



ACTIONS

N.C. WILDLIFE RESOURCES COMMISSION

July 8, 2009 at 9:00 a.m.

Wildlife Resources Commission Headquarters
Raleigh, North Carolina

Meeting - *Commission Chairman* Wes Seegars called the N.C. Wildlife Resources Commission meeting to order at 9:00 a.m. in the Commission Room at Wildlife Resources Commission Headquarters, Raleigh, NC.

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

Minutes - the Commission approved the May 13, 2009 Wildlife Resources Commission minutes as presented in **Exhibit A**.

Notices of Commissioner Reappointments – letters of reappointment by Governor Beverly Perdue of Commissioners Berkley Skinner and Steve Windham for terms ending June 30, 2013; and Nathaniel T. Harris, Jr., David Hoyle, Jr., and Joseph Barker for terms ending April 25, 2015 were received into the minutes in **Exhibits B-1, B-2, B-3, B-4, and B-5**.

National Fishing and Boating Week Lifetime License Presentations- Chairman Wes Seegars awarded a Lifetime Combination Fishing License, sponsored by Neuse Sport Shop in Kinston to Zack Kahl of Camp Lejeune, and a Lifetime Freshwater Fishing License, sponsored by the N.C. State Council of Trout Unlimited to Miah Domel of Camp Lejeune. The winners were drawn from among participants at 40 state-wide fishing events held during 2009 National Fishing and Boating Week.

2009 Thomas L. Quay Wildlife Diversity Award- Commissioner Chuck Bennett introduced Tom Henson, the 2009 winner of the Thomas L. Quay Wildlife Diversity Award, noting that Henson devoted his 30-year career at the Wildlife Resources Commission to wildlife diversity conservation. Executive Director Gordon Myers read a resolution in Henson's honor, incorporated into the minutes as **Exhibit C**, and presented him with a plaque and framed photograph by Tom Cagle.

Financial Status Report - the Commission received a financial status report as of May 31, 2009 on the Wildlife Operating Fund, which has a balance of \$14,973,924.60, and the Wildlife Endowment Fund, which has a balance of \$69,168,447.85, from Tommy Clark, *Budget Officer*, in **Exhibit D**.

Spotlight - Elk Project Update – the Commission received an update about the Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation’s efforts to restore the elk herd and habitat from Joe Treadway, *Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation Board Chairman* and Gary West, *Major Gift Officer*. Gary West highlighted the success of the Elk Project in increasing the herd in the U.S. by 44 percent. He encouraged partnerships for elk restoration, conservation education, and hunter recruitment.

Inland Fisheries Update - the Commission received an update about the activities of the Inland Fisheries Division from Bob Curry, *Inland Fisheries Division Chief*. Curry provided Commissioners with recent news releases and information about the many state-wide fishing events and activities at the Pechmann Fishing Education Center.

North Carolina Birding Trail Mountain Trail Guide – Dr. David Cobb, *Wildlife Management Division Chief*, announced that the dedication of the mountain section of the North Carolina Birding Trail was held two weeks ago. Dr. Cobb and *Chief Deputy Director* Mallory Martin attended. Dr. Cobb provided a copy of the Mountain Birding Trail Guide for each Commissioner.

Property Acquisitions - the Commission approved staff recommendations presented in **Exhibit E** by Dr. Cobb to acquire the Peterson Tract in Ashe County and the Havic and Nobitt Tracts in Camden County as donations for inclusion into the Game Land Program.

Property Exchange Request - R. Wayne Bailey-Caswell Game Land - upon the presentation of a request for a property exchange between an adjacent land owner and the WRC on the R. Wayne Bailey – Caswell Game Land in Caswell County (**Exhibit F**), the Commission voted to defer consideration of the proposal until the State Property Office negotiates terms with the landowner that would protect future access to the game land.

Naming Request – Cold Mountain Game Land – the Commission approved a request by the Ruffed Grouse Society (RGS) presented in **Exhibit G**, to name a portion of the Cold Mountain Game Land in Haywood County for the late Jerry Smathers, who was an avid grouse hunter and conservationist. The area will be named the “Jerry Smathers Memorial Project” allowing the RGS to continue to partner with the WRC by raising funds for creation of early successional habitat for ruffed grouse and other species.

Right of Way Request – Needmore Game Land - the Commission approved a request by Paul Carlson, presented by Dr. Cobb in **Exhibit H**, for a right of way along an existing road across the Coggins Bend tract on Needmore Game Land in Macon County, to access a tract that Mr. Carlson owns. This right of way may in the future provide public access across this portion of the game land, which currently has no public access.

Right of Way Request – Tillery Game Land - the Commission approved a request by the North Carolina Department of Transportation, presented by Dr. Cobb in **Exhibit I**, for a right of way for construction of improvements to SR 1114 (Piney Woods Road) on Tillery Game Land in Halifax County.

Land Acquisition Update - the Commission received a report on the status of land acquisition projects in **Exhibit J** from Dr. Cobb.

Huntmaster Lift Update - Dr. Cobb provided the Commissioners with a handout and DVD about the Huntmaster Lifts and how to use them. A calendar has been provided for organizations to use in reserving the lifts. The lifts, located state-wide, will create accessibility and additional hunting opportunities for disabled sportsmen.

2009 Population Status of Mourning Dove, White-winged Dove, Band-tailed Pigeon and American Woodcock - the Commission received reports from Dr. Cobb in **Exhibits K-1 and K-2** that summarize mourning dove, white-winged dove, band-tailed pigeon and woodcock population status for 2009.

Proposed 2009-2010 Early Hunting Season Frameworks for Certain Migratory Game Birds- the Commission received frameworks, presented by Dr. Cobb in **Exhibit K-3**, outlining Department of the Interior proposals for season lengths, shooting hours, bag and possession limits, and outside dates within which States may select seasons for hunting waterfowl and coots between the dates of September 1, 2009 and March 10, 2010.

Public Comments Regarding 2009-2010 Recommendations for Early Season Framework - the Commission received a summary from Dr. Cobb, in **Exhibit K-4**, of 224 public comments by internet regarding the proposed Early Season Frameworks.

2009-2010 Seasons and Bag Limits for Webless Migratory Game birds and Canada Geese - the Commission adopted staff recommendations, presented by Dr. Cobb in **Exhibit K-5**, for the 2009-2010 seasons, bag limits, and shooting hours for webless migratory game birds and waterfowl seasons beginning prior to October 1; to wit:

- **Dove- Sept. 5 - Oct. 10 and Nov. 23 - Nov. 28 and Dec. 19 - Jan. 15 (shooting hours noon until sunset on September 5 and one half hour before sunrise until sunset thereafter); daily bag 15**
- **King and Clapper Rails- Sept. 5 - Nov. 13; daily bag 15**
- **Sora and Virginia Rails- Sept. 5 - Nov. 13; daily bag 25**
- **Gallinule and Moorhens- Sept. 5 - Nov. 13; daily bag 15**
- **Woodcock- Jan. 1 – Jan. 30; daily bag 3**
- **Common Snipe- Nov. 13 - Feb. 27; daily bag 8**
- **Canada Goose- Sept. 1 – 30 statewide; daily bag 15; [extend shooting hours to ½ hour after sunset; allow use of unplugged guns; allow use of electronic calls- these expanded methods are allowed only west of U.S. 17]**
- **September Teal Season- Sept. 12 – Sept. 30 (East of US 17 Only); daily bag 4**

2009-2010 Extended Falconry Seasons for Webless Migratory Game Bird Species - the Commission adopted the following options for 2009-2010 Extended Falconry Seasons for webless species, presented by Dr. Cobb in **Exhibit K-6**:

- **Doves**
Gun Season: 9/5-10/10 & 11/23-11/28 & 12/19-1/15
Extended Falconry: 10/17-11/21
- **Woodcock**
Gun Season: 1/1-1/30
Extended Falconry: 11/14-12/31 & 2/1-2/27
- **Rails, Gallinule and Moorhens**
Gun Season: 9/5-11/13
Extended Falconry: 11/21-12/26

2009 Season for Take of Migrant Peregrine Falcons - the Commission received public comment summaries and approved a proposal presented in **Exhibit L** to establish a 2009 season for the take of three live migrant juvenile peregrine falcons for use in falconry, with the following stipulations:

- Total allowable take is 3 birds during the period from September 20, 2009 through October 20, 2009.
- All birds taken must be juveniles.
- Take would be allowed only by permit from the WRC and only east of US Highway 17.
- No banded birds could be taken. Any banded birds captured must be immediately released at the site of capture.
- Permits will be issued through our special hunts permitting system (random).
- Two permits will be issued to N.C. residents only; 1 permit will be open to residents or non-residents.
- All individuals issued a permit must have the proper state and federal falconry licenses/permits.
- Each person receiving a permit must complete a post-season survey provided by DWM staff and submit that survey no later than December 15, 2009.

Big Game Committee Report - Big Game Committee Chairman Dave Hoyle reported that discussions at the meeting on July 7, 2009 are in the preliminary stage and included bears, baiting, dog hunting, and deer herd management. Recommendations are being received from agency staff, Commission committees, and the public for consideration over the next regulatory cycle.

Warm Water Fisheries Committee Report - Warm Water Fisheries Chairman Ray White reported that discussions during the July 7, 2009 meeting included striped bass and the Roanoke River sampling and spring season, increases in the American shad population, depressed river herring population and North Carolina's sustainability plan for the river herring. The Division of Marine Fisheries has expressed interest in including saltwater fishing regulations in the NCWRC Regulations Digest. Coastal Recreational Fishing License receipts are a possible source of funding for publishing the expanded Digest. White mentioned CRFL RFAs and ongoing joint projects including the Chowan River pier and three boating access areas.

Habitat, Nongame, Endangered Species Committee Report - Committee Chairman Chuck Bennett reported that the National Park Service is prepared to state that the elk repopulation effort is a success. The NCWRC will anticipate a rule change to control elk in North Carolina.

Election of Commission Chairman and Vice Chairman - Chairman Wes Seegars read North Carolina General Statute 143-243, which calls for the election in odd numbered years of a chairman and vice chairman to serve two-year terms or until their successors are elected and qualified. Steve Windham was elected Chairman. Chuck Bennett was elected vice chairman. Steve Windham thanked the Commissioners for their votes of confidence and stated that he looks forward to working with Vice Chairman Chuck Bennett.

Closing Comments by Chairman Wes Seegars - Outgoing chairman Wes Seegars thanked his fellow Commissioners, Governors Easley and Perdue, interim Executive Director Fred Harris and Executive Director Gordon Myers and the Division Chiefs for their support and leadership during his three year chairmanship. Seegars noted challenges during his tenure as chairman and he highlighted successes, long range planning for the agency's mission, and ongoing projects. Seegars closed by offering his assistance to Chairman Steve Windham and Vice Chairman Chuck Bennett, and he emphasized that the job of the Commission is to represent every sportsman in the state and to conserve wildlife resources for all to enjoy.

Comments by Executive Director Gordon Myers - Executive Director Gordon Myers highlighted some of the wildlife bills sponsored by Senator A. B. Swindell and under consideration by the General Assembly. Myers mentioned the Budget Act and the efforts by the House of Representatives to repeal the special funding to the agency by sales tax transfer. With bipartisan support led by Representative Winkie Wilkins an amendment passed to block the repeal of the sales tax transfer, thus preserving the agency's funding model. The Beaver Management Assistance Program and increases in health and retirement benefit expenditures are two unfunded mandates that the agency will absorb. A \$4.1 million reduction in the agency budget is expected in the next fiscal year, increasing to over \$5 million the following year. Myers closed by thanking Chairman Seegars for his friendship, support and leadership in helping set priorities for the agency.

Adjournment - the meeting was adjourned by Chairman Seegars at 10:55 a.m.