

Elk and Alligator Committee

Meeting Agenda



**October 13, 2020
10:30 – 12:00 p.m.**

**Commission Room/Zoom Meeting
Centennial Campus, Raleigh**

Welcome/Open Meeting

- Alligator Fieldwork Update (Summer 2020)
- Alligator Management & Hunting Program(s)

Steve Windham

Alicia Davis

Brad Howard

Additional Topics

Steve Windham

Adjourn

Alligator Management Update



*Elk & Alligator Committee Meeting
October 13, 2020*

Alicia Davis, Alligator Biologist

Mark-Recapture Project at Lake Waccamaw



Marked Alligators at Lake Waccamaw

Gender	n = ?	Size range	6 ft.+	Recaps
Male	88	2 ft 6 in. – 9 ft 2 ¼ in.	34	14
Female	34	2 ft 9 ½ in. – 8 ft 10 ½ in.	11	5
Unknown	14	9 ½ in. – 4 ft 0 in.	n/a	1
Total	136	9 ½ in. – 9 ft 2 ¼ in.	45	20



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Individuals Trained on the Alligator Marking and Data Collection Protocol

Trainee Type	Individuals Trained to Date
NCWRC Law Enforcement Officers	42
NCWRC Wildlife Management Division staff	20
NCWRC Land & Water Access staff	16
Other NCWRC staff	17
Potential Alligator Control Agents	37
Conservation Partners	13
Total	145



Marking and Data Collection Protocol

for all alligators handled by NCWRC staff or Endangered Species permit holders (including Alligator Control Agents, Jurisdictional Alligator Handlers, and scientific researchers)



Reason for Handling	2017		2018		2019		2020		Total Records	Total Marked
	New	Recap	New	Recap	New	Recap	New	Recap		
Data collection purposes only	29	2	69	12	168	25	105	24	434	371
Relocation	41	3	44	5	52	8	43	8	204	180
Health/safety issue (no relocation)	1	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	3	3
Capture for transfer to captivity	0	0	2	0	2	0	1	0	5	-
Euthanization	0	0	0	0	1	1	2	0	4	-
Mortality (prior to handling)	5	0	9	0	3	0	14	4	35	-
Total	76	5	124	17	226	34	167	36	685	554



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Marking and Data Collection Protocol

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Relocations by Handler

Handler	2017	2018	2019	2020	Total
Wildlife Management	9	10	16	9	44
Law Enforcement	1	12	23	26	62
Alligator Control Agent	34	25	14	12	85
Jurisdictional Alligator Handler	0	2	5	4	11
Researcher	0	0	2	0	2
Total	44	49	60	51	204





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Wildlife Management	9	10	16	9	44
Law Enforcement	1	12	23	26	62
Alligator Control Agent	34	25	14	12	85
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Researcher	0	0	2	0	2
Total	44	49	60	51	204



DO NOT
FEED THE
ALLIGATORS

Two Projects

1. Learn about alligator movements following **relocation** (began November 2018)
2. Track adult females to begin ground-truthing predicted **nesting habitat** on game lands (began late May 2019)





ID	Deploy Date	Capture Location	Release Location	Distance* Translocated	Total Length
FR2	5/4/2020	Willow Springs pond Wake Co.	Juniper Creek Game Land Brunswick Co.	106 miles	7.5 ft
FN5	8/20/2020	Gull Rock Game Land Hyde Co.	site of capture	N/A	6.1 ft

*straight-line distance from capture location to release location

Gators Captured During Adult Female Transmitter Deployment Efforts in 2019



Total Length (ft)	male	female	unknown	TOTAL
8+	2	2	0	4
6-8	1	3	0	4
4-6	1	3	0	4
2-4	13	12	4	29
H-2	0	1	6	7
				48

Game Lands	Counties	Total Captured	Transmitters Deployed
Columbus County	Columbus	1	1
Cape Fear River Wetlands	New Hanover, Pender	1	-
Holly Shelter	Pender	3	1
Croatan, Neuse River, White Oak	Craven, Jones, Carteret	10	2
Gull Rock	Hyde	23	-
Juniper Creek	Brunswick, Columbus	10	-

Gators Captured During Adult Female Transmitter Deployment Efforts in 2020



Total Length (ft)	male	female	unknown	TOTAL
8+	0	0	0	0
6-8	0	1	0	1
4-6	2	0	0	2
2-4	1	-	12	13
H-2	-	-	46	46
				62

Game Lands	Counties	Total Captured	Transmitters Deployed
Columbus County	Columbus	-	-
Cape Fear River Wetlands	New Hanover, Pender	-	-
Holly Shelter	Pender	4	-
Croatan, Neuse River, White Oak	Craven, Jones, Carteret	-	-
Gull Rock	Hyde	57	1
Juniper Creek	Brunswick, Columbus	1	-

Two Nests were found on Holly Shelter and Gull Rock Game Lands this year.
Methods Used:

- GPS locations from tracked female
- Location of newly hatched young



Photo courtesy of: Kelly Douglass

Potential use of **FLIR technology** to help locate nests in the future.



Potential use of **FLIR technology** to help locate nests in the future.





Questions?

Meeting Outline

Committee Chairman Windham challenged staff to think practically and creatively about what the criteria might be for developing a Private Lands Alligator Management Program in North Carolina and to provide the Committee with a bullet point outline of those thoughts. I expanded the thought process to include ideas regarding both private and public land hunting opportunities as well as appropriate alligator conservation. I am very pleased with our staff's efforts and while all the details are not complete and there are some underlying questions that we will want to be very careful with moving forward, I think the information below is a very good contribution to our ongoing conversations.

Commissioner Windham asked that you consider the thoughts below and use these as a baseline to begin, continue, and further our conversations and discussions about alligator conservation, management, and harvest.

I began by establishing these three overarching criteria for my staff to use in developing their ideas specifically as it related to a harvest program.

1. A harvest program and harvest levels are biologically acceptable to sustain a NC alligator population.
2. A harvest program provides some level of opportunity to harvest alligators on private and public lands and waters.
3. Proposed alligator harvest program is designed in a manner that meets biological, sociological, and legally appropriate standards.

On page 12 of the Alligator Management Plan the Alligator TF recommended that NCWRC develop an Alligator Management Assistance Program (AMAP) to promote alligator habitat conservation and management. "NCWRC will provide support to landowners to set and achieve their alligator conservation and management goals through a cooperative agreement. The landowner must agree to provide and manage habitat for alligators and to provide access to NCWRC for alligator population monitoring and research. Where a hunting season is established, landowners may be eligible to receive alligator tags for use on their property during an established hunting season when consistent with the overall population goal for the metapopulation. Landowners will agree to provide biological information from any alligators harvested."

To that end we offer the following conceptual thoughts and ideas regarding how we might develop and implement certain alligator hunting opportunities in the State.

Private Land Alligator Harvest Program

- Initially, restrict participation to select counties within AMU 1
- Require a minimum acre size with a certain specific % of wetland habitat be available on the property. OR
- Require a specific amount (acres, etc.) of year-round wetland habitat regardless of the total property size.
- Harvest would be allocated on recommendation of staff biologists based on available habitat and/or alligator estimates.
- Harvest would be restricted to alligators of a minimum length to minimize biological impacts
- Could explore the possibility of providing opportunity to harvest smaller alligators for “meat”, would be below the normal “reproductive age size”, would still be limited to appropriate biological levels.
- Harvest would require physical check for data collection.
- Provide a mechanism for a landowner to legally target an alligator on their property for removal if certain circumstances require it, removal could be lethal or potentially non-lethal.
- Tags would be allocated by the property (like DMAP) and would be transferrable to a properly licensed individual. While they could not pay for the “tag”, a hunt/trespass fee would not be prohibited.
- Landowners would agree to participate in alligator management by allowing Agency staff (with appropriate coordination) access to the property for data collection purposes when necessary/needed.

General Public Alligator Hunting

- Allocate tags appropriately based on population density and available public waters.
- Potential to also issue absolute minimum number of private land tags to provide extremely limited opportunity for owners of smaller water bodies to also have harvest opportunities
- Tags are distributed by random drawing.
- Tags are not transferable.
- Tags would be for a specific county or other easily identified area.
- Harvest would be restricted to alligators of a minimum length to minimize biological impacts