

MISSISSIPPI COMMISSION ON WILDLIFE, FISHERIES, & PARKS

Thursday, April 13, 2023

No Educational Session 10 AM Business Session

**Cossar State Park Lodge Meeting Room
165 County Road 170, Oakland, MS 38948**

10:00 AM

BUSINESS SESSION MINUTES

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

Among the MDWFP staff attending were Executive Director Lynn Posey, Curtis Thornhill, Larry Pugh, Brian Ferguson, Col. Jerry Carter, Russ Walsh, Jerry Brown, Jason Thompson, Houston Havens, William McKinley, Doug Mann, and Drew Malone, Special Assistant Attorney General. The Chairman welcomed guests watching the live stream video and special guests attending from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and Mississippi Chapter of the National Wild Turkey Federation.

OPENING PRAYER

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

MINUTES

ACTION: Upon motion by Commissioner Mounger and seconded by Commissioner Coopwood, the Commission meeting minutes of March 23, 2023, were unanimously approved.

AGENDA

Executive Director Lynn Posey stated that the agenda should be amended as follows:

- Removal of two license reinstatement requests under Law Enforcement.

ACTION: Upon motion by Commissioner Rhoads and seconded by Commissioner Mounger, the Commission unanimously approved the meeting agenda of April 13, 2023, as amended.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

- **Brad Pierce, Smithville** – Deer Hunting with Dogs on Private Property.
Mr. Pierce stated that a hunting club leases 80 acres on the southwest side of his property line and dogs are turned loose and run throughout his property. He is not against deer dog hunting as long as the hunters are respectful of the property of others. The hunters also shoot their guns across the road and through his property. He feels it is unsafe for he and his nephews to sit in his deer stand due to stray bullets. He has received threats to burn his woods and cabin down and needs help.
- **Aaron Barton, Oxford** – New Fishing Guide Fees (Senate Bill 2534)
Mr. Barton was not present.
- **Ron Seiss** – Turkey Regulations.
Mr. Seiss presented his recommendations on turkey hunting. He had sent a written public comment to the Commission earlier in the month and now presented other comments not included in the letter. Discussion followed on the turkey hunting fall season.

LICENSE SALES REPORT

Jason Thompson, License/Boat Registration Division Director, presented the License Sales Report for the month of March 2023. The total revenue for the end of March is up 5% compared to March 2022.

Highlights of his report are listed below:

- Resident license sales – up \$56,000
- Resident WMA Permits – up 3%
- Resident Senior Exempt Licenses – up 9%
- Resident Small Game & Fresh Water Fishing Licenses – about the same as last year
- Non-resident license sales – up \$969,000 (9%)
- NR Annual Small Game – up 7%
- NR 7-day Small Game – up 7%
- NR WMA permits – up 5%
- NR Freshwater fishing license – up 2%
- Lifetime License category – down 5%
- License Packages sold – up 3,600

WILDLIFE**A. 2023-2024 Migratory Game Bird Framework Selection Recommendations**

Houston Havens, Waterfowl Program Coordinator, presented to the Commission the 2023-24 Migratory Game Bird Hunting Season Recommendations which are listed in the table below.

SPECIES	SEASON DATES	DAILY	POSSESSION
Teal (Early Season)	Sept. 9 - Sept. 24	6	18
Canada Geese (Early Season)	Sept. 1 – Sept. 30	5	15
Woodcock	Dec. 18 - Jan. 31	3	9
Snipe	Nov. 14 - Feb. 28	8	24
Common & Purple Gallinules	Sept. 1 – Oct 1 AND Nov. 23 – Dec. 31	15	45
Rails: Clapper and King	Sept. 1 – Oct 1 AND Nov. 23 – Dec. 31	15 Singly or in aggregate	45
Rails: Sora and Virginia	Sept. 1 – Oct 1 AND Nov. 23 – Dec. 31	25 Singly or in aggregate	75
Mourning and White-winged Doves (North Zone)	Sept. 2 - Oct 15 AND Oct. 28 – Nov. 26 AND Dec. 30 - Jan. 14	15	45
Mourning and White-winged Doves (South Zone)	Sept. 2 – Sept. 24 AND Oct. 7 - Nov. 5 AND Dec. 23 - Jan. 28	15	45
Ducks, Mergansers, and Coots	Nov. 24 – Nov. 26 AND Dec. 1 – Dec. 3 AND Dec. 9 - Jan. 31	Details Below*	Details Below*
Geese: Canada, White-fronted, Snow, Blue, Ross's, and Brant	Nov. 10 – Nov. 26 AND Dec. 1 – Dec. 3 AND Dec. 9 - Jan. 31	Canada Geese: 5 Snow, Blue, and Ross's: 20 White-fronted: 3 Brant: 1	Canada Geese: 15 Snow, Blue, and Ross's: No Limit White-fronted: 9 Brant: 3
Youth, Veteran, & Active Military Waterfowl Days	Feb. 3 - 4	Same as Regular Season	Same as Regular Season

***DUCKS, MERGANSERS, and COOTS daily bag limit and possession:** The duck daily bag limit will include a total of 6 ducks, including no more than 4 mallards (no more than 2 of which may be females), 3 wood ducks, 2 redheads, 1 pintail, 2 canvasbacks, 1 mottled duck, and 2

black ducks. The daily bag limit for scaup is 1 scaup per day Nov. 24 – 26, Dec. 1 – 3, and Dec. 9 – 17; and is 2 scaup per day Dec. 18 – Jan. 31. The merganser daily bag limit will be a total of 5 mergansers, only 2 of which may be hooded mergansers. The coot daily bag limit is 15. The possession limit for ducks, mergansers, and coots is three times the daily bag limit.

ACTION: Upon motion by Commissioner Bentz and seconded by Commissioner Mounger, the Commission unanimously approved the 2023-24 Migratory Framework Selections as recommended by the staff.

B. PROPOSED – 40 Miss. Admin. Code Part 2, Chapter 2 – White-tailed Deer

William McKinley, Enclosure Program Coordinator/Deer Program, recommended the following changes to Rule 2.2:

▪ **Rule 2.2 – White-tailed Deer Hunting Seasons and Bag Limits**

- Velvet Season will be September 15 – 17 on private lands only.
- Combine Northeast, East Central, and Southwest into Hills Deer Management Unit.
- Note: Archery season will open September 30 given October 1 is on a Sunday.

ACTION: Commissioner Bentz moved to approve staff recommendations on PROPOSED Rule 2.2, seconded by Commissioner Mounger, and the motion carried.

C. PROPOSED – 40 Miss. Admin. Code Part 2, Chapter 3 - Turkey

Adam Butler, Turkey Program Coordinator, made the following recommendations for changes to Rules 3.1, 3.4, and 8.4.

▪ **Rule 3.1 – Wild Turkey Seasons and Bag Limits**

- **Spring Turkey Season** – Saturday closest March 20 – May 1.
 - a. Nonresident public land draw period changed to reflect proposed statewide opening day. The standardized ending of the period is the last day in March.
 - b. Youth Season changed to reflect proposed statewide opening day.
- **Bag limit** – Retains current bag limit – 1 adult gobbler per day, three per spring season.
- **Fall Turkey Season** – Fall turkey season is suspended.

ACTION: Commissioner Bentz made a motion to approve the recommendations with the exception of the staff suspension of the Fall turkey season. His motion would reinstate the Fall turkey season with the stipulation not to kill hens and jakes statewide. The motion failed for the lack of a second.

Discussion followed.

ACTION: Commissioner Coopwood moved to approve staff recommendations on PROPOSED Rule 3.1, seconded by Commissioner Rhoads, and the motion carried 4 to 1. Commissioner Bentz was recorded as voting “no”.

▪ **Rule 3.4 – Mandatory Tagging and Harvest Reporting for Wild Turkeys**

- **Tagging and Harvest Reporting** – A tagging system for harvested turkeys is established.
 - a. Hunters will be required to carry a valid tag when hunting turkeys.
 - b. The tag must be physically invalidated and attached to the bird before moving.
 - c. Current harvest reporting requirements are retained.

Discussion followed.

ACTION: Commissioner Mounger moved to approve staff recommendations on PROPOSED Rule 3.4, seconded by Commissioner Coopwood, and the motion carried 4 to 1. Commissioner Bentz was recorded as voting “no”.

▪ **Rule 8.4 – Non-resident Hunting and Fishing License & Fee Program**

- **Non-resident Public Land License Endorsement** – Language altered to reflect proposed change in statewide season and calendar date standardization of the period's ending.
 - a. Drawn non-resident hunters may be accompanied by one non-hunting guest, aged 16 years or older.

ACTION: Commissioner Mounger moved to approve staff recommendations on PROPOSED Rule 8.4, seconded by Commissioner Coopwood, and the motion carried.

D. PROPOSED – 40 Miss. Admin. Code Part 2, Chapter 1 – Wildlife Management Areas

Rules 1.1 – 1.46 – WMA Regulations

Russ Walsh, Chief of Staff, presented the following rule changes for each WMA as outlined in a handout distributed to the Commission. A summary of these changes is outlined below:

1. BASIC REGULATIONS – Rule 1.1

- Allow air rifles no larger than .22 to be used for small game hunting.
- Drawn hunters may bring one non-hunting guest during permitted draw hunts (Hunters can still apply with a partner).
- All posted draw hunt procedures and rules will be enforced.

2. WMA NAME CHANGES

- Rename Tuscumbia WMA to “Harvey Moss WMA at Tuscumbia”- Rule 1.32

- Rename Caney Creek WMA to “Richard L. “Dick” Livingston and Dale O. Windham WMA at Caney Creek” – Rule 1.2

3. WMA ADDITION

Open Calling Panther WMA (lands around Calling Panther Lake) – Rule 1.47

- Permitted archery hunts.
- Squirrel hunting during February.
- Permitted youth turkey hunting.

4. DEER REGULATIONS

Antlerless Deer Opportunity – Rules 1.8 & 1.9

Increase in days:

- Allow antlerless opportunity with shotgun, primitive weapon, and handgun from opening day through January 7 (currently through December 15) on Copiah County WMA
- Allow antlerless opportunity with guns from December 24 through end-of-season (currently legal bucks only) on **Divide Section WMA**.

Marion County WMA – Rule 1.14

- Create the “Dillon Creek Unit” (recent 440-acre acquisition).
- Archery and youth gun hunting for deer.
- No hunting from or within 100 feet of pipeline rights-of-way during any deer firearm season on Dillon Creek Unit.

Hell Creek, Pascagoula, and Trim Cane WMAs – Rules 1.18, 1.29, & 1.30

- Establish senior adult draw hunts (in addition to Mahannah and Phil Bryant WMAs).

Pearl River WMA – Rule 1.19

- Allow youth to use centerfire rifles instead of primitive weapon only.

Riverfront WMA – Rule 1.44

- Allow primitive weapon during permitted deer hunts.

5. TURKEY SEASON REGULATIONS

All WMAs

- Align turkey season dates with new statewide season framework.

Canemount WMA – Rule 1.43

- Clarify turkey bag limit is one turkey per permitted hunting party.

6. SMALL GAME REGULATIONS

Hell Creek and Tusculumbia WMAs – Rules 1.29 and 1.32

- Open spring squirrel season.

Muscadine WMA – Rule 1.34

- Rabbit, raccoon, opossum, and bobcat seasons are open October and February on the Washington and Po-Lutken tracts.

Canemount WMA – Rule 1.43

- Allow squirrel hunting with dogs during squirrel season.

7. MIGRATORY BIRDSMahannah WMA – Rule 1.12

- Clarify when snipe and doves may be hunted.

Deviney WMA – Rule 1.41

- Clarify goose season is open daily during statewide goose seasons through Friday prior to opening Saturday of duck season.

Nix WMA – Rule 1.36

- Dove hunting is allowed from 2:00 p.m. – sunset on opening day. Remainder of season statewide structure.

8. HOGSCanal Section, Divide Section, and John Bell Williams – Rule 1.7

- Close hog hunting with dogs during February (*by request of Corps of Engineers*).

9. FISHING/BOATINGMahannah WMA – Rules 1.12

- Fishing not allowed in waterfowl and timber hunting units on waterfowl hunt days.

Pascagoula WMA – Rule 1.18

- Fishing is allowed on Saturdays and Sundays from May – August in Doyle's Pond.

Ward Bayou WMA – Rule 1.25

- All sandbars within the WMA boundaries are closed to recreational activities to protect endangered nesting turtles (*by request of Corps of Engineers and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service*).

10. ATV / ELECTRIC BICYCLES / HORSESOn State-owned and COE WMAs where allowed

- Electric bicycles may be ridden on marked foot-traffic trails only by users 65 years of age and older. They may not be ridden on any leveed roads or trails.

John Bell Williams WMA – Rule 1.7

- Hunting from horseback is not allowed; aligns regulations with Canal Section WMA. (Note: riding is allowed on hard surface roads during daytime hours outside of deer and turkey seasons).

Divide Section and Canal Section WMAs – Rules 1.7 & 1.9

- Allow youth to use ATVs in handicap hunting areas.

Leroy Percy WMA – Rule 1.11

- ORVs/ATVs/Electric bicycles are allowed for retrieval of harvested deer or hogs.

Mahannah WMA – Rule 1.12

- No off-road vehicles may be left on the WMA overnight.

Pascagoula WMA – Rule 1.18

- Horses allowed on roads on Land Between the Creeks Unit outside of any open hunting season.
- ORVs/ATVs/Electric bicycles are allowed to be driven to designated parking areas and for retrieval of harvested deer or hogs.

Sky Lake WMA – Rule 1.37

- ORVs/ATVs/Electric bicycles are allowed on designated roads or trails for hunting and fishing access only. Off-road use of ORVs/ATVs/Electric bicycles is allowed for retrieval of harvested deer or hogs.

11. LANGUAGE CLARIFICATIONCanal Section WMA – Rule 1.7

- Clarify that the AB3 Waterfowl Impoundment is closed to all firearms per COE request (archery only).

Mahannah and Phil Bryant WMAs – Rules 1.12 & 1.46

- Use Anderson-Tully Road instead of “main gravel road” for clarification.

12. SCOUTINGTuscumbia WMA – Rule 1.32

- Clarify scouting is not allowed on Wednesdays and Saturdays during waterfowl season.

Sky Lake WMA – Rule 1.37

- Clarify scouting is allowed daily from February 1 – September 30 and on Sundays through Wednesdays from October 1 – January 31.

ACTION: Upon motion made by Commissioner Coopwood and seconded by Commissioner Mounger, the Commission approved PROPOSED WMA Regulations (Rules 1.1 - 1.46), as recommended by staff.

(At this time Commissioner Bentz left the meeting to attend a prior engagement and any further votes taken from this point did not include votes by Commissioner Bentz).

FISHERIES

Jerry Brown, Director of Fisheries, provided an update on tornado damage received at Lake Monroe and presented the following PROPOSED rule changes.

A. PROPOSED 40 Miss. Admin. Code Part 3, Chapter 1 – General Fisheries Rules

- **Rule 1.3 – Regulations regarding Sport Fishing**
 - Insert language from statute §49-9-5 that it is illegal to harvest, possess or use mussels for bait.
 - a. USFWS request for clarification to anglers

ACTION: Upon motion made by Commissioner Mounger and seconded by Commissioner Rhoads, the Commission unanimously approved PROPOSED Fisheries Rule 1.3, as recommended by staff.

- **Rule 1.4 – Statewide Creel Limits**
 - Add limits for Simpson County Lake (opens June 2023):
 - a. Largemouth Bass: 14-22" slot limit with 1 over 22"; 10 per day
 - b. Bream: 20 per day
 - c. Crappie; 15 per day
 - Remove the following limits to simplify regulations; statewide limits will apply:
 - a. Trace State Park Lake:
 - Largemouth Bass 16-22" slot limit
 - Bream and Crappie – daily limits
 - b. Lake Mary Crawford
 - Bream daily limit

ACTION: Upon motion made by Commissioner Rhoads and seconded by Commissioner Coopwood, the Commission unanimously approved PROPOSED Fisheries Rule 1.4, as recommended by staff.

B. PROPOSED 40 Miss. Admin. Code Part 3, Chapter 2 – State Fishing Lakes, and Community Fishing Assistance Program Lakes

- **Rule 2.1 – Regulations regarding State Fishing Lakes**
 - Exempt lake fee (fishing, boating, and camping)
 - a. Reduce age requirement from 65 to 62
 - b. Include Veterans and Active Service Members

- Remove all references for Kemper County Lake
 - a. No longer operated as a MDWFP State Fishing Lake
- Remove Simpson County Lake from lakes closed for renovation
 - a. Opens in June 2023
- Insert language from State Parks Rule on use of off-road/non-titled vehicles
 - a. Only allowed in designated areas
 - b. Allows golf carts/LSMVs to be used on campground roads
- Allow hunting at Calling Panther Lake
 - a. Subject to WMA rules
 - b. Dog leash exception when squirrel hunting

ACTION: Upon motion made by Commissioner Rhoads and seconded by Commissioner Coopwood, the Commission approved PROPOSED Fisheries Rule 2.1, as recommended by staff.

PARKS

Brian Ferguson, Parks Chief of Staff, updated the Commission on projects underway with the Capital Improvement Program.

FINAL 40 Miss. Admin. Code Part 6, Chapter 1 – General Regulations for the MS State Parks

- **Rule 1.1 State Park Fees**

No public comments were received and recommendation for Final adoption of Rule 1.1 was made by Ferguson.

ACTION: Upon motion made by Commissioner Rhoads and seconded by Commissioner Mounger, the Commission unanimously approved FINAL Parks Rule 1.1, as recommended by staff.

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

No public comments were received and recommendation for Final adoption of Rule 1.2 was made by Ferguson.

ACTION: Upon motion made by Commissioner Coopwood and seconded by Commissioner Rhoads, the Commission unanimously approved FINAL Parks Rule 1.2, as recommended by staff.

LAW ENFORCEMENT

Law Enforcement Update

Col. Jerry Carter, Chief of Law Enforcement, reported 750 citations issued for the month of March with “No License” being number one and “PFD Violation” was number two.

March 24, 2023 brought severe weather across the State. The towns of Rolling Fork, Silver City, and Amory were severely affected. Over 70 officers responded to the storm that night assisting with Search and Rescue efforts. Later officers transitioned from Search and Rescue to assisting with Security and Traffic. Col. Carter thanked Charlie Briggs for allowing MDWFP Communication/GIS personnel to use his facility as MDWFP temporary headquarters for assisting SRT following the storm. Col. Carter also thanked SEAFWA Chiefs of Law Enforcement for their donations for the repair of Officer Jay Holman's home from the tornado damage.

Shooting range customer counts are: McIvor – 332; Turcotte – 456; and McHenry – 495.

OTHER BUSINESS

Executive Director Posey informed the Commission that the Legislative Session has ended and following the Governor's signature, the Commission will need to discuss bills related to the policy, rules, and regulations of MDWFP. The Commission will be updated at the May meeting.

NEXT MEETING DATE

Date: Thursday, May 18, 2023
Location: 1505 Eastover Drive, Jackson, MS 39211
Time: 10:00 AM FALLEN OFFICER MEMORIAL
1:00 PM COMMISSION MEETING

EXECUTIVE SESSION

There was no Executive Session.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business before the Commission, Commissioner Coopwood 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