MISSISSIPPI COMMISSION ON WILDLIFE, FISHERIES, & PARKS

Thursday, March 25th, 2026
10:00 AM Business Session
MDWFP Headquarters
1505 Eastover Drive
Jackson, MS 39211

BUSINESS SESSION MINUTES

PRESENT: Chairman Gary Rhoads, Vice-Chairman Billy Mounger, and Commissioner Todd Hairston were in attendance.

Among the MDWFP staff attending were Executive Director Lynn Posey, Curtis Thornhill, Scottie Jones, Col. Jerry Carter, Russ Walsh, Amy Blaylock, Jerry Brown, Brian Ferguson, Andre´ Hollis, and Drew Malone (General Counsel).

The Chairman gaveled the meeting to order and welcomed all guests and attendees, both in person and via livestream.

OPENING PRAYER

Chairman Rhoads requested that Russ Walsh, Director of Conservation Policies, open the meeting with prayer.

MINUTES

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

ACTION: Upon motion to approve by Commissioner Mounger and seconded by Commissioner Hairston, the Commission meeting minutes of February 19th, 2026, 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 at the time and there is a need for an executive session to discuss land matters.

Action: Upon motion by Commissioner Hairston and seconded by Commissioner Mounger, the Commission unanimously approved of the meeting agenda for March 25th, 2026.

Mr. Posey recognized two longtime legislative partners, Representative Kinkade and Senator Suber, for their critical role in successfully guiding the turkey stamp legislation through a difficult process. Speaking on behalf of the Commission, the Department, the

state chapter of the National Wild Turkey Federation, and the Foundation, he praised their work not only on the turkey stamp but also throughout the legislative session, including on the budget and general bill. He then invited them to the front and presented framed turkey stamps—No. 52 to Representative Kinkade and No. 8 to Senator Suber—followed by a photo and expressions of appreciation for their support.

LICENSE SALES REPORT

Jason Thompson, Director of Administrative Services, presented the License Sales Report for February 2026.

Highlights of his report are listed below:

Resident license sales - $5,803,982.10 (down 0.42%)
Non-resident license sales - $9,963,421.70 (down 1.91%)
Other license sales - $96,579.00 (up 4.03%)
Lifetime license sales - $680,000.00 (up 11.75%)

Mr. Thompson reported a total of 8,935 turkey stamp privileges (sold + exempt) as of the end of February.

PARKS

Mr. Ferguson, Chief of Staff, reported on visitation and revenue for state parks from 07/01/2025- 2/28/2026

Total Visitors- 439,000
Total Occupancy- 111,000
Total Revenue- $6,690,000

The parks report emphasized that these strong numbers have been achieved despite many amenities remaining closed due to ongoing repairs and renovations, and that a strong "off-season" in visitation is attributed in part to effective promotions and marketing. Mr. Ferguson highlighted that staff are still addressing significant storm damage from the winter storm at parks such as JP Coleman, Wall Doxey, John Kyle, and others, with debris removal and reopening efforts underway. He reported recent ribbon cuttings and reopenings at Clarkco and a park with 43 new campsites and noted that Paul B. Johnson State Park is reopening cabins, campground, and lodge, with additional tiny houses being added. Upcoming work includes reopening cabins at Wall Doxey, beginning architectural work for cabin renovations at JP Coleman, and pursuing a capital expense request before the Legislature to fund further park renovations, particularly in the northern part of the state. Overall, he concluded that the park system is in a good position with strong momentum as it enters the busy season.

WILDLIFE

Amy Blaylock presented the 2026 WMA Turkey Season Extension

- Senate Bill 2420 now requires any season ending on a Friday or Saturday to be extended through the following Sunday.
- Statewide turkey season on private and open public lands:
  - Automatically extended through May 3 this year.
- WMAs are regulated by Commission rule:
  - Proposal: Extend all relevant WMAs that otherwise ended May 1 (those following statewide framework, not draw-only WMAs) to also run through May 3.
  - List provided in rule references 1.2–1.39.

Action: Upon motion by Commissioner Mounger and seconded by Commissioner Hairston, the Commission unanimously approved the extension of the Turkey Season to run through May 3 2026.

Caleb Hinton presented Turkey Stamp Requests

Wild Turkey Program Coordinator Caleb Hinton introduced himself and reported that turkey season is going very well, with about 7,700 birds reported, a roughly 72% increase over the five-year average for that date. He presented first-round proposals for spending approximately $180,000 of turkey stamp funds on 11 WMA habitat projects (mulching, clover plantings, and hardwood injections) affecting about 1,500 acres, noting these funds can be matched with federal and NWTF dollars and that all turkey stamp revenue is spent in Mississippi.

Migratory Game Bird Season Recommendations

Houston Havens presented migratory game bird (waterfowl) season recommendations and then state waterfowl stamp funding recommendations.

Mourning and White-winged Doves (Statewide):
Recommendation: Sept. 5 – Oct. 4
Oct. 24 – Nov. 22
Dec. 26 – Jan. 24
Bag Limit 15; Possession Limit 45
Justification: Weekends are prioritized while providing early, mid, and late season opportunity. Framework: 90 days between September 1 and January 31. Seasons within each zone may be split into a maximum of 3 segments. Bag and possession limits, season length, and shooting hours must be uniform within specific hunting zones.

Canada Geese (Early Season):
Recommendation: September 1 – September 30

Bag Limit 5; Possession Limit 15
Justification: This season structure is identical to last year, allowing early season opportunity which targets resident Canada geese and potentially reduces human-wildlife conflicts.
Framework: 107 total days with a 5-bird daily bag limit. Seasons may be held between September 1 and February 15 and may be split into 4 segments. See below for the remainder of the Canada goose seasons.

Teal (Early Season):
Recommendation: September 19– September 27
Bag Limit 6; Possession Limit 18
Justification: This season structure is the same as last year, overlapping 9 days of Canada goose and rail seasons, and maximizing weekends as late as possible in September.
Framework: 9 consecutive days between September 1 and September 30.

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 and King Rail Bag Limit 15 singly or in aggregate; Possession Limit 45 Common and Purple Gallinule Bag Limit 15; Possession Limit 45
Justification: Season structure similar to last year, providing opportunity for early season hunting overlapping the early teal and Canada goose seasons, and providing late season opportunity overlapping a portion of the duck season.
Framework: 70 days between September 1 and January 31. The season may be split into 2 segments.

Snipe:
Recommendation: November 14 - February 28
Bag Limit 8; Possession Limit 24
Justification: This season structure is the same as last year, with simple season dates, and occurs as late as possible within the allowable framework.
Framework: 107 days between September 1 and February 28. The season may be split into 2 segments.

Woodcock:
Recommendation: December 18 - January 31
Bag Limit 3; Possession Limit 9
Justification: This season structure is the same as last year, with simple season dates, and occurs as late as possible within the allowable framework.
Framework: 45 days between the Saturday nearest September 22 and January 31. The season may be split into 2 segments.

Ducks, Mergansers, and Coots:
Recommendation: November 27 – November 29
December 4 – December 6

December 9 – January 31
Justification: This season structure prioritizes weekends, extends as late as allowed by the current federal framework, and uses the maximum number of days allowed. This provides most opportunity late in the season when waterfowl numbers typically peak for Mississippi.
Bag Limits: The duck daily bag limit is a total of 6 ducks, including no more than 4 mallards (no more than 2 of which may be females), 1 mottled duck, 2 black ducks, 3 pintail, 3 wood ducks, 2 canvasbacks, and 2 redheads. The daily bag limit for scaup is 1 scaup per day Nov. 27 – Nov. 29, Dec. 4 – 6, and Dec. 9 – 17; and is 2 scaup per day Dec. 18 – Jan. 31. The merganser daily bag limit is a total of 5 mergansers, only 2 of which may be hooded mergansers. The coot daily bag limit is 15.
Possession Limit: 3 times the daily bag limit.
Framework: 60 days between the Saturday nearest September 24 and January 31. The season may be split into 3 segments. Mississippi currently has 1 statewide zone for ducks, mergansers, and coots.

Youth, Veteran, and Active Military Waterfowl Days:
Recommendation: February 6 – 7
Justification: States are allowed to include veterans and active-duty military personnel for two special waterfowl hunting days per season, and these days are allowed to overlap with the special youth waterfowl days. These late season days provide opportunity when Mississippi's waterfowl populations and wetland habitat availability are both typically high.
Framework: 2 days outside of the regular duck season on weekends or holidays. Bag and possession limits, as well as shooting hours are the same as during the regular season.

Geese: Canada, Snow, Blue, Ross's, White-fronted, and Brant
Recommendation: November 13 – November 29
December 4 – December 6
December 9 – January 31
Justification: This season structure overlaps the entire duck season and uses remaining days for early season hunting opportunity. Goose season ends at the same time as duck season to allow the Light Goose Conservation Order to begin the following day. All regular goose seasons are overlapping for simplicity.
Canada Goose Bag Limit 5; Possession Limit 15
Snow, Blue, and Ross's Goose Bag Limit 20; No Possession Limit
White-fronted Goose Bag Limit 3; Possession Limit 9
Brant Bag Limit 1; Possession Limit 3
Frameworks: For Canada geese, states may select seasons not to exceed 107 days with a 5-bird daily bag limit. Canada goose seasons may be held between September 1 and February 15 and may be split into 4 segments. For Snow, Blue, and Ross's geese, states may select 107 days between September 1 and February 15. For White-fronted geese, states may select a season for white-fronted geese not to exceed 74 days with 3 geese daily, or 88 days with 2 geese daily, or 107 days with 1 goose daily between September 1 and February 15. For Brant, states may select a season not to exceed 70 days with 2 brant daily, or 107 days with 1 brant daily with outside dates the same as for Canada geese; alternately, states may include brant in an aggregate goose bag limit with either Canada geese, whitefronted geese, or dark geese.

These proposed season dates were put out for public comment following the March meeting and final selections will be made during the April meeting.

Requests for project funding from Duck Stamp revenue were presented as follows:

Ducks Unlimited and DU Canada: $125,000 for Continued Waterfowl Breeding Habitat Conservation in Saskatchewan
Delta Waterfowl: $125,000 for Adopt a Pothole Program – perpetual wetland and associated upland easements in Manitoba
Mississippi State University Waterfowl Research: $60,000
WMA Wetland Management and Enhancement Projects: $200,000
Private Land Wetland Infrastructure Assistance Program: $50,000
Aerial Waterfowl Surveys: $25,000
Waterfowl Program Travel: $9,000
Waterfowl Trapping and Banding Supplies: $5,000
Mississippi Flyway Council Annual Dues and Cooperative Projects: $40,581
Annual Gunner Palmer Youth Waterfowl Hunting and Education Camp: $5,000

Total for FY 2027: $644,581

Action: Upon motion by Commissioner Mounger and seconded by Commissioner Hairston, the Commission unanimously approved the staff recommendations for Migratory Game Bird Seasons Framework and the requests for funding of waterfowl projects from Duck Stamp Sales Proceeds, as presented.

40 Miss. Admin. Code, Part 2, Rule 5.2 Private Lands Alligator Hunting Regulations (Proposed)
The staff recommended expanding private land alligator hunting opportunities to all 82 counties in the state, instead of limiting them to the current 36 eligible counties. The change simply extends eligibility for private land alligator hunting vouchers statewide; it does not change the number of tags per landowner or the acreage formula used to determine tags (still 20 acres of permanent water for the first voucher, plus one additional voucher per 100 acres of permanent water). There would be no increase in tag numbers or prices.

Action: Upon motion by Commissioner Mounger and seconded by Commissioner Hairston, the Commission unanimously approved the staff recommendations for Rule 5.2.

FISHERIES

Jerry Brown recognized two staff members for the 2025 Fisheries Bureau Awards:

Buford Lessley – awarded the 2025 Fisheries Conservationist of the Year for his work as a fisheries biologist and project leader, including aquatic vegetation control statewide, rapid response to giant salvinia, supervising vegetation management on

Ross Barnett Reservoir, initiating a largemouth bass movement study, contributing to multi-state catfish work, and mentoring new biologists.

Jason Thigpen– awarded the 2025 State Lake Conservationist of the Year for his long service (since 2003), leadership at Lake Claude Bennett and then across the central region lakes, maintaining facilities and access, assisting with equipment and construction projects, leading nature trail improvements at Calling Panther Lake, and promoting the agency in a positive manner.

After the awards, Jerry Brown updated the Commission on invasive species control, noting that over 1.7 million pounds of invasive carp have been removed from public waters through a reimbursement program (with Moon Lake accounting for an estimated 70–80% of that harvest due to an additional local incentive).

LAW ENFORCEMENT

Col. Jerry Carter reported that for February 2026, law enforcement issued a range of citations, with the top five violations being: No Resident
License (60), Trespassing (20), PFD (16), No NR Fishing License (15), and Unlawful Possession (13). Col. Carter's report also highlighted that officers were not only enforcing regulations but also heavily involved in youth engagement and community outreach. Wardens assisted with youth rabbit and squirrel hunts on public lands, helping young hunters set their scopes. Officers also conducted on-the-water compliance checks, including seizing undersized crappie at Sardis Lake. His report also includes Warden Jones with youth at an outing in the Central Region. With boating season ramping up, wardens increased patrols and safety checks on lakes and rivers across the state

Customer counts for the department's shooting ranges for February 2026 were:
McIvor – 281
Turcotte – 447
McHenry – 485

Award Presentation
Representatives from the Mississippi National Guard's 112th Military Police Battalion attended the meeting to recognize Colonel Jerry Carter for his support of Guard members employed by the agency. On behalf of the Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve (ESGR), they presented him with a Patriot Employer Award, citing his outstanding support for employees who were called up on short-notice deployments to Washington, D.C., including missions for the presidential inauguration and other security operations. They also presented a commemorative plaque from Joint Task Force Magnolia, thanking him and the agency leadership for enabling Command Sergeant Major Primo and other conservation officers to fulfill their National Guard duties while continuing to serve the state.

NEXT MEETING

Date: April 23rd, 2026
Location: MDWFP Headquarters
Time: 10:00AM

EXECUTIVE SESSION

Chairman Rhoads 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 land transactions and personnel matters.

ACTION: Upon motion by Commissioner Hairston and seconded by Commissioner Mounger the Commission voted unanimously to close the meeting to determine the need for an Executive Session to discuss 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 possible land transactions.

A closed discussion followed.

ACTION: Upon motion by Commissioner Hairston and seconded by Commissioner Mounger the Commission voted unanimously to enter Executive Session to discuss transactions in land.

Drew Malone, General Counsel, announced to the visitors now in the lobby that the Commission had voted to enter Executive Session to discuss the potential purchase of land and transactions concerning the purchase of land.

The Meeting was closed.

During Executive Session the Commission authorized the Department to proceed with obtaining two appraisals for certain lands adjacent to an existing WMA located in Attala County.

ACTION: Upon motion by Commissioner Hairston and seconded by Commissioner Mounger the Commission voted unanimously to move forward with obtaining the two appraisals for the purchase of certain land adjacent to an existing WMA located in Attala County.

During Executive Session the Commission authorized the Department to obtain a right-of-first-refusal to purchase a certain piece of property in Copiah County, adjacent to the Copiah County WMA.

ACTION: Upon motion by Commissioner Mounger and seconded by Commissioner Hairston the Commission voted unanimously to obtain a right-of-first-refusal to purchase a certain piece of property in Copiah County.

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

ACTION: Commissioner Hairston made the motion to go out of Executive Session and open the meeting. Commissioner Mounger second the motion and the Commission voted unanimously to go out of Executive Session and open the meeting.

Mr. Malone announced to those still outside the room that the Commission had voted to authorize the Department to proceed with appraisals of a property in Attala County and to obtain a right-of-first-refusal for a tract of land in Copiah County.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business before the Commission, Chairman Rhoads called for a motion to adjourn. Commissioner Mounger 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 — 4/23/26 Date

Billy Mounger, VICE CHAIRMAN — 4/23/26 Date