraisals performed by certified Mississippi appraisers, and has performed all other due diligence requirements to verify acreage, title, and related matters, as set forth in MISS. CODE ANN. §49-5-71, required to make an expenditure from the Wildlife Heritage Fund;

WHEREAS, at its regular meeting of March 23, 2023, the Commission, in Executive Session deliberations as authorized by MISS. CODE ANN. §25-41-7(4)(g), “[t]ransaction of business and discussion regarding the prospective purchase, sale or leasing of lands,” voted unanimously to authorize the purchase of a certain tract of land, being approximately 300 acres more or less and located in Scott County, Mississippi, at a purchase price not to exceed \$600,000.00.

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 in Executive Session, 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 purchase of lands in Scott County represents a significant achievement in natural resource conservation, with the potential for preserving and enhancing wildlife habitat in perpetuity for all Mississippians and will provide a buffer property for Roosevelt State Park; and that this Resolution shall serve to certify compliance with all applicable statutes pertaining to the purchase of real property by and through the Wildlife Heritage Fund, and 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, as consideration for the purchase of the subject lands; 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 an amount not to exceed Six Hundred Thousand Dollars (\$600,000.00), as full consideration and payment for the purchase of the subject lands.

**IT IS THE INTENT OF THE COMMISSION,** that this resolution shall serve to ratify and memorialize the actions of the Commission on March 23, 2023, and shall serve to document compliance with the terms and provisions of MISS. CODE ANN. §49-5-83.

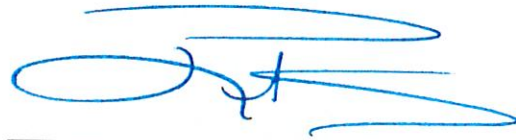
**SO RESOLVED AND ORDERED**, by unanimous vote of the Commission, this the 23<sup>rd</sup> day of March, 2023.



Bill Finney 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 March 23, 2023, as duly noticed and conducted by law.



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