



MINUTES
June 6, 2024
N.C. Wildlife Resources Commission Meeting
Raleigh, North Carolina

Chairman Monty Crump called the June 6, 2024 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 Joe Budd led the Pledge of Allegiance.

Commissioner Tommy Fonville gave the invocation.

ROLL CALL

Margo Minkler, *Commission Liaison*, called the roll. John Coley, Steve Windham, Landon Zimmer, Hayden Rogers, and John Alexander were absent.

COMMISSIONER ATTENDANCE

Monty Crump	Jim Ruffin	Wes Seegars	Ray Clifton
Thomas Fonville	Mark Craig	Kelly Davis	John Stone
David Hoyle	Tom Berry	Tom Haislip	Joe Budd
Brad Stanback	JC Cole	Mike Alford	Reid Smith

VISITORS

Representative John R. Bell, IV, North Carolina General Assembly
Family of Commissioner Reid Smith

MANDATORY ETHICS INQUIRY

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

RECEIVE STATE ETHICS COMMISSION REVIEW OF 2024 STATEMENT OF ECONOMIC INTEREST FOR PROSPECTIVE COMMISSIONER REID M. SMITH – Pursuant to NCGS §138A-15(c), *Margo Minkler, Ethics Liaison*, read into the Minutes relevant portions of the evaluations by the N.C. Ethics Commission of the 2024 Statement of Economic Interest for *Reid M. Smith, House Speaker Tim Moore Appointee*

ADMINISTER OATH OF OFFICE TO NEW COMMISSIONER – Representative John R. Bell, IV, North Carolina General Assembly administered the Oath of Office to House Speaker Appointee Reid M. Smith

MINUTES OF APRIL 18, 2024 MEETING

On a motion by David Hoyle and second by Wes Seegars, the Minutes of the April 18, 2024 meeting was approved as presented in **EXHIBIT A**.

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

ADMINISTRATION

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.

COMMITTEE MEETING REPORTS

Rules Committee Report – May 14, 2024 – *Wes Seegars, Chair*, reported the Rules Committee met for an out-of-cycle meeting on May 14, 2024 to review the 2025-2026 annual cycle rule proposals and the plan for readoption of several periodic review rules. First, Chiefs presented inland fish, land and water access, and wildlife management proposals for the 2025-2026 seasons. A new proposal, based on discussions from the April Commission meeting, to shift the turkey season one week later than the current season framework was presented and discussed. All proposals were approved to move forward for rulemaking in June. Next, the readoption plan for four 10G and 10J rules was presented. These rules will be presented for notice in July so they can be readopted by the December 2024 deadline. Finally, the definition of youth was discussed, as was the merit of variations or continuity between the age of youth for hunting different species. This affects the deer, turkey, migratory birds, game lands, and trout rules.

Land Acquisition & Property Committee Report – June 5, 2024 – *Tom Berry, Chair*, reported The Land Acquisition and Property Committee met on Wednesday, June 5, 2024. The meeting

began with a review of a newly formatted Phase I Land Investigation Form. The Committee provided feedback on the new form, requesting that staff add property tax value and asking price. The Committee also recommended that staff continue using the existing overview and detailed maps and suggested providing parcel data on the detailed map to show the parcel size of surrounding properties. A motion was made to approve the newly formatted Phase I form, contingent upon incorporating the recommended changes from the Committee. The Committee then reviewed and approved three Phase I land acquisition proposals and one Phase II land acquisition proposal. Two other property matters were presented: the Committee approved the Dominion Easement Request in Caswell County and voted to deny the TED Renewables Easement Request in Bertie County.

Habitat, Nongame, & Endangered Species Committee Report – June 5, 2024 – *Kelly Davis, Chair*, reported that the Habitat Nongame Endangered Species Committee met on Wednesday, June 5, 2024. *Dr. Sara Schweitzer, Wildlife Management Division Assistant Chief*, provided presentations on the Sea Turtles Conservation Plan and the nomination packet for the expiring terms of Nongame Wildlife Advisory Committee membership. The Committee endorsed both. The Committee then received a presentation by *Rachael Hoch, Aquatic Wildlife Diversity Assistant Chief*, on a reintroduction proposal for Carolina Heelsplitter in Stevens Creek. The reintroduction would be done under the NC Programmatic Safe Harbor Agreement, and the proposal was unanimously approved. Next, *Cindy Simpson, Wildlife Action Plan Coordinator*, provided updates on the major revision of the Wildlife Action Plan, including the projected timeline, a new tool to identify opportunity areas, opportunities for participation, and where to find more information. The final revision is due to the USFWS no later than September 30, 2025. *Shannon Deaton, Habitat Conservation Program Manager*, then provided information on the 2024 Thomas L. Quay Wildlife Diversity Award, explaining the criteria and procedure used to select a recipient. Shannon also provided information on an America the Beautiful Challenge grant the agency was recently awarded to benefit Southeast Species of Greatest Conservation Need in NC, SC, FL, and GA. Two guests, *Dr. Greg Cope, a distinguished professor at NC State University*, and *Chris Eads, faculty at NC State University*, joined the Committee Meeting to provide information on the newly constructed Yates Mill Aquatic Conservation Center located in Wake County. *Chris Eads, Assistant Director of the Center*, presented information on the mission of the new Center, which uses cutting-edge techniques to rear imperiled aquatic species, supports staff and student research, and provides public outreach and education opportunities. A future field trip for Commissioners will be planned.

Motion from the Habitat, Nongame & Endangered Species Committee – On a motion by Kelly Davis, and a second by Jim Ruffin, the Commission approved a motion to recognize Dr. Wilson Laney as the 2024 Thomas L. Quay Wildlife Diversity Award recipient.

Big Game Committee Report – June 5, 2024 – *David Hoyle, Chair*, reported that the Big Game Committee met on Wednesday, June 5, 2024. The meeting began with a presentation by *Kathryn Jewell, Social Scientist*, who shared interesting findings and information from the Wildlife Feeding and Baiting in NC survey. The survey explored the percentage of deer and bear hunters who are baiting or feeding, the quantities they are putting out, and other interesting facts about baiting and feeding by deer and bear hunters. The committee looks forward to seeing the full summary of the survey in the near future. Next, *Colleen Olfenbuttel, Game and Furbearer Program Supervisor*, gave a brief update on the Coastal Bear Population research project, which is in its final field season. She also discussed the different data that will be used to inform the new bear plan and the

general timeline for its completion, with a target date of December 2026. Having no further business, the meeting was adjourned.

Finance, Audit & Compliance Committee Report – June 5, 2024 – *Brad Stanback, Vice Chair*, reported that the Finance, Audit & Compliance Committee met on Wednesday, June 5, 2024. *Jason Cottle, Chief Financial Officer*, presented a comparison of current and prior fiscal year-to-date expenditures and revenues in both the general fund and capital improvement fund categories, offering comments for any categories either increasing or decreasing in excess of one million dollars. An update was also provided on the current value and asset allocation of the agency’s Endowment fund, including the amount of expendable income currently available for use, as well as the amount of expendable income presently obligated for agency priorities. *Kyle Briggs, Chief Deputy Director*, introduced WRC’s new Internal Auditor, *Elizabeth Davis*. Elizabeth Davis provided an overview of internal audit and compliance requirements for the internal audit function. The 2024 updated WRC Internal Audit Charter was presented to the committee. Key updates to the new charter were discussed, and the Committee voted to approve the charter. Davis also presented the Self-Assessment Maturity Model and discussed where the audit function was assessed within the model, based on work completed in fiscal year 2024. She detailed that there were two engagements in process, which included the Enhancing Accountability in Government through Leadership and Education project and the annual internal audit risk assessment.

Committee of the Whole Report – June 5, 2024 – *Monty Crump, Chair*, reported that the Committee of the Whole met on Wednesday, June 5, 2024. The meeting began with *Brian Daniels, Customer Service Manager, Customer Support Services*, presenting Reciprocal License Fees. Next, *Melva Bonner, Regulatory Analyst*, presented temporary and permanent rulemaking for Needmore Game Lands and temporary rulemaking for Buffalo Cove, South Mountains, and Kings Creek Game Lands. *Daron Barnes, Land and Water Access Division Chief, Brad Howard, Wildlife Management Division Chief, and Christian Waters, Inland Fisheries Division Chief*, presented the annual cycle rule proposals for 2025-2026. The Committee endorsed modifying the turkey season as proposed by staff and changing the definition of youth back to under 16. Finally, *Christian Waters* presented temporary rulemaking for Striped Mullet and White Mullet, Harvest Reporting Requirements, and Flounder. After a very lively discussion about these rules, the Committee adjourned.

AGENCY SPOTLIGHT

AGENCY SPOTLIGHT – Searching for Sound – *Aubrey Greene, Wildlife Diversity Biologist*, gave a presentation titled “Searching for Sound”. The presentation highlighted how the division uses Autonomous Recording Units (ARUs) that acoustically monitor threatened and endangered species, species of greatest conservation need, and game species to inform conservation, management, and regulation efforts.

RECIPROCAL HUNTING LICENSE FEES FOR NON-RESIDENTS – On a motion by Joe Budd and a second by Jim Ruffin, the Commission approved the resolution to allow changes in nonresident hunting license fees for neighboring states to establish parity, under the authority of NCGS 113-275(a1) presented in **(EXHIBIT C)** by *Brian Daniels, Customer Service Manager, Customer Support Services*

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

CONSIDERATION OF NONGAME WILDLIFE ADVISORY COMMITTEE APPOINTMENTS – On a motion by David Hoyle and a second by Kelly Davis, the Commission reappointed J. Edward Corey III, North Carolina Division of Parks and Recreation; Jared Gray, North Carolina Department of Transportation; G. Lane Sauls, VHB, Inc.; Dustin Smith, North Carolina Zoo; and Bruce White, GFR Forestry Consultants, PLLC, to the Nongame Wildlife Advisory Committee presented in **(EXHIBIT D)** by *Kyle Briggs, Chief Deputy Director*

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

LAND ACQUISITION AND PROPERTY MATTERS

Phase II Land Acquisition – On a motion by Brad Stanback and second by Tom Berry, the Commission approved to proceed with acquisition of Rash Heir– Ashe County presented in **(EXHIBIT E)** by *Ben Solomon, Assistant Chief and Land Acquisition Manager*

- **Rash Heirs – Ashe County (E)**

Other Property Matters

On a motion by Ray Clifton and a second by Tom Berry, the Commission approved the Easement Request from Dominion Energy to purchase an easement through a portion of R. Wayne Bailey-Caswell Game Land in Caswell County presented in **(EXHIBIT F-1)** by *Ben Solomon*

- **R. Wayne Bailey-Caswell Game Land in Caswell County (F-1)**

On a motion by Tom Berry and second by Jim Ruffin, the Commission denied the Easement Request from Tyr Energy Development Renewables to purchase an easement through a portion of Bertie County Game Land in Bertie County presented in **(EXHIBIT F-2)** by *Ben Solomon*

- **Bertie County Game Land in Bertie County (F-2)**

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

WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT DIVISION

Species Conservation Plan – On a motion by Wes Seegars and second by Joe Budd, the Commission approved the final adoption of the Sea Turtles Conservation Plan presented in **(EXHIBIT G)** by *Dr. Sara Schweitzer, Wildlife Management Division Assistant Chief*

EXHIBITS G is incorporated into the official record of this meeting.

RULEMAKING

Temporary/Permanent Rulemaking Notice of Text – 2024-2025 Land and Water Access - 10D .0252 Needmore Game Land Rule – On a motion by Kelly Davis and a second by Tom

Berry the Commission publishing Notice of Text in the *NC Register* with an open comment period and a public hearing for the 2024-2025 Annual Cycle deer season companion rule presented in **(EXHIBIT H-1)** and approved fiscal notes for proposed rules presented in **(EXHIBIT H-2)** by *Melva Bonner, Regulatory Analyst*

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

Temporary Rulemaking Adoption – 2024-2025 Land and Water Access Rules – On a motion by David Hoyle and second by Mike Alford the Commission reviewed public comments presented in **(EXHIBIT I-1)** and adopted proposed amendments to the 2024-2025 Annual Cycle deer season companion rules presented in **(EXHIBIT I-2)** by *Melva Bonner*

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

Permanent Rulemaking Notice of Text – 2025-2026 Annual Cycle Land and Water Access Rules – On a motion by Brad Stanback and second by Ray Clifton 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 J-1)** and approved fiscal notes for proposed rules presented in **(EXHIBIT J-2)** by *Daron Barnes, Land and Water Access Division Chief*

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

Permanent Rulemaking Notice of Text – 2025-2026 Annual Cycle Wildlife Management Rules – On a motion by Ray Clifton and second by David Hoyle the Commission approved publishing Notice of Text in the *NC Register* with an open comment period and a public hearing for amendments to Wildlife Management rules presented in **(EXHIBIT K-1)** and approved fiscal notes for proposed rules presented in **(EXHIBIT K-2)** by *Brad Howard, Wildlife Management Division Chief*

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

Permanent Rulemaking Notice of Text – 2025-2026 Annual Cycle Inland Fisheries Rules – On a motion by Tom Berry and second by Mike Alford the Commission approved publishing Notice of Text in the *NC Register* with an open comment period and a public hearing for amendments to Inland Fisheries rules presented in **(EXHIBIT L-1)** and approved fiscal notes for proposed rules presented in **(EXHIBIT L-2)** by *Christian Waters, Inland Fisheries Division Chief*

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

Temporary Rulemaking Adoption – 10C .0422 Striped Mullet and White Mullet Rule – On a motion by David Hoyle and a second by Wes Seegars the Commission reviewed public comments presented in **(EXHIBIT M-1)** and adopted proposed amendment to 10C .0422 Striped Mullet and White Mullet rule presented in **(EXHIBIT M-2)** by *Christian Waters*

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

Temporary Rulemaking Adoption – 10C .0218 Harvest Reporting Requirements Rule – On a motion by Mark Craig and second by John Stone the Commission reviewed public comments presented in **(EXHIBIT N-1)** and adopted 10C .0218 Harvest Reporting Requirements rule presented in **(EXHIBIT N-2)** by *Christian Waters*

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


Temporary Rulemaking Notice of Text – 10C .0307 Flounder Rule – On a motion by David Hoyle 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 temporary amendments to the flounder rule presented in **(EXHIBIT O)** by *Christian Waters*

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


COMMENTS FROM THE CHAIRMAN – *Chairman Crump* began his comments by expressing his gratitude to the board for their active participation and valuable contributions. He also recognized the efforts of Chief Deputy Director Kyle Briggs and the entire staff. In the absence of Director Ingram, they have admirably stepped up to ensure that operations run smoothly, and objectives are met.

ADJOURNMENT

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



Monty Crump, Chairman 07/25/2024
Date



Cameron Ingram, Executive Director 07/25/2024
Date