

EXHIBIT A

February 25, 2021



MINUTES December 10, 2020 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 December 10, 2020 N.C. Wildlife Resources Commission (NCWRC) webinar meeting was called to order by Commission Chairman David Hoyle, Jr. at 9:00 a.m.

Chairman Hoyle 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. Hoyle announced that by the statutory requirement, the roll will be called for attendance and for each vote.

Commissioner John Coley gave the invocation.

MANDATORY ETHICS INQUIRY

Chairman Hoyle advised the Commission of the mandatory ethics inquiry as mandated in NCGS §138A-15.

ROLL CALL

Betsy Haywood, *Commission Liaison*, called the roll. Ray Clifton, Mike Johnson, and Jim Cogdell were absent.

COMMISSIONER ATTENDANCE

David Hoyle, Jr.
John Stone
Monty Crump
Brad Stanback
Tom Berry
Landon Zimmer
Hayden Rogers
Wes Seegars

Kelly Davis
John Coley
Steve Windham
Nat Harris
Tommy Fonville
Jim Ruffin
Mark Craig
Richard Edwards

MINUTES OF OCTOBER 22, MEETING

By acclamation, the Minutes of the October 22, 2020 meeting were approved as presented in **Exhibit A**. **Exhibit A** is incorporated into the official record of this meeting.

ADMINISTRATION

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

Wildlife Operating and Capital Improvement Funds - As of October 31, 2020, the revenues in the General Fund were \$56,609,672.54, with Capital Improvement (CI) revenues \$2,389,441.57. Expenditures in the General Fund were \$51,225,781.75. Expenditures in the CI Fund were \$2,808,931.60. The excess of revenues and other sources over expenditures and other uses in the General Fund was \$5,383,890.79, with -\$419,490.03 in CI. The General Fund Balance as of October 31, 2020 was \$21,920,528.02. The CI Fund balance as of October 31, 2020 was \$2,895,680.39.

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

COMMITTEE MEETING REPORTS

Ad Hoc Education Centers Committee Report – November 16, 2020 – Kelly Davis, *Chair*, reported that the *ad hoc* Education Centers Committee met on November 16, 2020 at agency Headquarters in Raleigh and via Zoom. The purpose of the *ad hoc* Committee is to discuss and make a recommendation on the future management of the three WRC education Centers in Corolla, Fayetteville, and Brevard, to determine whether the education centers support the WRC mission and strategic plan, and whether changes need to be made or the centers disposed. Kris Smith, *Education Division Chief*, provided historical information on the WRC's statutory charge, strategic plan, and the mission of Wildlife Education. Kris then provided information on each center's current programming, budget, visitation, and land lease agreements. The Committee discussed that over 90 percent of visitors to the Outer Banks Center for Wildlife Education in Corolla are not North Carolina residents. The Center does provide Citizen Science programming to provide wildlife connections for its visitors; however, the committee expressed concerns over maintaining a center which is primarily a travel and tourism facility. The Committee will explore operations options with Currituck County. The Committee discussed the John E. Pechmann Fishing Education Center and the Pisgah Center for Wildlife Education. Committee members agreed that these two education centers are more closely aligned with the mission of the WRC and serve NC residents; however, programmatic changes were recommended for each center. On Tuesday, December 1, 2020, a small group discussed options for the Outer Banks Wildlife Education Center with the Currituck County Manager and two county commissioners. They were provided with additional operations and staffing information for their January retreat and are optimistic that an agreement will be reached that works well for both the WRC and Currituck County. The *ad hoc* Committee will report with a recommendation at the February 25, 2021 meeting.

The Committee requested that Executive Director Cameron Ingram charge staff with developing a timeline and process for creating operation plans for the two centers, and to identify target markets and

programming that include the agency's R3 objectives to recruit, retain, and reactivate wildlife-associated recreationists. The *ad hoc* committee requested that staff report on this charge at the next Education, Shooting, and Archery Committee meeting which may be scheduled for early February.

Finance Committee Report – December 9, 2020 – Landon Zimmer, *Chair*, reported that the Finance Committee met on December 9, 2020. Dr. D.P. Singla, *Chief Financial Officer*, provided an update on Operating Fund balances as of October 2020. The Committee reviewed the Bank Of New York (BNY) Mellon Investment rollforward summary which included the fund withdrawal process. The Committee also reviewed the State Treasurers' policy regarding Endowment percentage allocations between Bond Index Fund and Equity Index Fund. The Committee agreed to continue to assess the allocation percentages next year to decide what may be the right fit for the agency. WRC staff was asked to arrange a presentation from BlackRock Financial Management, Inc., the investment carrier, at the February or April Committee meeting for further discussions. The Committee reviewed the approval process of Endowment Fund spending for capital projects, debt payments, and large purchases. Janice Underwood, *Information Technology Director*, provided the pricing analysis and the license sales trend. Commissioner Stone requested that Director Ingram include license trends as part of the R3 plan. The Committee requested that internal staff update the lifetime pricing analysis by February or April 2021. The Committee received the Endowment reconstruction project update and requested final expendable and non-expendable allocations at the April 2021 Committee meeting.

Motion from Finance Committee - On a motion by Steve Windham and second by Brad Stanback, the Commission approved a Resolution from the Finance Committee on the Allocation of Available Interest in the North Carolina Wildlife Endowment fund from Sales of Infant and Youth Lifetime Licenses. The Resolution is incorporated by reference into the official record of this meeting and is filed with the Minutes.

Land Acquisition and Property Committee Meeting Report – December 9, 2020 - Tom Berry, *Chair*, reported that the Committee met on December 9, 2020. Jessie Birkhead, *Land Acquisition and Grants Manager* provided an overview of current land acquisition projects. She provided the committee with an update on the Alcoa Tuckertown acquisition and will discuss the final project budget at the February 2021 meeting. The Committee reviewed one Phase I project and endorsed two Phase II projects for a vote by the Commission. The Committee reviewed a naming request for a Boating Access Area. The Committee named commissioners including Tommy Fonville, John Coley, Monty Crump, Brad Stanback, Kelly Davis, and Wes Seegars, who have expressed an interest in being on an *ad hoc* committee to discuss land acquisition strategies at a meeting sometime in January 2021.

Boating Safety Committee Report – October 19, 2020 – *Commissioner* Mark Craig reported that the Boating Safety Committee met on December 9, 2020. Betsy Haywood, *No Wake Zone Coordinator*, reviewed public comments and consideration of final adoption of five rule amendments for no-wake zones. The Committee recommended denial of one amendment in Dayton Cove in Clay County. The Committee reviewed one request for temporary rulemaking for a no-wake zone and safety zone during a pedestrian bridge construction project on Lake James in Burke County.

Habitat, Nongame and Endangered Species Committee Report – December 9, 2020 – Mark Craig, *Chair*, reported that the Committee met on December 9, 2020. Wildlife Diversity program coordinators

Todd Ewing and Dr. Sara Schweitzer presented Proposed Changes to the Protected Animal List recommended by the Nongame Wildlife Advisory Committee (NWAC) Scientific Councils for Crustacea, Amphibians, and Reptiles. Six crayfish, five amphibian, and four reptile species were reviewed using the N.C. Species Assessment Tool. North Carolina Wildlife Resources staff recommended to withdraw the proposed status change for the Coastal Plain Population of the Wood Frog because the population overall in North Carolina does not meet criteria for listing. The Committee recommended by affirmation that the remaining 14 proposed changes to the Protected Animal List be considered for approval by the Commission. Ewing and Schweitzer also presented 25 Technical Corrections to the Protected Animal List, as provided by NWAC's Bird, Fish, and Mollusk Scientific Councils. Technical corrections included changes due to Federal listing status, common and scientific name corrections, and removal from the Protected Animal List due to the species no longer considered native to or found in North Carolina. The Committee approved these recommendations to be presented to the Commission for a vote at a future meeting.

Four Species Conservation Plans (Brook Floater, Neuse/Tar River Basin Endemics, Gopher Frog, and Robust Redhorse) were presented. The bog turtle conservation plan has received additional updated information and will be considered in the next group of Species Conservation Plans that will be reviewed in 2021. The Committee recommended that the four completed plans be considered for approval by the Commission during the Business Meeting on December 10, 2020.

Committee of the Whole Report – December 9, 2020 – David Hoyle, Jr., Chair, reported that the Committee met on December 9, 2020. Carrie Ruhlman, *Rulemaking Coordinator*, reviewed public comments received and several proposed rules for consideration by the Commission. She Also reviewed a petition for rulemaking to amend rules regulating controlled fox hunting preserves. Director Cameron Ingram proposed a change to the January public hearings because of Covid-19, with one virtual public hearing to be held on January 21, 2021. Former Director Gordon Myers provided an update on the Commissioner Handbook he has been working on, including an outline of the contents, and he expects it to be finished soon.

AWARD RECOGNITIONS

Executive Director Cameron Ingram presented recognitions of four awards to agency personnel:

Master Officer Darby Enoch, District 6 - *Shikar-Safari Club International Officer of the Year for NC*

Captain Steve Bullins, District 7 Captain - *NC Governor's Award for Safety and Heroism*

Jeff Evans, Superintendent Watha State Fish Hatchery - *Southeastern Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies' Fisheries Biologist of the Year*

Gordon Myers, former Executive Director - *Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies' Seth Gordon Award*

AGENCY SPOTLIGHT – Pollinator Initiatives and Partnerships

Cindy Simpson, *Wildlife Action Plan Coordinator*, gave an update about the Habitat Conservation Division (HABCON) and programs. The Wildlife Resources Commission is eligible to receive federal grant funds for the conservation of nongame species through the State and Tribal Wildlife Grants program. These funds allow the Commission to address the priority conservation actions outlined in the North Carolina Wildlife Action Plan (NCWAP). The 2015 NCWAP identifies fish and wildlife species of greatest conservation need and other species for which there are research or management priorities and describes the survey, research, monitoring, and management actions that will benefit these species. The NCWAP supports important partnership and collaboration efforts that benefit conservation of wildlife as well as their habitats. A unique partnership that implements NCWAP priorities is the NC Pollinator Conservation Alliance, comprised of state and federal agencies, private businesses, and various conservation organizations. Through this partnership the Commission supports and implements important pollinator conservation work described in the NCWAP.

Gabriela Garrison, *Eastern Piedmont Habitat Conservation Coordinator*, discussed the incredible pollinator diversity in North Carolina that sustains both agricultural and wildlife communities. Pollinators include native bees, butterflies, moths, wasps, and countless other insects. To conserve and bolster these species and their habitat, a statewide partnership was created to promote communication, outreach, and conservation across organizations. This partnership, the NC Pollinator Conservation Alliance (NCPCA), formed six committees, to include Outreach, Plant Resources, Energy, Habitat Assessment, Research and Pesticide Stewardship. Although in-person outreach was challenging in 2020, the NCPCA was able to host a webinar instead of its Annual Pollinator Field Day. The NCPCA also distributed over 1,000 stems of common, swamp and butterfly milkweed to various private landowners across the State, with plans to continue distribution in 2021. In April 2021, biologists from WRC will start their third field season of a native bee sampling study. In conjunction with prescribed burning and habitat response, this project examines native bee diversity on four Game Lands across the state. This study will help create a baseline for native bees as well as give biologists the needed tools to make habitat management decisions that will benefit pollinators. NCPCA projects on the horizon for 2021 include a spring webinar series, an Urban Pollinator Habitat Guide and a statewide partnership with local soil and water districts to implement pollinator conservation best management practices.

CONSERVATION PLANS ADOPTION

On a motion by Mark Craig and second by Tom Berry the Commission adopted four Conservation Plans, presented by Todd Ewing, *Aquatic Wildlife Diversity Program Manager* and Dr. Sara Schweitzer, *Wildlife Diversity Program Coordinator* – Brook Floater presented in **Exhibit C-1**, five rare aquatic species restricted to the Neuse and Tar Rivers presented in **Exhibit C-2**, Gopher Frog presented in **Exhibit C-3**, and Robust Redhorse presented in **Exhibit C-4**.

Exhibits C-1, C-2, C-3, and C-4 are incorporated into the official record of this meeting.

LAND AND WATER ACCESS DIVISION

Land Acquisitions and Property Matters

Phase II Land Acquisitions – on a motion by Tom Berry and second by John Coley, the Commission approved the acquisition of two properties, presented by Jessie Birckhead, *Land Acquisition and Grants Manager*, in **Exhibits D-1 and D-2**.

- King’s Bridge Tract – Henderson County (D-1)
- Hall Tract – Bladen County (D-2)

Naming Request - Boating Access Area - Rowan County - by the same motion, the Commission approved a naming request from the Three Rivers Land Trust for the Hannah’s Ferry /Pump Station Boating Access Area in Rowan County, presented in **Exhibit E**.

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

WATER SAFETY RULEMAKING

Monty Crump made a motion, seconded by Jim Cogdell, and voted to adopt **Exhibits F-2, G-2, I-2, J-2, and K-2**. By the same motion, the Commission voted to disapprove **Exhibit H-2**. Water safety rules proposals were presented by Betsy Haywood, *No-Wake Zone Coordinator*:

Clay County, Lake Chatuge - Gibson Cove – the Commission adopted, with changes, an amendment to 15A NCAC 10F .0308 for a revised no-wake zone in a portion of Gibson Cove shore to shore, beginning north of the boating access area and extending south to the end of the cove. (**Exhibit F-2**)

Clay County, Lake Chatuge – Clay County Recreational Park – the Commission adopted, with changes to revise coordinates, an amendment to 15A NCAC 10F .0308 for a no-wake zone at the peninsula around Clay County Recreational Park. (**Exhibit G-2**)

Clay County, Lake Chatuge – Dayton Cove – the Commission received public comments from property owners in Dayton Cove (**Exhibit H-1**), and after considerable discussion during the Boating Safety Committee Meeting, denied the application for an amendment to 15A NCAC 10F .0308 for a no-wake zone in the waters of Dayton Cove on Lake Chatuge. (**Exhibit H-2**)

Stanly County, Lake Tillery – the Commission adopted an amendment to 15A NCAC 10F .0317 for a no-wake zone on Lake Tillery at the Boathouse and Marina in Norwood. (**Exhibit I-2**)

Burke County, Lake James – the Commission adopted an amendment to 15A NCAC 10F .0323 to extend the no-wake zone on Lake James from northeast of the Highway 126 Bridge shore to shore, southward shore to shore to 50 yards south of the Canal Bridge Boating Access Area. (**Exhibit J-2**)

Temporary Rule Final Adoption, Burke County – Lake James – the Commission adopted a temporary amendment to 15A NCAC 10F .0323 for a no-wake zone and safety zone where vessel entry not authorized by the WRC is prohibited, in Mill Creek on Lake James during construction of a pedestrian bridge at Lake James State Park. (**Exhibit K-2**)

Exhibits F-1, F-2, G-1, G-2, H-1, H-2, I-1, I-2, J-1, J-2, K-1, and K-2 are incorporated into the official record of this meeting.

PERMANENT RULEMAKING

On a motion by Wes Seegars and second by Tom Berry, the Commission reviewed public comments and voted on final adoption of **Exhibits L-2** and **M-2**, presented by Carrie Ruhlman, *Rulemaking Coordinator*:

Controlled Fox Hunting Preserves – the Commission adopted proposed amendments to 15A NCAC 10H .1200, rules for licensing and regulation of controlled fox hunting preserves. (**Exhibit L-2**)

Sale of Live Foxes and Coyotes to Controlled Fox Hunting Preserves – the Commission received one public comment in **Exhibit M-1** and adopted amendments to 15A NCAC 10B .0409, the rule for trapping and live sale of foxes and coyotes to controlled fox hunting preserves. (**Exhibit M-2**)

Exhibits L-2 and M-2 are incorporated into the official record of this meeting.

PETITION FOR RULEMAKING

The Commission approved a petition for rulemaking from the public, presented by Carrie Ruhlman in **Exhibit N**, to amend rules 15A NCAC 10H, .1201, .1202, .1203, and .1204 regulating controlled fox hunting preserves.

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

MODIFICATION OF 2021 PUBLIC HEARING SCHEDULE

The Commission approved a request, presented in **Exhibit O** by Cameron Ingram, *Executive Director*, to modify the 2021 Public Hearing schedule to remove in-person public hearings due to the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic. Staff will send an email blast and other types of notification so that the public will be aware that in-person public hearings for proposed rules will be replaced with one virtual public hearing in January 2021.

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

COMMENTS FROM THE CHAIRMAN

Chairman Hoyle thanked Commissioners and Staff for their attendance and planning for committee meetings. He looks forward to the day that everyone can meet in person again in the Commission Room.

COMMENTS FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

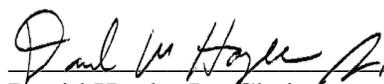
Executive Director Ingram announced that Betsy Haywood will join the Law Enforcement Division to concentrate on water safety rulemaking. He thanked her for her service to the Director's Office. Ingram also recognized Gordon Myers for his service to the Commission and thanked him for his mentorship. Ingram recognized the more than 600 employees who work for the Wildlife Resources Commission and thanked everyone who worked on committee meetings and presentation.

COMMISSIONER COMMENTS

Commissioners Wes Seegars and Steve Windham added their thanks to Gordon Myers, noting that they and Chairman Hoyle worked with Myers from his beginning as Executive Director. Commissioner Monty Crump seconded their comments and thanked Betsy Haywood.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, the WRC webinar meeting was adjourned at 10:25 a.m.
All exhibits are incorporated into the official record of this meeting by reference and are filed with the minutes.



David Hoyle, Jr., Chairman

February 25, 2021

Date



Cameron Ingram, Executive Director

February 25, 2021

Date