

MISSISSIPPI COMMISSION ON WILDLIFE, FISHERIES, & PARKS

Thursday, December 15, 2022

9:30 AM Educational Session 10:00 AM Business Session
1505 Eastover Drive, Jackson, MS 39211

EDUCATIONAL SESSION

PRESENT:

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

ABSENT:

Commissioner Scott Coopwood

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

SPECIAL RESPONSE TEAM (SRT) REVIEW

Captain Steven Westerfield presented a PowerPoint presentation on the MDWFP Special Response Team (SRT). Currently the SRT consists of 38 Law Enforcement Officers and three (3) Support personnel. The three SRT Support employees provide situational awareness prior to, during, and after deployments by means of radio communications, dynamic mapping, UAS Flight Control, and secure video streams. The mobile command center for the SRT Support is provided in a state-of-the-art SRT Trailer and a Mobile UAS UTV.

Highlights of his presentation are shown below:

SRT Functions:

- ESF Co-Primary & ESF-13 secondary SEOC
- Overland Search and Rescue
- Tactical Search
- Urban Search and Rescue
- Swiftwater/Floodwater Rescue
- Drone Support
- Onsite Mapping

Special Equipment:

- Air Boat
- Safe Boat w/Radiation Detection
- Shallow Draft Boats
- Swiftwater Boats
- Off Road Vehicles
- Drones

Drones are the way of the future and are used not only to protect our law enforcement officers with their night vision but to map the exact locations of violators. Future plans include the deployment of Android Team Awareness Kit (ATAK) software to install on the officer's Department phones which will have the capability of viewing the drones in action.

BUSINESS SESSION

PRESENT:

Chairman Bill F. Cossar
Commissioner William Mounger II
Commissioner Gary Rhoads
Commissioner Leonard Bentz
Commissioner Scott Coopwood – Attended by teleconference

Among the MDWFP staff attending were Executive Director Lynn Posey, Curtis Thornhill, Larry Pugh, Col. Jerry Carter, Russ Walsh, Amy Blaylock, Jason Thompson, Brian Ferguson, Andre Hollis, Jerry Brown, Angel Rohnke, Charles Knight, Jennifer Shows, Doug Mann, and Drew Malone, Special Assistant Attorney General. The Chairman welcomed guests watching the live stream video and special guests attending the meeting. Mississippi Representative Scott Bounds was recognized.

OPENING PRAYER

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

MINUTES

ACTION: Upon motion by Commissioner Bentz and seconded by Commissioner Mounger, the Commission meeting minutes of November 17, 2022, were unanimously approved.

AGENDA

The Chairman asked if any changes to the agenda needed to be made. Executive Director Posey stated that a License Reinstatement Request made by Michael Hale needed to be removed. He was unable to attend the meeting.

ACTION: Upon motion by Commissioner Bentz and seconded by Commissioner Rhoads, the Commission unanimously approved the meeting agenda of December 15, 2022, as amended.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

- *Justin Smith, Mahannah WMA* – Mr. Smith distributed a handout to the Commission. His handout listed the concerns he has regarding Mahannah WMA with possible solutions, as outlined below:

Hunters disregard and deliberately break rules and regulations.

Possible Solution: Issue stronger fines for those breaking rules and regulations with possible suspension of license. Perform the timber draw near the timber unit entry and not at the draw house (5.6 miles away).

Reckless use of ATV's and UTV's going into the timber unit.

Possible Solution: While conducting the draw near the parking area of the timber this would possibly deter someone from operating recklessly.

Lack of pull off areas to allow passing on the roadway into Mahannah. Most of the travelers accessing these roads are pulling a trailer and this makes passing difficult with such narrow lanes.

Possible Solution: Install pull off areas every .5 miles down the main road through Mahannah WMA. This area currently has extremely soft shoulders following any amount of precipitation.

Discussion followed. Chairman Cossar thanked Mr. Smith for bringing his concerns before the Commission.

- *Jerry Montgomery, President of Warren County Hunting & Fishing Club* – Mr. Montgomery gave the Commission a handout concerning trespassers on Warren County Hunting & Fishing Club property from state managed land. Mr. Montgomery's hunting club was established around 1900 and encompasses four counties – Warren, Claiborne, Sharkey, and Issaquena. It shares 10 miles of border with the Phil Bryant-Mahannah properties. Since the purchase of the Phil Bryant Complex, trespassing has increased. Montgomery requested an increase in law enforcement presence in the South Delta Area to curb some of the lawbreaking, including breaking into parked vehicles.

Discussion followed. Chairman Cossar thanked Mr. Montgomery for coming before the Commission.

- *David Smith, President, MS Dog Hunters Association* – Mr. Smith came before the Commission to find out why the National Forest Service in Mississippi changed their rules and regulations on all six national forests in Mississippi (Forest Order No. 08-11-37-23-152).

Chairman Cossar recognized Shannon Kelardy, Forest Supervisor for the National Forests of Mississippi, as she came forward to answer Mr. Smith's questions. Ms. Kelardy stated that she conferred with her chief law enforcement officers and that this change was made due to safety concerns and by aligning the regulations on federal forests lands with regulations on State WMAs. By doing so the public and law enforcement will have one set of regulations to enforce instead of two. Ms. Kelardy informed Mr. Smith that if he wanted to know who made the decision to make these changes that those changes were made by her in her position as Forest Supervisor for the National Forests Lands located in Mississippi.

Commissioner Bentz expressed his concerns that these new rules were not discussed with the public but instead were enacted by a "federal bureaucrat." He stated that these rules

were a blatant attack on the dog hunters of this state in an attempt to limit dog hunting on national Forest land.

In addition to Commissioner Bentz's comments, further discussion followed by the other Commissioners. Chairman Cossar thanked Mr. Smith and Ms. Kelardy for coming.

- *Ed Penny, Claiborne Co. landowner* – Mr. Penny came forward after the Wildlife Report had been given.

Mr. Penny came to express his disappointment in the November 17, 2022, decision by the Commission to revise the state's Chronic Wasting Disease (CWD) Management Plan and allow supplemental feeding to return in Claiborne County. According to Mr. Penny, it was his understanding that the change to allow supplemental feeding in Claiborne County was done without public comment or with the input of other agencies. Mr. Penny requested that in the future before any additional changes were made by the Commission to the CWD plan that it be done with the advice from other entities and allow the public which could be affected by the change the opportunity to provide their input.

Mr. Penny requested that the Commission nullify this action and reinstitute the ban on supplemental feeding in Claiborne County

Commissioner Bentz commented that cattle farmers provide mineral blocks and feed troughs from which deer could possibly congregate and eat. He did not see any difference between the cattle farmer and the hunter when it comes to providing places for deer to eat. Bentz questioned whether regulations should be considered regarding how cattle farmers feed their cows. Mr. Penny pointed out that the Commission on Wildlife, Fisheries, and Parks has no such authority to regulate the cattle industry in this state.

Discussion followed. Chairman Cossar thanked Mr. Penny for coming before the Commission.

LICENSE SALES REPORT

Jason Thompson, License/Boat Registration Division Director, presented the License Sales Report for the month of November 2022. Thompson reported that total revenue this past month is up 3%.

Highlights of his report are listed below:

- Resident license – down 2%
- Res Waterfowl Stamps – up 800
- Res WMA permits – up 200
- Res Sr Exempt - up 5%
- NR license – up 7%
- NR 7-day small game – up 11%
- NR Small Game Hunting – up 4%

- NR WMA Permits – up 3%
- Deer Permits - \$526,000
- Lifetime License – up 4%

WILDLIFE

FINAL 40 Miss. Admin. Code Part 2, Chapter 5: Regulations regarding Alligators

Ricky Flynt, Alligator/Furbearer Coordinator, stated that Commissioner Bentz had voiced some concerns with Rule 5.4 at the last meeting but the two of them had met after the meeting and he believed that they had an understanding of the rule change.

- **Rule 5.4 – Alligator Hunting Season for Pelahatchie Bay (Rankin County)**

ACTION: Commissioner Bentz thanked Mr. Flynt for clarifying the rule. Bentz voted “no” on the Proposed rule last month but after the clarification, Bentz was in favor of the rule change.

Upon motion made by Commissioner Bentz and seconded by Commissioner Rhoads, the Commission unanimously approved FINAL Rule 5.4

PARKS

Parks Revenue Report

Andre´ Hollis, Director of State Parks, presented updates on state park projects for the past month.

- Hugh White – New wastewater treatment plant on one side of the park and the campground area is now linked to the City of Grenada sewer system
- Buccaneer – Ribbon cutting for 44 campground sites at Buccaneer on December 16
- Tishomingo – Recent ribbon cutting for 24 campground sites and sewer hook-ups
- Percy Quin – Widening single lane bridge to two lanes by May
- Roosevelt – Repairs on spillway by January 4. Two cabins are currently being completely renovated.

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

Brian Ferguson, Parks Chief of Staff, came forward with a handout on Proposed rule changes for State Park Fees and Regulations. This is the first comprehensive rate change for state parks in 15 years. This fee rate structure puts Mississippi State Parks in line with market rates of neighboring states and businesses with similar attributes. Ferguson reminded the Commission

that park employee salaries are mostly supported from the general fund but 100% of the support for operations and maintenance for all parks come from the fees collected. Reservations will be changed from a fees structure to a range structure. The maximum in the ranges may never be met; however, this range allows parks to adjust fees according to the type of entertainment, event, holiday, etc. A copy of the proposed fee change summary has been appended to the minutes.

- **Rule 1.1 – State Park Fees**

ACTION: Upon motion made by Commissioner Bentz and seconded by Commissioner Mounger, the Commission unanimously approved PROPOSED Rule 1.1.

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

ACTION: Upon motion made by Commissioner Mounger and seconded by Commissioner Rhoads, the Commission unanimously approved PROPOSED Rule 1.2.

LAW ENFORCEMENT

Law Enforcement Update

Col. Jerry Carter, Chief of Law Enforcement, requested a moment of silence in remembrance for fallen Bay St. Louis police officers, Sgt. Steven Robin and Officer Branden Estorffe.

Col. Carter reported for the month of November, there were a total of 1,299 citations issued with "No License" being first on the list, "Hunting from a Public Road" second, "Trespassing" third, "Supplemental Feeding" fourth, and "No Hunter Orange" fifth.

Other Updates:

- Officers issued 413 citations during the opening weekend of waterfowl season (Nov. 25-27). Details were focused on private lands, state WMAs, and National Wildlife Refuges. Over 3,220 waterfowl and deer hunters were encountered during this opening weekend.
- Headlighting case in Forest County, resulted in two individuals being charged with seven counts of headlighting, seven counts of hunting from a public road, seven counts of hunting after hours, and six counts of illegal possession. Seven deer carcasses were confiscated. Fines were around \$20,000 per person. The investigation is still ongoing.
- Today is the last day for applicants to apply for the 2023 Cadet Class. Interviews are scheduled for January.

The shooting range customer counts for November were:
Mclvor – 1,058; Turcotte – 1,215; and McHenry – 623.

Law Enforcement Officer Awards

The following law enforcement officers were recognized for their outstanding achievements and actions performed above and beyond the call of duty. Applause followed each award presentation.

Boating Officer Awards – presented by Major Megan Fedrick. These officers were also recognized by the National Assoc of State Boating Law Administrators

- PVT. Jakobe Richards – BUI Law Enforcement Officer of the Year
(Operation Dry Water 2022 Campaign)
- SGT. Kevin Howell – Boating Law Enforcement Officer of the Year

Lifesaving Awards – presented by Col. Jerry Carter

- CPL. Heath Hulon
- PVT. Wesley Harvison
- MSG. Jay Holeman

Waterfowl Officer of the Year – presented by Col. Jerry Carter

- LT. Lee Harvey

Conservation Officer of the Year – presented by Col. Jerry Carter

- MSG. Bud Loper

OTHER BUSINESS

Larry Pugh, Director of Technical Services, presented SGT. Kevin Howell with a certificate honoring five years of dedicated service with MDWFP as part of an Employee Appreciation Recognition.

NEXT MEETING DATE

Date: Wednesday, January 25, 2023

Location: The Cotton House, Donelson Room, Cleveland, MS

Time: 9:00 AM Educational Session; 10:00 AM Business Session

EXECUTIVE SESSION

No Executive Session was necessary.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business before the Commission, Commissioner Rhoads 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

General regulations for the Mississippi State Parks

RULE 1.1 STATE PARK FEES

Mississippi State Parks is proposing RATE RANGES for our amenities.

1. **General Entrance Rates – Page 1**
 - A. Change - Entrance rate \$2.00-\$4.00 per person
Change - Special Event \$5.00-\$50.00 per person/vehicle
 - B. Add - None
2. **Cabin & RV Rates - Page 3**
 - A. Change -Cabins \$35.00-\$190.00 Nightly
Change -Camping/RV Sites \$25.00 - \$190.00 Nightly
Change - Monthly Camping \$500.00-800.00
Change - Camping 65+/Disabled 10% discount
 - B. Add-None
3. **Amphitheater – Page 5**
 - A. Change – None
 - B. Delete – None
 - C. Add – Amphitheater \$100.00-\$200.00 Hourly
4. **Miscellaneous – Page 5**
 - A. Change – Ice from \$2.50 to Market Rate
Change – Firewood from \$7.00 to Market Rate
Change – Damage Fee from \$50.00 to Cost of Replacement
 - B. Add - None
5. **Motels & Townhouses – Page 6**
 - A. Change – Weekday and Weekend Rates to a single range for all nights
Change – Motel Rate from \$62.00 to Range of \$72.00-\$110.00
Change - Townhouse Rate from \$162.00 to Range of \$162.00-\$225.00 Only at J.P. Coleman
 - B. Add- None
6. **Recreational Facilities – Page 10**
 - A. Change – None
 - B. Add – LeFleur’s Bluff Complex Regal’s Landing \$150.00-\$1000.00 Per hour.
This is a brand new reservable
7. **Pavilions – Page 10**
 - A. Change – Rate of \$40.00 - \$200.00 to \$5.00 - \$200.00/hour
 - B. Add - None

RULE 1.2 GENERAL RULES AND REGULATIONS FOR STATE PARKS

Mississippi State Parks is proposing to eliminate vouchers and refine the cancellation policy.

1. Reservations – Page 1

- A. Change – All reservations window change from 24 months to 13 months
- B. Add – None

2. Cancellations, Refunds, Vouchers & Transfers – Page 3 & 4

- A. Change – None
- B. Delete – Vouchers as an option. Will offer refunds instead
Delete – \$10 Transfer Fee
- C. Add – Cancellation of 7 plus days
Add – Cancellation 6 days or less, forfeit half of reservation amount.
Add – c. No refund if the reservation is cancelled within 3 days. (page 4)
Add – d. Once checked in, a cancellation is not permitted, nor will a refund be issued. (page 4)
Add – f. No changes or transfers to reservations are allowed within 3 days.
(page 4)