

MISSISSIPPI COMMISSION ON WILDLIFE, FISHERIES, & PARKS

Wednesday November 19th, 2025

10:00 AM Business Session

MDWFP Headquarters

1505 Eastover Drive

Jackson, MS 39211

BUSINESS SESSION MINUTES

PRESENT: Chairman Gary Rhoads, Vice-Chairman Billy Mounger, Commissioners Colin Maloney, Todd Hairston, and Drew St. John were in attendance.

Among the MDWFP staff attending were Executive Director Lynn Posey, Curtis Thornhill, Scottie Jones, Russ Walsh, Amy Blaylock, Jerry Brown, Jason Thompson, Brian Ferguson, and Andre' Hollis.

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

OPENING PRAYER

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

MINUTES

Chairman Rhoads asked the Commission to review the minutes of the September meeting and when done, he called for a motion to approve the minutes.

ACTION: Upon motion to approve by Commissioner Maloney and seconded by Commissioner Mounger, the Commission meeting minutes of September 17th, 2025, were unanimously approved.

AGENDA

The Chairman asked Executive Director, Lynn Posey, if there were any changes to the proposed agenda. Mr. Posey stated that there were no changes and there would not be a need for an Executive Session. There also would be no public comments.

Action: Upon motion by Commissioner Maloney and seconded by Commissioner Hairston, the Commission unanimously approved of the meeting agenda for November 19th, 2025.

PUBLIC SPEAKERS

Mr. Miller advocated for permitting thermal drone use in Mississippi to recover deer, citing his company's extensive experience with drones in agriculture, television, and lost pet recovery. He noted that current Mississippi laws lack clarity regarding using drones for deer recovery, resulting in a gray area for operators. To address this, he proposed requiring operators to maintain detailed records and be licensed by the state—similar to regulations for crop-spraying drones—which would also generate revenue for conservation efforts. He further suggested implementing ethical safeguards, such as a 12-hour waiting period before informing hunters of a live deer's location. Finally, Mr. Miller expressed his willingness to work closely with the Commission to craft specific, practical regulations benefiting both wildlife recovery and compliance.

LICENSE SALES REPORT

Jason Thompson, Director of Administrative Services, presented the License Sales Report for October 2025.

Highlights of his report are listed below:

Resident license sales - \$2,106,302.70 (down 2.12%)
Non-resident license sales - \$2,187,846.10 (down 8.21%)
Other license sales - \$87,229.00 (up 1.72%)
Lifetime license sales - \$246,500 (down 8.02%)

In addition to the sales figures, the agency highlighted improvements to the license software system, including enhanced boat registration and real-time driver's license verification. They also emphasized the importance of recruiting new hunters, noting that each license sold multiplies federal funding, and are analyzing post-season trends to guide future efforts.

WILDLIFE

The Commission received a license exemption request presented by Russ Walsh from G6:2 Outdoors, an organization that holds annual special hunts for individuals with disabilities or special needs. The request was to exempt participating out-of-state hunters from license requirements and the hunters coming for the events scheduled on December 5th and 6th, 2025.

ACTION: Upon motion by Commissioner Mounger and seconded by Commissioner Maloney, the Commission unanimously approved the license exemption request from G6:2 Outdoors for special hunts for disabled and special needs hunters on December 5th and 6th, 2025.

Commissioners emphasized the importance of proper deer herd management, encouraging hunters—especially DMAP club members—to harvest the recommended

number of deer, particularly does, to help manage the state's record-high deer population. They clarified that bag limits vary across regions, with most of the state set at three bucks and five does, while the CWD (Chronic Wasting Disease) zone allows up to four bucks and ten does, and additional tags are available near positive CWD sites. This aims to ensure hunters follow biologists' advice for healthy herd balance statewide.

MUSEUM

Angel provided an extensive update on the Mississippi Museum of Natural Science's major renovation, which is funded by \$3 million in capital expense funds supporting phase one and two. The work includes a complete redesign of the gift shop and main lobby, upgrades to meeting spaces and restrooms, skylight repairs, and construction of new pavilions and an outdoor play area for children. The theater was fully renovated to better serve school groups and public events. Visitor flow and the retail experience are being improved with an expanded and modernized gift shop and more welcoming entry features. Phase three, for which funding is still being sought, aims to create immersive, digitally enhanced exhibits. To boost visitation and revenue, new positions such as a facilities rental manager and social media specialist have been added, and new programming like sleepovers and expanded rentals are underway.

The museum has seen consistent growth in both revenue and attendance, received prestigious state and national awards, and just achieved a re-accreditation, earned by less than 10% of U.S. museums. Angel also discussed planned branding initiatives to further raise public awareness and engagement with the museum and agency.

PARKS

Mr. Ferguson reports on visitation and revenue for state parks in September and October.

Highlights of Mr. Ferguson's report of both months combined are listed below:

Total Visitors- 124,377
Total Occupancy- 33,840
Total Revenue- \$2,550,000

Chairman Rhoads expressed how impressive the reopening of Roosevelt was and how nice the cabins are.

In 2026, MDWFP plans to host major Fourth of July celebrations at every Mississippi state park to commemorate America's 250th anniversary, with seven parks featuring large-scale events including flag ceremonies, military participation, live music, and fireworks. The goal is to make these parks premier destinations for Independence Day festivities statewide.

LAW ENFORCEMENT

Lt Col. Chris Reed, reported that during the month of October 2025, a total of 149 citations were issued with “No Resident License” being number one (53), “Trespassing” number two (13), and “No WMA Permit” number three (13) were tied, “Violation WMA Regs was number four (8), “No PFD was number five (7).

Following the citation report, law enforcement highlighted a successful investigation of an unlawfully taken deer in North Mississippi, crediting effective collaboration between officers and local landowners. Officers were also praised for their involvement in youth outreach programs, such as the Super Hunt event at Turcotte, which provided positive experiences for participants. Additionally, several staff were recognized for their contributions at community events, including the Officer of the Year, Corporal Levi Walker.

Customer counts for the department’s shooting ranges for the month of August were:

McIvor – 923

Turcotte – 1349

McHenry – 650

License Reinstatement

Aiden Hargrove appeared before the Commission to request reinstatement of his hunting license after being caught headlighting in Claiborne County—a serious violation for which he expressed regret, confirmed he did not shoot any game, and discussed lessons learned about the importance of responsible hunting and choosing friends wisely. The Commissioners questioned him about the incident, emphasized hunting ethics and safety, and offered guidance on making better choices. Law enforcement confirmed Mr. Hargrove had fulfilled all requirements for reinstatement and had no objection.

ACTION: Upon motion by Commissioner Hairston and seconded by Commissioner Maloney, the Commission unanimously approved the reinstatement of Aiden Hargrove’s hunting license.

The Commission recognized and promoted two long-serving officers to the rank of captain. Captain Sheila Smith, with 22 years of agency service, was acknowledged for her leadership in the southern region, notable past achievements—including winning the 2017 Wildlife Officer of the Year and working on major poaching cases—and her dedication to law enforcement. Captain Tyler Norman, also a 22-year veteran, was promoted for his supervision of the central region, receipt of both Turkey and Waterfowl Officer of the Year awards, and his extensive experience in wildlife operations.

NEXT MEETING

Date: December 17th, 2025
Location: MDWFP Headquarters
Time: 10:00AM

ADJOURNMENT

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



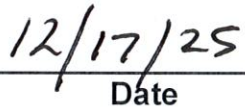
Gary Rhoads, CHAIRMAN



Billy Mounger, VICE CHAIRMAN



Date



Date