

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

June 23, 2009

Attending:

Committee Members

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

Board Members

Earl Barrs
Jenny Lynn Bradley
Walter Hudson
Phyllis Johnson
Loyce Turner
Philip Watt

Visitors

Ronny Just, Georgia Power
Aaron Mitchell, Georgia Power
Mike Giles, Georgia Poultry Federation
Phil Zinsmeister, Sierra Club
Bryan Tolar, Georgia Agribusiness Council
Tas Smith, Georgia Farm Bureau
Andrew Schock, The Conservation Fund
Shana Udvardy, Georgia Conservancy
John Eberhart, Georgia Earth Alliance
Jim Stokes, Sustainable Solutions of Georgia
Bettie Sleeth, Home Builders Association of Georgia

Staff Members

Chris Clark
Carol Couch
Paul Burkhalter
Todd Holbrook
Susan Shipman
Dan Forster
Becky Kelley
Ray Luce
Marlin Gottschalk
Karl Burgess
John Bowers
Jim Ozier
Steve Saunders
Dave Crass
Jac Capp
Richard Swanson
Emily Hitchcock
Lauren Curry
Doralyn Kirkland
Lindsey Young
Jim Ussery
Steve Friedman
Mike Harris
Brade Gane
Alexandra Cleary
Richard Strickfaden
Lon Revall
Mary Ann Evans

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Abit Massey, Georgia Poultry Federation

Shirl Parsons, Georgia Wildlife Federation

Nate Hunt, Southern Environmental Law Center

The June 23, 2009 meeting of the Wildlife Resources Committee was called to order by Board Chairman Bill Carruth.

Chairman Carruth called on Bill Archer, Chairman of the Wildlife Resources Committee, who called on Dan Forster, Director of Wildlife Resources Division.

Mr. Forster called on John Bowers, Assistant Chief of Game Management to present a briefing on the proposed amendments to Hunting Regulations, Chapter 391-4-2-.46 and 391-4-2-.54, and Chapters 391-4-1-.55 through 391-4-5-.58, Waterfowl and Late Season Migratory Bird Regulations.

Mr. Bowers stated that the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) regulates the harvest of migratory birds through frameworks, which are adopted by the USFWS Regulatory Committee in late July based on recommendations from the Flyway Council. He further stated that the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) is actively involved in the Flyway Council, and that DNR's Waterfowl Biologist sits on the USFWS Regulatory Committee.

Mr. Bowers stated that the frameworks will be adopted after the breeding ground surveys are completed in July. He further stated that he anticipates a 60-day season with a six-duck bag limit for the 2009-2010 season. He added that he also anticipates the reopening of the Canvas Back season with a bag limit of one.

Mr. Bowers stated that the proposed seasons are listed in the board package. (Proposed amendments attached hereto and made a part hereof)

Mr. Bowers briefed the board on the proposed amendments to Rules 391-4-2-.13, Wildlife Management Area License; 391-4-2-62, Alligators; 391-4-2-.70, Wildlife Management Areas (WMAs) and other State Lands; and 391-4-3-.09, Public Fishing Areas. He stated that these changes include the need to adopt regulatory amendments consistent with statutory changes relating to the WMA license and the use of lights to hunt alligators, and to mitigate a net loss of certain hunting opportunities on WMAs resulting from budgetary reductions. (Proposed amendments attached hereto and made a part hereof)

Mr. Forster called on Jim Ozier, Program Manager, Nongame Conservation, to present a briefing on the proposed amendments to Rule 391-4-10-.07, exceptions, protection of endangered, threatened, rare or unusual species to allow the take of peregrine falcons for falconry purposes.

Mr. Ozier stated that the peregrine falcon is highly prized as a falconry bird and has been protected from take since being listed as endangered by the USFWS in the 1970s. He further stated that captive-bred falcons have been available and were

instrumental in helping to restore wild populations. He added that the species was removed from protection by USFWS in 1999 and it has been determined through careful data analysis that a regulated take for falconry would be appropriate.

Mr. Ozier stated that falconers are highly supportive of this proposal. He further stated that some groups are concerned that it is too soon after delisting to amend the Rule, some prefer that falconers rely on captive-bred falcons and wild raptors, and others feel that a bird which symbolizes freedom and speed should not be possessed.

Mr. Ozier stated that as part of DNR's public participation effort, a stakeholders meeting was held on May 21, 2009, and included representatives from the Georgia Falconry Association, Georgia Game Hawkers Club, Georgia Ornithological Society, the Georgia Conservancy, the Nature Conservancy, Atlanta Audubon, Ogeechee Audubon, Coastal Audubon and the Georgia Wildlife Federation.

Mr. Ozier stated that the proposed amendments would be presented to the Board for approval at the August meeting.

Mr. Forster updated the Board on the marbled godwits, which are coastal birds that have been fitted with satellite transmitters to track their flight from the Georgia coast to the Dakotas and back.

Mr. Forster updated the Board on the Go Fish Georgia program, handing out photos of the Go Fish Center and stated that Phase I, which is construction of the outer shell, will be completed sometime near the end of August. He further stated that Phase II will be construction of the interior exhibits and will be out for bid in July. He added that it will take between nine months to one year to construct those exhibits.

Mr. Forster updated the Board on the boat ramps that are being constructed under the Go Fish Georgia program.

Mr. Forster updated the Board on the ongoing license system issue, stating that there are now 588 walk-in agents where individuals can conduct a cash transaction and purchase a license. He further stated that 14 new counties have been added as license agents, and that progress is being made to add more counties in the future.

Mr. Forster stated that there are many non-traditional agents who are selling licenses under the new system, which is a very positive stride. He further stated that effective July 1, 2009, an individual who purchases a license before it expires would receive a refund of \$2.75.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned.