

SC DNR Wildlife and Freshwater Fisheries Advisory Committee Meeting
Minutes
October 8, 2013
Rembert Dennis Building, Columbia, South Carolina

MEMBERS PRESENT:

Vice Chair Cleve Smith, Milton Brazell, Paul Bennett, John Troutman, Billy Hoole, Charles Howard, Bryson Thomason, Stan Halliday

MEMBERS ABSENT:

Chair Mike Hutchins, John Gramling

STAFF PRESENT:

Emily Cope, Ken Prosser, Ross Self, Lynn Quattro, Tim Ivey, Billy Dukes, Derrell Shipes, Jay Butfiloski, Susan Johnson

There were no constituents present; however, Joey Holloman with *The State* was in attendance.

Vice Chair Cleve Smith called the meeting to order and the minutes of the July 9, 2013 were approved as submitted.

CORMORANT REMOVAL PROGRAM ON SANTEE COOPER LAKES: Derrell Shipes, Chief, Statewide Projects, distributed draft copies of DNR's cormorant removal program (copy attached to the original minutes).

Mr. Shipes stated cormorants are protected by the Migratory Bird Treaty Act and are not classified as game birds. Additionally, there is no season prescribed for taking them. Their removal can only occur after a determination they are causing damage to private or public resources. The USFWS provides the authority to issue cormorant depredation permits to individuals when the birds are causing such damage.

Mr. Shipes reported DNR has determined that wintering, migrant cormorants are damaging public resources on the Santee Cooper Lakes. DNR has also determined the USFWS will allow members of the public to remove cormorants from the lakes by issuing conditional permits to individuals. Mr. Shipes outlined the process of obtaining a permit and conditions that will be associated with each permit issued. Mr. Shipes reported the period for taking cormorants under these permits will be February 2, 2014 through March 31, 2014.

OPENING DAY DOVE FIELD RESULTS:

Wildlife Chief Tim Ivey distributed copies of opening day results (copy attached to the original minutes). Mr. Ivey reported this had been a challenging year for staff in establishing dove fields due to the amount of rainfall. Out of 48 fields monitored in 26 counties (approximately 1,700 acres), there were 2,951 hunters, approximately 60,014 shots were fired, and 9,420 doves were harvested.

Mr. Ivey stated there were 9 youth fields, 231 youth participated with 5,899 shots fired and 612 doves harvested.

UPDATE ON BLUE CATFISH ISSUES IN THE SANTEE COOPER LAKE SYSTEM: Fisheries Chief Ross Self distributed copies of the Santee Cooper Blue Catfish public meetings summary as well as population monitoring charts (copy attached to the original minutes). Mr. Self stated due to concerns that had been raised by DNR staff and the fishing public regarding the decline in blue catfish in the Santee Cooper system, staff held three public meetings in September. A total of 116 attendees signed in, 56 were recreational anglers, 33 commercial anglers, 28 recreational guides and 22 staff. Attendees were given a questionnaire which included a comment section.

Mr. Self reported as a result of the information and comments, two popular ideas received from these public meetings are a daily possession limit and a reduction in the maximum size limit. Mr. Self announced for a number of years at Santee Cooper there has been a limit of only 1 blue catfish greater than 36 inches.

Mr. Self stated now that the public input process has been completed, staff can now begin working on finalizing recommendations. Staff will be considering an individual possession limit, size limit and bow fishing. Staff's goal is to have a recommendation by the end of October.

COYOTE MANAGEMENT UPATE:

Furbearer Project Leader Jay Butfiloski discussed coyote control strategies staff is considering. He stated staff has recently updated the coyote poster which includes current research information. Staff is addressing current options for taking coyotes and working on a number of documents, i.e., Coyote Brochure, and Coyotes in Suburban and Urban areas.

Mr. Butfiloski announced staff plans to conduct a workshop on coyote and other nuisance species in Calhoun County on November 7th. Staff is also discussing the possibility of conducting calling and shooting seminars (contacting industry calling reps regarding availability and willingness to participate, invite reps or similar persons to host programs at Palmetto Sportsmans Classic and similar outdoor shows). Staff is also discussing building a referral network with Clemson Extension for landowners seeking assistance by offering land access for hunters or trappers looking for places to hunt or trap during the open season. Staff is looking at the possibility of public trapping on certain WMAs, surveying registered coyote night hunters on success and activity rates, training several biologists and technicians in each region to trap coyotes, and including coyote control literature to ADQP cooperators. Mr. Butfiloski commented that pending a positive outcome of BMP trap testing, legislation allowing the use of cable restraints (snares) for capturing coyotes in SC may be investigated.

WFF Deputy Director Emily Cope stated DNR is requesting funding (state appropriated dollars) funding for four biologist positions, one biologist for each DNR Region. These

biologists will primarily focus on providing technical assistance to landowners in dealing with feral hogs and coyotes.

OTHER OLD AND/OR NEW BUSINESS:

Charles Howard stated he is adamant about the feral hog issue. He feels many people are wondering what is going on, that we aren't getting anywhere. Mr. Howard reported he first brought this issue up two years ago. He remarked that he is encouraged by Emily Cope's announcement DNR plans to request funding for biologists to provide technical assistance to landowners. Mr. Howard stated feral hogs are a real problem and he spoke to an individual yesterday who stated he loses \$30,000 annually to feral hogs. He further stated people don't need to hear about the history of feral hogs, they want something proactive to happen. He asked where are we and what can we do about this problem. He reported that shooting hogs at night is not very practical and is not enough to impact the population. Mr. Howard said he can't emphasize enough how important it is for DNR to lead regarding this issue. He further stated he knows DNR is working on this problem but people need to see some results, public relations would help.

(Bryson Thomason stated in the upstate no one had given hogs much of a thought. He reported when you bait for deer, you will discover you have hogs. He further stated he has hog pictures on his deer cameras and no deer.

Cleve Smith stated his opinion is baiting for deer with corn in the Piedmont is going to have unintended consequences. Mr. Smith has heard from several landowners who had plots of chicory and clover who bought silos, augers and corn for automatic feeders and their plots are now destroyed. The individuals had not previously had hogs. Mr. Smith further stated he feels another unintended consequence will be with bears.

Emily Cope stated her take-home message about feral hogs and coyotes is DNR has tried to give landowners flexibility in dealing with these animals. Mrs. Cope further stated staff will work harder to promote what options are available in handling this problem. She stressed the importance of private landowners becoming involved in dealing with these nuisance animals. Landowners will have to play a role in helping to manage hog and coyote populations on their own property.

Tim Ivey stated because of trap design, current trapping techniques are not going to control hog groups. Because of the design problem, the trap gate has been modified. Mr. Ivey reported staff recently purchased 4 Jager Pro hog systems. These systems are designed to deal with groups of hogs. Each system has an 8 foot gate with four 16 foot long corral panels. Staff will be able to utilize remote monitoring and remote release. It has been shown that taking groups of hogs on large properties, hog damage was almost eliminated up to 2 to 3 years.

ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEMBER COMMENTS:

Charles Howard stated he recently read in his local newspaper a controversial story regarding bow hunters in Colorado utilizing poisoned arrows. He asked about SC allowing the use of poisoned arrows on private land. Emily Cope reported the chemicals

used on the arrows are highly regulated. Possession of the chemical used is illegal without a prescription. Ms. Cope stated staff will be reviewing legislation regarding drugged arrows and determining an appropriate course of action to clarify the matter.

Paul Bennett announced another successful fishing rodeo was held at Cheraw Fish Hatchery on September 14th. A total of 51 anglers participated and 221 fish were caught (132 bream, 83 catfish and 6 bass).

DATE, TIME AND PLACE OF NEXT MEETING:

Tuesday, January 14, 2014. Time/location to be announced.

Vice Chair Smith thanked all those in attendance for coming. He thanked the biologists in attendance for their intellect, dedication and hard work. He further stated he is most appreciative of the resources available.