

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

June 28, 2011

Attending:

Committee Members

Philip Watt, Chairman
Joe Hatfield, Vice Chairman
Warren Budd
Mabel Jenkins
Duncan Johnson
Phyllis Johnson
Ray Lambert
Aaron McWhorter
Loyce Turner
Earl Barrs, Board Chairman, ex-officio

Board Members

Dennis Billew
Bill Carruth
Warren Budd
Jim Walters
Philip Wilheit
Steven Woodruff

Visitors

Ronny Just, Georgia Power Company
Kurt Ebersbach, Green Law
Andy Fleming, Friends of Georgia State Parks
Glenn Flake, Friends of Georgia State Park, Chattahoochee Bend
Karl Ledford, Georgia Transmission
Dale Kemmerick, Retired
Walter Jones, Morris News Service
Bettie Sleeth, Home Builders Association of Georgia
Aaron Mitchell, Georgia Power Company
John Eberhart, Georgia Earth Alliance
Kelly Jordan, Arabia Mountain Heritage Area Alliance
Will Wingate, Georgia Conservancy
Maggie Lee, Freelance Reporter
Doug Fulle, Oglethorpe Power
Kathryn Keisler, Green Law

Staff Members

Mark Williams
Allen Barnes
Todd Holbrook
Homer Bryson
Spud Woodward
Becky Kelley
Dan Forster
Dave Crass
Emily Hitchcock
Kyle Pearson
Steve Friedman
Doug Haymans
Jim Ussery
Doralyn Kirkland
Mark Smith
Jac Capp
Paul Nelson
John Bowers
Lauren Curry
Wally Woods
Ben Stowers
David Clark
John Biagi
Sally Winchester
Connie Buck
Tim Banks
Elizabeth Starkey
Lon Revall
Eric VanDeGenachte
Sherry Crew-Jay
Cathy Barnette
Mary Ann Evans
Hellen Harris

The June 28, 2011 meeting of the Wildlife Resources Committee was called to order by Board Chairman Earl Barrs.

Chairman Barrs called on Philip Watt, Chairman of the Wildlife Resources Committee, who called on John Bowers, Assistant Chief, Game Management.

Mr. Bowers stated that the first item was a briefing on proposed amendments to Hunting Regulations, Chapter 391-4-2-.46, 391-4-2-.52, and 391-4-2-.55 through 391-4-2-.58, Waterfowl and Late Season Migratory Bird Regulations. He further stated that the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) regulates the harvest of migratory birds by establishing a framework (opening and closing dates, maximum season length and maximum bag limits) within which the states can set their migratory bird hunting seasons.

Mr. Bowers stated that the proposed waterfowl and late-season migratory bird hunting season dates are within the framework anticipated to be offered by USFWS later this summer. He further stated that the proposal maximizes hunting opportunity within the anticipated framework. He added that the framework for waterfowl and late-season migratory bird hunting adopted by USFWS may change based on habitat conditions in northern breeding grounds and other biological parameters.

Mr. Bowers stated that a one-page summary of proposed waterfowl and late-season migratory bird hunting season dates for 2011-2012 had been included in the Board package. He further stated that this recommendation requires no Board action at this time, but is intended to provide the opportunity for input prior to the final proposal that will be presented at the August meeting.

Discussion ensued.

Mr. Bowers stated that the next item was for action on the proposed amendment to Hunting Regulations, Chapter 391-4-2-.71, Federal Wildlife Areas. He further stated that this proposed amendment is responsive to public desires to provide late-summer opportunity for pursuing bears with dogs for training purposes in Federal Wildlife Areas. He added that the proposed amendment provides a total of 141 days of opportunity.

Discussion ensued.

Mr. Bowers stated that he would like to request that the Committee recommend the Board approve the proposed amendment to Hunting Regulations, Chapter 391-4-2-.71, Federal Wildlife Areas.

A motion was made by Mr. Hatfield, seconded by Mrs. Jenkins and carried unanimously that the Committee recommends that the Board approve the proposed amendment to Hunting Regulations, Chapter 391-4-2-.71, Federal Wildlife Areas. (Proposed Amendment hereto and made a part hereof)

Dan Forster, Director, Wildlife Resources Division (WRD), presented the action on proposed addition of New Rule 391-1-7-.01, Refund of Fees.

Director Forster stated that New Rule 391-1-7-.01, Refund of Fees was to provide refunds of fees collected in error or as an overpayment, or to refund fees which the Department or State is not otherwise entitled. He further stated that this proposal was discussed in detail at the May meeting and resulted from the passage of SB-121 during the past Legislative Session and signed by the Governor.

Director Forster stated that previously, Georgia law did not allow the Department to provide refund of fees, and customers due a refund were required to submit an application for refund to the Claims Advisory Board in the Secretary of State's Office. He further stated that this was a fairly lengthy and time consuming process for customers, as well as DNR employees. He added that the new DNR-based refund process will be more immediate, will be appreciated by customers, and will save significant staff time.

Director Forster stated that the proposed Rule provides guidelines under which the various Divisions of the Department may develop forms and procedures for providing customer refunds, and requests that the Committee recommend that the Board approve the proposed addition of the New Rule.

A motion was made by Mrs. Jenkins, seconded by Mr. Hatfield and carried unanimously that the Committee recommends that the Board approve the proposed addition of New Rule 391-1-7-.01, Refund of Fees, to specify how the Department will provide refunds of fees collected in error or as an overpayment, or to which the Department or State is not otherwise entitled. (Proposed Addition of New Rule attached hereto and made a part hereof)

Director Forster introduced Elizabeth Starkey as Communications Program Manager and announced that Colonel Eddie Henderson had been appointed as new Chief of Law Enforcement.

Director Forster gave an update on the Forest L. Wood Cup Championship Fishing Tournament to be held at Lake Lanier on August 9-12, 2012, the new archery range that has recently opened on Lake Oconee, the shooting sports range program, the Go Fish Center's new shooting sports room, and opportunities for Board members to participate in WRD field work. He also gave an update on improvements to customer communications and service.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned.