



ACTIONS

N.C. WILDLIFE RESOURCES COMMISSION

March 10, 2011 at 9:00 a.m.

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

Call to Order – *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. Bennett noted the absences of Steve Windham, Bobby Purcell, Ray White, and Nat Harris.

Pledge of Allegiance and Invocation - *Commissioner* David Hoyle, Jr. led the Pledge of Allegiance. *Commissioner* Mitch St. Clair, Sr. gave the invocation.

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

Welcome – Vice Chairman Bennett welcomed Commissioners and guests.

Minutes - the Commission approved the January 13, 2011 Wildlife Resources Commission minutes as presented in **Exhibit A**.

Financial Status Report - the Commission received a financial status report on the Wildlife Operating Fund and the Wildlife Endowment Fund as of January 31, 2011, from Cecilia Edgar, *Deputy Director of Administration*, presented in **Exhibit B**. The Operating Fund balance was \$20,515,085.95. The Endowment Fund balance was \$79,997,608.09.

Special Recognition – Vice Chairman Chuck Bennett welcomed former *North Carolina House Representative* Jim Gulley and his wife Suzanne. Bennett presented a wildlife print and certificate of appreciation to Mr. Gulley for his legislative support and initiatives that benefit North Carolina wildlife and fellow outdoorsmen. Bennett called a five minute recess so that photographs could be taken.

Inland Fisheries Update – the Commission received an update about the activities of the Division of Inland Fisheries from Bob Curry, *Division Chief*. Curry mentioned that fisheries outreach activities were held for 250 students during the Dixie Deer Classic in Raleigh. The third annual Cape Fear Expo will be held in Wilmington March 18-20. On March 1 striped bass fishing opened on the Roanoke River. Curry announced that public hearings will be held in late March in Elizabethtown, New Bern, Edenton and Raleigh to receive comments about the rule proposal to establish size limits, creel limits, and seasons for spotted sea trout, flounder, red drum, and gray trout by reference to regulations established by NC Marine Fisheries Commission (MFC) in adjacent joint and coastal waters. Curry announced that North Carolina will host the 40th annual Federal Aid Conference in Wilmington.

Division Spotlight – Restoring North Carolina’s Rivers - the Commission received a spotlight by Steve Fraley, *Western Aquatic Wildlife Diversity Coordinator*, on agency activities for the conservation of priority aquatic species including some crayfish and mussels. Fraley stated that the program to restore North Carolina’s rivers uses the agency Strategic Plan and Wildlife Action Plan as guidance with the goal of conserving, recovering, and keeping common aquatic species that are stressed by habitat loss and degradation, thermal and hydrologic alterations, and channel alterations. Fraley highlighted several successful restorations working with partners on creeks and rivers in the western part of the state.

Wildlife Management Update - the Commission received an update about the activities of the Division of Wildlife Management from Dr. David Cobb, *Division Chief*. Dr. Cobb directed the Commissioners to information about White-Nose Syndrome in bats discovered in a second North Carolina county, the 2011 Midwinter Waterfowl Survey, the Wildlife Conservation Lands Program, and the Wildlife Diversity Annual Report for 2009-2010. The Division participated in the Dixie Deer Classic. A meeting was held in Asheville two weeks ago to discuss elk management. Cobb mentioned that Spring Turkey Season Youth Day will be the first Saturday in April.

Property Related Issues – the Commission approved the staff recommendation to coordinate with the State Property Office for the acquisition of the Voice of America Tract in Beaufort County, at no cost to the agency as a transfer from the Federal Government. The Commission approved staff recommendation to work with the State Property Office and to fund the purchase of the Piedmont Land Conservancy Tracts in Alleghany and Surry counties for twenty thousand dollars. **Exhibit C** was presented by Dr. David Cobb.

Property Purchase- Currituck County – the Commission approved the request from Currituck County, presented by Dr. Cobb in **Exhibit D**, to purchase 56.35 acres of state-owned property to accommodate state and federal regulations associated with a spray field and airport with the following conditions:

- Require the County to construct a small 30 by 50 feet parking area off Maple Road for game land users;
- Retain a 20 foot easement across the 56 acres to be acquired by the County to provide pedestrian access to the game land;
- Require the County to enroll the 56 acre tract into the Game Land Program.

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

Boating Access Area Utility Easement, Dare County – the Commission approved a staff recommendation presented in **Exhibit F** by Erik Christofferson, *Engineering Services Division Chief*, to grant a utility easement to Dare County at the Bowsertown Boating Access Area in Manteo.

Technology Presentation – SharePoint – the Commission received an introductory presentation from Todd Leck, *Network Manager*, about SharePoint. SharePoint is a password protected portal for Commissioners and staff to share tasks, maintain team calendars, store and search files and documents pertaining to various committees and agency reports. Leck stated that the portal, while password protected, is subject to public records requests. He also stated that paper copies will remain available for those Commissioners who cannot use the SharePoint portal. Active committee documents are being loaded first. Staff contacts will post items and email alerts will be sent to the Commissioners.

Small Game Committee Report – Dr. David Cobb reported that the Small Game Committee met on March 9, 2011 and received a report from Frank Barrick about issues with quail and Coopers hawks. The Committee discussed the 2010 Diedrick Small Game Award. Dr. Cobb requested that the committee send their nominations soon, and announced that Chairman Bobby Purcell plans to hold a Small Game Committee meeting before the May Commission meeting to consider the Diedrick Award winner.

Big Game Committee Meeting Report - Chairman David Hoyle, Jr. reported that the Big Game Committee met on March 9, 2011. Three representatives from the Department of Agriculture attended and discussion included issues regarding feral swine. There is great concern about interaction between feral swine and domestic and commercial hogs that will result in an increase in the feral swine population, and about the threat of diseases spread among the feral and domestic populations. The Big Game Committee requested a collaborative news release between the WRC and Agriculture about feral swine. In 94 counties in North Carolina the feral swine are not regulated by the WRC. Free sample blood collection kits are available to hunters from the Department of Agriculture for testing feral swine for disease. Both agencies want to educate the public about the public health threat of brucellosis, which can be transmitted to humans by swine. Pseudorabies, another disease of concern, is *not* transmissible to humans. Hoyle announced that the next meeting of the Big Game Committee will be held in May and will be open discussion about bears and bear seasons and limits. Hoyle expects large attendance and plans to hold that meeting in the auditorium on the first floor.

Joint Cold Water Fisheries/Land Use and Access Committee Meeting Report – Martin Lewis, Cold Water Fisheries Chairman, announced that the two committees met on March 9, 2011 and

went into closed session to discuss public trust issues. Because of time constraints the committees were unable to consider the other items on the agenda. That discussion will be deferred until later.

Education, Marketing and Outreach Committee Meeting Report – Chairman Dell Murphy reported that the EMO Committee met on March 9, 2011. Erik Christofferson, *Engineering Services Division Chief*, Greg Jenkins, *Editor of Wildlife in North Carolina* magazine, and Mark Dubowski, *Marketing Director* presented a business plan proposal to help the magazine become self-sustainable and to increase revenues by increasing circulation and advertising. The suggestion is to reduce the number of magazine issues to bi-monthly, with the addition of special editions associated with hunting and fishing. The Commission adopted a motion from the EMO Committee to endorse the plan concept in general with the recommendation that the Executive Director develop and implement an appropriate advertising acceptance policy.

Commissioner Eugene Price recused himself from the discussion and consideration of the motion.

Migratory Birds, Waterfowl Committee Meeting Report – Chairman Maughan Hull reported that the Migratory Birds and Waterfowl Committee met on March 9, 2011. The committee and staff discussed hunting seasons in North Carolina that are more restrictive than the federal frameworks. The Northeast Goose Season and issues with migrant versus resident Canada geese and hunting opportunities was discussed. The data will be analyzed and the committee will revisit this issue in 2012. Discussion was held regarding the more liberal black duck seasons that are allowed in adjacent states. The Field Sanctuary Program, which has been reduced to only one site, is expensive to maintain. The Commission adopted staff recommendation to end the Field Sanctuary Program. The Committee requested a breakdown of expenses for the waterfowl funds. Staff was asked to investigate “Aid and Public Assistance” and to provide a report and recommendation to the full Commission at the May meeting.

Habitat, Non-Game and Endangered Species Committee – Vice Chairman Chuck Bennett reported that the committee met electronically. The committee has asked Dr. Cobb to develop a protocol for members of the non-game and Scientific Councils.

Letter from the North Carolina Bear Hunters Association – Vice Chairman Chuck Bennett read into the minutes a letter from Jim Noles, President of the North Carolina Bear Hunters Association, in appreciation of the Resolution by the North Carolina Wildlife Resources Commission that supports hunting with dogs in North Carolina.

Land Use and Access Followup - Chairman Doug Parsons asked about the discussion of plans for a meeting with PCS Phosphate and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers regarding the offer of the conservation easement of PCS Phosphate property in Beaufort County. Chief Deputy Director Mallory Martin stated that the meeting was postponed at the request of PCS Phosphate. Plans are to hold a meeting with PCS Phosphate and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and to report to the Commission at the May meeting.

Comments by the Executive Director - Executive Director Gordon Myers announced that he has attended the meeting of the NER Subcommittee at the Legislature. They are doing agency overviews with discussions of consideration of merging some of the agencies. Myers stated that work is ongoing on the Feral Swine bill and the Landowner Protection Act bill. Myers is unable to speak about budget reductions because of the talk of mergers of various agencies and the impact any of those might have on the WRC.

Comments by the Chief Deputy Director – Chief Deputy Director Mallory Martin thanked agency staff for their efforts in holding five committee meetings on March 9. Martin stated that the agency is dealing with many complex issues. He stated that the SharePoint portal offers storage opportunities for the committee data and documents and hopes it will be used.

Adjournment – Vice Chairman Chuck Bennett adjourned the meeting at 10:40 a.m.