

Waterfowl Advisory Committee
November 14, 2023
Meeting Minutes
Donnelley WMA
585 Donnelley Drive. Green Pond, SC 29446

Members Present:

Chairman Bob Perry, Vice Chairman John Hilton, Stuart Cochran, Bill Mace, Ernie Wiggers

Members Absent:

Jerry Lee (excused absence)

DNR Staff Present:

WFF Deputy Director Emily Cope, Chief of Wildlife Billy Dukes, Assistant Chief of Wildlife (Regions 1 & 3) Willie Simmons, Assistant Chief of Wildlife (Regions 2 & 4) Sam Chappellear, Statewide Waterfowl Biologist Molly Kneece, Regional Coordinator (Region 4) Alicia Farrell, Donnelley WMA (Unit 4C) Coordinator Daniel Barrineau, Wildlife Section Administrative Coordinator Patty Castine.

Constituents Present:

Dean Harrigal, Jeff Dennis

Call to Order

Chairman Perry called the meeting to order at 9:31AM, with notice that the date, time, and place of the meeting was posted on the DNR website in accordance with the Freedom of Information Act.

Introductions and Constituent Comments

Staff and constituents introduced themselves and provided their background and interests.

Constituents who wished to speak: Jeff Dennis, an outdoor writer, made a brief statement regarding his interests in duck hunting and applying for and attending Category I waterfowl lottery hunts. Dean Harrigal, retired waterfowl biologist, made a brief statement reminding everyone of our position in the Atlantic Flyway and being at the mercy of many factors we cannot control as to how many ducks winter in South Carolina each year.

Approval of Minutes

Chairman Perry requested a motion to approve the minutes of the August 8, 2023, Waterfowl Advisory Committee meeting. Ernie Wiggers made a motion to approve the minutes. The motion was seconded by Vice Chairman John Hilton and passed with unanimous approval by the Committee.

Comments from DNR Leadership

Deputy Director Emily Cope welcomed everyone to the meeting. Chief of Wildlife Billy Dukes welcomed the committee and all attendees and referenced the Fall Flights Report in the folders provided to each committee member.

DNR Project Updates and Status of Category I WMAs

Statewide Waterfowl Biologist Kneece provided a presentation regarding an overview of her duties and the progress she is making. Regional Coordinators Willie Simmons (1 & 3) and Sam Chappellear (2 & 4) gave updates on the waterfowl areas in each of their regions. Regional Coordinator Alicia Farrell gave an update on Region 4 properties, specifically Samworth. Chairman Perry asked if there was any consideration of collecting data on public use on surrounding waterways. Deputy Director Cope stated

that there is a possibility that two temporary hourly technicians may be hired to collect data at the Samworth and Hagley boat ramps as hunters are leaving. Deputy Director Cope advised the Committee that there is a YouTube video posted which portrays outdated and inaccurate information regarding the status of Samworth WMA. Chairman Perry stated he contacted the person responsible for posting the video and advised the person the information that was shared is incorrect and that much progress has been made by DNR on this area. Deputy Director Cope and Chief Dukes thanked Chairman Perry for contacting poster of the video. It was suggested by Vice Chairman Hilton and Bill Mace to show certain individuals who are wrong about the conditions at Samworth the actual progress that's been made on the property. Biologist Kneece also briefed the Committee on the planned re-initiation of aerial surveys, not on a statewide basis, but on selected WMAs. The Committee members welcomed this news. Finally, Biologist Kneece reviewed the methodology of the Rapid Habitat Assessment.

Category I Lottery Hunts 2023-2024 Update

Chief Dukes shared a rundown of the varying numbers for Category I lottery hunt results comparing the number of hunts and the number of hunters for the 2022-23 waterfowl seasons on 10 different properties. The results showed an increase for 2023 for all properties with the exceptions of Bear Island and Sandy Beach. Waterfowl Biologist Kneece mentioned that she attends at least one hunt on all the Category I waterfowl areas each year to observe and get hunter input. Chairman Perry asked staff if there would be any problem with any member of the Committee attending some of the Category I hunts solely as observers. Deputy Director Cope and Chief Dukes indicated that would be appreciated and Chief Dukes provided a schedule of hunt site dates.

Draft Waterfowl Project Mission and Vision Statements

The requested mission and vision statement for the advisory committee was presented to the committee by Chief Dukes. After a brief discussion, Chairman Perry made a motion to approve the statement, Vice Chairman Hilton seconded and passed with unanimous approval by the Committee. These statements are appended.

Duck Stamp Expenditures 2021-2022

Chief Dukes presented the rundown of the duck stamp expenditures for FY23. He assured the committee that all funds are specifically used for all waterfowl areas throughout the state. Deputy Director Cope offered photos to be included in the annual report. Vice Chairman Hilton suggested using the funds in the future to install a pump at Broad River Waterfowl Area.

South Carolina Banding and Band Recovery Update

Waterfowl Biologist Kneece gave a presentation regarding waterfowl banding efforts in SC and band recovery locations of ducks banded in the state.

Overview of Donnelley WMA

Unit 4C Biologist Daniel Barrineau gave a presentation on Donnelley WMA, with focus on wetlands and waterfowl management and the addition of Category II waterfowl hunting on the area. Due to scheduled hunting on Donnelley WMA, it was decided to forego any tour of the area.

Other, Old and/or New Business

Chairman Perry recognized the August 22, 2023, field day that was held at Samworth. Ernie Wiggers recommended more continuing education for the committee members and landowners. Waterfowl Biologist Kneece offered to keep the committee members on her email blast for all updates that are posted regarding DNR waterfowl areas and banding activities.

A Survey Monkey link was forwarded to all committee members entitled Setting Duck Season Dates: Hunter Preference Survey. The survey was distributed to a random sample of SC duck hunters, which

explains why not everyone on the advisory committee received it. Survey results will be tabulated and presented at a later date.

Information was provided to the committee members on how to seek reimbursement for expenses incurred while conducting Waterfowl Advisory Committee business. A handout was provided to Committee members outlining the process. Administrative Coordinator Castine will assist Committee members and will coordinate with DNR Human Resources staff as needed.

The Committee discussed the frequency of storms, sea-level rise, recurring damage on coastal WMAs, and the agency's ability to build and maintain resilience. It was recommended this topic be a focus for Committee discussions during 2024.

Date, Time, and Location of Next Meeting

The next meeting of the Waterfowl Advisory Committee is planned for 9:30 AM, Tuesday, February 13, 2024, at the National Estuarine Research Reserve (NERR) McKenzie Field Station in Bennett's Point, South Carolina. The Committee will hope to tour Bear Island and Springfield WMAs after the meeting. Administrative Coordinator Castine will contact MRD staff to check on availability and will reserve the NEER Station facility, if so.

Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 2:10 PM.

**SCDNR Waterfowl Project
Mission and Vision
November 14, 2023**

Mission: To facilitate development of waterfowl habitat on public and private lands in South Carolina and the expansion of waterfowl hunting opportunity through expert technical assistance, the application of sound, scientific research, and continued professional development and education of staff and the waterfowl management community.

Vision: To become a trusted resource and the notable authority for waterfowl management in South Carolina.