

MISSISSIPPI COMMISSION ON WILDLIFE, FISHERIES, & PARKS

**Thursday March 19th, 2025
10:00 AM Business Session
MDWFP Headquarters
1505 Eastover Drive**

BUSINESS SESSION MINUTES

PRESENT: Commissioners Gary Rhoads, Billy Mounger, Colin Maloney, and Todd Hairston were in attendance.

Among the MDWFP staff attending were Executive Director Lynn Posey, Brian Ferguson, Lt. Col. Scottie Jones, Russ Walsh, Amy Blaylock, Jerry Brown, Jason Thompson, Andre' Hollis, Drew Malone (General Counsel) and Doug Mann.

The Vice-Chairman gaveled the meeting into order and welcomed guests, both those watching the live stream video and those attending in person.

The Executive Director, Lynn Posey, welcomed Dr. Sam Polles, former Executive Director, along with many special guests, which included a few former commissioners, former employees, and friends and family of Dr. Polles.

OPENING PRAYER

Vice-Chairman Rhoads requested that Jason Thompson, Director of Administrative Services, open the meeting with prayer.

MINUTES

Vice-Chairman Rhoads asked the Commission to review the minutes from the February meeting and when done called for a motion to approve the minutes.

ACTION: Upon motion by Commissioner Mounger and seconded by Commissioner Hairston, the Commission meeting minutes of February 12th, 2025, were unanimously approved.

AGENDA

The Vice-Chairman asked Executive Director, Lynn Posey if there were any changes to the proposed agenda. Mr. Posey stated there are a few changes in the agenda. Roger Richardson and Joey Carrington will speak in the "Public Comments" section and the Fisheries awards are postponed until next month.

ACTION: Upon motion by Commissioner Maloney and seconded by Commissioner Hairston, the Commission unanimously approved the meeting agenda March 19th, 2025.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

Mr. Roger Richardson spoke on behalf of adjacent landowners and a hunting club, highlighting a significant decline in deer numbers over the past five to six years. Mr. Richardson described the management program they have in place to protect deer, including allowing bucks to mature before harvest. Despite their efforts, they have noticed a dramatic decrease in the number of surviving bucks and overall deer numbers, leading them to stop hunting late in the season. Mr. Richardson attributes the decline to unregulated depredation permits issued to farmers, which allow nighttime hunting and have decimated the deer herd.

Commissioner Mounger asked Mr. Richardson a few questions about his land and thanked him for coming forward to the Commission to express his concerns.

Joey Carrington was next to address the Commission with his concerns. Mr. Carrington stated that he has noticed a lack of deer in fields where soybeans are planted, suggesting that farmers are shooting deer indiscriminately. Mr. Carrington called for a more ethical and regulated approach to deer management, including stricter rules on depredation permits and better enforcement.

Vice-Chairman Rhoads thanked Mr. Carrington for his time and said the Commission is aware of his concerns and that his concerns are noted.

LICENSE SALES REPORT

Jason Thompson, Director of Administrative Services, presented the License Sales Report for the month of February 2025. The total revenue for the end of February was down about 1% (\$16,694,498.80) compared to February 2024 (-1.32%).

Highlights of his report are listed below:

- Resident license sales – \$5,826,981.20 (down 1.51%)
- Non-resident license sales – \$10,166,629.60 (down 1.56%)
- Other Licenses – \$92,888.00 (down 0.92%)
- Lifetime License category – \$608,000.00 (down 4.63%)

Jason Thompson closed his report by stating the new POS license system, implemented on February 20th (28 days ago), has processed over 43,000 privileges and 31,000 transactions, with some challenges still being addressed.

PARKS

Andre Hollis, Director of Parks, provided an update on state park projects, including campground and cabin renovations, and the expansion of campsites to accommodate larger

RVs. Specific projects include full renovations on the outside and inside to Roosevelt cabins (13 cabins), Paul B. Johnson cabins (16 cabins), Wall Doxey cabins (6 cabins), and Percy Quin cabins (18 cabins) with estimated completion dates ranging from April to September.

The Commission and Dr. Polles expressed their excitement for the upgrades and renovations being made throughout the Mississippi State Parks.

LAW ENFORCEMENT

Law Enforcement Update

Col. Jerry Carter, Chief of Law Enforcement, reported that during the month of February 2025, a total of 326 citations were issued with "No Resident License" being number one (58), "Trespassing" was number two (33), "No WMA Permit" was number three (25), "No WMA Check In" was number four (24), and "State Lake Violations" was number five (12).

Col. Jerry Carter continued his report showing an incident at Lake Tom Bailey state fishing lake where a male subject rammed his vehicle into the front of Officer Loper's truck. After a long pursuit, Officers Loper and Thomas caught the subject and placed him under arrest. The next slide showed officers conducting public events and Hunter/Boater Ed classes. The next slide showed officers May and Trosclair with a happy group of anglers with a large black drum. The officers were checking fishing license compliance in Harrison County. The last slide showed LTC Jones and the NWTF Officer of the Year, Logan Kirk, of Tishomingo County at the NWTF Convention in Nashville.

Customer counts for the department's shooting ranges for the month of February were: McIvor – 411; Turcotte – 294; and McHenry – 572 customers.

License Reinstatement

Colonel Carter brought an individual before the Commission, requesting to have his hunting license restored.

Morgan Moorman was asked to present his request to have his hunting license reinstated. The date of the violation occurred on May 26, 2023. Officers got a call regarding someone headlighting and Officers Tallent and Ross conducted an interview after receiving the call. Mr. Moorman was brought in for questioning and confessed to headlighting during his interview. Mr. Moorman stated he shined his lights at the deer because he was trying to get a better look at it in a cotton field. Mr. Moorman said that a man down the road took a picture of his vehicle and reported him for spotlighting deer.

After some general questioning and discussion from the Commission, Vice-Chairman Rhoads called for a motion.

ACTION: Upon motion by Commissioner Hairston and seconded by Commissioner Maloney the Commission voted unanimously to reinstate the hunting license of Mr. Moorman.

Col. Jerry Carter closed his report by announcing the opening of active recruiting for Law Enforcement officers, with plans to hire 20 new officers starting March 21st.

WILDLIFE

Migratory Game Bird Season Recommendations

Houston Havens presented recommendations for various migratory birds based on popular trends and positive feedback. Recommendations will be open for public comment and final selections will be made during the April Commission meeting. The recommendation included specific dates such as:

Mourning and White-winged Doves (Statewide):

Recommendation: Sept. 1 - Sept. 30

Oct. 18 -Nov. 16

Dec. 27 - Jan. 25

Bag Limit 15; Possession Limit 45

Canada Geese (Early Season):

Recommendation: September 1 - September 30

Bag Limit 5; Possession Limit 15

Teal (Early Season):

Recommendation: September 20 - September 28

Bag Limit 6; Possession Limit 18

Rails and Gallinules (Soras, Virginia Rails, Clapper Rails, King Rails; Common and Purple Gallinules):

Recommendation: September 1 – September 30

November 22 – December 31

Sora and Virginia Rail Bag Limit 25 singly or in aggregate; Possession Limit 75

Clapper Rail and King Rail Bag Limit 15 singly or in aggregate; Possession Limit 45

Common and Purple Gallinule Bag Limit 15; Possession Limit 45

Snipe:

Recommendation: November 14 - February 28

Bag Limit 8; Possession Limit 24

Woodcock:

Recommendation: December 18 - January 31

Bag Limit 3; Possession Limit 9

Ducks, Mergansers, and Coots:

Recommendation: November 28 - November 30

December 6 - January 31

Youth, Veteran, and Active Military Waterfowl Days:

Recommendation: February 7 – 8

Geese: Canada, Snow, Blue, Ross's, White-fronted, and Brant

Recommendation: November 14- November 30

December 6 - January 31

Light Goose Conservation Order

Recommendation: October 1 - November 13

December 1 - December 5

February 1 - February 6

February 9 - March 31

Award Presentation

Russ Walsh, Director of Wildlife, recognized the 2024 WMA Conservationist of the Year, Mr. Bobby Kellum, for his dedication and contributions to the agency's Wildlife Management Area Program. The 2024 Wildlife Conservationist of the Year, Mr. Anthony Ballard, was also recognized for his work on the black bear program, including the development of new traps and educational outreach.

OTHER BUSINESS

Mr. Posey introduced a resolution to honor Dr. Sam G. Polles for his 29 years of service as Executive Director of the Mississippi Department of Wildlife, Fisheries, and Parks. The resolution highlights Dr. Polles' achievements, which include enhancing education and salaries for conservation officers, improving training and equipment, and doubling the amount of public lands held in trust for natural resource conservation and outdoor recreation. Dr. Polles delivered a heartfelt speech reflecting on "his better half" (Mary Margaret Polles), his career, the importance of teamwork, and his love for the agency and its mission.

The commission voted unanimously to adopt the resolution honoring Dr. Polles and designating him as "Executive Director Emeritus." The audience gave a standing ovation in support of Dr. Polles.

ACTION: Upon motion by Commissioner Mounger and seconded by Commissioner Maloney, the Commission voted unanimously to approve the Resolution honoring Dr. Polles.

NEXT MEETING DATE

Executive Director Posey announced the proposed date and time for the next meeting as follows:

Date: Thursday, April 17th, 2025
Location: MDWFP Headquarters – 1505 Eastover Drive
Time: 10:00 AM Business Session

EXECUTIVE SESSION

The Executive Director stated that there was no need for an Executive Session.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business before the Commission, Vice Chairman Rhoads called for a motion to adjourn. Commissioner Hairston made the motion to adjourn which was seconded by Commissioner Hairston. The motion passed unanimously. Vice Chairman Rhoads gaveled the meeting into adjournment.



Scott Coopwood, CHAIRMAN



Gary Rhoads, VICE CHAIRMAN



Date



Date