



MINUTES
February 24, 2022
N.C. Wildlife Resources Commission Meeting
Raleigh, North Carolina

Chairman Monty Crump called the February 24, 2022, N.C. Wildlife Resources Commission meeting to order at 9:00 a.m. in the Commission Room at the agency's headquarters in Raleigh. Crump reminded everyone that the meeting is being audio streamed live and will be available at www.ncwildlife.org.

Commissioner JC Cole led the Pledge of Allegiance.

Commissioner Kelly Davis gave the invocation.

MANDATORY ETHICS INQUIRY

Chairman Crump advised the Commission of the mandatory ethics inquiry as mandated in NCGS §138A-15.

ROLL CALL

Margo Minkler, *Commission Liaison*, called the roll. John Alexander, Mike Alford, Tom Berry, and Jim Ruffin were absent.

COMMISSIONER ATTENDANCE

Monty Crump	Thomas Fonville	Kelly Davis	John Stone
David Hoyle	Hayden Rogers	Steve Windham	Tom Haislip
Brad Stanback	Wes Seegars	J.C. Cole	Ray Clifton
John Coley	Mark Craig	Landon Zimmer	

VISITORS

Mastaneh, Lea, and Lola Christofferson

MINUTES OF DECEMBER 9, 2021 MEETING

On a motion by David Hoyle and second by Landon Zimmer, the Minutes of the December 9, 2021 meeting were approved as presented in **EXHIBIT A**.

Exhibit A is incorporated into the official record of this meeting.

ADMINISTRATION

Dr. DP Singla, *Chief Financial Officer*, presented a status report in **EXHIBIT B** on the Wildlife Resources Commission General Fund, Capital Improvement Fund, and the Endowment Fund.

Exhibit B is incorporated into the official record of this meeting.

SPECIAL PRESENTATIONS

2021 THOMAS L. QUAY WILDLIFE DIVERSITY AWARD PRESENTATION – The Commission presented the 2021 Thomas L. Quay Wildlife Diversity Award posthumously to Mr. Duane Raver.

COMMITTEE MEETING REPORTS

Land Acquisition and Property Committee Report – February 2, 2022 – *Brad Stanback, Vice Chair*, reported the Land Acquisition and Property Committee met out-of-cycle on Wednesday, February 2, 2022. The Committee reviewed two Phase I and four Phase II land acquisition projects. At the end of the meeting, Commissioners discussed the Weyerhaeuser tracts that are adjacent to the VOA game land, and it was decided to postpone further discussion on these tracts at this time. The Committee would also like to note the Tuckertown Recognition Luncheon has been postponed until the scheduled Land Acquisition and Property Committee meeting on April 13, 2022. The Tuckertown and High Rock acquisitions allowed the Commission to retain nearly 5,000 acres that were already enrolled in our game lands program. We look forward to gathering and recognizing all involved conservation partners and staff that were instrumental in the Tuckertown acquisition.

Fisheries Committee Report – February 2, 2022 – *John Stone, Chair*, reported the Fisheries Committee met out of cycle on Wednesday, February 2, 2022. Chris Smith, *Fish Biologist*, presented information on the management and status of the Roanoke River Striped Bass population. The data indicates that the population is overfished, and overfishing is occurring. The current population lacks older, more reproductively mature fish, specifically females which produce a larger number of more viable eggs. The total allowable landings (TAL) for 2022 will be 6,580 pounds for the Roanoke River recreational fishery based on the lower TAL with an additional reduction to pay back the harvest overage from 2021. In an effort not to exceed the TAL, the

Committee concurred with the staff recommendation for a 4-day harvest season (April 23-24 and April 28-29) for the whole river. The daily creel limit was reduced previously to 1 fish/day through temporary rulemaking. A communication plan to inform constituents of the Roanoke River Striped Bass harvest season will be implemented. Doug Besler, *Mountain Region Fishery Supervisor*, presented background information on the status of Muskellunge in the French Broad River and habitat restoration efforts at Mud Creek. Staff are monitoring the use of the Mud Creek habitat sloughs by Muskellunge through tracking via PIT tag antenna arrays and use by anglers with trail cameras. The committee expressed interest in restricting fishing in the habitat sloughs during the spawning season and asked staff to draft a rule proposal for consideration at the next Committee meeting. Jeremy McCargo, *Anadromous Research Coordinator*, provided an update on Amendment 2 to the NC Estuarine Striped Bass Fisheries Management Plan which the Marine Fisheries Commission will consider releasing for public and advisory committee review at their February meeting. Jeremy also briefly introduced the management strategies that are presented in the plan. Committee questions were held until the April meeting when the plan will be discussed further, and the Committee will have the opportunity to select preferred management options.

Habitat, Nongame, Endangered Species Committee Report – February 23, 2022 – Mark Craig, Chair, reported the Habitat, Nongame, Endangered Species Committee met on Wednesday, February 23, 2022. Todd Ewing, *Assistant Chief, Aquatic Wildlife Diversity Program*, and Dr. Sara Schweitzer, *Assistant Chief, Terrestrial Wildlife Diversity Program*, provided summaries of reports from the Scientific Councils on Fishes, Mammals, and Birds, including results from Status Assessment Tool evaluations. Status changes were proposed for four fish species, two bat species, and no change in listing status for one bird species. The Committee approved the staff's proposed changes. Scientific Councils also provided recommendations for Technical Changes to the Species List, and Mr. Ewing explained three corrections due to Federal Status changes for one fish, mussel, and salamander species. The recommended State Status change will match the Federal Status for these species. Two Technical Corrections were recommended to update scientific and common names for a frog and snake species. Last, staff recommended removing one small mammal from the Protected Species List due to further study that determined it does not occur in North Carolina. The Committee approved these proposed Technical Corrections. Mr. Ewing and Dr. Schweitzer then gave a summary of draft conservation plans for the Atlantic Pigtoe and Henslow's Sparrow. The Committee approved posting these plans for public comment. Once staff receive comments and make any necessary changes, the plans will be brought back to the Committee for approval and consideration by the entire Commission. Cindy Simpson, *Wildlife Action Plan Coordinator*, presented an update on the progress toward revising the Wildlife Action Plan. The Plan is currently undergoing a major revision to include plants. Ms. Simpson also explained that the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service requires all Wildlife Action Plans to be updated every 10 years. The process of updating the plan has begun and will be completed by 2025. Staff are working on regional and national efforts to make the plans more consistent among states.

Education Committee Report – February 23, 2022 – Kelly Davis, Chair, reported the Education and Communication Committee met on Wednesday, February 23rd. Staff presented an update on the *Pathway to Wildlife Relevancy Project*. The data collection was completed in December and staff have begun analyzing the information gathered and provided the committee a brief overview.

Staff have identified a working group from the Wildlife Education Division and agency leadership that will meet in March to begin drafting the Division's operational plan. The project is on track to be completed by the end of the calendar year. An overview of the agency's range program was also presented. This included information on the 6 ranges managed directly by the Commission and the 3 facilities managed by our partners. Staff gave the future vision for the range program that includes the addition of full-time range officers, increasing partnerships to assist with funding, marketing opportunities, and facility improvements that will allow for additional classes and programs driven by data from the division's evaluation projects. The committee was advised of a \$10,000 donation from Davidson's Firearms of Greensboro for safety upgrades at R. Wayne Bailey-Caswell Range. These funds will be paired with the agency's federal shooting range grants to increase their financial impact.

Rules Committee Report – February 23, 2022 – *Wes Seegars, Chair*, reported the Rules Committee met on Wednesday, February 23, 2022 to review out-of-cycle rule proposals. Staff presented rule text for potential changes to 10B and 10C rules required for the periodic review, along with rule changes required by legislation from the 2021 long session. Out-of-cycle rules will be presented for notice of text at the April Commission meeting.

Big Game Committee Report – February 23, 2022 – *David Hoyle, Chair*, reported the Big Game Committee met on Wednesday, February 23, 2022. Brad Howard, *Wildlife Management Division Chief*, presented a review of the history of the elk population in North Carolina and an update on current and future elk management activities. Next, Sarah Van de Berg, *Wildlife Health Biologist*, shared the status of CWD Surveillance efforts and reported staff are working closely with our constituents in the Cervid Health Cooperator program and have received over 5500 CWD samples which is an all-time high. Moriah Boggess, *Deer Biologist*, shared an update on the deer research project being conducted north of Durham. The project is well underway and seems to be running smoothly. Brad presented the deer and bear reported harvest updates and commented on the mandatory bear tooth submission response. Submission rates are at 79% statewide and continue to increase. Having no further business, the Committee adjourned.

Committee of the Whole Report – February 23, 2022 – *Monty Crump, Chair*, reported the Committee of the Whole met on Wednesday, February 23, 2022 and received a presentation from Chris Goudreau, *Western Hydropower Coordinator*, on the Commission's Dam Prioritization project. Dr. Singla presented options for license fee increases based on statute, and the committee approved moving forward with an examination of potential increases using CPI-U for the April meeting. Fairley Mahlum, *Communications, Marketing & Digital Engagement Director*, briefed the committee on the plans to promote the Agency's 75th anniversary this year. The committee reviewed public comments and rule text for Safety Equipment, Inland Fisheries, Rehabilitation, License Fees, Wildlife Management, and Game Land which will be voted on later today.

AGENCY SPOTLIGHT – WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT – *Brad Howard, Wildlife Management Division Chief* gave the first 75th anniversary spotlight where he focused on the Commission's success in the restoration of white-tailed deer, wild turkey, and black bear.

LAND ACQUISITION AND PROPERTY MATTERS

Phase II Land Acquisitions – On a motion by Brad Stanback and second by Steve Windham, the Commission approved the acquisition of the following property presented by *Ben Solomon, Assistant Chief and Land Acquisition Manager* (**EXHIBITS C-1, C-2, C-3, C-4**)

- Pisgah Creek Tract – Haywood County (**EXHIBIT C-1**)
- Chowan Swamp Game Land Addition – Hertford and Bertie Counties (**EXHIBIT C-2**)
- Cape Fear D/V Tract – Pender County (**EXHIBIT C-3**)
- Donnie Snelson Tract – Madison County (**EXHIBIT C-4**)

Exhibits C-1, C-2, C-3, C-4 are incorporated into the official record of this meeting.

RULEMAKING

Adoption – 15A NCAC 10F .0201 Safety Equipment – The Commission reviewed public comments (**EXHIBIT D-1**) and, on a motion by Wes Seegars and second by David Hoyle, the Commission adopted changes to boating safety equipment rule (**EXHIBIT D-2**) presented by *Major Ben Meyer, Law Enforcement Division*

Exhibits D-1, D-2 are incorporated into the official record of this meeting.

Adoption – 2022-2023 Wildlife Management Rules – The Commission reviewed public comments (**EXHIBIT E-1**) and, on a motion by David Hoyle and second by Landon Zimmer, the Commission adopted proposed changes to wildlife management rules (**EXHIBIT E-2b**) presented by *Brad Howard, Wildlife Management Division Chief*

Exhibits E-1, E-2b are incorporated into the official record of this meeting.

Adoption – 2022-2023 Inland Fisheries Rules – The Commission reviewed public comments (**EXHIBIT F-1**) and, on a motion by John Stone and second by Hayden Rogers, the Commission adopted proposed changes to inland fisheries rules (**EXHIBIT F-2**) presented by *Christian Waters, Inland Fisheries Division Chief*

Exhibits F-1, F-2 are incorporated into the official record of this meeting.

Adoption – 2022-2023 Land and Water Access Rules – The Commission reviewed public comments (**EXHIBIT G-1**) and, on a motion by Steve Windham and second by Brad Stanback, the Commission adopted proposed changes to land and water access rules (**EXHIBIT G-2b**) presented by *Brian McRae, Deputy Director of Operations*

Exhibits G-1, G-2b are incorporated into the official record of this meeting.

Adoption – 2022-2023 Rehabilitation & License Fees Rules – The Commission reviewed public comments (**EXHIBIT H-1**) and, on a motion by Kelly Davis and second by Steve Windham, the Commission adopted proposed changes to rehabilitation and license fee rule (**EXHIBIT H-2b**)

presented by *Daron Barnes, Office of Wildlife Interaction, Regulation Activities and Permits Program Manager*


Exhibits H-1, H-2b are incorporated into the official record of this meeting.

COMMENTS FROM THE CHAIRMAN – Chairman Crump provided an update on the sales of the new Half Price 50+ Lifetime License and shared his appreciation of Janice Underwood for providing updates.


COMMENTS FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR – Executive Director Cameron Ingram and former Executive Director Gordon Myers presented The Order of The Long Leaf Pine Award to Erik Christofferson recognizing his 30 years of extraordinary service and significant contributions to the state.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, the WRC webinar meeting was adjourned at 10:23 a.m. All exhibits are incorporated into the official record of this meeting by reference and are filed with the minutes.



Monty Crump, Chairman April 14, 2022
Date



Cameron Ingram, Executive Director April 14, 2022
Date