



MINUTES
February 23, 2023
N.C. Wildlife Resources Commission Meeting
Raleigh, North Carolina

Chairman Monty Crump called the February 23, 2023 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 Kelly Davis led the Pledge of Allegiance.

Commissioner John Stone gave the invocation.

ROLL CALL

Margo Minkler, *Commission Liaison*, called the roll. Wes Seegars, Steve Windham, Hayden Rogers, and John Alexander were absent.

COMMISSIONER ATTENDANCE

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|-----------------|------------|-------------|---------------|
| Monty Crump | Jim Ruffin | John Coley | Ray Clifton |
| Thomas Fonville | Mark Craig | Kelly Davis | Landon Zimmer |
| David Hoyle | Tom Berry | Tom Haislip | John Stone |
| Brad Stanback | JC Cole | Mike Alford | |

VISITORS

| | |
|----------------------|--------------------|
| Tim Draughon, NWTF | Bill Collart, NWTF |
| Brent Phillips, NWTF | Robert Smith, NWTF |
| Bryan Perry, NWTF | Zac Morton, NWTF |

MANDATORY ETHICS INQUIRY

Chairman Crump advised the Commission of the mandatory ethics inquiry as mandated in NCGS §138A-15. Commissioner Mark Craig recused himself from discussion and action on Exhibit D.

MINUTES OF DECEMBER 8, 2022 MEETING

On a motion by Landon Zimmer and second by John Coley, the Minutes of the December 8, 2022 meeting were approved as presented in **EXHIBIT A**.

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

ADMINISTRATION

Charonda Lee, *Budget Analyst*, 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.

COMMITTEE MEETING REPORTS

Habitat, Nongame, Endangered Species Committee Report – February 22, 2023 – Mark Craig Chair, reported the Committee met on February 22, 2023. Mr. Jeff Hall, *Wildlife Biologist II*, presented an informative overview of snake species found in the longleaf pine ecosystem of North Carolina. Although much longleaf pine habitat has been altered or lost, the Commission's game lands provide habitat for many snake species due to use of beneficial management practices such as prescribed burning and low basal area forest management. Mr. Hall also provided information about a website that aids identification of reptiles and amphibians and Herp Mapper, an app that can be used to submit sightings. Dr. Sara Schweitzer, *Wildlife Management Division Assistant Chief*, followed Mr. Hall with a presentation of the Southern Hognose Snake Conservation Plan. The HNGES Committee approved posting the plan on the Commission's website for a 30-day public comment period. Ms. Rachael Hoch, *Inland Fisheries Division Assistant Chief*, presented reintroduction proposals for four aquatic species. The first proposal was to reintroduce the state listed Freshwater Drum into the upper French Broad River. The remaining three proposals were to reintroduce federally listed species – the Roanoke Logperch into the upper Mayo River, the Magnificent Ramshorn into the Green Swamp Game Land, and the Spotfin Chub into four watersheds including the upper French Broad River, the Swannanoa River, the South Toe River, and the Tuckasegee River. The Commission will use its Candidate Conservation Agreement with Assurances and Safe Harbor Agreement for the reintroductions of the three federally listed species. All reintroduction proposals were approved by the HNGES Committee.

Rules Committee Report – February 22, 2023 – David Hoyle, Vice Chair, reported the Rules Committee met February 22, 2023, and received several updates on current and upcoming rules. First was a rundown of the public comments for the annual rule cycle proposals and an explanation of the form letter comments and unrelated rule suggestions received. Due to the number of rule suggestions submitted during annual cycle comment periods and throughout the year, a rule

suggestion portal has been added to the regulations webpage. Rule suggestions will be compiled and reviewed annually by staff and Commissioners prior to the subsequent annual cycle. Next the final group of periodic review rules were discussed. Seven rules were presented that will go to the full Commission for vote to notice text in April. Finally, the plan for adoption of permanent Chronic Wasting Disease (CWD) rules was discussed and Commissioners received an explanation of the petition for rulemaking on the Columbus County Game Land that will be added to the April Commission meeting agenda.

Fisheries Committee Report – February 22, 2023 – *John Stone, Chair*, reported the Fisheries Committee met on February 22, 2023. Lawrence Dorsey, *Piedmont Fisheries Supervisor*, provided an overview of a project which specifically showed that Bodie Bass escape low oxygenated water during warmer summer months which is different from Striped Bass. Information from the project on habitat usage, areas where fish can be located, and when they can be found will be shared with anglers via various media sources. Thomas Johnson, *District 7 Fisheries Biologist*, provided an update of how mountain fisheries staff are identifying select streams for Brook Trout restorations. To date, three streams have been restored in District 7 with more planned, and staff have identified over 100 potential restoration sites across the mountain region. Mark Fowlkes, *Piedmont Aquatic Habitat Enhancement Coordinator*, gave an overview of the Inland Fisheries Division program to establish native aquatic vegetation throughout the state. Staff have worked diligently over the past decade to establish a native plant grow out facility at the Sykes Depot in Mebane, and with generous donations from AFTCO, Fish America Foundation, and Wired 2 Fish, the division plans to expand the facility in 2024. Christian Waters, *Inland Fisheries Chief*, provided a review of two socioeconomic studies for inland fishing in North Carolina and trout fishing in the mountain region. The 2017 study demonstrated that inland fishing contributed \$4.18 billion to North Carolina's economy while a 2014 study of mountain trout fishing showed an overall contribution of \$383 million to North Carolina's economy with \$250 million attributed to stocked trout fisheries. The trout fishing study is currently being repeated with results expected later this summer. In closing, he provided a reminder of the harvest season dates in April for Roanoke River Striped Bass.

Big Game Committee Report – February 22, 2023 – *David Hoyle, Chair*, reported the Big Game Committee met on February 22, 2023, to discuss several topics. First, Brad Howard, *Wildlife Management Division Chief*, gave a brief update about the current elk bill that was introduced in the legislature, and the committee did have brief discussion related to elk hunting, including comments from Representative Jay Adams. Next, Brad gave a presentation about this year's bear harvest update. Then, Moriah Boggess, *Deer Biologist*, presented on the upcoming Western Deer Season forums that will discuss potential changes to the western deer season. These changes are coming at the request of deer hunters in that area, but as pointed out the changes would result in biological improvements for our deer seasons. The discussion then moved to CWD and the results of this year's sampling efforts. Staff presented on suggestions for next year's sampling efforts and the Committee discussed the numerous complexities of CWD on the landscape. In closing, the Committee commended all the agency staff's efforts this year.

Committee of the Whole Report – February 22, 2023 – *Monty Crump, Chair*, reported the Committee of the Whole met February 22, 2023. Based on pending legislative review of previous Inland Fisheries and Land and Water Access rules, the Committee agreed to postpone consideration of the new rule proposals until the March 30th virtual meeting and removed those

exhibits from the agenda. The revised agenda and exhibit package is online. The Committee then reviewed a proposed lease amendment for the Weldon Boating Access Area; two water safety rules for notice of text; the 2023-2024 Wildlife Management rule proposals and public comments for consideration of adoption; and proposed changes to Big Game Harvest Reporting and Vessel Numbering, for notice of text. Finally, Director Ingram asked Dr. David Cobb to come up to the front and be recognized for 25 years of distinguished service to the Commission and the wildlife resources of the State of North Carolina. Dr. Cobb is retiring from the Commission effective April 1st.

AGENCY SPOTLIGHT

AGENCY SPOTLIGHT – WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT – *Chris Kreh, Wildlife Management Division Assistant Chief* gave a presentation titled “The NWTF Super Fund: A Recipe For Success”. The presentation highlighted how the National Wild Turkey Federation has supported many WRC projects for turkey transfers, equipment, habitat, outreach, land acquisition, law enforcement, and research.

SPECIAL PRESENTATIONS

Check Presentation from NC State Chapter of the National Wild Turkey Federation – *Tim Draughon, President*, presented a donation check from the NC State Chapter of the National Wild Turkey Federation’s Super Fund Program for wildlife management and land acquisition projects across the state that benefit wild turkey habitat.

2022 National Wild Turkey Federation’s North Carolina Officer of the Year Award – *Tim Draughon* presented the National Wild Turkey Federation’s North Carolina Officer of the Year Award to Senior Officer Hunter Perdue.

LAND ACQUISITION AND PROPERTY MATTERS

Other Property Matters – On a motion by David Hoyle and second by Jim Ruffin, the Commission approved staff recommendations for other property matters presented in **(EXHIBIT C)** by *Ben Solomon*

- Lease amendment for the Weldon Boating Access Area **(EXHIBIT C)**

EXHIBIT C is incorporated into the official record of this meeting.

WATER SAFETY RULEMAKING

With Commissioner Mark Craig recused on Exhibit D, on a motion by Ray Clifton and second by Kelly Davis, the Commission approved the following water safety rules presented in **EXHIBITS D & E** by Betsy Haywood, Water Safety Rules Coordinator

Notice of Text – 15A NCAC 10F .0310 Dare County– The Commission approved publishing Notice of Text in the *NC Register* with an open comment period and public hearing for a proposed amendment to 15A NCAC 10F .0310 on behalf of the National Park Service, to establish a no-wake zone in the waters of Motts Creek in the area surrounding the Oregon Inlet Fishing Center and Boat Basin and Bodie Island U. S. Coast Guard Station. Incorporate into the North Carolina Administrative Code the names and addresses of Boating Access Areas in Dare County. **(EXHIBIT D)**

Notice of Text – 15A NCAC 10F .0374 Cube Hydro Carolinas Safety and Restricted Zones – The Commission approved publishing Notice of Text in the *NC Register* with an open comment period and public hearing for proposed amendments to 15A NCAC 10F .0374, to change the name from Cube Yadkin Generation to Cube Hydro Carolinas; to establish Safety Zones where vessel entry is prohibited; and Restricted Areas where US Coast Guard approved personal flotation devices shall be worn, where swimming is prohibited and discharge of a firearm is prohibited, at High Rock Hydroelectric Station on Yadkin River in Rowan and Davidson counties; Tuckertown Hydroelectric Station on Yadkin River in Stanly and Montgomery counties; Narrows Hydroelectric Station on Yadkin River in Stanly and Montgomery counties; and Falls Hydroelectric Station on Yadkin River in Stanly and Montgomery counties. **(EXHIBIT E)**

EXHIBITS D & E are incorporated into the official record of this meeting.

RULEMAKING

Permanent Rulemaking Adoption – 2023-2024 Wildlife Management Rules– On a motion by Landon Zimmer and a second by John Coley, the Commission reviewed public comments **(EXHIBIT F-1)** and adopted proposed changes to wildlife management rules presented in **(EXHIBIT F-2)** by *Brad Howard, Wildlife Management Division Chief*

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

Notice of Text – 10B .0113 Big Game Harvest Reporting– On a motion by David Hoyle and a second by Ray Clifton, the Commission approved publishing Notice of Text in the *NC Register* with an open comment period and public hearing for proposed amendments to Rule 10B .0113 for electronic reporting presented in **(EXHIBIT G-1)** and approved fiscal notes for proposed amendments presented in **(EXHIBIT G-2)** by *Carrie Ruhlman, Rulemaking Coordinator*

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

Notice of Text – 10F Vessel Numbering– On a motion by David Hoyle and a second by Mike Alford, the Commission approved publishing Notice of Text in the *NC Register* with an open comment period and public hearing for proposed amendments to 10F .0102, .0104, and .0109 to update vessel data collection and certificate of number requirements to comply with USCG regulations presented in **(EXHIBIT H)** by *Carrie Ruhlman*

EXHIBIT H is incorporated into the official record of this meeting.

COMMENTS FROM THE CHAIRMAN – Chairman Crump acknowledged staff’s hard work and commitment to the resources of North Carolina. He also noted his appreciation for the partnership with the NC State Chapter of the National Wild Turkey Federation.

COMMENTS FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR – Executive Director Cameron Ingram shared information on the upcoming Youth Hunter Education Skills Tournaments (YHEST) scheduled for March/April and noted he has often described YHEST as one of the most successful outreach programs done by the agency. He encouraged the board, staff, and the public to attend their local tournament. In closing, he presented a rendering of the design for WRC’s Samarcand Training Center building.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, the WRC webinar meeting was adjourned at 9:59 a.m. All exhibits are incorporated into the official record of this meeting by reference and are filed with the minutes.



Monty Crump, Chairman 4/20/2023
Date



Cameron Ingram, Executive Director 4/20/2023
Date