



ACTIONS

N.C. WILDLIFE RESOURCES COMMISSION

June 20, 2013 at 9:00 a.m.

NC Wildlife Resources Commission Headquarters

1751 Varsity Drive

Raleigh, North Carolina

Call to Order - *Commission* David Hoyle, Jr. called the N.C. Wildlife Resources Commission meeting to order at 9:00 a.m. in the Commission Conference Room, 5th floor. Hayden Rogers, Dell Murphy, and Dalton Ruffin were absent.

Pledge of Allegiance and Invocation – *Commissioner* Ray White led the Pledge of Allegiance. *Commissioner* John Coley gave the invocation.

Welcome - Chairman Hoyle welcomed Commissioners and guests. Hoyle announced that the meeting audio was being streamed live on the WRC website.

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

Minutes of May 17, 2013 Meeting - the Commission approved the May 17, 2013 Wildlife Resources Commission minutes as presented in **Exhibit A**.

Minutes of May 21, 2013 Emergency Telephonic Meeting – the Commission approved the minutes of the emergency telephonic meeting of the Wildlife Resources Commission as presented in **Exhibit B**.

Financial Status Report - the Commission received a financial status report on the Wildlife Operating Fund and the Wildlife Endowment Fund as of May 31, 2013, from Tommy Clark, *Budget Officer*, presented in **Exhibit C**. The Operating Fund balance was \$21,796,453.08. The Endowment Fund balance was \$97,609,052.67.

Fisheries Committee Meeting Report – Wes Seegars, *Chair*, reported that the Fisheries Committee met on June 19, 2013. The committee again reviewed the draft North Carolina Trout Resources Management Plan that was presented to the Fisheries Committee at the May 17, 2013 meeting. The Commission approved the North Carolina Trout Resources Management Plan as presented in **Exhibit F**. Seegars stated that the committee received a Human Dimensions update from Kerry Linehan, *Human Dimensions Biologist*. Christian Waters, *Fisheries Management Coordinator*, gave an update about fisheries University research projects and research by fisheries staff to evaluate stocked brown and rainbow trout for a put-grow-and-take fishery at Apalachia Reservoir.

Big Game Committee Meeting Report – John Litton Clark, *Chair*, reported that the Big Game Committee met on June 19, 2013. Dr. David Cobb, *Wildlife Management Division Chief*, gave an overview to the committee about the black bear management bill, an update about the status of the bill to allow hunting coyotes at night except in five eastern counties, an alligator project estimated to be completed by the end of 2013, the 2013 turkey harvest and impacts from extending Youth Day to Youth Week, and the study concerning deer management units in the state, estimated to result in consideration of changes in deer seasons by 2015.

Habitat, Nongame and Endangered Species Committee Meeting Report – Durwood Laughinghouse, *Chair*, reported that the HNGES Committee met on June 19, 2013. Brad Howard, *Private Lands Coordinator*, presented an Elk Management update about the use of collars to track elk movements, behavior, and habitat use in western NC. Cindy Carr, *Wildlife Action Plan Coordinator*, reported that the 2005 Wildlife Action Plan content is being reviewed with plans to reorganize for the final report due in October 2015, and to put the Wildlife Action Plan into electronic format. Laughinghouse reported that the committee received updates from Todd Ewing about the Conservation Recovery Plan and the Cape Fear shiner project. Perry Sumner, *Wildlife Diversity Coordinator*, discussed the Wildlife Diversity committee of the Southeastern Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies (SEAFWA), a cooperative multi-state effort to compile data on species of special interest.

Land Use and Access Committee Meeting Report – Jim Cogdell, *Chair*, reported that the Land Use and Access Committee met on June 19, 2013. Cogdell thanked staff for ongoing assistance in providing the committee with a process to consider acquisition proposals by first examining proposals for biological advantages, positive impacts on nearby game lands, and overall stewardship costs to the agency. The evaluations are completed before any consideration is given to the purchase of properties. Isaac Harrold, *Public Lands Manager*, showed a graph of land acquisitions by decade. The first acquisition was in 1937, before the NCWRC was created. Acquisitions stayed flat between the 1960s and 1980s, with a big spike in 2007. Of the \$313,000,000.00 spent, only ten percent has been funded by the NCWRC, with the majority coming from other state funding sources, especially the Clean Water Management Trust Fund and debt service on the International Paper bond obtained for the purchase of that tract in 2007. Cogdell reiterated that it is important to point out that agency funds are not being used for land acquisitions. He mentioned the Game Land Management Plans that Engineering Services is working on, and said that Erik Christofferson, *Engineering Division Chief*, will have the first set of plans available for consideration by the Commission within six months.

Migratory Birds, Waterfowl Committee Meeting Report – *Berkley Skinner, Chair*, reported that the Migratory Birds, Waterfowl Committee met on June 19, 2013. Discussion included a final review of the *North Carolina Resident Canada Goose Management Plan* and *A Proactive Approach to Setting Canada Goose Hunting Seasons in the Northeast Hunt Unit – A Proposal*, which will be recommended for adoption by the Commission in **Exhibits D and E**.

Boating Safety Committee Meeting Report – *Joe Barker, Chair*, reported that the Boating Safety Committee met on June 19, 2013. The committee reviewed **Exhibits H and I**, proposed no wake zones in Perquimans and Beaufort counties. The Boating Safety Committee will recommend adoption by the Commission of **Exhibits H and I**.

Presentation of the 2013 Lawrence G. Diedrick Award – *Dr. David Cobb, Wildlife Management Division Chief*, provided an introduction about Commissioner Lawrence (Larry) Diedrick for whom the Lawrence G. Diedrick Small Game Award is named. *Director Gordon Myers* and *Commissioner Mitch St. Clair* presented the 2013 Lawrence G. Diedrick Small Game Award in the individual category to Eddie Smith, founder of Grady White Boats. Mr. Smith was lauded for his many years of leadership and contributions toward providing boating and fishing opportunities, for involvement with youth, and for his contributions to small game conservation with the restoration of Grimes Plantation in Pitt County and stewardship of its 6000 acres for appropriate small game habitat. Myers and St. Clair also awarded the Diedrick Award in the organizational category to the Land Trust for Central North Carolina. Since 1995 the Land Trust for Central North Carolina has worked in ten piedmont counties and acquired more than 4000 acres, focusing on stewardship and education about keeping lands open for public access. Jason Walser, Executive Director of the Land Trust for Central North Carolina accepted the award.

Agency Spotlight – Environmental DNA (eDNA) Technology – the Commission received a spotlight from *Lori A. Williams, Mountain Region Wildlife Diversity Biologist*, about partnerships with the NC Zoo, University of Idaho, and others to develop technology to test for environmental DNA in mountain waters. Unique genetic markers have been identified in hellbender and mudpuppy salamanders. Skin cells, live or dead tissue, egg material and body fluids are present in streams, and the water is tested for the presence of these specific species, providing proof of the presence of some species that would not otherwise be detected. In a pilot study in 2012, thirty-three sites tested positive for hellbenders. Nine new hellbender streams in seven counties have been identified. Hellbender eDNA spikes in September during their breeding season. Using eDNA to find mudpuppies has been less successful. Two streams tested positive for those salamanders but one new stream was recorded as a result of the testing. Future efforts will focus on refining methods to better detect the mudpuppies. Ms. Williams stated that eDNA can be used for early detection of invasive species and to detect the presence of rare mussels and rare fish, and for tracking anadromous fish as they make spawning migrations.

Wildlife Management Update – the Commission received an update about the activities of the Division of Wildlife Management from *Dr. David Cobb, Wildlife Management Division Chief*. Cobb announced that CDs provided to each Commissioner contain documents and newsletters of interest including the 2011 national survey of fishing, hunting and wildlife recreation, 2012-2013 tundra swan harvest information, information about setting the Canada goose hunting seasons in the Northeast hunt unit, turkey harvest information, and a publication concerning crossing structures for Northern flying squirrels.

Approval of the North Carolina Resident Canada Goose Management Plan - the Commission approved the *North Carolina Resident Canada Goose Management Plan*, presented in **Exhibit D**.

Approval of A Proactive Approach to Setting Canada Goose Hunting Seasons in the Northeast Hunt Unit – A Proposal – the Commission adopted **Exhibit E, A Proactive Approach to Setting Canada Goose Hunting Seasons in the Northeast Hunt Unit**. *Director Gordon Myers* stated that he visited the Fish and Wildlife Service in Atlanta recently. The FWS complimented the NCWRC on its exemplary approach to setting waterfowl seasons for the Canada geese in northeastern North Carolina.

Inland Fisheries Update – the Commission received an update on the activities of the Inland Fisheries Division from *Bob Curry, Inland Fisheries Division Chief*. Curry announced that 162,500 striped bass hybrids have been stocked in Lake Norman. At the Becoming an Outdoor Woman weekend in Wilkes County one hundred four women participated. Curry announced that at statewide events held during National Fishing and Boating Week, two winners were chosen for lifetime licenses to be presented at the July WRC meeting. Curry stated that there will be a CRFL (Coastal Recreational Fishing License) joint committee conference call on June 25, to discuss the Vandemere Boating Access Area project.

Surplus Property Matter Tabled – the Commission voted to table **Exhibit G**, consideration of possible disposition of three structures at the Watha Fish Hatchery in Pender County, pending further investigation and reports to be brought back to the Commission.

No Wake Zone Amendment and Technical Changes – Perquimans County - the Commission adopted an amendment to 15A NCAC 10F .0355 requested by the Town of Hertford, for a modification and enlargement of a no wake zone along the Hertford waterfront. The Commission also voted to incorporate technical changes into the rule to correct location name of no wake zones in (a)(2)(A) and (a)(2)(B) to Yeopim Creek. (**Exhibit H**)

No Wake Zone Amendment and Technical Changes – Beaufort County – the Commission adopted the request by the Wildlife Resources Commission to amend portions of 15A NCAC 10F .0303(a)(2) and (a)(5) to modify sizes of no wake zones located in Blounts Creek at Mouth of the Creek Bridge and in the vicinity of the Blounts Creek Boating Access Area, presented in **Exhibit I**. The Commission also approved technical changes to clarify the descriptions of no wake zones in Broad Creek (a)(1) and in Tranter's Creek(a)(6), using latitude and longitude.

Comments by the Chairman – *Chairman David Hoyle* again congratulated the individual and organizational winners of the Lawrence G. Diedrick Small Game Award. Hoyle thanked staff for their work on the various committee meetings and Commission meeting, and noted that there is not enough time to talk about all the important issues before the Wildlife Resources Commission. Hoyle thanked all Commissioners for their assistance to him and said it has been an honor to serve with fellow Commissioners and agency staff.

Comments by the Executive Director – *Executive Director Gordon Myers* thanked the Commissioners for their support and their teamwork with legislative budget issues. Myers stated that the House budget is more favorable than that proposed by the Senate. The budget would restore five million dollars the first year and seven million dollars the second year. Myers stated that staff is working on a conceptual plan to move the agency toward self-sufficiency. Some ideas include modest fee increases, a request for the agency to be allowed to adjust fees based on the Consumer Price Index, transition the age for reduced price lifetime licenses from 65 to age 70, and consider increasing non-resident license fees for additional revenue. The agency is seeking to eliminate the six percent service agent commission and instead add a two dollar transaction fee. The agency is proposing to limit the cash balance to no more than twenty-five percent of the annualized budget. If the agency exceeds that limit we would receive a *non-recurring* reduction in the appropriation the following year. If the Endowment Fund reaches more than one hundred million dollars the Commission will work to spend down fifty percent of the annual Endowment interest. Myers stated that the Hunter Heritage Apprentice bill has been signed into law.

Myers introduced *Scott Griffin of the North Carolina Sportsmen's Caucus Advisory Board*. Griffin thanked Diedrick Award winner Eddie Smith who was instrumental in starting the N.C. Sportsmen's Caucus. The Sportsmen's Caucus falls under the Congressional Sportsmen Foundation in Washington D.C. Three hundred members of Congressional Sportsmen Foundation support the caucus. Griffin announced a large wildlife conservation event on Wednesday, June 27 at the home of Frank and Judy Grainger. More than 190 people are expected to attend. There will be an effort to obtain funding for camouflaged wheelchairs for disabled sportsmen and women to use in the huntmaster lifts across the state. Griffin expects all of the wheelchairs to be funded. He urged all to attend and thanked the Commissioners for helping make the event possible.

Adjournment – The meeting was adjourned at 10:55 a.m.