

SC DNR Wildlife and Freshwater Fisheries Advisory Committee  
Minutes, July 13, 2010 Meeting  
Rembert Dennis Building, Columbia, South Carolina

MEMBERS PRESENT:

Paul Bennett, John Gramling, Charles Howard, Cleve Smith, Bryson Thomason, John Troutman

MEMBERS ABSENT:

Chair Stephen Davis, Vice Chair Ed Muckenfuss, Milton Brazell, Billy Hoole

STAFF PRESENT:

Breck Carmichael, Ken Prosser, Charles Ruth, Derrell Shipes, Lynn Quattro, Lt. Tim Baxley, Susan Johnson

Douglas Ford, Research Director for the Senate Fish, Game and Forestry Committee was also in attendance.

Breck Carmichael chaired the meeting in the absence of the Chair and Vice Chair. He opened the meeting with a moment of silence.

The minutes of the April 13, 2010 meeting were approved as submitted.

Paul Bennett stated there had been a recent black bear sighting in Cheraw.

John Troutman stated he recently spoke with a constituent regarding the harvesting of pine straw at Sandhills State Forest destroying quail habitat. Troutman referred the person to Billy Dukes, Small Game Project Leader. Carmichael stated DNR is not involved with selling pine straw on any of its managed lands; however the SC Forestry Commission (which has property in DNR's Wildlife Management Area Program) does have an active program selling pine straw. Carmichael stated DNR does encourage the SCFC not to allow pine straw raking during prime nesting season for ground-nesting birds.

Charles Howard stated the track of a small bear track was seen on property he owns. He also mentioned a recent bear capture in Florence. He further stated he recently saw a member of a hunt club on the Big Pee Dee River adjacent to I-95 who had a picture of an adult black bear track. Howard encouraged everyone to make more of an effort to warn individuals not to shoot bears should they encounter them during hunting season. Mr. Howard asked if DNR has any type of cooperation/partnership with Tall Timbers, a research group. Carmichael stated DNR has had a long-time relationship with Tall Timbers and they now have a field station located on Mt. Pleasant Plantation near Andrews in Georgetown County. Mr. Howard also commented that he would like to see more directional signage to the Wee Tee WMA boat landing in Williamsburg County. Mr. Howard asked if a sign regarding the boat landing could be placed on the highway. Carmichael stated he would have someone contact the property owner, the SC Forestry Commission, about the situation.

SC DEER HUNTER SURVEY, PRELIMINARY RESULTS:

Charles Ruth, DNR Deer and Wild Turkey Project Supervisor, stated DNR contracted with the firm Responsive Management to conduct a telephone survey of randomly selected resident licensees that had hunted deer during the 2009 season for the purpose of gathering information regarding mandatory buck limits and deer tagging. Ruth distributed copies of a preliminary report of summarizing information collected in the survey (copy attached). Ruth stated over 3,600 individuals were randomly selected (big game permittees) and contacted; a minimum of 600 per game zone. There was generally good support (60-70%) for the establishment of a reasonable season limit on bucks and a mandatory tagging system for all harvested deer, including the payment of a fee for the deer tags. Also, the survey indicated that of those surveyed who also hunt turkeys, 81% would be willing to pay \$5 for a set of turkey tags if the funds from fees would be used to administer the tag program and for turkey research and management. Carmichael stated a full report will be submitted to the DNR Board for review at their August 2010 meeting. Carmichael asked committee members if they had anything on this topic they wanted him to convey to the DNR Board at the August meeting. Cleve Smith stated results of the survey need to be publicized as soon as possible. John Troutman stated when the survey results are distributed, individuals should be asked to contact their legislators.

#### CONSTITUTIONAL RIGHT TO HUNT AND FISH CAMPAIGN:

Carmichael stated a joint resolution passed in the 2009 legislative year prescribing a question on the ballot at the next general election (November 2010) as to whether or not language declaring the right to hunt and fish should be added to State's Constitution. According to Carmichael, the National Rifle Association (NRA) campaigned for all states to include this language in their constitution so that in the future animal rights organizations would not be allowed to stop hunting. There was some concern from state fish and wildlife agencies that the language proposed by the NRA could potentially hinder agencies' ability to regulate hunting and fishing. As a result, DNR's legal counsel and staff worked with the NRA for better wording to be included on the ballot. Carmichael noted that a group working through the Camo Coalition (organized by the SC Wildlife Federation) has started an outreach campaign to insure the passage of this referendum in November. Copies of the resolution highlighting the exact wording to be used on the ballot were distributed (copy attached).

#### FRESHWATER FISHERIES CHAPTER 13 REVISION UPDATE:

Lynn Quattro, Assistant Chief of Freshwater Fisheries, informed the Committee about progress on revision of the statutes governing freshwater fishing in the state. The updated statutes have been reviewed and amended based on the input of four constituent groups and comments received after the draft changes were posted on the web. Quattro stated the amended Chapter 13 revision is currently posted on DNR's website for review again by the public. In addition, four regional open houses are currently scheduled in July and August. The first will be held in Columbia on July 14, followed by Moncks Corner on July 27, Greenville on August 3, and Florence on August 17. All open houses will be held from 6 pm to 8:30 pm. Biologists and legal staff will be on hand to answer questions and take comments from the public.

#### STRIPED BASS UPDATE:

Lynn Quattro also provided a summary of striped bass stocking throughout the state in 2010. A stocking report was distributed (copy attached to the original minutes). Quattro stated a total of 4,549,820 striped bass fingerlings were stocked in the following waterbodies: Ashley River, Catawba River, Lake Greenwood, Lake Hartwell, Lake Marion, Lake Moultrie, Lake Murray, Lake Thurmond and Lake Wateree. Additionally, 244,492 hybrid fingerlings were stocked in Lakes Hartwell and Thurmond. The

numbers of stocked striped bass was up from 2009 by 220,309, despite a poor production year at the federal hatchery in Orangeburg. Lynn also updated the Committee on the new striped bass legislation passed for the coastal rivers, inshore waters and territorial sea. She stated legislation closed the summer catch and release fishery on the Lower Saluda River, but proposed changes to Chapter 13 would reopen that fishery.

#### NEW FERAL HOG LAW:

Derrell Shipes, Chief, Statewide Projects, Research and Surveys, stated the General Assembly recently passed a law prohibiting the removal or transport of feral hogs from the wild without a permit. The law also allows hunters to harvest feral hogs at night with certain weapon restrictions. Shipes further stated a person must now obtain an annual hog transport and release permit from DNR (\$50 fee) before transporting and/or releasing a hog from a free roaming population. The animals must be tagged (tags will be provided by DNR). A permitted hog can only be released on the same tract it was captured or into a DNR permitted enclosure within the same county that is utilized for hunting purposes. Shipes announced under no circumstances may a live hog removed from the wild be transported through or into another county or be released in a county other than the county in which it was captured. DNR personnel will inspect hog hunting enclosures before a permit is issued in order to ensure any captured hog released into the enclosure is not likely to escape into the wild. Shipes stated in addition to carrying diseases, feral hogs are very destructive and can and have destroyed hundreds of acres of farmland, native plants and wildlife habitat in a very short amount of time.

#### EARLY MIGRATORY BIRD SEASON SELECTIONS:

Derrell Shipes distributed copies of the DNR Board approved 2010-2011 early migratory bird hunting seasons (copy attached to the original minutes). Shipes stated the Waterfowl Advisory Committee recently concurred with staff recommendations regarding the early Canada Goose and Teal seasons. The DNR Board approved these recommendations at their meeting on July 7th: Dove September 4 - October 9, first three days of the season is afternoon shooting only, November 20 - November 27, December 21 – January 15. The early Teal season approved is September 15-September 30; Canada Goose early season September 1 – September 30. Shipes stated these seasons will be sent to the US Fish and Wildlife Service for approval.

#### BUDGET AND LEGISLATIVE UPDATE:

Breck Carmichael distributed copies of DNR's legislative update as of June 17, 2010 (copy attached to the original minutes). Carmichael announced the agency had a very good legislative year, other than budget issues. He summarized some of the key bills that passed. A multi-year license passed allowing DNR to sell a three year hunting/fishing license. There is no cost break incentive associated with the license, merely the convenience having a license that will last a period of three years. A bill passed allowing DNR to increase the non-resident fee in the alligator draw hunt. A timber harvest bill, which allows DNR to sell timber quickly in emergency situations (wildfire, hurricane, etc.) also passed. Additionally, legislation passed allowing DNR to charge \$25.00 for bear tags. The bill also allows DNR to open and regulate a bear season outside Game Zone 1. A surface water withdrawal bill also passed which will allow some regulation on individuals withdrawing water from public rivers and streams. Legislation passed setting size limits at 14 inches total length and creel limit at 5 per day for black bass in Lakes Marion and Moultrie and the upper Santee River. Legislation passed relating to the release of hogs for hunting purposes (previously discussed by Derrell Shipes). A bill known as the "Renegade Hunter Act" passed prohibiting hunting on a property line or right-of-way without permission of the

adjoining landowner if dogs used in the hunt have crossed onto the adjoining tract. If dog(s) cross the property line onto property where they are not supposed to be, all hunters on that property line must unload their firearms and cease hunting. Legislation also passed adding one month to the trapping season, now December 1 through March 1 of the succeeding year. A bill allowing the hunting of coyotes and armadillos at night with certain weapon and light restrictions also passed.

Carmichael stated DNR began the last fiscal year (July 1, 2009) with \$18.8 million in state appropriated money. On July 1, 2010, the agency began the new fiscal year with \$14.6 million in state appropriated money, a \$4.2 million cut. Projections for next year are for significant additional cuts for all agencies. The WFF Division no longer receives any appropriated dollars and operates entirely on federal funds and various revenue sources. However, the Division has had to take cuts in license revenue, to offset losses of funds in other DNR Divisions. Carmichael informed committee members of the recent reduction in force in the Land, Water and Conservation Districts Division and in the Outreach and Support Services Division, which could no longer be avoided due to the budget cuts.

**OLD/NEW BUSINESS:**

Carmichael was asked about the effort on the BP oil spill contingency plan. He stated should the oil reach coastal South Carolina, the Department of Health and Environmental Control would be the lead agency; however, DNR would be involved in the response.

Paul Bennett asked about the possibility of including an article in the *SC Wildlife Magazine* addressing the results of the deer hunter survey Charles Ruth discussed. Bennett stated if not an article, perhaps DNR Director John Frampton could address the survey results in his column in the next issue of the magazine.

**DATE, TIME AND PLACE OF NEXT MEETING:**

October 12, 2010, time and location to be announced.