MISSISSIPPI COMMISSION ON WILDLIFE, FISHERIES, & PARKS

Thursday, May 14th, 2026
1:00PM Business Session
MDWFP Headquarters
1505 Eastover Drive
Jackson, MS 39211

BUSINESS SESSION MINUTES

PRESENT: Chairman Gary Rhoads, Vice-Chairman Billy Mounger, 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, Col. Jerry Carter, Russ Walsh, Amy Blaylock, Jerry Brown, Jason Thompson, 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 Mounger, the Commission meeting minutes from April 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 that no one is signed up for public comments at this meeting. He stated there is one person who would like to be added to other business and there is a need to discuss going into an executive session.

Action: Upon motion by Commissioner Maloney and seconded by Commissioner Hairston, the Commission unanimously approved of the meeting agenda for May 14th, 2026.

LICENSE SALES REPORT

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

Highlights of his report are listed below:

Resident license sales - $6,765,409.00 (up 2.58%)
Non-resident license sales - $11,459,024.30 (down 0.30%)
Other license sales - $102,801.00 (up 3.87%)
Lifetime license sales - $815,000.00 (up 11.19%)

Turkey stamp revenue was about $778,530, with resident portion being $259,930 and non-resident portion being $518,600.

PARKS

FINAL – 40: Miss. Admin. Code, Part 6

Rule 1.1-State Park Rule Fees

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: Action: Upon motion by Commissioner Mounger and seconded by Commissioner Maloney, the Commission unanimously adopted Rule 1.1 as final.

Andre Hollis, Director of Parks, reported on visitation and revenue for state parks from 07/01/2025- 4/30/2026

Total Visitors- 578,000
Total Occupancy- 141,000
Total Revenue- $8,620,000

Director Andre explained that JP Coleman reopened on April 30, John Kyle was planned to reopen on May 22, and Cossar and Wall Doxey were targeted to reopen within 2–3 weeks, with FEMA reimbursement being pursued for storm cleanup. He also reported progress on major projects and highlighted that seven parks will host major America 250 events to encourage visitation and public engagement.

FISHERIES

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

Rule 1.4- Statewide Creel Limits

Jerry Brown, Chief of Fisheries, said that at the previous month's meeting, fisheries had proposed changes to Rule 1.4 (statewide creel limits), that no public comments had been received on those proposed changes, and that staff recommended the rule be adopted as final.

Action: Action: Upon motion by Commissioner Mounger and seconded by Commissioner Maloney, the Commission unanimously adopted Rule 1.4 as final.

Rule 3.1 Regulations Regarding Commercial Fishing

Regarding Rule 3.1 Jerry Brown said that they had received 38 public comments: 19 were in favor and 19 were opposed, and that about 85% of those opposed were nonresidents mainly supporting pay lakes in Ohio where many of the fish are believed to go. He then stated that staff recommended adopting Rule 3.1 as final.

Action: Upon motion by Commissioner Mounger and seconded by Commissioner Maloney, the Commission unanimously adopted Rule 3.1 as final.

WILDLIFE

FINAL - 40 Miss. Admin Code, Part 2, WMA Rules 1.1-1.48

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.

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

FINAL- 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.

FINAL- 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 April 2026, law enforcement issued a range of citations, with the top five violations being: No Hunting License (159), Trespassing (119), WMA Violations (73), Unlawful Possession (56), and PFD Violations (18).

Lt. Col. Reed's report also highlighted response to recent tornadoes in south Mississippi, safely removing a 12'6" alligator from a country club pond, conducting school and daycare outreach (bringing an alligator and enforcement boat for safety talks), and assisting biologists with black bear capture and relocation. He also described a detailed turkey-poaching case in Tippah County where an officer used a landowner's cell camera images, field surveillance, and patient waiting to catch a trespassing hunter who had illegally harvested a gobbler and a hen and lacked the required stamp and tagging, using it to illustrate officers' dedication, time investment, and commitment to ensuring fair and safe hunting opportunities for both private and public land users.

OTHER BUSINESS

Ms. Shannon Kelardy Bozeman from the U.S. Forest Service asked the commission to support renewing the safety closure order for the National Forests in Mississippi, which had been implemented in 2023 to improve visitor and hunter safety and to align Forest Service regulations as closely as possible with the state's WMA regulations; that order expired in February and she wants it renewed. Commissioners responded appreciatively, noting the value of the national forest lands in Mississippi, and thanked her and her staff for coordinating closely with the department to mirror state rules.

NEXT MEETING

Date: June 24th, 2026
Location: MDWFP Headquarters
Time: 10:00 AM

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 Maloney and seconded by Commissioner Hairston 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.

Josh Moree 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, CHAIRMAN — Date: 6/25/26

Billy Mounger, VICE CHAIRMAN — Date: 6/24/26