

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

**Thursday April 17<sup>th</sup>, 2025  
10:00 AM Business Session  
MDWFP Headquarters  
1505 Eastover Drive**

## **BUSINESS SESSION MINUTES**

**PRESENT: Chairman Scott Coopwood and Commissioners Gary Rhoads, Colin Maloney, and Todd Hairston were in attendance. Commissioner Billy Mounger attended via phone.**

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

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

Chairman Coopwood recognized Noble Lee, Chairman of the Wildlife, Fisheries, Parks, and Marine Foundation, for a few remarks. Mr. Lee expressed his gratitude to the Commissioners and stated that the foundation will continue to support the MDWFP. Chairman Lee acknowledged the hard work of the Commission and expressed his anticipation of continued cooperation between the foundation and the department.

Chairman Coopwood briefly informed those in attendance that he was approaching the end of his term as a Commissioner. He stated that he was honored to have been appointed as a Commissioner by the Governor and announced that he would be leaving the Commission in June after having served for the last ten (10) years. He introduced Drew St. John, who will take over the second district position starting July 1<sup>st</sup>.

Drew St. John expressed excitement about joining the commission and his hopes that he would be able to contribute to the Department's mission of conservation.

Executive Director, Lynn Posey acknowledged the presence of various other guests, including Representative Scott Bounds and other key figures from the Department, Foundation, and Tyler Tech, the State electronic transaction portal vendor.

## **OPENING PRAYER**

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

### MINUTES

Chairman Coopwood asked the Commission to review the minutes from the March meeting and when done called for a motion to approve the minutes.

**ACTION: Upon motion by Commissioner Rhoads and seconded by Commissioner Hairston, the Commission meeting minutes of March 19<sup>th</sup>, 2025, were unanimously approved.**

### AGENDA

The Chairman asked Executive Director, Lynn Posey if there were any changes to the proposed agenda. Mr. Posey stated there are no public comments and there is a need for an Executive Session.

**ACTION: Upon motion by Commissioner Hairston and seconded by Commissioner Maloney, the Commission unanimously approved the meeting agenda April 19<sup>th</sup>, 2025.**

### LICENSE SALES REPORT

Jason Thompson, Director of Administrative Services, presented the License Sales Report for the month of March 2025. The total revenue for the end of March was down .10% (\$18,074,451.50) compared to March 2024.

Highlights of his report are listed below:

- Resident license sales – \$6,187,821.00 (down 3.63%)
- Non-resident license sales – \$11,131,605.50 (down 2.13%)
- Other Licenses – \$96,425.00 (down 0.31%)
- Lifetime License category – \$658,500.00 (down 4.29%)

Mr. Posey asked for more details on the \$500,000 decrease in revenue. Mr. Thompson attributed the loss to the transition to a new license point-of-sale system and issues with the auto-renewal feature.

### WILDLIFE

#### **40 Miss. Admin. Code, Part 2, Rule 5.3 Alligator Hunting Season for Public Waters (Proposed)**

Russ Walsh asked Andrew Arnett, State Alligator Coordinator, to present the proposed changes to Rule 5.3, regulating alligator hunting in public waters. The changes proposed will expand alligator hunting opportunities in the public waters of the southeastern part of the state.

The proposed rule would allow alligator hunting in Graveline Bayou and its portions, excluding the Mississippi Sound and Fort Bayou, as set forth on the map in their binders.

**ACTION: Upon motion by Commissioner Rhoads and seconded by Commissioner Maloney, the Commission unanimously approved Rule 5.3, as proposed.**

#### **Migratory Bird Season Dates and Bag Limits Framework**

Russ Walsh stated there were a few public comments received regarding the Migratory Bird Seasons dates that were presented at last month's Commission Meeting. Mr. Walsh reminded the Commission that the Fish & Wildlife Service provided a framework within which the Department could choose and set the dates. The information presented last month represented the Staff recommendation for seasons and needed Commission approval.

**ACTION: Upon motion by Commissioner Maloney and seconded by Commissioner Hairston, the Commission unanimously adopted the Migratory Bird Season as presented framework.**

#### **40 Miss. Admin. Code, Part 2, Chapter 1, WMA Regulations (PROPOSED)**

Mr. Walsh proposed the changes to the WMA regulations to the Commission as follows:

##### **Rule 1.1**

- **Case Definition- C: Firearms:** Shoulder fired weapons must be unloaded and cased while in a vehicle on a WMA. Shoulder-fired weapons in an ORV/ATV are not required to be cased. The case must be a container specifically designed for firearms and must be zipped, snapped, buckled, tied, or otherwise fastened with no portion of the weapon exposed.
- **LL. Tracking and/or Retrieval of Wounded Deer:** If blood-trailing/tracking dogs are used, no more than two (2) dogs may be used. If the deer being tracked is discovered alive, but wounded, the hunter or tracker may dispatch the deer by using a handgun with a barrel no longer than six (6) inches chambered in a caliber no larger than .45 caliber. WMA annual user permit and WMA check-in and out required. All off-road motorized vehicle/ATV/UTVs rules apply.

##### **Rule 1.16**

- **Feral Hogs: DOG RESTRICTIONS:** Deer hunting with dogs is prohibited. Small game hunting with dogs is allowed during any small game season. Hunting, running, or pursuing hogs with the use of dogs is prohibited

**Rule 1.18**

- **BAG LIMITS:** a. Deer: One antlerless deer and one legal buck per permitted hunt. All harvested deer count towards statewide bag limits, unless otherwise stated. Youth are allowed harvest of one antlerless deer during specified seasons.

**Rule 1.29**

- Deer: **SPECIAL EVENTS:** The WMA is closed to all firearm hunting during special event dates. Anyone participating in permitted special events must obey conduct rules as designated and posted by a club or group permitted to hold an event.
- **6. YOUTH TURKEY HUNTING PERMITS:** Turkey hunting is allowed by special permit only. You can apply online at [www.mdwfp.com](http://www.mdwfp.com). See application for hunt dates, application deadlines, and other information about permitted hunts.

**Rule 1.32**

- **DEER HUNTING–UNIT 2:** Once the waterfowl draw hunts begin, archery and youth gun hunting will be allowed only on Sunday, Monday, Tuesday, Thursday, and Friday. On Wednesday and Saturday, archery hunting, youth gun hunting, and scouting will be allowed after 1 pm.

**Rule 1.37**

- **DOVE:** (species-specific season will revert to statewide season dates).

**ACTION:** Upon motion by Commissioner Rhoads and seconded by Commissioner Maloney, the Commission unanimously approved the WMA Regulation Changes as **PROPOSED** rules.

**40 Miss. Admin. Code, part 2, Rule 2.2 White-tailed Deer Seasons and Bag Limits (PROPOSED)**

Russ Walsh reminded the Commission that the proposed rule changes only included changes to dates and related technical amendments.

**ACTION:** Upon motion by Commissioner Hairston and seconded by Commissioner Maloney, the Commission unanimously approved Rule 2.2 changes as **PROPOSED**.

**40 Miss. Admin. Code, Part 2, Rule 4.1 Small Game Seasons and Bag Limits (PROPOSED).**

Mr. Walsh presented the changes in the Small Game Seasons and Bag Limits rule for adoption. Briefly, those proposed changes included:

**C. OPOSSUM, RACCOON, AND BOBCAT: (Amended to mirror statutory changes)**

1. First Season: October 1 - October 31 (sport hunting with dogs and guns for food & sport)
2. Bag Limit: 5 per day; 8 per party
3. Second Season: November 1 - March 15 (sport hunting with dogs and guns for food, sport, and pelt)
4. Bag Limit: No limit

**ACTION:** Upon motion by Commissioner Maloney and seconded by Commissioner Rhoads, the Commission unanimously approved Rule 4.1 as PROPOSED.

**40 Miss. Admin. Code, Part 2, Rule 8.3 Animals Inherently Dangerous to Humans (PROPOSED)**

Mr. Walsh asked the Commission to adopt as final, the proposed change in this rule which reads as follows: "4. Transportation: Any person transporting animals inherently dangerous to humans through the state must obtain a permit prior to the transportation."

**ACTION:** Upon motion by Commissioner Rhoads and seconded by Commissioner Hairston, the Commission unanimously approved Rule 8.3 as PROPOSED.

**40 Miss. Admin. Code, Part 1, Rule 8.4 Nonresident Licenses (PROPOSED)**

Mr. Walsh proudly reminded the Commission that the Legislature has passed a bill authorizing a Mississippi Wild Turkey Stamp. As a result, the license rule for nonresidents needed to be amended to reflect this new requirement as follows:

- Spring Turkey Permits will now become the Wild Turkey Stamp.
- The cost of the non-resident wild turkey stamp is increased from \$50 to \$100.

**ACTION:** Upon motion by Commissioner Hairston and seconded by Commissioner Rhoads, the Commission unanimously approved Rule 8.4 as a PROPOSED rule.

**FISHERIES****40 Miss. Admin. Code, Part 3, Rule 2.2 Regulations Regarding Community Fishing Assistance Program Lakes (PROPOSED)**

Jerry Brown, Chief of Fisheries, presented the following rule change to the rules for Community Fishing Assistance Program lakes, requested by the City of Eupora. The city was

requesting that the Commission incorporate language from a Eupora City Ordinance that prohibits commercial business being conducted at White's Creek Lake (CFAP), as follows: 17h: No commercial activity. As defined by Eupora City Ordinance, commercial activity means, "any activity pursued in furtherance of a business, or trade, or profession, or in the employ of another." This prohibition includes, but is not limited to, guided fishing tours or charters.

**ACTION: Upon motion by Commissioner Hairston and seconded by Commissioner , Maloney the Commission unanimously approved Rule 2.2 as a PROPOSED rule.**

### **Awards**

Mr. Brown next took the opportunity to present several awards to personnel in the Fisheries Bureau who had exemplified exceptional performance:

The 2024 Fisheries Conservationist of the Year was presented to Emily-Jo Wiggins, Education Program Coordinator (VEC). Emily serves as the director of the Visitor Education Center located at the Bob Tyler Fish Hatchery in Enid, Mississippi.

The 2024 State Lake Conservationist of the Year was presented to Britt Harris, State Lake Supervisor (North).

## **LAW ENFORCEMENT**

### **Law Enforcement Update**

Lt. Col. Scottie Jones, Assistant Chief of Law Enforcement, reported that during the month of March 2025, a total of 565 citations were issued with "No License" being number one (187), "Trespassing" was number two (53), "Unlawful Possession" was number three (31), "Failure to Report Turkey" was number four (25), and "Violation WMA Regs." was number five (23).

Lt. Col. Jones continued his report which showed officers in Amite County charging a subject with trespassing and hunting turkeys over bait and another slide which showed officers assisting with tornado damage in Walthall, Marion, Pike, and Jefferson Davis Counties.

Customer counts for the department's shooting ranges for the month of March were: Mclvor – 397; Turcotte – 465; and McHenry – 346 customers.

### **License Reinstatement**

Lt. Col. Jones brought two individuals before the Commission, Lucas McRee and Jordan Newsome. They were asked to present their request to have their hunting licenses reinstated.

On December 19<sup>th</sup>, 2023, officers conducted a headlighting detail near Claiborne County. Mr. McRee stated that someone with them shined a light after noticing some commotion, quickly realizing it was game wardens setting up. He went on to say that the driver fled the scene, and their vehicle was stopped by an officer positioned farther down the road. McRee admitted he got

out and ran when they were stopped. He stated that he has since paid all associated fines and had his hunting license suspended for one year.

After some general questioning and discussion from the Commission, Chairman Coopwood 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. McRee.**

Jordan Newsome was next to explain his involvement in the headlighting incident on December 19<sup>th</sup>, 2023. Mr. Newsome stated that he was the driver that night. He explained they were driving on the Trace when someone in the truck shined a light on what appeared to be a deer. Upon realizing it was actually a game warden, Mr. Newsome turned the truck around, only to encounter a second game warden waiting farther down the road. He stated that he was pulled over and taken to jail that night. Mr. Newsome also noted that the truck and weapons inside the truck were seized, and that he has paid his fines.

**ACTION: Upon motion by Commissioner Hairston and seconded by Commissioner Rhoads, the Commission voted unanimously to reinstate the hunting license of Mr. Newsome.**

### OTHER BUSINESS

Chairman Coopwood mentioned the passing of former Executive Director, Dr. Sam Polles' wife. He asked to keep the Polles family in everyone's prayers.

### NEXT MEETING DATE

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

Date: Thursday, May 15<sup>th</sup>, 2025  
Location: MDWFP Headquarters – 1505 Eastover Drive  
Time: 1:00 PM Business Session

### EXECUTIVE SESSION

Chairman Coopwood asked Executive Director Posey if there were a need for Executive Session. Executive Director Posey replied that there was indeed a need for an Executive Session to discuss prospective purchases of real property. The Chairman called for a motion to determine the need for Executive Session.

**ACTION: Upon motion by Commissioner Rhoades and seconded by Commissioner Maloney the Commission voted unanimously to close the meeting to determine the need for an Executive Session to discuss potential purchases of real property or other transactions in land.**

The meeting was closed and the room was cleared.

Drew Malone, General Counsel, announced to the visitors now in the lobby that the meeting had been closed to determine the need for an Executive Session to discuss potential transactions in real property.

A closed discussion followed.

**ACTION: Upon motion by Commissioner Rhoades and seconded by Commissioner Hairston, the Commission voted unanimously to enter Executive Session to discuss potential purchases of real property or other transactions in land.**

Land Coordinator, Art Kennard presented the Commission with a proposal to purchase approximately 120 acres in Marion County, adjacent to the Marion County Wildlife Management Area. The land is not only contiguous to the WMA, but in the past has also been the source of confusion as to the location of the boundary between the properties. Mr. Kennard was requesting Commission approval to move forward with having the property appraised.

**ACTION: Upon motion by Commissioner Maloney and seconded by Commissioner Rhoads the Commission voted unanimously to authorize staff to pursue the acquisition of the property adjacent to the Marion County WMA.**

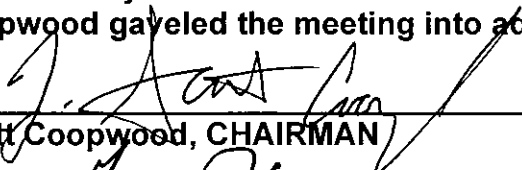
There being no further matters for discussion in Executive Session, Chairman Coopwood called for a motion to re-open the meeting.

**ACTION: Upon motion by Commissioner Rhoades and seconded by Commissioner Hairston the Commission voted unanimously to exit Executive session and return to an open meeting.**

Mr. Malone announced to those still outside the room that the Commission had voted to authorize appraising a certain parcel of land in Marion County and having no further business, had opened the meeting.

### ADJOURNMENT

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

  
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Scott Coopwood, CHAIRMAN

5/15/25  
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Date

  
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Gary Rhoads, VICE CHAIRMAN

5/15/25  
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Date