



***Joint Big Game/Habitat, Nongame and Endangered Species Committee Meeting Summary
August 28, 2013 at 9:00 am
NCWRC, 5th Floor Commission Room***

Meeting Attendees

• **Committee Members:**

David Hoyle, Jr. – Big Game Committee Chair
Wes Seegars
Tom Berry
Mark Craig

John Coley
Ray Clifton
Richard Edwards
Durwood Laughinghouse

• **Commissioners:**

Garry Spence
Jim Cogdell
Dell Murphy

Joe Barker
Tommy Fonville (Commissioner-elect)

• **Staff:**

Mallory Martin
Erik Christofferson
Shannon Deaton
David Sawyer
Perry Sumner
Daron Barnes
Bob Curry
Chris Dillon

Isaac Harrold
Betsy Haywood
Brad Howard
Colleen Olfenbittel
Kate Pipkin
Brad Gunn
Dale Caveny
Gordon Myers

• **Visitors:**

Hal Atkinson – Camp-Younts Foundation
David Simmons – NC Bear Hunters Assoc.
Joe McClees – NC Sporting Dog Assoc.
Dick Hamilton – NCWF
Matt Jenkins – NCBA

Fred Harris, NC Wildlife Federation
Matthew Pait – NCBHA
Henri McClees – NC Sporting Dog Assoc.
J.R. Stone – NCBA
Anson Byers – Hyde County

Big Game Committee Chair David Hoyle, Jr. called the joint meeting of the Big Game Committee and Habitat, Nongame and Endangered Species Committee to order at 9:00 am.

Black Bear Management and Rulemaking

- State-Wide Public Meetings re: bear management rulemaking - Executive Director Gordon Myers recommended that state-wide meetings be held in early October to receive public comments about integration of rules pertaining to the take of black bear with bait, as a result of legislative action during this past session. The plan is to develop proposed rules text after these meetings, to be considered by the WRC in November 2013 to take to public hearings in January 2014.
Action for meetings: provide information about use of unprocessed food, information about research and monitoring, management stamp for black bear, and *let people know that nothing has changed for still hunters.*
- Concept of Piedmont Bear Season – Dr. David Cobb, Wildlife Management Division Chief, reported that staff is working on the concept of a possible piedmont bear season. The season would coincide with the deer season. Part of the discussion will be hunting bears with dogs in the piedmont. There is motivation to manage bears in the piedmont. Non-harvest mortality in bears from vehicles has increased since 2011. Colleen Olfenbittel, Furbearer Biologist, discussed an Urban Bear Study that will be funded with 75% federal funds and a 25% match by NC State University. The 5-year study starts in 2014. The goal is to put GPS collars on forty bears, and study reproduction and survivorship.
Action: Commissioner Mark Craig requested an overlay showing where hunting deer with dogs is allowed in the piedmont for purposes of consideration of a piedmont bear season that runs concurrently with the deer season.
- Bears in urban areas: Brad Howard announced a meeting on September 9, 2013 with the Greensboro Police Department, to educate about bear behavior and how to respond to bear sightings. Brad Howard, Colleen Olfenbittel and Ann May will provide information. Commissioners are invited to attend the Greensboro meeting. Commissioner Wes Seegars suggested creating a training video for officers and eventually videos for YouTube. Also he recommended coordinating with veterinarians across the state for efficient administration of tranquilizers to remove problem bears.

Consideration of Draft Rule Proposal to Allow Sale of Trophy Wildlife

Discussion was held regarding House Bill 581 which directs the WRC to adopt rules to allow the sale of trophy wildlife. Rulemaking would bring the WRC into compliance with the existing statute. The proposal would go to January 2014 public hearings. No action was taken by the Committee.

- No direct permit would be required to buy pelts to using in tying flies.
- The proposal would allow the Executive Director to issue a trophy wildlife permit to sell a mounted specimen.

Elk Management and Research Activities

Discussion was held about the successful reintroduction of elk in western North Carolina, and challenges that have arisen as the elk move out of the national park. House Bill 936 creates a minimum fine of \$2500.00 for the illegal take, transport or possession of elk.

Elk Management goals through 2015

- Quantify movement patterns and habitat outside park – two bull elk in Haywood County have satellite collars. After the rut the plan is to put collars on three cows. Monitor interaction of elk inside and outside of the park. Understand the size of the home range and seasonal shift in range.
- Determine attitude of private landowners in western NC. Analyze and provide report by 2014. Apply results to real time management efforts. Refine current management strategies. Develop long-term management goals.
18,000 anonymous surveys are being sent, with the ability to send identifiable surveys if the respondent prefers. Follow-up postcards will be sent. The survey will be ready by the end of the calendar year.
- Work cooperatively to expand and improve habitat management. Formalize habitat development efforts with the US Fish and Wildlife Service, Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians, National Park Service, NC Wildlife Federation, Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation, landowners and other private organizations.
- Develop an understanding of population size and biological variables outside the Park. Current population estimate is 140 animals. Develop survey techniques to estimate population size outside the Park. Use satellite collars. Develop long-term monitoring techniques.
- Develop strategies to assist landowners who are experiencing elk damage. Provide technical assistance. Review current listing status of elk. Provide viable alternatives to address elk damage on private lands. Provide depredation permit from the Executive Director when appropriate.
- Develop and expand outreach and marketing activities promoting elk watching and other positive aspects of elk conservation. Work with stakeholders to generate positive benefits. Complete RFP for range-wide elk feasibility study.
Action: Commissioner David Hoyle wants another Maggie Valley meeting so stakeholders may voice their concerns.

Elk Depredation Permit

Pursuant to NCGS 113-274 a property owner can take wildlife when it is in the act of depredating his property.

Action: The Committee passed a motion supporting the Executive Director's issuance of one or multiple depredation permits, on a case by case basis, at his discretion. The WRC will retrieve the elk head for testing purposes.

Gordon Myers requested that the statute and rules on depredation permits be integrated into the Elk Management Plan.

Commissioner Richard Edwards suggested a one day deer hunting gun season for youth, to be held the first Saturday of muzzle loading season. Youth would be able to hunt with guns on that Saturday.

Action: David Cobb will provide graphic and proposed rule text for consideration by Committee.

The meeting was adjourned at 11:55 am.