



MINUTES
October 26, 2023
N.C. Wildlife Resources Commission Meeting
Raleigh, North Carolina

Chairman Monty Crump called the October 26, 2023 N.C. Wildlife Resources Commission meeting to order at 9:00 a.m. in the Commission Room at the agency's headquarters in Raleigh. Crump reminded everyone that the meeting is being audio streamed live and will be available at www.ncwildlife.org.

Commissioner David Hoyle led the Pledge of Allegiance.

Commissioner Wes Seegars gave the invocation.

ROLL CALL

Margo Minkler, *Commission Liaison*, called the roll. Ray Clifton, Steve Windham, John Stone, Hayden Rogers, JC Cole, and Mike Alford were absent.

COMMISSIONER ATTENDANCE

Monty Crump	Jim Ruffin	John Coley	Wes Seegars
Mark Craig	Thomas Fonville	Kelly Davis	
David Hoyle	Tom Berry	Tom Haislip	
Brad Stanback	John Alexander	Landon Zimmer	

MANDATORY ETHICS INQUIRY

Chairman Crump advised the Commission of the mandatory ethics inquiry as mandated in NCGS §138A-15. Chairman Crump recused himself from discussion and action on Exhibit C.

MINUTES OF AUGUST 24, 2023 MEETING

On a motion by Jim Ruffin and second by John Coley, the Minutes of the August 24, 2023 meeting were approved as presented in **EXHIBIT A**.

EXHIBIT A is incorporated into the official record of this meeting.

FINANCIAL STATUS REPORT

Jason Cottle, *Chief Financial Officer*, presented a status report in **EXHIBIT B** on the Wildlife Resources Commission General Fund, Capital Improvement Fund, and the Endowment Fund.

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

Motion after receiving the Financial Status Report On a motion by Landon Zimmer and a second by Jim Ruffin, the Commission approved a motion to move \$3 million per month from the Endowment Fund's Bond Index Fund to the Equity Index Fund through October 2024.

SPECIAL PRESENTATIONS

2023 THOMAS L. QUAY WILDLIFE DIVERSITY AWARD PRESENTATION – *Cam Ingram, Executive Director*, presented the 2023 Thomas L. Quay Wildlife Diversity Award to David Allen.

COMMITTEE MEETING REPORTS

Education and Communication Committee Report – October 25, 2023 – *Tom Haislip, Chair*, reported the Education and Communication Committee met on Wednesday, October 25, 2023. Staff presented an update on the newly formed Operations and Program Development Team of the Wildlife Education Division. The team provides broad-scale, statewide program planning and development for the Wildlife Education Division toward the agency's relevancy and R3 efforts. This team has several exciting projects to build and strengthen partnerships to better engage with and influence people through the Commission's programs and opportunities. The committee also received a presentation on the agency's partnership with Agricultural Education and FFA. The Wildlife Education team leads the annual effort of Wildlife Camp at the FFA camp facility at White Lake with Ducks Unlimited, the National Wildlife Turkey Federation, the NC Forest Service, NC State Parks, the NC Wildlife Upland Federation, and the US Department of Agriculture. At this event, students receive hands-on experience with fish sampling with a biologist on a shocking boat, trapping with USDA, boater safety with enforcement, deer necropsy, and other wildlife-related work activities to inspire them towards careers in conservation.

Migratory Birds and Waterfowls Committee Report – October 25, 2023 – *John Coley, Chair*, reported the Migratory Birds and Waterfowl Committee met Wednesday, October 25, 2023 and welcomed partners from Ducks Unlimited – *Deanne Drouillard, Manager of Eastern Region Partnerships for DU Canada*, and *Emily Purcell, Director of Conservation Programs for the Southeastern U.S.* Deanne provided an overview of the Fall Flights program. The Commission has contributed almost \$2 million to this program since 1969 to secure, restore, and maintain wetland habitat, mostly in Canada's maritime provinces which support a great number of nesting green-winged teal and other dabbling ducks. Deanne also extended an invitation for the Commission to

come back to Canada to see some of the great work we have been funding. Emily then provided an update on the Eastern Mallard Study, supported by DU, Inc. and partnering states, including North Carolina. More than 1,100 GPS transmitters will be deployed on hen mallards to study reproductive parameters, seasonal survival, movement ecology and habitat use. *Doug Howell, Migratory Game Bird Coordinator*, provided a summary of a 2023 tundra swan mortality event caused by lead exposure in a 500-acre impoundment on Lake Mattamuskeet National Wildlife Refuge. Doug and other WRC staff are coordinating with the refuge and others to complete a soil survey to determine lead concentrations and distribution in the impoundment. Staff are also working with the Service to have a contractor remove common carp from Lake Mattamuskeet and experimentally treat the lake to remove cyanobacteria. Both the carp and cyanobacteria impact submerged aquatic vegetation, which is an important food source for waterfowl and other species.

Small Game and Wild Turkey Committee Report – October 25, 2023 – *Jim Ruffin, Chair*, reported the Small Game and Wild Turkey Committee met Wednesday, October 25, 2023. Dr. Chris Moorman of NC State University presented on the results of the Wild Turkey Ecology Study funded by the Commission and conducted by NC State. The study spanned three years and will continue to provide us with extremely valuable information about the wild turkey population in North Carolina and insights into management of our turkey population. This information will continue to contribute to conversations and decisions on wild turkey management, including harvest, for years to come. The Committee also recognized the attendance of both the NWTf State Chapter President Tim Draughn and National President Bryan Perry, the NWTf provided more than \$100,000 towards this study and their contribution and dedication to the wild turkey resource and of course this study in North Carolina is greatly appreciated. Finally, *Daron Barnes, Land and Water Access (LAWA) Division Chief*, gave a brief update on the ongoing efforts of the LAWA staff at the Caswell Small Game Focus Area.

Fisheries Committee Report – October 25, 2023 – *Tommy Fonville, Committee Member*, reported the Fisheries Committee met Wednesday, October 25, 2023. Before proceeding with the scheduled agenda, Chairman Stone recognized special guest Representative Jay Adams, co-chair of the House Wildlife Committee. Representative Adams briefly addressed the Commission prior to returning to the legislature. *Corey Oakley, Inland Fisheries Assistant Division Chief*, began the agenda with a presentation of a video that highlighted the efforts of Commission staff to restore Muskie back to the French Broad River through stocking and habitat restoration. The video was followed by *Scott Loftis, Aquatic Habitat Research Coordinator*, providing an update on fish usage of the restored habitat sloughs at Mud Creek on the French Broad River. *Christian Waters, Inland Fisheries Division Chief*, gave updates on the 2024 Roanoke River Striped Bass Harvest season, the 2023 recreational flounder seasons, the recent DMF proclamation to close the Striped and White Mullet fisheries in joint and coastal fishing waters through the end of the year, recent findings of zebra mussels and apple snails, both of which are aquatic nuisance species recently found in NC for the first time, and the Setzer Hatchery renovation including staff efforts to minimize the eventual impacts of the hatchery being shut down for construction in late 2024. Next, Corey Oakley presented a video that highlights the Commission's F1 bass stocking project at Lake Norman, Lake Gaston, and Jordan Lake and the Commission's partnership with Bass Anglers for NC Lakes to help raise annual funding for the stocking project. Chuck Murray, president of NC B.A.S.S. and cofounder of Bass Anglers for NC Lakes presented the Commission with a check for \$30,000.

Big Game Committee Report – October 25, 2023 – *David Hoyle, Chair*, reported the Big Game Committee met Wednesday, October 25, 2023, and the meeting began with an update on Chronic Wasting Disease in the State by *Chris Kreh, Wildlife Management Division Assistant Chief*. Chris confirmed that we have a new CWD positive in the 2023 hunting season which is the first positive in Johnston County. Staff are already working hard to obtain and submit samples this hunting season, and we will see if there are additional positives as we get results from those samples.

Next, *Catherine Larose, NCSU*, and *Kathryn Jewell, Social Scientist*, gave very interesting and informative presentations on social science studies related to hunters' knowledge, opinions, and understanding of Chronic Wasting Disease. The information gleaned from these studies will be beneficial to our approach to CWD and deer management. Finally, *Justin McVey, Agency Elk Biologist*, presented the results of the elk study conducted by the University of Tennessee. This was a very informative presentation and subsequent discussion about the elk herd and future elk management options including hunting. The chair recommended that the committee use this information to continue discussions on how and when an elk hunt in North Carolina might be conducted. Having no further business, the meeting was adjourned.

Committee of the Whole Report – October 25, 2023 – *Monty Crump, Chair*, reported the Committee of the Whole met Wednesday, October 25, 2023 with a packed agenda. We began with proposed annual cycle rulemaking for notice of text. *Melva Bonner, Regulatory Analyst*, and *Betsy Haywood, Water Safety Rules Coordinator*, both presented rules for adoption and for notice of text. *Ben Solomon, Assistant Chief and Land Acquisition Manager*, presented a proposed lease renewal for the Hinson Lake lodge. *Carrie Ruhlman, Rulemaking Coordinator*, and *Jason Cottle, Chief Financial Officer*, then presented potential changes to license fees to keep up with CPI-U and inflation. Jason then presented a recommendation to transfer \$3 million per month from the Bond Index Fund to the Equity Index Fund through October 2024. Executive Director Ingram presented the proposed 2024 Commission meeting schedule, and then recognized staff who have just received prestigious awards: Sgt. Dustin Durham and Master Officer Charles Vaughn were awarded the 2023 Governor's Award for Excellence for Safety and Heroism; Travis Wilson was named the 2023 Governor's Conservation Achievement Award Natural Resources Scientist of the Year; Master Officer Ryan Biggerstaff was named the 2023 Governor's Conservation Achievement Award Wildlife Enforcement Officer of the Year; and Doug Besler was named the 2023 Southeastern Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies Fisheries Biologist of the Year. Finally, the Committee went into closed session to discuss ongoing litigation with our attorney. The Committee returned from closed session and, there being no further business, the meeting was adjourned.

AGENCY SPOTLIGHT – CMDE – Connecting Through Communication, Marketing & Digital Engagement– *Fairley Mahlum, Office Director* gave a presentation titled “Connecting Through Communication, Marketing & Digital Engagement.” The presentation provided an overview of the Office's approach, process and tools used to communicate messages to specific target audiences. Highlights of recent successes were showcased including high levels of engagement with the agency's newsletter and social media channels, 2023 marketing campaigns and the employment of new web-based technologies like QR Codes and Flipping Book.

LAND ACQUISITION AND PROPERTY MATTERS

Other Property Matters – With Chairman Crump recused, on a motion by Tom Berry and second by Wes Seegars, the Commission approved the Hinson Lake Lodge Lease Renewal presented in **(EXHIBIT C)** by *Ben Solomon, Assistant Chief and Land Acquisition Manager*

EXHIBIT C is incorporated into the official record of this meeting.

RULEMAKING

Notice of Text – 2024-2025 Annual Cycle Inland Fisheries Rules – On a motion by David Hoyle and a second by Kelly Davis, the Commission approved publishing Notice of Text in the *NC Register* with an open comment period and a public hearing for proposed amendments to Inland Fisheries rules presented in **(EXHIBIT D-1)** and approved fiscal notes for proposed rules presented in **(EXHIBIT D-2)** by *Christian Waters, Inland Fisheries Division Chief*

EXHIBITS D-1, D-2 are incorporated into the official record of this meeting.

Notice of Text – 2024-2025 Annual Cycle Land and Water Access Rules – On a motion by John Alexander and a second by Brad Stanback, the Commission approved publishing Notice of Text in the *NC Register* with an open comment period and a public hearing for amendments to Land and Water Access rules presented in **(EXHIBIT E-1)** and approved fiscal notes for proposed rules presented in **(EXHIBIT E-2)** by *Daron Barnes, Land and Water Access Division Chief*

EXHIBITS E-1, E-2 are incorporated into the official record of this meeting.

Notice of Text – 2024-2025 Annual Cycle Wildlife Management Rules – On a motion by David Hoyle and a second by Tom Berry, the Commission approved publishing Notice of Text in the *NC Register* with an open comment period and a public hearing for proposed amendments to Wildlife Management rules presented in **(EXHIBIT F-1)** and approved fiscal notes for proposed rules presented in **(EXHIBIT F-2)** by *Chris Kreh, Wildlife Management Division Assistant Chief*

EXHIBITS F-1, F-2 are incorporated into the official record of this meeting.

Notice of Text – 2024-2025 Annual Cycle Administrative Rules – On a motion by Jim Ruffin and a second by Brad Stanback, the Commission approved publishing Notice of Text in the *NC Register* with an open comment period and a public hearing for proposed amendments to Administrative rules presented in **(EXHIBIT G-1)** and approved fiscal notes for proposed rules presented in **(EXHIBIT G-2)** by *Ben Meyer, Law Enforcement Division Colonel*

EXHIBITS G-1, G-2 are incorporated into the official record of this meeting.

Adoption – 10B .0500 Chronic Wasting Disease (CWD) Rules – On a motion by Wes Seegars and a second by Tom Berry, the Commission reviewed public comments presented in **(EXHIBIT H-1)** and approved adoption of 10B .0501 and .0503 to regulate activities that aid in the transmission of CWD and assist with detection and the isolation of the disease presented in **(EXHIBIT H-2)** by *Melva Bonner, Regulatory Analyst*

EXHIBITS H-1, H-2 are incorporated into the official record of this meeting.

On a motion by John Alexander and second by David Hoyle, the Commission approved the following staff recommendations in **(EXHIBITS I, J-1, J-2)**

Notice of Text – 10A .0500 Declaratory Rulings Rules –the Commission approved publishing Notice of Text in the *NC Register* with an open comment period and a public hearing for proposed amendments to 10A .0501 through .0503 presented in **(EXHIBIT I-1)** by *Melva Bonner*

Notice of Text – 10E Public Fishing and Boating Access Areas Rules –the Commission approved publishing Notice of Text in the *NC Register* with an open comment period and a public hearing for proposed amendments to 10E .0101 through .0104 presented in **(EXHIBIT J-1)** and approved fiscal notes for proposed rules presented in **(EXHIBIT J-2)** by *Melva Bonner*

EXHIBITS I, J-1, J-2 are incorporated into the official record of this meeting.

WATER SAFETY RULEMAKING

Final Adoption – 15A NCAC 10F .0333 Mecklenburg and Gaston Counties – On a motion by Tommy Fonville and a second by John Coley, the Commission reviewed public comments presented in **(EXHIBIT K-1)** and approved final adoption of the rule proposed by the Lake Wylie Marine Commission, for a restricted area with swim beach at the South Point Access Area on Lake Wylie in Belmont in Gaston County, north of a rope in a cove east of the access area; and codification into the North Carolina Administrative Code the address of the no-wake zone within 50 yards of the South Point Access Area boat ramps presented in **(EXHIBIT K-2)** by *Betsy Haywood, Water Safety Rules Coordinator*

EXHIBITS K-1, K-2 are incorporated into the official record of this meeting.

Technical Correction – 15A NCAC 10F .0310 Dare County – On a motion by Landon Zimmer and a second by John Alexander, the Commission approved publishing Notice of Text in the *NC Register* with an open comment period for a technical correction to the coordinates of the no-wake zone at Motts Creek, Cape Hatteras National Seashore, where the Oregon Inlet U.S. Coast Guard Station, Oregon Inlet Fishing Center and Marina, Oregon Inlet Public Boat Ramp, kayak launch area, and U.S. Coast Guard Station and Launch Area are located presented in **(EXHIBIT L)** by *Betsy Haywood*

2024 WILDLIFE RESOURCES COMMISSION MEETING SCHEDULE – On a motion by David Hoyle and a second by Mark Craig, the Commission approved proposed 2024 Wildlife Resources Commission meeting schedule presented in **(EXHIBIT M)** by *Cameron Ingram, Executive Director*

COMMENTS FROM THE CHAIRMAN – Chairman Crump presented a comprehensive overview of the Ground-breaking ceremony held on October 6th for the forthcoming law enforcement training facility at the Department of Public Safety (DPS) Samarcand Training Academy in Moore County. He expressed gratitude towards the board members who participated in the event. Furthermore, Chairman Crump provided insights into his role as a guest speaker at the Hoffman Field Trial Jamboree 2023, emphasizing the significance of the opportunity and the valuable connections made during the event.

COMMENTS FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR – Director Ingram expressed sincere gratitude and recognition to the agency staff and Commissioners for their unwavering dedication, investing a substantial amount of effort and resources to advance the agency's legislative objectives. Despite not attaining all our legislative priorities this year, notable accomplishments were secured for the agency. A landmark achievement this year was the allocation of resources in the budget, marking the first time in 45 years, to establish 16 new wildlife law enforcement positions, accompanied by recurring funding, signifying a significant stride forward.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, the WRC webinar meeting was adjourned at 10:09 a.m. All exhibits are incorporated into the official record of this meeting by reference and are filed with the minutes.



Monty Crump, Chairman 12/07/2023
Date



Cameron Ingram, Executive Director 12/07/2023
Date