



ACTIONS

N.C. WILDLIFE RESOURCES COMMISSION

November 4, 2010 at 9:00 a.m.

NC Wildlife Resources Commission Headquarters
1751 Varsity Drive
Raleigh, North Carolina

Call to Order – In the absence of Chairman Steve Windham, *Commission Vice Chairman* Chuck Bennett called the N.C. Wildlife Resources Commission meeting to order at 9:00 a.m. in the Commission Conference Room, 5th floor. Commissioners absent were Steve Windham, Bobby Purcell, Nat Harris, and Dell Murphy.

Welcome – Vice Chairman Bennett welcomed Commissioners and guests.

Pledge of Allegiance and Invocation - *Commissioner* Wes Seegars led the Pledge of Allegiance. *Commissioner* Berkley Skinner gave the invocation.

Mandatory Ethics Inquiry – Vice Chairman Bennett read the ethics inquiry mandated in North Carolina General Statute 138A-15(e).

Minutes - the Commission approved the October 13, 2010 Wildlife Resources Commission minutes as presented in **Exhibit A**.

Conservation Education Update – the Commission received an update on the activities of the Conservation Education Division from Will Sutton, *Conservation Education Division Chief*. Sutton reported that this year's State Fair attendance exceeded one million people. An average of 2600 people per day visited the Wildlife exhibit, which focused on Youth Day. Sutton said that the *Wildlife in North Carolina* magazine will be 75 years old in November. An article on North Carolina heritage in *Our State* magazine contained an interview with Sharon Meade, Community Services Coordinator at the Outer Banks Center for Wildlife Education at Corolla.

Conservation Education Spotlight – the Commission received an update about the Distance Learning Program at the Centennial Campus for Wildlife Education from Susannah Thompson, *Distance Learning Coordinator*. Thompson highlighted some of the partnerships between the WRC and conservation partners to produce DVDs and instructional videos on habitats, the Huntmaster Lift, and hunting heritage. She reported that the Distance Learning Program reaches schools in every district state-wide and offers web-based learning.

Financial Status Report - the Commission received a financial status report on the Wildlife Operating Fund and the Wildlife Endowment Fund as September 30, 2010, from Tommy Clark, *Budget Officer*, presented in **Exhibit B**. The Operating Fund balance is \$24,290,016.51. The Endowment Fund balance is \$77,504,165.79.

Wildlife Management Update – the Commission received an update about the activities of the Division of Wildlife Management from Dr. David Cobb, *Wildlife Management Division Chief*. Dr. Cobb provided Commissioners with packets of information including copies of the issue of *Wildlife Professional Magazine* that focuses on the North American Model of Wildlife Conservation. Cobb reported that 3100 mentors signed up for the Hats-On Campaign to get people involved in hunting.

Presentation of the Wildlife Society's 2010 Wildlife Management Excellence Award – Dr. Cobb recognized Jacquelyn Wallace and Kacey Cooke for winning the Southeastern Section of the Wildlife Society's 2010 Wildlife Management Excellence Award. Wallace and Cooke were nominated for their work to develop the state-wide program "Green Growth Toolbox," which helps communities integrate wildlife conservation into development projects.

Land Acquisition Update - the Commission received a regular update presented by Dr. Cobb in **Exhibit C** on the status of land acquisitions.

Public Hearing Schedule for Rule Proposal (to Establish Emergency Powers in Event of Wildlife Disease Threat) – the Commission received the schedule of dates and locations of public hearings on the proposed establishment of 15A NCAC 10A.1201, to establish emergency powers in the event of a wildlife disease threat (**Exhibit D**).

2011-2012 Hunting and Trapping Regulation Proposals – the Commission adopted eight hunting and trapping rule proposals, presented by Dr. Cobb in **Exhibit E:**

- H1) Add Currituck National Wildlife Refuge to the same deer season framework currently applied to nearby Mackay Island National Wildlife Refuge – the Saturday on or nearest to September 10 to January 1.
Amend the following rule:
15A NCAC 10B .0203 Deer (White-tailed)
- H2) Create a new rule to define the following trap terms: breakaway device, Collarum™-type trap, leghold, foothold, loop stop, power-activated, relaxing lock, snare and steel-jaw. These terms would only apply to rules within subchapter 10B.
Adopt the following rule:
15A NCAC 10B .0301 Definitions
- H3) Define the physical characteristics and placement of a Collarum™-type trap.
Amend the following rule:
15A NCAC 10B .0304 Traps
- H4) Create a class of roads on game lands that are open only from 5 am to 10 pm during the months of June, July and August. These roads shall be posted with the opening and closing times.
Amend the following rule:
15A NCAC 10D .0102 General Regulations Regarding Use
- H5) Remove hunting and trapping restrictions at Cowan’s Ford Waterfowl Refuge. The property within the refuge will be regulated the same as any other public waters and private property in those counties.
Amend the following rules:
15A NCAC 10D .0102 General Regulations Regarding Use
15A NCAC 10D .0103 Hunting on Game Lands
- H6) Reduce the number of days when permits are required to dove hunt the posted dove areas at Croatan Game Land from the first seven open days of the dove season to the first two days only.
Amend the following rule:
15A NCAC 10D .0103 Hunting on Game Lands
- H7) Remove the permit requirement to hunt turkey on the Camden County portion of the North River Game Land.
Amend the following rule:
15A NCAC 10D .0103 Hunting on Game Lands
- H8) Require a permit in order to hunt deer and bear at Pond Mountain Game Land.
Amend the following rule:
15A NCAC 10D .0103 Hunting on Game Lands

Inland Fisheries Update – the Commission received an update on the activities of the Inland Fisheries Division from Bob Curry, *Inland Fisheries Division Chief*. Curry gave an update on the location of Atlantic sturgeon that were tagged with radio transmitters in September in the Roanoke River at Weldon. Curry announced that catfish have been restocked now after months of poor conditions caused widespread fish kills. Staff is working on adjusting the cost of restocking with the cooperators.

2011-2012 Fishing Regulation Proposals – the Commission adopted fourteen fishing rule proposals, presented by Bob Curry in **Exhibit F**:

- 1) Tuckasegee River (Jackson County) – Identify the downstream boundary of Delayed Harvest Trout Waters as the falls located 275 yards upstream of US 23-441 bridge conspicuously marked by a sign on each bank and upstream boundary as the downstream NC 107 bridge.
Amend the following rule:
15A NCAC 10C .0205 *Public Mountain Trout Waters*
- 2) Ellijay Creek (Macon County) – Remove the Public Mountain Trout Waters designation.
Amend the following rule:
15A NCAC 10C .0205 *Public Mountain Trout Waters*
- 3) Spring Creek (Madison County) – Classify 1.7 miles as Delayed Harvest Trout Waters.
Amend the following rule:
15A NCAC 10C .0205 *Public Mountain Trout Waters*
- 4) Ararat River (Surry County) – Classify 2.0 miles as Delayed Harvest Trout Waters.
Amend the following rule:
15A NCAC 10C .0205 *Public Mountain Trout Waters*
- 5) Buckeye Creek (Watauga County) – Classify 0.5 miles as Hatchery Supported Trout Waters.
Amend the following rule:
15A NCAC 10C .0205 *Public Mountain Trout Waters*
- 6) Coffee Lake (Watauga County) – Reclassify this 2.0-acre lake from Hatchery Supported to Delayed Harvest Trout Waters.
Amend the following rule:
15A NCAC 10C .0205 *Public Mountain Trout Waters*
- 7) Elk Creek (Wilkes County) – Classify 1.0 miles as Delayed Harvest Trout Waters.
Amend the following rule:
15A NCAC 10C .0205 *Public Mountain Trout Waters*
- 8) Elk Hollow Branch (Avery County) – Remove the Public Mountain Trout Waters designation.
Amend the following rule:
15A NCAC 10C .0205 *Public Mountain Trout Waters*
- 9) Pond Creek (Watauga County) – Classify 1.5 miles as Catch and Release/Artificial Lures Only Trout Waters.
Amend the following rule:
15A NCAC 10C .0205 *Public Mountain Trout Waters*

- 10) Dugger Creek (Watauga and Wilkes counties) and Laurel Creek (Watauga County) – (Administrative change) Identify Reynolds Blue Ridge development as the property owner allowing public fishing access.

Amend the following rule:

15A NCAC 10C .0205 *Public Mountain Trout Waters*

- 11) Sea trout (spotted or speckled) – Establish a 14-inch minimum size limit with a 10 fish daily creel limit in inland fishing waters.

Amend the following rule:

15A NCAC 10C .0305 *Open Seasons: Creel and Size Limits*

- 12) Black bass (Alleghany County) – Establish a 14-20 inch protective slot limit for black bass in the New River and allow only one fish in the five fish per day creel limit to exceed 20 inches.

Amend the following rule:

15A NCAC 10C .0305 *Open Seasons: Creel and Size Limits*

- 13) Gray trout (weakfish) – Establish a 12-inch minimum size limit with a one fish daily creel limit in inland fishing waters.

Amend the following rules:

15A NCAC 10C .0305 *Open Seasons: Creel and Size Limits*

15A NCAC 10C .0401 *Manner of Taking Nongame Fishes: Purchase and Sale*

- 14) Prohibit the possession of quagga mussels and red claw crayfish.

Amend the following rule:

15A NCAC 10C .0211 *Possession of Certain Fishes*

Engineering Services Division Update – the Commission received an update about the activities and projects of the Engineering Services Division from Erik Christofferson, *Engineering Services Division Chief*. Christofferson announced that the Division is prioritizing making boating access areas across the state ADA (Americans with Disabilities Act) compliant. Of the more than 200 boating access areas state-wide, 58 are totally compliant and 77 are not compliant. Christofferson estimated that it would take approximately 277 thousand dollars per year for five years to make all BAAs compliant. He added that using inmate labor to build the structures is a great savings to the WRC.

Boating Access Area Renovation – Yadkin River, Surry County – the Commission approved a request, presented by Erik Christofferson in **Exhibit G**, to partner with the Town of Elkin to renovate a boating access area at Crater Park.

2011 Wildlife Resources Commission Meeting Schedule – the Commission adopted **Exhibit H**, the 2011 schedule for Wildlife Resources Commission meetings which will be held on Thursdays in Raleigh:

January 13, 2011

March 10, 2011

May 12, 2011

July 7, 2011

August 25, 2011

October 13, 2011

November 10, 2011

Big Game Committee Meeting Report – the Commission adopted a motion from the Big Game Committee at its meeting on November 3, 2010, for the Commission to implement the deer hunting regulations change proposal evaluation process approved by the Big Game Committee, and for staff to address data gaps and delineation of deer management units and appropriate regulations that are outlined in the report presented to the Committee as soon as is feasible. Chairman David Hoyle, Jr. reported that the Big Game Committee discussed issues with feral hogs, noting that the Department of Agriculture is concerned as well about disease spread and impact on the commercial hog industry. In 94 counties it is legal to shoot feral hogs at night with the aid of artificial light. The committee recommended that best practices for shooting feral hogs be posted on the agency website. The committee discussed hunting coyotes at night, which Hoyle stated would require a statutory change. He reiterated the importance of correct information being reported by stakeholders who attend the Big Game Committee meetings.

Habitat, Non-Game and Endangered Species Committee Meeting Report - Committee Chairman Chuck Bennett reported that the committee in its meeting on November 3, 2010 established procedures for nominations of recipients of the Thomas L. Quay Wildlife Diversity Award, which are similar to procedures used in nominating recipients of the Diedrick Small Game Award.

Land Use and Access Committee Meeting Report – the Commission adopted a motion from the Land Use and Access Committee for staff to pursue a Memorandum of Understanding and lease agreement with Caldwell County for a Day Use Facility at a park. Chairman Doug Parsons reported that the committee also discussed the possible funding, partnership and stewardship of the East Fork Headwaters Tract, an 8000-acre parcel in Transylvania County. The Conservation Fund is seeking assistance from the WRC in obtaining some of the funding for the \$33 million purchase. The Land Use and Access Committee tasked Executive Director Gordon Myers with writing a resolution in support of the Conservation Fund's efforts to purchase the East Fork Headquarters Tract. Myers presented a resolution that did not reflect some of the proposed language discussed in committee, which he stated could be construed to financially obligate the WRC beyond its ability to meet those obligations. Myers announced that upon discussion and reflection on state-wide budgetary uncertainties which could limit the WRC's ability to obligate funds, and the limited information available as to which tracts within the parcel, if sold separately, would best fit with stewardship by the WRC, he felt it better to present the resolution as originally discussed. The Commission adopted the resolution. Myers assured the assembly that agency staff will work closely with funding partners over the next four to six weeks to identify and try to expedite funding sources that may be available through a state agency to the Conservation Fund.

Comments by Executive Director - Gordon Myers, *Executive Director*, remarked that the recent election results and legislative changes underscore the importance of the agency seeking sustainable funding. He announced that the agency has complied with the Office of State Budget's request to submit 15 percent budget cut options to the Office of the Governor on November 5, 2010.

Comments by Vice Chairman - Vice Chairman Bennett stated that Commissioner Mitch St. Clair will report to the assembly about possible solutions that would allow some committee meetings to be held off-site via teleconference in the interest of saving time and money. Commissioner Ray White announced that the Outer Banks Center for Wildlife Education subcommittee met at Corolla about developing a Memorandum of Understanding with Currituck Heritage Trust and Outer Banks Center for Wildlife Education. The committee will bring final edits of the MOU to the full Commission.

Adjournment - the meeting was adjourned at 10:25 a.m.