

**Waterfowl Advisory Committee
November 8, 2022, Minutes
Rembert C. Dennis Board Room
1000 Assembly St. Columbia, SC 29202**

Members Present:

Chairman Bob Perry, Jerry Lee, John Hilton, Stuart Cochran, Bill Mace

Members Absent:

All current members were in attendance

DNR Staff Present:

Emily Cope, Billy Dukes, Molly Kneece, Charles Ruth, Alicia Farrell, Zadok Moss, Will Dillman, Sam Chappelle, Willie Simmons, Ken Prosser, Kevin Ryan, Kelsey Huffstetler

Others Present:

Rep. Phillip Lowe

Constituents Present:

Smith Ragsdale

Billy Dukes, Chief of Wildlife, called the meeting to order.

Representative Phillip Lowe, made comments regarding his work on House Ways and Means to support additional funding for waterfowl projects, and his sponsorship of H4177.

Billy Dukes, Chief of Wildlife, presented a review of Act 147 – H4177, and provided a brief overview of the responsibilities of the committee. The duties of the committee include assisting in the management of waterfowl habitats, assisting in the development, protection, and propagation of waterfowl in this state, assisting in prioritizing the expenditures of monies to accomplish this purpose, and review the activities of the Waterfowl Program Manager (Molly Kneece). An organizational chart was also provided, to inform the committee on the education backgrounds of the DNR staff involved in the Waterfowl Management Program. There are currently 3 staff members with an advanced degree in Waterfowl and Wetlands, 8 staff members with an advanced degree, and 4 staff members with a degree.

Molly Kneece, Waterfowl Program Manager/Biologist, presented on Category 1 Waterfowl Area Supervision, the Category 1 Waterfowl Area Peer Review Process, and Samworth WMA Management and Peer Review Summary. Samworth WMA is a 1,300-acre property, located in Georgetown County. It includes 968 acres of MTI, 17 miles of perimeter dike, and 24 rice trunks. The property has seen significant flood damage due to major weather events including the 1000-year flood in October of 2015, Hurricane Matthew in October of 2016, Hurricane Irma in September of 2017, and Hurricane Florence in September of 2018. Infrastructure repairs have been ongoing since 2017, and have been managed in-

house, as well as through contracted projects. Habitat management on Samworth includes white marsh spraying, prescribed fire, and site disturbance. Staff's ability to efficiently and effectively manage wetland impounds continues to be heavily influenced by three major forces, including water, a growing coastline, and conservation in the flyway. In May of 2021, Samworth concluded a third-party review, with a team of three external wetland experts (Mark Purcell, Stephen Rockwood, Rance Mooring) from public and private sectors across the South, with the intention of conducting a thorough review of current impoundment management practices. The team was tasked with evaluating existing management plans for gaps or misplaced goals, infrastructure for unknown needs, current water management and disturbance for intended food composition, potential for agricultural crops versus natural food sources, and efforts to control invasive species. A similar peer review process has been conducted at Wateree HP/WMA in Richland County, as well as Bear Island WMA in Colleton County, and will be carried out in the remaining Category 1 Waterfowl Areas.

The Committee shared their thoughts, as well as their individual objectives and expectations for future management practices, data collection and review, and funding. The committee agreed to elect Bob Perry as the Chairman of the Waterfowl Advisory Committee, and he accepted the position.

Date, Time, and Location of Next Meeting

The next meeting of the Waterfowl Advisory Committee will be held at 10:30am, on Tuesday, December 6, 2022, at the auditorium at the Region 1 DNR office in Clemson, located at 311 Natural Resource Drive, Clemson, SC 29631. A tour of the Beaverdam Creek WMA will be provided upon the conclusion of the meeting.