

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

August 25, 2015

Attending:

Committee Members

Dee Yancey, Chairman
Mark Mobley, Vice Chairman
William Bagwell
Dwight Davis
Dwight Evans
Rob Leebern
Aaron McWhorter
Philip Watt
Philip Wilheit
Ray Lambert, Board Chair, ex-officio

Board Members

Nancy Addison
Duncan Johnson, Jr.
Phyllis Johnson
Mike Phelps
Matt Sawhill
Bodine Sinyard
Brother Stewart

Visitors

Jonathan Harding, Georgia Agribusiness Council
Bryan Tolar, Georgia Agribusiness Council
Bill Lott, UCCTU
Tom Redmon, Chattahoochee Park Conservancy
Ben Emanuel, American Rivers
Dewey G. Grantham, Jr., Liberty Tire Recycling
Dyna Kohler, Chattahoochee Parks Conservancy
Lisa Gordon, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
Steve Levetan, Pull-a-Part, LLC
Alan Toney, citizen
Jim Harvey, Trout Unlimited
Jennette Gayer, Environment Georgia
Kent Strickland, Environment Georgia
Colleen McLoughlin, Environment Georgia

Staff Members

Mark Williams
Jud Turner
Walter Rabon
Bryan Tucker
Eddie Henderson
Becky Kelley
Spud Woodward
Steve Friedman
Kyle Pearson
Mary Kathryn Yearata
Cathy Barnette
Taylor Brown
Mark Whitney
Doug Haymans
Doralyn Kirkland
Jac Capp
Jeff Cown
Karen Hays
Wally Woods
John Bowers
Mary Walker
Stan Elrod
Tina Brunjes
Jon Ambrose
Terry West
Zachary Harris
Trip Addison

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Debbie Phillips, Georgia Industry Environmental Coalition

Mark Woodall, Friends of the Environment

Dough Niell, Georgia Chamber

Jeffrey Harvey, Farm Bureau

Chris Manganiello, Georgia River Network

Bill Cox, Chattahoochee River N.R.A.

Alyse Williams, Office of Planning and Budget

James Hamilton, North Georgia Mountain Authority

Bill Donahue, North Georgia Mountain Authority

Laura Hartt, Chattahoochee Riverkeeper

John Eberhart, Georgia Earth Alliance

Roger Huff, White Water Learning Center of Georgia

Gerard Gunthert, Chattahoochee Riverkeeper

Joyce Shephard, City of Atlanta Council Member

Jerry Stober, FOMR

William Tomlin, The Sierra Club

Jason Ulseth, Chattahoochee Riverkeeper

Harriet Peacock, citizen

Sally Bethea, citizen

Joshua Hanthorn, citizen

Chris Scalley, Fishing Guide

Roger Buerki, citizen

The August 25, 2015 meeting of the Wildlife Resources Committee was called to order by Ray Lambert, Chairman of the Board of Natural Resources.

Chairman Lambert called on Dee Yancey, Chairman of the Wildlife Resources Committee, who called on Tina Brunjes, Programs Operation Manager, to present the proposed amendments to Waterfowl Hunting Regulations, Chapter 391-4-2.

Ms. Brunjes stated the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) regulate the harvest of migratory game birds by establishing a framework within which the states set their migratory bird hunting seasons. She further stated the Board was briefed on this item in June. She added these proposed seasons and bag limits conform to federal frameworks approved by the USFWS in late July and maximize opportunity for Georgia hunters.

Ms. Brunjes stated she would request the Committee recommend that the Board approve the item as presented.

A motion was made by Dr. Watt, seconded by Mr. Evans and carried unanimously that the Committee recommend that the Board adopt the Resolution to approve the proposed amendments to Waterfowl Hunting Regulations, Chapter 391-4-2, as presented.

Chairman Yancey called on Jon Ambrose, Chief of Nongame Conservation, to brief the Board on the Statewide Wildlife Action Plan Revision and Related Proactive Conservation Efforts.

Mr. Ambrose stated the State Wildlife Action Plan addresses conservation needs for high priority animals, plants and habitats in Georgia. He further stated the original plan was submitted to the USFWS in 2005. He added WRD has completed a “comprehensive review and revision” of the plan which includes assessments of species, habitats, and conservation needs and opportunities.

Mr. Ambrose stated the purpose of the SWAP revision is to incorporate new information on the status of species and habitats; address emerging issues and identify new initiatives and partnerships; improve consistency across jurisdictional boundaries; and provide useful information and decision-making tools to conservation partners.

Mr. Ambrose stated a public review draft was posted online June 1, 2015 and a comment period was held ending July 15, 2015. He further stated WRD put out press releases as well as media interviews. He added public meetings were held in Covington, Perry and Brunswick.

Chairman Yancey called on Dan Forster, Director of the Wildlife Resources Division, to brief the Board on License Restructure and Fee Increase Initiative: Public Outreach Results and Next Steps.

Director Forster stated WRD has been working to obtain consumer support for a plan to restructure licenses and license fees designed to: simplify license purchase decisions; increase Federal and State revenue streams; achieve price parity with other Southeastern states; maintain competitive

license prices and provide exceptional value; recapture buying power; improve recruitment, retention and reactivation; and include partners in the process.

Director Forster stated during May 2015, WRD conducted an online general survey, sent direct email to over 500,000 hunters and anglers, and held 7 open-house style public forums across the state with an in-depth survey. He further stated WRD received feedback from over 5,000 sportsmen.

Director Forster discussed the results of the feedback received from the surveys which included 90% of public forum attendees supporting a modest increase in hunting and fishing licenses and 85% of public forum participants supporting license fees set at or above the Southeastern average.

Director Forster stated the next steps include finalizing the new license structure and fee proposal and seeking Governor's Office approval for the proposal. He further stated a draft of proposed legislation will be presented in November at the Legislative Listening session. He added WRD anticipates the proposed legislation being introduced during the 2016 legislative session.

Discussion ensued concerning the cost of a lifetime license in the current proposal.

Mr. Stewart stated he would like to applaud the WRD staff for holding the public meetings around the state. He further stated the presentations given at these meetings were very informative.

Chairman Yancey asked Director Forster to discuss the uses from the increased revenues under the current proposed fee increase. Director Forster stated these fees could be used to increase hours of Public Fishing Areas, increase staff at Wildlife Management Areas and Public Fishing Areas, build new shooting ranges and boat ramps, increase Youth Education, fish stocking, increase access to Wildlife Management Areas, and be able to provide the public with more information on coyote control.

Mr. Sinyard asked Director Forster to discuss the increase in Federal funds received under the current proposed fee increase. Director Forster stated this pot of money changes yearly but he would anticipate a several million dollar a year increase.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned.