



**MINUTES**  
**October 28, 2021**  
**N.C. Wildlife Resources Commission Webinar Meeting**  
**Raleigh, North Carolina**

Pursuant to North Carolina General Statute (NCGS) §166A-19.20 (Public Bodies/Remote Meetings During Declared Emergencies), the October 28, 2021 N.C. Wildlife Resources Commission (NCWRC) webinar meeting was called to order by Commission Chairman Monty Crump at 9:00 a.m.

Chairman Crump announced that the webinar meeting audio is being streamed live and will be available on the NCWRC's website. He reminded Commissioners to speak their names before making motions or comments and to mute their devices when not speaking. Crump announced that by the statutory requirement, the roll will be called for attendance and for each vote.

**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.

**COMMISSIONER ATTENDANCE**

Monty Crump	Thomas Fonville	Landon Zimmer
David Hoyle	Wes Seegars	Hayden Rogers
John Coley	Mark Craig	John Stone
Tom Berry	Brad Stanback	John Alexander
Jim Ruffin	Ray Clifton	
Kelly Davis	Steve Windham	

### **NOTICES OF COMMISSION APPOINTMENTS**

The Commission received into the minutes the Notices of Appointments by Senate President Pro Tempore Phil Berger of John M. Alexander, Jr., Mark Craig, Landon G. Zimmer, and Thomas “Tom” Berry for terms ending June 30, 2023; and Appointments by House Speaker Tim Moore of Vernon Ray Clifton, Jr., John A. Stone, John T. Coley, IV, and Tommy Fonville for terms ending June 30, 2023. **(EXHIBIT A)**

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

### **RECEIVE STATE ETHICS COMMISSION REVIEWS OF 2021 STATEMENT OF ECONOMIC INTEREST FOR PROSPECTIVE COMMISSIONER JOHN M. ALEXANDER, JR.**

– Pursuant to NCGS §138A-15(c), Margo Minkler, Ethics Liaison, read into the Minutes relevant portions of the evaluations by the N.C. Ethics Commission of the 2021 Statement of Economic Interest for John M. Alexander, Jr., President Pro Tempore Appointee.

### **MINUTES OF AUGUST 26, 2021 MEETING**

With John Alexander abstaining, on a motion by David Hoyle and a second by Wes Seegars, the Minutes of the August 26, 2021 meeting were approved as presented in **Exhibit B**.

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

### **ADMINISTRATION**

Dr. DP Singla, Chief Financial Officer, presented a status report in **Exhibit C** on the Wildlife Operating Fund and Capital Improvement Fund.

**Exhibit C** is incorporated into the official record of this meeting.

### **COMMITTEE MEETING REPORTS**

**Land Acquisitions and Property Committee Report – September 20, 2021** – *Tom Berry, Chair*, reported the Land Acquisitions and Property Committee met on September 20<sup>th</sup>, 2021. The Land Acquisition and Property Committee conducted an out-of-cycle meeting to further review an easement request at Needmore Game Land. After careful consideration, the Committee endorsed this request with the addition of specific restrictions for the easement. This recommendation will be presented to the Commission for approval.

**Habitat, Nongame, Endangered Species Committee Report – October 27, 2021**– *Mark Craig, Chair*, reported the Habitat, Nongame, Endangered Species Committee met on October 27<sup>th</sup>, 2021. The meeting began with two presentations from biologists with the terrestrial and aquatic Wildlife Diversity programs. Dr. Matthew Godfrey, the Sea Turtle Biologist for the Wildlife Management Division, presented information on sea turtle management and conservation in North Carolina. North Carolina’s 300+ mile long coast, its sounds, and the Atlantic Ocean off our coast provide optimal nesting and foraging habitat for sea turtles, all of which are currently federally listed. Partners and thousands of volunteers help monitor and conduct research on nests, eggs, and adults. Genetic analyses of egg tissue identify individual female

loggerhead sea turtles and have helped determine that the population is truly growing, that some females select the same beach for nesting during a season while others range more than 1000 km (~ 625 miles) among beaches, and one female they've tracked is 80 years old but still nesting successfully. Research has also determined that juveniles and breeding adults are the most important cohorts to protect to keep the population growing. Mr. Michael Fisk, the Eastern Region Aquatic Wildlife Diversity Research Coordinator, summarized conservation efforts for the Carolina Madtom, a small member of the Catfish Family found only in the Neuse and Tar River basins in North Carolina. Research has shown that the Carolina Madtom is declining in both distribution and abundance. The species now exists in small, fragmented populations which have low genetic diversity. Due to this significant decline, the Carolina Madtom was listed as endangered by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service in 2021. Threats to the species include poor water quality, habitat degradation, and predation by Flathead Catfish. To offset these declines, Commission staff have teamed with Conservation Fisheries, Inc. to propagate the Carolina Madtom. Propagated individuals will be used to augment existing populations as well as possibly establishing new populations in the future. Lastly, Mr. Todd Ewing presented a proposal to the Committee to augment existing populations of the Carolina Madtom in Little Fishing Creek, Fishing Creek, Swift Creek, and Sandy Creek watersheds within the Tar River basin. The Committee approved this proposal.

**Education and Communication Committee Report – October 27, 2021** – *Kelly Davis, Chair*, reported the Education and Communication Committee met on October 27<sup>th</sup>, 2021. The Committee presented an overview of the successful efforts to date to reduce expenditures and increase revenue for Wildlife in North Carolina's magazine. An update was given on the work underway to improve the agency's website for a better user experience and enhanced accessibility along with work on a complete redesign. The committee also received an update on the work of the Pathway to Wildlife Relevancy Project and staff efforts align programming with the R3 plan. In addition, the committee received an update on the Pisgah Center for Wildlife Education. Two options for the future of the Pisgah Center are as follows:

- **Options 1:** Reopen as a visitor center with a walk-through trout display and restrooms. Most education opportunities would move off-site.
- **Options 2:** Demolish the main education center building and restrooms allowing for raceway expansion to increase trout production and the relocation of hatchery infrastructure that could potentially mitigate future flooding risk. Hatchery education programs would continue however other programs would move off-site.

The committee selected Option 2 to recommend to the full Commission for a vote.

**Motion from Education and Communication Committee-** On a motion by Jim Ruffin and second by Tom Berry, the Commission approved a plan to demolish the Pisgah Center for Wildlife Education's main building and adjacent restrooms due to damage received during Tropical Storm Fred and directed Executive Director Ingram to develop and implement a new educational model that utilizes existing Center staff to conduct programs across western North Carolina and to work with the Setzer Hatchery design team and US Forest Service personnel to explore increasing the footprint of the hatchery to gain efficiencies in operation and maximize production.

**Finance, Audit and Compliance Committee Report – October 27, 2021** – *Landon Zimmer, Chair*, reported the Finance, Audit and Compliance Committee met on October 27<sup>th</sup>, 2021. The Audit and Compliance presented two topics: Risk Assessments and the Self-Assessment and Maturity Model. Risk

Assessments were developed by all WRC divisions and offices, 281 risks were identified, next steps will be a review by WRC management and presentation of results to the Committee. A Self-Assessment and Maturity Model overview was given to the Committee. The model is an assessment tool to be used by all NC internal audit functions to determine their level of compliance with the Institute of Internal Auditors International Professional Practices Framework. Chief Financial Officer (CFO) Dr. DP Singla presented a comparison of current and previous fiscal years for periods ending August 31<sup>st</sup>, 2021, showcasing both revenues and expenditures for the General and Capital Improvement funds. Explanations were provided for any variances more than one million dollars. Lastly, the Committee reviewed the Endowment Fund balances, Asset Allocation, and the rate of return. The Committee agreed to continue the transfer of funds from Bond Index Fund (BIF) to Equity Index Fund (EIF) in the amount of \$1,500,000 for 12 months starting in the month of November 2021 and will assess again next year in year 2022.

**Motion from Finance, Audit and Compliance Committee** – On a motion by Landon Zimmer and a second by John Coley, the Commission approved a motion to move \$1.5 million per month in the Endowment Fund’s Bond Index Fund to the Equity Index Fund for a period of twelve months beginning November 2021.

**Joint Land Acquisitions and Property (LAP)/ Small Game Wild Turkey (SGWT) Committee Report – October 27, 2021** – *Tom Berry, LAP Chair and Jim Ruffin, SGWT Chair*, reported the Land Acquisitions and Property and Small Game Wild Turkey Committee met on October 27<sup>th</sup>, 2021. Both committees reviewed and endorsed three Phase I and two Phase II land acquisition projects. Additionally, the committees received an update on the new Game Land Parcel Analysis as well as the Small Game Focal area concept. Staff were directed to reach out to the 16 landowners with properties greater than 2,000 acres and inquire about the potential for acquisition. Lastly, staff were directed to provide distances from existing depots to these 16 properties, evaluate incorporating other public lands into the analysis, and prepare an out-of-cycle meeting to discuss next steps in relation to the Small Game Focal Area concept.

**Joint Fisheries/Rules Committee Report – October 27, 2021** – *John Stone, Fisheries Chair and Wes Seegars, Rules Chair*, reported the Fisheries and Rules Committee met on October 27<sup>th</sup>, 2021. Inland Fisheries Division Chief Christian Waters provided a timeline of meetings and actions related to the delineation of waters and readoption of joint rules and described disputes with the Division of Marine Fisheries and Marine Fisheries Commission. He then summarized proposed rule changes for updating and readopting or repealing joint rules to meet the requirements for the Periodic Review of Rules. In addition, he proposed amending existing rules and developing new rules to reaffirm and clarify the Commission’s authority to regulate specific inland game fishes in all Public Fishing Waters and all fishes in Joint Fishing Waters when caught by hook and line. Chief Deputy Director Kyle Briggs outlined the next steps for these rule proposals. At December Commission meeting, staff will present rule text and associated fiscal note for readopting joint rules and for reaffirming the Commission’s authority in joint fishing waters. Approval will be requested to publish Notice of Text, open the comment period, and conduct a public hearing. Staff will also present proposed changes to boundary lines for Inland and Coastal Fishing Waters to the Fisheries and Rules committees for initial consideration. A motion was made and approved by the Fisheries Committee in support of the rulemaking approach as proposed to address joint rules and delineation of waters. Kyle provided an update on recovery efforts at the Setzer State Fish Hatchery following the flooding from Tropical Storm Fred. Through the hard work and

dedication of David Deaton, Adam Moticak, and hatchery staff, enough trout have been obtained from other state, federal, and private hatcheries to fulfill stocking obligations for this fall and next spring. Kyle mentioned that many of the fish will be Rainbow Trout because the species is most readily available. While the trout stocked will be at least 10 inches in length, the percentage of larger fish (14 inch or larger) will likely be reduced. Christian added that there is very small buffer to address any further disruptions in trout production.

**Committee of the Whole Report – October 27, 2021** – *Monty Crump, Chair*, reported the Committee of the Whole Committee met on October 27<sup>th</sup>, 2021. The Committee reviewed proposed rules for inland fisheries, wildlife management, land and water access, rehabilitation and license fees, and safety equipment that will be voted on later in the meeting. An update on agency plans to hold 3 regional and 1 virtual January public hearings for the 2022-2023 rule proposals. Director Ingram presented the proposed 2022 Wildlife Resources Commission meeting schedule. Another update on the 2020-2021 Commission research report from Dr. David Cobb. Finally, the Committee voted to award the Thomas L. Quay Wildlife Diversity Award to an individual, whom they hope to honor in person in December or next February.

**AGENCY SPOTLIGHT – Overview of the Capital Projects Program and an Updated Project List**  
– *Brad Kleinmaier, Capital Projects Coordinator*

The agency spotlight covered an Overview of the Capital Projects Program and was presented by Brad Kleinmaier, WRC’s Capital Projects Coordinator. The presentation focused on what projects are considered Capital Improvements under NC General Statutes, as well as the procedures for establishing and completing these projects. During the presentation several recently completed and current projects were presented, and future projects were discussed.

**LAND AND WATER ACCESS DIVISION**

**Land Acquisitions and Property Matters**

**Phase II Land Acquisitions** – On a motion by Tom Berry and second by Brad Stanback, the Commission approved the acquisition of the following property presented in **EXHIBITS D-1 and D-2** by *Brian McRae, Land and Water Access Division Chief*:

- SME Tracts – Ashe County (**EXHIBIT D-1**)
- Warren Tract – Halifax County (**EXHIBIT D-2**)

**Other Property Matters** – On a motion by Tom Berry and second by David Hoyle, the Commission approved staff recommendations for other property matters presented in **EXHIBIT E** by *Brian McRae*:

- Perrigo Easement Request – Consider conveyance of an easement at Needmore Game Land to a private property owner (**EXHIBIT E**)

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

**RULEMAKING**

**Permanent Rulemaking Notice of Text – 2022-2023 Annual Cycle Rules – Land and Water Access** – With the exclusion of Proposal #12 listed in the package as 15A NCAC 10D .0211, on a motion by David Hoyle and second by Steve Windham, The Commission approved publishing Notice of Text in the *NC Register* with an open comment period and public hearings for proposed changes to land and water access rules presented in **EXHIBIT F-1** by *Brian McRae*.

On a motion by David Hoyle and second by Wes Seegars, the Commission approved the Fiscal Note presented in **Exhibit F-2** by *Brian McRae*.

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

**Permanent Rulemaking Notice of Text – 2022-2023 Annual Cycle Rules – Wildlife Management** – On a motion by Wes Seegars and second by David Hoyle, the Commission approved the Fiscal Note and publishing Notice of Text in the *NC Register* with an open comment period and public hearings for proposed changes to wildlife management rules presented in **EXHIBITS G-1 and G-2** by *Brad Howard, Wildlife Management Division Chief*.

**Exhibits G-1 and G-2** are incorporated into the official record of this meeting.

**Permanent Rulemaking Notice of Text – 2022-2023 Annual Cycle Rules – Rehabilitation & License Fees** – On a motion by David Hoyle and second by Landon Zimmer, the Commission approved publishing Notice of Text in the *NC Register* with an open comment period and public hearings for proposed changes to rehabilitation and license fee rules presented in **EXHIBIT H** by *Daron Barnes, Office of Wildlife Interaction, Regulation Activities and Permits Program Manager*.

**Exhibit H** is incorporated into the official record of this meeting.

**Permanent Rulemaking Notice of Text – 2022-2023 Annual Cycle Rules – Inland Fisheries** – On a motion by David Hoyle and second by Landon Zimmer, the Commission approved the Fiscal Note and publishing Notice of Text in the *NC Register* with an open comment period and public hearings for proposed changes to inland fisheries rules presented in **EXHIBITS I-1 and I-2** by *Christian Waters, Inland Fisheries Division Chief*.

**Exhibits I-1 and I-2** are incorporated into the official record of this meeting.

**Temporary Rulemaking Adoption – 15A NCAC 10C .0314 Striped Bass** – On a motion by Tom Berry and second by Jim Ruffin, the Commission reviewed public comments and adopted temporary changes to the Striped Bass Rule presented in **EXHIBITS J-1 and J-2** by *Christian Waters, Inland Fisheries Division Chief*.

**Exhibits J-1 and J-2** are incorporated into the official record of this meeting.

**Permanent Rulemaking Notice of Text – 15A NCAC 10F .0201 Safety Equipment** – On a motion by

David Hoyle and second by John Coley, the Commission approved publishing Notice of Text in the *NC Register* with an open comment period and virtual public hearing for proposed changes to safety equipment rule presented in **EXHIBIT K** by *Ben Meyer, Law Enforcement Division, Major of Administration*.

**Exhibit K** is incorporated into the official record of this meeting.

**2022 WILDLIFE RESOURCES COMMISSION MEETING SCHEDULE** – On a motion by Steve Windham and a second by Tom Berry, the Commission approved the proposed 2022 Wildlife Resources Commission meeting schedule presented in **EXHIBIT L** by *Cameron Ingram, Executive Director*.

**Exhibit L** is incorporated into the official record of this meeting.

**COMMENTS FROM THE CHAIRMAN**

Chairman Crump thanked everyone for their participation in the lengthy meeting with a lot of rule text to review. He shared his appreciation for how staff set up their presentations, so it was easy to follow and understand. Lastly, he announced the agency started selling discounted lifetime licenses for ages 50 or older last week and the initial statistics, without marketing yet, show a lot of interest in these licenses.

**COMMENTS FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR**

Executive Director Ingram thanked Chairman Crump, Vice Chairman Fonville, and all of the Commissioners and staff who assisted in organizing the new Commissioner Orientation. He also acknowledged the following outstanding employees who recently received awards: Tony Wait received the NC Governor’s Award for Excellence, Safety and Heroism Category, Lori Williams received the Southeastern Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies 2021 Wildlife Biologist of the Year, and Chad Thomas received the Southeastern Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies 2021 Fisheries Biologist of the Year.

**ADJOURNMENT**

There being no further business, the WRC webinar meeting was adjourned at 10:12 a.m. All exhibits are incorporated into the official record of this meeting by reference and are filed with the minutes.

  
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Monty Crump, Chairman December 9, 2021  
Date

  
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Cameron Ingram, Executive Director December 9, 2021  
Date