

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

**Thursday, August 17, 2023**

**11:00 AM Educational Session**

**(MCOTA) Holmes Co. State Park, 5369 State Park Road, Durant, MS**

## **EDUCATIONAL SESSION**

**PRESENT:** Chairman Bill F. Cossar, Commissioner Leonard Bentz, and Commissioner Gary Rhoads.

**ABSENT:** Commissioners Scott Coopwood and William Mounger II

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

The meeting was called to order at 11:00 AM by Chairman Bill F. Cossar.

### **Feral Hog Toxic Bait**

Chairman Cossar welcomed Dr. Jim LaCour, Louisiana State Wildlife Veterinarian, and Dr. Glen Gentry, Director of the LSU AgCenter Central Research Station. Dr. LaCour came forward and introduced Dr. Gentry.

Dr. Gentry provided a PowerPoint presentation revealing the destruction caused by the ever-increasing feral hog problem across the United States and the process LSU has been undertaking over the past few years to perfect a lethal feral pig bait and delivery system that would minimize the risk to off-target animals. After much study by trial and error, dehydrated fish was determined to be the best base to attract hogs and a common food preservative, sodium nitrite, would be added which is lethal to feral pigs and poses a low risk to humans. The LSU bait was kneaded into a soft, rubbery texture so that the pigs do not leave crumbs on the ground for other animals.

Dr. Gentry received a patent, June 8, 2023, on the toxic feral bait process. Dr. Gentry gave credit for this process to the outstanding team of scientists at the LSU lab and monetary support from the Pennington Family Foundation, Rice Research Board, and the Louisiana Soybean and Grain Research and Promotion Board.

The next big hurdle will be obtaining \$900,000 for an Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Experimental Use Permit. This would be used to conduct field trials to test the effectiveness of the lethal feral hog bait and the use of innovative delivery technology.

**MDWFP 2023 Cadet Class**

Twelve cadets with the MDWFP Conservation Officer Cadet Program were present and asked to identify themselves, their background, and why they chose to become a Conservation Officer. The cadets have two more weeks of training before their graduation on Thursday, August 31, 2023, at Roosevelt State Park. The cadets are listed below.

1. Christopher Scott
2. Aaron Wesley
3. Max Kelly
4. Brandon Edmondson
5. Dustin Floyd
6. Ben Gray
7. Lane Young
8. Stephen Helton
9. Tonnor Segree
10. D'Janis Kendrick
11. Comer Clark
12. Logan McDaniel

A round of applause followed.

The Educational Session ended.

**MISSISSIPPI COMMISSION ON WILDLIFE, FISHERIES, & PARKS****Thursday, August 17, 2023****1:00 PM Business Session****(MCOTA) Holmes Co. State Park, 5369 State Park Road, Durant, MS****BUSINESS SESSION MINUTES**

**PRESENT:** Chairman Bill F. Cossar, Commissioner Leonard Bentz, and Commissioner Gary Rhoads. Commissioners Scott Coopwood and William Mounger II attended via telecommunication.

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

The meeting was called to order at 1:00 PM by Chairman Bill F. Cossar. The Chairman welcomed guests watching the live stream video and special guests attending.

**OPENING PRAYER**

Chairman Cossar asked Jason Thompson to open the meeting with prayer.

**OATH OF OFFICE**

Leonard Bentz, having been re-appointed by Governor Tate Reeves to serve a five-year term on the Commission on Wildlife, Fisheries, and Parks, representing the Fifth Congressional District, beginning July 1, 2023, and ending June 30, 2028, was sworn into office by Notary Sharon Polzin.

**MINUTES**

**ACTION:** Upon motion by Commissioner Rhoads and seconded by Commissioner Bentz, the Commission meeting minutes of July 13, 2023, were unanimously approved.

### **AGENDA**

Executive Director Lynn Posey stated that items for the Executive Session would need consideration, but no agenda changes were necessary.

**ACTION:** Upon motion by Commissioner Bentz and seconded by Commissioner Rhoads, the Commission unanimously approved the meeting agenda of August 17, 2023.

### **PUBLIC COMMENTS**

No one came forward for public comment.

### **LICENSE SALES REPORT**

Jason Thompson, Administrative Services Director, presented the License Sales Report for the month of July 2023. The total revenue for the end of this fiscal year is down \$24,000 from last year. This total does not include the Freshwater Fishing Guide and Outfitter fees collected this month but will be included in next month's report.

Highlights of his report are listed below:

- Resident (RES) license sales – down \$27,000
- Non-resident (NR) license sales – up 7% (up \$10,000)
- Other Licenses – up 38 more permits sold than last year
- Lifetime License category – down \$41,000

60 Freshwater Fishing Guides and Outfitters permits sold - totaling \$40,525

### **MDWFP INTERNSHIP PROGRAM**

Angel Rohnke, Deputy Administrator, introduced each summer intern and asked them to step forward and tell about their experiences and plans for the future.

- *Marinee Laina Humphries* – worked with biologists at the Museum of Natural Science
- *Caroline Crawford* – worked with Wildlife Bureau - O'Keefe WMA
- *Zach Noel Bagwell* – worked with Law Enforcement Bureau Officers
- *Casey Joel Williams* – worked with the biologists at the Fisheries Bureau - North MS Fish Hatchery. Williams had already returned to his college fall classes and was unable to attend the meeting.

The Internship Program was a great success for the young people and MDWFP.

## FISHERIES

### **PROPOSED – 40 Miss. Admin. Code Part 3, Chapter 3 – Regulations regarding Commercial Fishing**

Jerry Brown, Director of Fisheries, proposed the following changes to commercial fishing regulations for reasons listed below:

#### **Rule 3.1 – Regulations regarding Commercial Fishing**

- Section D – Freshwater Commercial Fishing Equipment
  - (D.4): Allows the use of Wire Reinforced Catfish Nets
    - As requested by commercial anglers
    - Legal in other states (LA, AR, and TN)
- Section G: Harvest Size and Possession Restrictions; Bait
  - (G.3.a): Insert language from MS Code §49-9-5 that it is illegal to harvest, possess or use mussels for bait.
    - USFWS request for clarification to anglers
    - Recently added to Rule 1.3 (Regulations regarding sportfishing)
  - (G.4): Changes regulation regarding harvest and transporting dead non-native fish out-of-state for sale.
    - It will be allowed because some anglers harvest invasive carp in MS and sell to processors outside the state.
  - (G.5.a): Adds definition for dressed and dressed length of fish for clarification.
  - (G.11): Adds that it is illegal to be in possession of or sell the flesh or eggs of protected sturgeon species.
    - Copied from Section G.10 for paddlefish due to caviar trade.

**ACTION: Upon motion made by Commissioner Bentz and seconded by Commissioner Rhoads, the Commission approved PROPOSED passage of Rule 3.1 as presented by staff.**

### **Asian Carp Program**

Upon request by the Executive Director, Brown updated the Commission on the Carp Program. U.S. Fish and Wildlife Services allocated funds several years ago to several states, including Mississippi, to reimburse processors or hire contract fishermen to catch and remove invasive carp from the waters where they habitat. Only one contract fisherman and only one processor, Moon River, were interested in these incentives. Finding an incentive to lure more processors to Mississippi has been difficult.

Plans are being made to build barriers on the Tennessee River, such as Pickwick. Language was added to a Water Resources Development Act (WRDA) bill to include a barrier on the Tenn-Tom Waterway to block the passage of carp. One of the challenges for the states is the cost since it is a 75% federal and 25% state match. This will involve a considerable amount of matching money and Legislative authority will be needed for funding.

## PARKS

### Capital Improvement Update

Andre´ Hollis, Director of Parks, stated that the Parks revenue for FY23 compared to FY22 was an increase of \$436,462. Revenue was exceptional at four parks this past year with one park's revenue over \$2 million, two parks over \$1 million, and one park at \$900,000. In the past 26 years, MDWFP has never had this many parks with revenue over a million dollars for the year.

Updates on Projects at MS State Parks (some completed, some in the works):

1. Buccaneer
  - a. Wi-Fi
  - b. Splash Pad
  - c. Cabanas
  - d. 70 New Gulf View Campsites
2. Clarkco
  - a. Nature Trail Renovation
  - b. Bike Competition is being planned.
3. Cossar
  - a. New Furniture in Cabins 9 & 14 – donated by Crossroads Furniture in Cleveland Mississippi
  - b. Crossroads Furniture wanted to partner and give back to Cossar State Park by donating furniture for one cabin each year.
  - c. Mini Golf Course Renovated
4. J.P. Coleman
  - a. Motel Townhouse Renovation
  - b. New Roof on Motel
  - c. New Roof on Business Retreat Center
5. Lake Lincoln
  - a. New Fishing Piers with help of the Fishing Bureau
6. Lake Lowndes
  - a. Resurfaced Tennis Courts
7. Natchez
  - a. 10 Renovated Cabins – to be completed by the end of September
  - b. New Fishing Piers
8. Paul B. Johnson
  - a. New Gatehouse
  - b. New Souvenir Shop – trying to get into more retail
9. Percy Quin
  - a. Lodge Renovations
  - b. 9 Cabin Renovations
  - c. New Bridge
10. Roosevelt
  - a. 2 Cabin Renovations (Cabins 8 & 12)
  - b. Camp Store Renovations by Labor Day
  - c. New Fishing Piers

- d. Resurfaced Tennis Courts – partnership with Morton High School to hold matches at the park
- 11. Tishomingo
  - a. 24 Campsite Renovations
- 12. Wall Doxey
  - a. Bath House Renovation
  - b. Exterior Repairs on 4 Cabins
- 13. Statewide (over last 12-18 months)
  - a. 37 New Floors
  - b. 8 New Roofs

On September 5<sup>th</sup> three campground renovations will begin at Paul B Johnson, Percy Quin, and Roosevelt - making sites wider and longer.

## **LAW ENFORCEMENT**

### **Law Enforcement Update**

Col. Jerry Carter, Chief of Law Enforcement, reported that during the month of July, 616 citations were issued with "No License" being number one, "PFD Violation" number two, "No Boat Registration" third, "Trespassing" fourth, and "No Boating Certificate" fifth.

### **K-9 Team**

Four K-9 dogs have been purchased: two silver Labrador Retrievers, one yellow Labrador Retriever, and one German Short-haired Pointer.

Officers selected for the K-9 Team are:

- Officer Larry Primeaux (South)
- Officer Zach Munter (South)
- Officer Baylee Jones (Central)
- Officer Bradley Starling (North)

The K-9 Team Three-Month Training Program will begin in September and be completed by the opening of gun season.

K-9 kennels, equipment, and outfitting of trucks will be in place by the time the training is completed.

### **Dive Team**

Officers selected for the Dive Team are:

- Michael Voyles
- Tim Gholson
- Brian Tallent
- Cole Edwards
- Craig Walker
- Jason Redden

- Brandon Abel
- Samuel Shufelt
- Jamie Barnett
- Cole Bush
- Steve Trosclair
- Dominic Williams

The Dive Team will begin training in September in Flowood, further training at Roosevelt State Park, and ending in Pelham, Alabama. Equipment is being purchased now for the Dive Team.

The shooting range customer counts for July 6 – August 6, 2023, were:  
McIvor – 494; Turcotte – 652; and McHenry – 441.

### **MDWFP LawFit Team**

Col. Carter presented the MDWFP LawFit Team who once again took the top spot at the 21<sup>st</sup> Annual National LawFit Challenge held June 29<sup>th</sup> – July 1<sup>st</sup> in Rankin County, MS. Col. Carter asked the LawFit Team to come forward as he introduced them.

LT. Marcus Christon, Leader of the LawFit Team  
LT. Justin Gates, Assistant Leader  
SGM. Derrick Scott  
SGT. Cody Barber  
SGT. Payton Marascalco  
SGT. James Sanders  
SGT. Tamarrius Good  
CPL. Bradley Starling  
CPL. Braeden Reynolds

The 2023 MDWFP LawFit Team placed Top Five in the following events:

#### **Overall Individual Male**

- 1<sup>st</sup> Place – Marcus Christon
- 3<sup>rd</sup> Place – Derrick Scott

#### **4Man Team**

- 1<sup>st</sup> Place – Marcus Christon, Derrick Scott, Justin Gates, & Cody Barber
- 4<sup>th</sup> Place – Bradley Starling, Payton Marascalco, Braeden Reynolds, & Tamarrius Good

#### **2Man Team**

- 1<sup>st</sup> Place – Marcus Christon & Derrick Scott
- 4<sup>th</sup> Place – Justin Gates & Cody Barber

#### **Bench Press**

- 1<sup>st</sup> Place – Derrick Scott
- 3<sup>rd</sup> Place – Cody Barber
- 4<sup>th</sup> Place – Justin Gates



Sit-ups

4<sup>th</sup> Place – Marcus Christon

Pull-ups

1<sup>st</sup> Place – Marcus Christon

2<sup>nd</sup> Place – Derrick Scott

4<sup>th</sup> Place – Payton Marascalco

1.5 Mile Run

2<sup>nd</sup> Place – Derrick Scott

Obstacle Course

2<sup>nd</sup> Place – Marcus Christon

4<sup>th</sup> Place – Payton Marascalco

Applause followed for the remarkable dedication and achievements of these officers.

### **OTHER BUSINESS**

**Foundation Scholarship Awards**

Mr. Nobel Lee, Vice Chairman of the Foundation on Wildlife, Fisheries, and Parks, came on behalf of the Foundation to present scholarship awards to the winners. The Foundation awards up to four scholarships annually in the amount of \$3,000 each.

Michelle Carter, Foundation Director of Programs, stated that the committee had a tough decision in picking four winners out of the 12 applicants. The four winners were announced and asked to come forward to receive their awards. Nobel Lee presented the awards to:

Caroline Crawford

Ian Hurst

Lindsay Liljedahl

Casey Joel Williams – absent

A round of applause followed.

### **NEXT MEETING DATE**

Date: Thursday, September 14, 2023

Location: JP Coleman State Park Conference Center, 613 CR 321, Iuka 38852

Time: 9:00 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 Bentz made a motion to close the meeting to determine the need to go into Executive Session. Commissioner Rhoads 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 personnel and the potential purchase of land.

**ACTION: Commissioner Rhoads made a motion to enter into Executive Session to discuss the prospective purchase of land and a personnel matter. Commissioner Bentz 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 a personnel matter and the potential purchase of land.

Art Kennard, MDWFP Lands Coordinator, updated the Commission on the availability of two specific tracts of land that were available for purchase.

**Upon motion by Commissioner Bentz and seconded by Commissioner Rhoads the Commission unanimously voted to allow the Executive Director to proceed with obtaining appraisals of those two tracts of land and to offer the average of the two appraisals as the purchase price pursuant to statute.**

Chairman Cossar opened the floor for discussion about adjusting the Executive Director's compensation. Discussion followed regarding the Southeastern average for other wildlife agency directors and compensation under the state's new SEC<sup>2</sup> public employee system. Discussion followed and it was discussed that the salary for the Executive Director's salary should be increased to \$159,671.22, effective October 1, 2023.

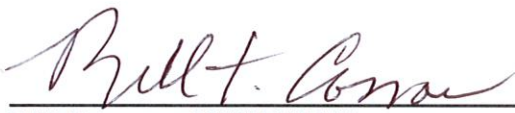
**Upon motion by Commissioner Bentz and seconded by Commissioner Rhoads the Commission unanimously voted to forward the Commission's request to the State Personnel Board, that the Executive Director's compensation be increased to \$159,671.22, effective October 1, 2023.**

There being no further items for discussion in Executive Session, Commissioner Bentz 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 handled a personnel matter and authorized the Executive Director to offer to purchase certain tracts of land in an amount equal to the average of two appraisals as the purchase price.

### ADJOURNMENT

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



Bill Cossar, CHAIRMAN

  
Date

Scott Coopwood, VICE CHAIRMAN

  
Date