



ACTIONS

N.C. WILDLIFE RESOURCES COMMISSION

January 17, 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. Wes Seegars and Mitch St. Clair were absent.

Pledge of Allegiance and Invocation – *Commissioner* Joe Barker led the Pledge of Allegiance. *Commissioner* Ray White gave the invocation.

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

Welcome - Chairman Hoyle welcomed Commissioners and guests. Hoyle recognized former employee Sarah Clapp, who is the Principal Clerk of the N.C. Senate; Senator Bill Rabon, who will swear in the new Wildlife Commissioner; and J. T. Windham, son of former Commissioner Steve Windham. Hoyle announced that the meeting audio was being streamed live on the WRC website.

Notice of Appointment of Commissioner Richard Edwards – Chairman Hoyle received into the Minutes **Exhibit A**, the Notice of Appointment by *Governor* Bev Perdue of *Commissioner At-Large* Richard Edwards to complete the term of Steve Windham.

Administer Oath of Office to Commissioner Richard Edwards – *North Carolina Senator* Bill Rabon administered the Oath of Office to Commissioner At-Large Richard Edwards, appointed by Governor Bev Perdue to fill the term of Steve Windham, which expires June 30, 2013.

Minutes - the Commission approved the November 8, 2012 Wildlife Resources Commission minutes 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 November 30, 2012, from Tommy Clark, *Budget Officer*, presented in **Exhibit C**. The Operating Fund balance was \$23,273,361.89. The Endowment Fund balance was \$94,439,416.02.

Big Game Committee Meeting Report – John Litton Clark, *Chair*, reported that the Big Game Committee met on Wednesday, January 16, 2013. The topics discussed were stabilization of the black bear population and inequities between allowing the use of bait for hunting bears with dogs and not allowing bait in still hunting. Included in discussions were bear hunters and property owners from across the state. The Committee will continue to discuss these issues to try to reach a more equitable compromise.

Habitat, Nongame and Endangered Species Committee Meeting Report – Durwood Laughinghouse, *Chair*, reported that the HNGES Committee met on January 16, 2013. Steve Williams gave a presentation on habitat suitability for elk within North Carolina. Williams's model is based on biological parameters and sociological constraints. A feasibility study will focus on human dimensions, continued cooperation with private landowners, and financial costs associated with the feasibility plan. Perry Sumner and Shannon Deaton, *Nongame Species Coordinators*, presented a historical perspective of nongame species conservation in North Carolina. Sumner and Deaton gave an update about how the listings for protected species are adopted and revised. Shannon Deaton advised the Commission that a website is available for taxpayers to make contributions to nongame programs. Upon the HNGES Committee's recommendation, the Commission adopted as permanent the draft plan that was adopted in July 2012 for augmentation of the Cape Fear Shiner.

Land Use and Access Committee Meeting Report - on behalf of Jim Cogdell, *Chair*, who has laryngitis, Isaac Harrold, *Public Lands Section Manager* reported that the Land Use and Access Committee met on January 16, 2013. Dr. David Cobb, *Wildlife Management Division Chief* and Professor Jaime Collazo of NC State University gave a project description and status update on a statewide habitat threat and risk assessment project. Isaac Harrold presented for discussion Phase I land acquisition plans in **Exhibits E-1, E-2, E-3, E-4, E-5** and Phase II land acquisition plans in **Exhibits F-1, F-2, and F-3** to be considered for a vote by the entire Commission. The Committee recommended approval of the land acquisition requests. The Committee received information about an easement request by Duke Energy in **Exhibit G** for a power transmission line in Henderson County with a recommendation for the entire Commission to approve the request. Executive Director Gordon Myers updated the committee about the proposed conveyance of the McKinney Lake National Fish Hatchery to the State of North Carolina, presented in **Exhibit H**, to be voted on later in the meeting. Isaac Harrold notified the committee of a cooperative agreement that will authorize the City of Raleigh to construct a greenway on a portion of the Butner-Falls Game land.

Joint Coastal Recreational Fishing License Committee Report – Ray White, *Chair*, reported that Joe Barker, Mitch St. Clair and he met with Marine Fisheries Commissioners Chris Elkins, Kelly Darden and Joe Shute at a joint CRFL Committee meeting in Washington, NC on December 4, 2012. After reviewing thirty-four projects, twenty projects were approved for funding with the Marine Resources Fund, at a cost of \$2,433,435. The Marine Resources Fund balance as of October 31, 2012 was \$8,116,246. Marine Resources Fund projects are allocated among three areas; people, fish, and habitats. The FY 2013-14 projects were allocated among those categories as follows:

People - Five projects (\$1,210,333)
 Fish - Five projects (\$479,825)
 Habitat - Ten project (\$743,277)

Agency Spotlight - the Commission received a presentation about *Wildlife in North Carolina* magazine from Jim Wilson, *Editor*. Wilson gave an overview of changes that have been made to the magazine in the last one and one half years to increase its profitability, with implementation of a business plan, reduction in staff, and efficiencies in printing and contract contributors that have saved \$420,000 in operating costs. Subscribers are holding steady at 44,000. The magazine now is printed bi-monthly. Marketing efforts have increased greatly, with the use of social media, trade shows, direct mail and email marketing, and a change in magazine content to appeal more to the majority of the readership who have some sort of hunting or fishing license. Wilson thanked the Commission for approving the business plan and for giving staff the opportunity to continue to produce this quality magazine, which has won more awards than any other state wildlife magazine.

Inland Fisheries Update – the Commission received an update on the activities of the Inland Fisheries Division from Bob Curry, *Inland Fisheries Division Chief*. Curry directed the Commissioners to information at their places regarding January 1, 2013 changes in creel limits for American shad in the Cape Fear River system and the Albemarle Sound, Roanoke River and Neuse River systems. He mentioned a report based on the USFWS’ 2011 National Survey of Fishing, Hunting and Wildlife-Associated Recreation that ranks North Carolina as number 4 in the number of non-resident anglers and number 8 by angler expenditures. Curry mentioned that striped bass season opens on the Roanoke River on March 1. On January 30 the nominations close for the 2013 Thomas L. Quay Wildlife Diversity Award. Curry stated that the Fisheries Committee will meet on the Wednesday before the March 14, 2013 WRC meeting.

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 a survey from hunters of dove and woodcocks, the Gopher Frog Study, and the final report from the Strategic Recruitment and Retention Initiative that was held in October 2012. Cobb said that staff has begun work on rules proposals and is looking at suggestions from the public hearings that were held in September 2012.

CURE Program and Wildlife Conservation Lands Program Updates - Dr. David Cobb presented in **Exhibit D** a 2011-2012 annual report on the Cooperative upland Habitat Restoration and Enhancement Program (CURE). When the CURE Program began in 2000 the focus was on use of private lands to enhance early successional habitats through the Wildlife Conservation Land Program (WCLP), with target species quail and nongame birds. The program expanded to include four state-owned game lands and corporate CURE, which works with corporate land owners. CURE programs benefit many species of birds as well as reptiles and amphibians. Funding through federal and Department of Justice grants provides additional opportunities to engage with county and state agencies on National Farm Bill issues. Recommendations include maintaining the Southeastern Focal Area as the premier private lands focal area for quail and early successional wildlife species and to explore opportunities to expand CURE activities on game lands.

Phase I Property Acquisition Requests – the Commission approved the staff recommendation presented in **Exhibits E-1, E-2, E-3, E-4, and E-5** by Isaac Harrold, *Public Lands Section Manager* to coordinate with the State Property Office and funding partners to develop acquisition plans for the following properties:

- Duvall Tract, Little Tennessee River – Macon County
- Lewiston Boating and Fishing Access Area, Roanoke River - Bertie County
- Deviney Tract – Rutherford County
- Truth Temple Tract – Ashe County
- Holt Tract – Warren County

Phase II Property Acquisition Requests – the Commission gave final approval to proceed with the acquisition of the following properties, presented in **Exhibits F-1, F-2, and F-3**:

- Trout Lake (Lease) – Ashe County
- Browns Island Tract 2 – Carteret County
- Pinch Gut Phase IV Tract – Brunswick County

Easement Request, Henderson County – the Commission approved a request by Duke Energy, presented in **Exhibit G**, to expand an existing power transmission line easement on a portion of Green River Game Land in Henderson County for the purpose of adding additional guy wires.

Conveyance – McKinney Lake National Fish Hatchery – the Commission received an update from *Executive Director* Gordon Myers about the history of the ownership of the McKinney Lake National Fish Hatchery. The Fish and Wildlife Service announced in 1995 that they would discontinue operations of this hatchery and the Wildlife Resources Commission was directed to transfer it to state ownership. Since the transfer would make the WRC subject to the requirements of the Dam Safety Act and would encumber the agency to bear the cost of repair of severe deficiencies in the dam at the fish hatchery, the Fish and Wildlife Service and NCWRC entered into a MOU to transfer operations of the hatchery to the WRC without a financial encumbrance to repair the dam. The FWS worked with Congress to facilitate and pay for the remediation of the dam. The NCWRC grows channel catfish at the hatchery, which are used for the community fishing program in urban areas across the state. On December 28, 2012 Congress signed federal legislation to transfer ownership of the McKinney Lake Fish Hatchery to the State of North Carolina. The Commission voted to allow the NCWRC to work with the State Property Office to transfer the Fish Hatchery to the State.

Change in May WRC Meeting Date and Location – the Commission approved moving the date and location of the May meeting of the Wildlife Resources Commission. Instead of meeting in Raleigh on Thursday, May 9, the meeting will be held on **Friday, May 17, 2013** at Pine Knoll Shores at Atlantic Beach. **Committee meetings will be held on Thursday, May 16**, also at Pine Knoll Shores. An exact location for the meetings will be determined.

Comments by the Chairman – Chairman David Hoyle thanked Commissioner Hayden Rogers, Executive Director Gordon Myers, and Chief Deputy Director Mallory Martin for going with him to Cherokee to speak with representatives of the Eastern Band of the Cherokee about their vision for the importation of white-tailed deer onto the Qualla Boundary. Chairman Hoyle thanked Big Game Committee Chair John Litton Clark, and Joe and Henri McClees for their assistance in inviting stakeholders to the Big Game Committee to discuss black bear issues. Hoyle thanked agency staff for their efforts in preparing for the meeting and committee meetings.

Comments by the Executive Director – Executive Director Gordon Myers thanked Cherokee Chief Michell Hicks and Natural Resources Director Forrest Parker for inviting the NCWRC to establish a formal relationship with the Eastern Band of Cherokees in working on wildlife conservation issues. Myers noted the completion of the report on the Strategic Recruitment and Retention Initiative. A formal SRRI Committee, led by Deet James, *Hunting Heritage Biologist*, will identify goals and tools for staff to evaluate performance of existing and new programs for recruitment and retention. As a test, programs will be targeted at each Education Center. Myers and Commissioner Dell Murphy encouraged Commissioners to come to a March meeting of the Youth Engagement Subcommittee where goals and ideas from the SRRI will be discussed further. Director Myers gave a short legislative update. He noted that the Legislature convened briefly on January 9 and then adjourned until January 30. Chris Dillon, *Legislative Liaison*, has been meeting with legislators. A late March Legislative Day is planned. Dillon will put together teams of Commissioners to meet with legislators on Legislative Day. Myers directed Commissioners to a blue paper in their notebooks, with information about improvements and access to the new Share Point site. He directed questions about the Share Point site to *Deputy Director Cecilia Edgar*.

Commissioner Comments – Commissioner Durwood Laughinghouse suggested that increasing time demands from important committee meetings warrant consideration of Tuesday afternoon committee meetings, or shorter committee meetings after the Thursday business meeting of the NWRC. Jim Cogdell urged Commissioners to attend and support hunter skills tournaments in their areas. Cogdell noted that some counties are attempting to outlaw shooting clays. Cogdell hopes that the Shooting Sports subcommittee will become more active to address these issues. Tom Berry thanked the Commission for increasing discussions about short-term Elk Management Plans and a focus on forest lands. A human dimensions study will be done to gather landowner opinions. Dr. Cobb will provide information to the Elk Foundation. David Hoyle asked Dr. Cobb to include the presentation about the decline of hunting areas on the Share Point site too. A roads layer will be added to the maps.

Adjournment –Chairman David Hoyle reminded the Commissioners that accommodations for the March 14 meeting will be at a new hotel, the Hyatt Place Raleigh West. The meeting was adjourned at 10:50 a.m.