MISSISSIPPI COMMISSION ON WILDLIFE, FISHERIES, & PARKS

Thursday, April 23rd, 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, Colin Maloney, and Drew St. John were in attendance, Commissioner Todd Hairston attended via Teleconference.

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 Jason Thompson, Director of Administrative Services, 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 Maloney and seconded by Commissioner St. John, the Commission meeting minutes from March 2026 were unanimously approved.

AGENDA

The Chairman asked Executive Director, Lynn Posey, if there were any changes to the proposed agenda. Executive Director Posey stated there is one person who signed up for public comments and there is a need for an executive session to discuss land matters.

Action: Upon motion by Commissioner Maloney and seconded by Commissioner St. John, the Commission unanimously approved of the meeting agenda for April 23rd, 2026.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

Mike Jarvis, a private landowner and high-fence/breeding-facility owner, asked the Commission to lift or modify the moratorium on intrastate white-tailed deer transport. He explained that he applied in December to move 17 deer from one CWD-free enclosure to another, paid the required $25 per deer, had his check cashed, and has heard nothing since. He emphasized that over seven years he has complied with all inspections, licensing, testing of harvested deer, and rule changes, yet his breeding facility has never been allowed to actually move or breed deer under the moratorium. Jarvis argued that his deer would be double-fenced to minimize disease risk, questioned why Mississippi State/The Duffs could move deer under a moratorium while he could not, and asked what specific steps he or the Private Landowner Association must take next to get case-by-case transport permits approved, particularly to support his long-time work hosting disabled youth on trophy hunts. The Commissioners thanked him for his comments and would take his recommendations under advisement.

LICENSE SALES REPORT

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

Highlights of his report are listed below:

Resident license sales - $6,464,310.40 (up 3.44%)
Non-resident license sales - $11,075,682.00 (down 0.49%)
Other license sales - $99,727 (up 3.50%)
Lifetime license sales - $756,500 (up 14.53%)

Turkey stamp revenue was about $772,180, with roughly 31,000–37,000 total stamps issued (including exempt hunters). Game Check data showed around 16,000 gobblers reported harvested so far—already a record since Game Check began—indicating high hunter participation and strong use of turkey licenses and stamps.

Commissioner Mounger asked if people are still using the old app. Mr. Thompson explained that some customers are still trying to use the old MDWFP app, which is partially functional (you can still view turkey harvest numbers) but cannot be used to check game or fully transact. They said they've been pushing communication telling users to switch to the new app, and when people call after downloading the old one, staff walks them through getting the new app and using it instead.

PARKS

40 Miss. Admin. Code, Part 6, Rule 1.1

Parks proposed changes to Rule 1.1 (State Park Fees) mainly to align their age and fee structure with Fisheries. They added "age 16 and up" to the daily fishing fee, changed

age ranges from 16–64 to 16–61 for annual bank/pier fishing and annual boat launch, and adjusted the heading of the second "fishing permit" section to "boating permit." They also changed the senior category from 65+ to 62+, so park rules match Fisheries' senior definition.

Action: Upon motion by Commissioner Maloney and seconded by Commissioner Mounger, the Commission unanimously approved the staff recommendations for Parks changes to Rule 1.1.

Andre Hollis, Director of Parks, reported on visitation and revenue for state parks from 07/01/2025- 3/31/2026

Total Visitors- 510,000
Total Occupancy- 127,000
Total Revenue- $7,780,000

Director Hollis also reported strong early performance from newly reopened facilities, including the Clarkco, as well as new canvas units at Paul B. Johnson, all of which generated significant bookings and revenue in March–April. Staff also outlined ongoing ice-storm recovery work at JP Coleman, Cossar, Wall Doxey, and John Kyle, noting that park crews and Wildlife staff are working together with a goal of having all affected parks back open and ready by Memorial Day.

CONSERVATION PROGRAM

Chris Clark, Director of Conservation Programs, gave an update on the customer counts for the department's shooting ranges for March 2026.
McIvor – 597
Turcotte – 522
McHenry – 951

During the range report, Commissioner Mounger asked whether there were any new marketing efforts planned to promote the department's shooting ranges and facilities. Director Clark responded that they are working on improvements—notably a new pavilion at McIvor to better host large tournaments—and are looking at additional ways to make the ranges more attractive and user-friendly for major events.

FISHERIES

PROPOSED - 40: Miss. Admin. Code, Part 3:

Rule 1.4- Statewide Creel Limits

Jerry Brown, Chief of Fisheries, proposed sport-fishing changes to clarify and standardize size and creel limits on several lakes. They clarified the definition of a minimum length

limit, raised the crappie daily limit from 15 to 20 at Lake Mary Crawford and Simpson County Lake, and added an 11-inch minimum length and 20-fish daily limit for crappie at Horseshoe Lake. They also removed various special largemouth bass regulations at several lakes so the statewide 10-fish limit now applies, increased the bream limit at Simpson County Lake from 20 to 50, and added a no-harvest rule for walleye at Elvis Presley Lake (those fish are brood stock).

Action: Upon motion by Commissioner Maloney and seconded by Commissioner St. John, the Commission unanimously approved the staff recommendations for Fisheries changes to Rule 1.4.

Rule 3.1 Regulations Regarding Commercial Fishing

Fisheries proposed two catfish-focused changes. First, under Section 7, the minimum mesh size requirement for hoop nets was reduced from 3 inches to 2 inches, a change requested by commercial anglers and consistent with neighboring states. Second, under Section G (Harvest Size and Possession Restrictions), they added a new provision making it illegal to possess, transport, or sell live catfish 34 inches or longer, aligning Mississippi's rules with Alabama, Tennessee, and Arkansas and providing protection for large, trophy-size catfish from the live-fish trade.

Action: Upon motion by Commissioner Maloney and seconded by Commissioner Mounger, the Commission unanimously approved the staff recommendations for Fisheries changes to Rule 3.1.

WILDLIFE

Amy Blaylock- 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.
  - Rules proposed to go final.

Action: Upon motion by Commissioner Mounger and seconded by Commissioner Maloney, the Commission unanimously approved the extension of the Turkey Season to run through May 3, 2026 on the WMAs proposed as final.

40 Miss. Admin Code, Part 2, WMA Rules 1.1-1.39

Amy Blaylock, Chief of Wildlife, proposed a package of WMA regulation changes to clarify rules, standardize bag limits, and adjust specific areas. System-wide, they added language prohibiting alcohol, illegal drugs, drug paraphernalia, and intoxicated persons on WMAs, and clarified that permitted turkey hunts are limited to one turkey per permitted hunter, counting toward statewide limits. Area-specific updates included: removing campground language at John Starr WMA; adding archery opportunity in youth/handicap areas; clarifying that youth/veteran/military waterfowl seasons at Malmaison WMA follow statewide dates; allowing non-residents to apply for Natchez State Park WMA draws (still capped at 10% non-resident); removing the orange hat requirement for waterfowl at Tuscumbia and temporarily switching its duck hunts from draw to stand-by only until water issues are solved; shortening the Tuscumbia turkey draw to end March 31 with open hunting after; removing quail date language at Skylake; tightening youth deer areas at Howard Miller; and establishing full season/bag frameworks for the new Alligator WMA (archery, youth deer, and primitive-weapon permit hunts, then back to archery/youth).

Action: Upon motion by Commissioner Mounger and seconded by Commissioner St. John, the Commission unanimously approved the proposed changes to WMA rules 1.1-1.6.

40 Miss. Admin. Code, Part 2, Rule 5.2 – Alligator Hunting Season for Private Lands

For Rule 5.2 (Alligator Hunting Season – Private Lands), Wildlife expanded the private-lands alligator season from selected counties to all 82 Mississippi counties. No other major framework changes were described; the update primarily broadens where permitted private-lands alligator hunting can occur statewide.

Action: Upon motion by Commissioner Mounger and seconded by Commissioner Maloney, the Commission unanimously adopted Rule 5.2 as final.

2026-2027 Migratory Bird Framework

Wildlife stated there were a few public comments received regarding the Migratory Bird Seasons dates that were presented at last month's Commission Meeting. 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 Mounger, the Commission unanimously adopted Migratory Bird Framework as final.

40 Miss. Admin. Code, Part 2, Rule 2.2 – White-Tailed Deer Seasons and Bag Limits

For Rule 2.2 (White-Tailed Deer Seasons and Bag Limits), Wildlife updated season dates to match current statutory requirements and adjusted the DMAP CWD Management Tag provision. Instead of only issuing special tags within three miles of a CWD-positive deer, tags can now be issued within three miles of any CWD-positive detection, including environmental positives (e.g., positive scrape/soil samples), and used with weapon of choice during any open deer season on approved properties to intensively remove deer around new detections.

ACTION: Upon motion by Commissioner Maloney and seconded by Commissioner Mounger, the Commission unanimously approved the proposed changes to rule 2.2

40 Miss. Admin. Code, Part 2, Rule 3.1 – Wild Turkey Seasons and Bag Limits

For Rule 3.1 (Wild Turkey Seasons and Bag Limits), Wildlife added language to match the new statute so that when May 1 falls on a Friday or Saturday, turkey season automatically extends through the following Sunday without further Commission action. They also changed the non-resident spring turkey bag limit from 3 birds to 2, with a split: only one bird may be taken before April 1, and a second bird (max) after April 1; resident limits remain at three. The youth/exempt "may take a jake" provision was updated to align with this structure.

40 Miss. Admin. Code, Part 2, Rule 4.1 – Small Game Seasons and Bag Limits

For Rule 4.1 (Small Game Seasons and Bag Limits), Wildlife made technical date changes to bring the rule in line with the new statute. Seasons for raccoon, opossum, bobcat, squirrel, quail, and rabbit are now written so that whenever a listed season end date falls on a Friday or Saturday, the season is automatically extended through that Sunday, ensuring weekend access without repeated rule changes.

Action: Upon motion by Commissioner Maloney and seconded by Commissioner St. John, the Commission unanimously approved the proposed changes rules 3.1 and 4.1.

LAW ENFORCEMENT

Lt. Col. Chris Reed reported that for March 2026, law enforcement issued a range of citations, with the top five violations being: No Resident License (121), Trespassing (89), Unlawful Possession (69), No Turkey Stamp (53), and Violation of WMA Regs (40).

Lt. Col. Reed's report also highlighted several notable activities in March 2026. Officers concluded a major deer-poaching case in Adams County, where non-resident hunters were "island hopping" along the Mississippi River to trespass and take deer, resulting in

10 subjects charged and numerous trespasses and unlawful-possession counts. They assisted in search and rescue on the Tenn-Tom Waterway after a vehicle was swept away in flash flooding and conducted annual SRT, tracking, K-9, firearms, and defensive-tactics training at the Conservation Officer Training Academy. Officers also made on-the-ground cases like catching an out-of-season, unlicensed turkey hunter in Pearl River County and performed routine compliance checks that included positive interactions with successful youth hunters, reinforcing both enforcement and outreach roles.

OTHER BUSINESS

Commissioner Mounger requested that the Wildlife Bureau bring forth a recommendation to address the supplemental feeding of deer during turkey season at an upcoming meeting.

NEXT MEETING

Date: May 14th, 2026
Location: MDWFP Headquarters
Time: 1:00PM

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 Maloney the Commission voted unanimously to close the meeting to determine the need for an Executive Session to discuss transactions in real property.

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.

Art Kennard informed the Commissioners about a tract of land that was for sale that was adjacent to Copiah County WMA. The Commissioners gave the Department their approval to obtain two appraisals of the property and determine what a fair purchase price would be.

Upon motion by Commissioner Mounger and seconded by Commissioner Maloney the Commission voted to give the Department their approval to obtain two appraisals of the property located in Copiah County adjacent to the Copiah County WMA and determine what a fair purchase price would be.

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

ACTION: Commissioner Maloney made the motion to go out of Executive Session and open the meeting. Commissioner St. John 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 obtain appraisals on a certain piece of property for an amount being the average of two appraisals for possible purchase by the Department.

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 St. John. The motion passed unanimously. Chairman Rhoads gaveled the meeting into adjournment.

Gary Rhoads

Gary Rhoads, CHAIRMAN

5/14/2026

Date

W. M. Mounger

Billy Mounger, VICE CHAIRMAN

5/14/2026

Date