

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

August 26, 2013

Attending:

Committee Members

Philip Wilheit, Chairman
Mark Mobley, Vice Chairman
William Bagwell
Duncan Johnson
Phyllis Johnson
Bodine Sinyard
Philip Watt
Dee Yancey
Rob Leebern, Board Chairman, ex-officio

Board Members

Nancy Addison
Dwight Davis
Ray Lambert
Paul Shailendra
Mark Smith

Visitors

Michael Pisciotta, Georgia Agribusiness Council
John Worley, University of Georgia
Melony Wilson, University of Georgia
Craig Manganiello, Georgia River Network
Lauren Joy, Southern Environmental Law Center
Gordon Rogers, Flint Riverkeeper
Charles Griffin, Georgia Pork Producers Association
Terry Danforth, Georgia Pork Producers Association
Mark Woodall, Sierra Club
Juliet Cohen, Chattahoochee Riverkeeper
Greg Blount, Troutman Sanders
Justin Wong, Troutman Sanders
Gina Rogers, Georgia Wildlife Federation
Todd Holbrook, Georgia Wildlife Federation
Doug Fulle, Oglethorpe Power
Deb Phillips, Georgia Industry Environmental Coalition
Daniel Johnson, ARC
Ronny Just, Georgia Power Company

Staff Members

Mark Williams
Jud Turner
Homer Bryson
Spud Woodward
Dave Crass
Dan Forster
Becky Kelley
Eddie Henderson
Steve Friedman
Kyle Pearson
Lauren Curry
Zachary Harris
Cathy Barnette
Taylor Brown
Doralyn Kirkland
Russ Pennington
Terry West
Michael Chadwell
Doug Haymans
John Bowers
John Biagi
Jac Capp
Keith Bentley
Jeff Cown
Mary Walker

The August 26, 2013 meeting of the Wildlife Resources Committee was called to order by Chairman Rob Leebern.

Chairman Leebern called on Philip Wilheit, Chairman of the Wildlife Resources Committee, who called on John Bowers, Chief of Game Management, to present the proposed amendments to Hunting Regulations, Chapter 391-4-2-.43 through 391-4-2-.45 and 391-4-2-.47 through 391-4-2-.56, Waterfowl and Migratory Bird Regulations.

Mr. Bowers stated the proposed regulations are set by a framework proposed by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS). He further stated the Board was briefed on these amendments in June. He added since June, the USFWS has adopted their framework which was more flexible than anticipated.

Mr. Bowers stated WRD has modified the proposal to reflect a bag limit increase from four to six for September teal season; a bag limit increase from one to two for the canvasback; and an increase in possession limits three times the daily bag limit for all migratory birds. He further stated the bag limit for scaup was more restrictive (from 4 to 2) and is adjusted likewise.

Mr. Bowers stated these proposed season and bag limits conform to federal frameworks and maximize opportunity for our hunters.

Mr. Bowers stated he would request the Committee recommend that the Board approve the item, as presented.

A motion was made by Mr. Yancey, seconded by Mr. Mobley and carried unanimously that the Committee recommend that the Board adopt the Resolution to approve the proposed amendments to Hunting Regulations, Chapter 391-4-2-.43 through 391-4-2-.45 and 391-4-2-.47 through 391-4-2-.56, Waterfowl and Migratory Bird Regulations, as presented.

Mr. Bowers stated the next item for the Board's consideration was an action on the proposed adoption of New Rule 391-4-2-.33, Special Opportunity Turkey Season.

Mr. Bowers stated the Board was briefed on the proposed new rule in June. He further stated this proposal stems from HB 207, which instructed the Department to authorize a special turkey season for mobility impaired and youth. He added the legislation also stipulated that the special turkey season be held the weekend prior to the current opening weekend of turkey season.

Mr. Bowers stated public notice was issued in late June. He further stated a public hearing was held in July. He added 62 comments were received and were largely supportive of the rule.

Mr. Bowers stated he would request the Committee recommend that the Board approve the item, as presented.

A motion was made by Ms. Johnson, seconded by Dr. Watt and carried unanimously that the Committee recommend that the Board adopt the Resolution to approve the proposed adoption of New Rule 391-4-2-.33, Special Opportunity Turkey Season, as presented.

Chairman Wilheit called on John Biagi, Chief of Fisheries Management, to present the proposed amendments to Fishing Regulations, Chapter 391-4-3-.03, 391-4-3-.05, and 391-4-3-.06.

Mr. Biagi stated the proposed changes will remove unnecessary seasonal restrictions for fishing in marked areas around three springs in Lake Blackshear, modify length limit for largemouth bass on Bear Creek Water Supply Reservoir in Jackson County, and add a protective slot limit for largemouth bass from Lake Lindsay Grace in Wayne County.

Mr. Biagi stated the Board was briefed on the proposed amendments in June. He further stated a public hearing was held in each county, 20,000 direct emails were distributed, and WRD issued news releases. He added public response was nearly unanimous in support of the changes.

Mr. Biagi stated he would request the Committee recommend that the Board approve the item, as presented.

A motion was made by Mr. Johnson, seconded by Dr. Watt and carried unanimously that the Committee recommend that the Board adopt the Resolution to approve the proposed amendments to Fishing Regulations, Chapter 391-4-3-.03, 391-4-3-.05, and 391-4-3-.06, as presented.

Chairman Wilheit called on Dan Forster, Director of the Wildlife Resources Division, for his division update.

Director Forster gave an update on Strategic Plan Survey participation; the alligator hunting quota drawing; an increase in loggerhead nests; and the availability of the WRD license plates.

Discussion ensued between Director Forster and the Board members concerning the alligator population and harvest in Georgia.

Ms. Johnson asked Director Forster for WRD to look into increasing the number of permits offered to hunters. She further stated alligator hunting is an incredible opportunity.

Director Forster announced to the Board that John Bowers had been named the new Chief of Game Management at WRD.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned.