

Minutes
Wildlife Resources Committee
2 Martin Luther King, Jr. Drive, S. E.
Suite 1252 East Tower
Atlanta, GA 30334

April 28, 2009

Attending:

Committee Members

Ray Lambert, Acting Chairman
Gene Bishop
Warren Budd
Joe Hatfield
Bob Rutland
Jim Walters
Tom Wheeler
Bill Carruth, Board Chairman, ex-officio

Board Members

Earl Barrs
Walter Hudson
Phyllis Johnson
Loyce Turner
Jim Tysinger

Visitors

Phil Zinsmester, Sierra Club
Josh Stancil, Georgia Forestry Association
Ronny Just, Georgia Power
Steve Ewald, Georgia Power
Jim Stokes, Sustainable Solutions of Georgia
Doug Fulle, Oglethorpe Power

Staff Members

Chris Clark
Carol Couch
Todd Holbrook
Paul Burkhalter
Susan Shipman
Dan Forster
Marlin Gottschalk
Ray Luce
Jim Ussey
Spud Woodward
Linda MacGregor
David Crass
Steve Friedman
Doralyn Kirkland
Wally Woods
Jennifer Kaduck
Connie Buck
Lon Revall
Mark Whitney
Paul Nelson
James Capp
Mark Smith
Jimmy Johnston
Emily Hitchcock
Alexandra Cleary
Sarah Dearman
Mary Ann Evans
Hellen Harris

The April 28, 2009 Wildlife Resources Committee meeting was called to order by Board Chairman Bill Carruth.

Chairman Carruth called on Ray Lambert, Acting Chairman of the Wildlife Resources Committee in Mr. Archer's absence. Mr. Lambert called on Mark Whitney, Chief, Game Management, for a briefing on Georgia's Urban Deer management Plan.

Mr. Whitney stated that over the last decade there had been an acceleration of human population growth in urban and suburban areas and that deer-vehicle collisions have increased. He further stated that the Statewide Deer Management Plan 2005 – 2014 addressed this issue, which directed the Wildlife Resources Division (WRD) to initiate a public planning process to facilitate gaining hunter access to private urban and suburban wildlife habitat. He added that the Plan specifically speaks to private lands and after a task force was formed, they expanded the direction to include public as well as private lands.

Mr. Whitney stated that the public involvement process included assembling an 18-member Urban Deer Advisory Committee that was representative of a number of different types of entities and agencies, specifically identifying stakeholders that had a vested interest in urban/suburban deer/human conflicts. He further stated that the Urban Deer Management Plan recommended the following: (1) approaches that address deer issues in all settings; (2) hunting as a primary method of control; and (3) shared responsibility for addressing issues.

Mr. Whitney stated that issues to be addressed are hunter access, landowner liability, firearms ordinances, and public perceptions. He further stated that the committee developed 26 separate recommendations to deal with this issue on public and private lands.

Mr. Whitney stated that the committee considered potential alternatives to hunting in both lethal and non-lethal areas. He further stated that he believes most of these ideas are very feasible options to be implemented, while some would be too expensive or unlikely to take place.

Mr. Whitney stated that the role of the Wildlife Resources Division (WRD) is coordination, advisory, facilitation and technical assistance. He further stated that participation by public and private entities is voluntary and that good examples exist for success.

Mr. Whitney stated that although no Board action is required on the Urban Deer Management Plan, he welcomes any comments or ideas from Board members. He further stated that the Plan is ready to be signed by the Director of WRD and the Commissioner. He added that WRD is now charged with implementation of the Plan and hopes to accomplish as much as possible considering present budgetary constraints.

Mr. Lambert called on Dan Forster, Director of WRD, for an update. Mr. Forster complimented Mr. Whitney and his staff for their work regarding the deer management issue.

Mr. Forster gave an update on an issue regarding the execution of an undercover operation where exotic animals including fallow deer, red deer, elk and mouflon sheep were being transported from a deer farm to a high fence facility for sport. He stated that the individual had been served with administrative papers and he expects it to be several months before the issue is resolved.

Mr. Forster gave an update on the Peregrine Falcons who are nesting on the 53rd floor of the Sun Trust Building, the Go Fish Center in Perry, and the 18 tournament ramps that are being constructed. He then gave an update of the licensing system issue.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned.