

**South Carolina Department of Natural Resources
Wildlife and Freshwater Fisheries Advisory Committee
August 11, 2022, Minutes
Samworth Wildlife Management Area
420 Dirleton Road, Georgetown SC 29440**

Members Present:

Vice Chairman Cleve Smith, Eddie Kinsey, Martha Herbert, Jonathan Rabon, Mac Baughman, Stan Halliday

Members Absent:

Chairman Mike Hutchins, Titus Duren, Will Shirley, Trey Watford, Sam Hiott

Staff Present:

Emily Cope, Billy Dukes, Will Dillman, Sam Chappellear, Willie Simmons, Ross Self, Lynn Quattro, Jason Marsik, Achi Treptow, Jamie Dozier, Alicia Farrell, Molly Kneece, Kelsey Huffstetler

Others Present:

Constituent Mike Hardy

Vice Chairman Cleve Smith called the meeting to order.

The minutes of the May 24, 2022, meeting was approved as submitted.

Jason Marsik, Freshwater Fisheries Biologist, gave a presentation on the ongoing recovery efforts of the Waccamaw River fish population following the impact of Hurricane Florence. The Waccamaw River Study included a comprehensive fish community study from 2015-2017, the 2018 Hurricane Florence fish kill, and the 2019-2021 replicated previous study. Hurricane Florence was followed by a fish kill caused by a drop in oxygen levels, and high levels of nutrients and organic matter being flushed into the system. By late October/Early November, there was a 30% reduction in catch rates among Redear, Largemouth Bass, Redbreast, and Bluegill. Catfish were unable to be sampled due to water parameters. Results of the recovery efforts concluded that total numbers of fish weren't negatively impacted after a year, adults were greatly affected by hypoxic conditions, and in the first year mostly juvenile fish were collected. It generally takes 3 years for most species to recover from a fish kill, however bream species may require a shorter recovery period. Bass sizes are still in recovery mode, and will typically take 3-5 years to fully recover, however catfish distribution may never return to historic balance.

Achi Treptow, Upper Coastal Waterfowl Project Leader, reported on the status of current and ongoing Upper Coastal Waterfowl projects. Samworth WMA is 968 acres, consisting of 17 miles of perimeter dike, and 24 rice trunks, Santee Delta is 1,722 acres, with 10 miles of perimeter dikes and 12 rice trunks, and Santee Coastal WMA is 24,000 acres, with 12 miles of trails and roads, 96 miles of dike, and 77 water control structures. Work done on the Lower Middleton portion includes 12,740 feet of external dike re-topping, 13,430 feet of canal clean out, 1,730 feet of new dike, 2,265 feet of berm re-establishment, and 4 new trunks. Work done on the Upper Middleton portion includes 8,690 feet of external dike re-topping, 6,010 feet of internal dike re-topping, 2,060 feet of new dike, and 4 new rice trunks. Work done on the Murphy portion includes 10,020 feet of external dike re-topping, 4,605 feet of internal dike re-topping, 845 feet of new dike, 6 new rice trunks, and 1 new spillway box. Work completed on the Santee Delta portions includes 318,800 feet of external dike re-topping, 8,325 feet of internal dike re-topping, 4,710 feet of new dike, 44,285 feet of canal clean out, 13 new rice trunks, and 4 new spillway boxes.

Jamie Dozier, Tom Yawkey Wildlife Center Project Leader, gave a presentation on activities, programs, and upcoming research projects taking place at the Tom Yawkey Research Center. Dozier highlighted various research projects, including an ongoing project intended to determine environmental factors and their effects on the sex ratio of alligator hatchlings. Dozier also provided an overview of management highlights including trunk, dike, and spillway repairs, general property maintenance, prescribed burns, the planting of various areas, and spraying to control invasive vegetation. Yawkey is currently the site of multiple projects including the monitoring of Loggerhead Sea Turtle nesting, the Carolina Hedge Nettle project, waterfowl and wading bird surveys, and Red Cockaded Woodpecker monitoring. Many of the research projects taking place at Yawkey are done in cooperation with the Clemson University Research Partnership.

Emily Cope, Deputy Director of WFF, reported on legislative updates, and the status of new and current bills, including the passing of the Purple Paint Law, which enables landowners to mark their property against trespassing, with the use of purple paint on boundary markers, as well as Act 147- H4177, a waterfowl bill that institutes the addition of a Statewide Waterfowl Program Manager, as well as a Waterfowl Advisory Committee.

Date, Time, and Location of Next Meeting

The next meeting of the Wildlife and Freshwater Fisheries Advisory Committee will be held at 10:00am on Thursday, November 3, at the Belfast Wildlife Management Area, in Kinards, SC.

Vice Chairman Cleve Smith adjourned the meeting.