

**Waterfowl Advisory Committee**  
**August 20, 2024**  
**Meeting Minutes**  
**SCDNR Dennis Wildlife Center**  
**305 Black Oak Rd, Bonneau, SC 29431**

**Minutes Approved November 12, 2024**

**Members Present:**

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

**Members Absent:**

Jerry Lee

**DNR Staff Present:**

Deputy Director Emily Cope, Chief of Wildlife Billy Dukes, Assistant Chief of Statewide Projects Will Dillman, Assistant Chief of Wildlife (Regions 1 & 3) Willie Simmons, Assistant Chief of Wildlife (Regions 2 & 4) Sam Chappelle, Statewide Waterfowl Biologist Molly Kneece, Chief Legal Counsel Susan Porter, Region 4C Biologist Will Carlisle, Region 4 Assistant Coordinator Zadok Moss and Administrative Coordinator Patty Castine.

**Constituents Present:**

Marc Johnson

**Call to Order**

Chairman Perry called the meeting to order at 9:30AM, 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. Everyone present was welcomed.

**Introductions and Constituent Comments**

Committee members, staff and constituents introduced themselves and provided their background and interests.

Chairman Perry introduced Marc Johnson. Mr. Johnson gave a brief overview of a proposed solar farm near Plantersville, SC that will be very close to several privately-owned managed tidal impoundments in the area. Chairman Perry thanked Mr. Johnson for the information and stated that maps of the proposed area would be distributed later during the day's meeting when discussing Other, Old and/or New Business. Mr. Johnson also provided an update of an ongoing duck DNA study involving multiple partners.

**Consideration and Approval of Minutes**

Chairman Perry asked if there was any discussion regarding the May 13, 2024, Waterfowl Advisory Committee meeting minutes. Vice Chairman Hilton requested to make a change to the minutes wanting to strike the last sentence of the paragraph from Dr. Phil Lavretsky's presentation of Mallard, Black Duck and Mottled Duck Genetics be changed to "There is concern over Eastern Wild Mallard genetic impacts as demonstrated by Dr. Lavretsky's research." Chairman Perry requested a motion to approve the minutes as amended. Vice Chairman Hilton made a motion to approve the minutes. The motion was seconded by Stuart Cochran and passed with unanimous approval by the Committee.

**Comments from the Chair**

Chairman Perry thanked Chief Dukes and Administrative Coordinator Castine for their work regarding the completion of meeting minutes.

### **Comments from DNR Leadership**

Deputy Director Emily Cope welcomed everyone. Chief Dukes welcomed everyone and thanked Assistant Chief Sam Chappellear and Biologist Will Carlisle for coordinating the meeting and the afternoon field trip. He stated federal budget allocations for harvest reports and aerial surveys are in jeopardy due to rising costs, and he will be attending the upcoming Atlantic Flyway Council meeting to communicate to the USFWS and encourage them to provide the need funds to continue the data collection, surveys, and reports.

### **Tropical Storm Debby**

Assistant Chief Sam Chappellear gave a presentation showing the damage to Category I WMAs in Regions 2 and 4 from Hurricane Debby. He discussed the excessive amount of rain that fell during the storm which mostly damaged crops and gave updates on the plan for cleanup and the replanting process. Assistant Chief Willie Simmons gave an update on damage to Category I WMAs in Regions 1 and 3 from Hurricane Debby. He stated that Beaverdam WMA and Clemson Waterfowl Area suffered no flooding or damage. However, Wateree River HP/WMA suffered flooding and crop damage even though attempts were made to lower water levels.

### **WMA Repairs and Maintenance**

Assistant Chief Chappellear gave an overview of repairs and maintenance on WMAs in Regions 2 and 4. Properties reviewed were The Cape, Murphy Island, Cedar Island, Santee-Delta East, Santee-Delta West and Broad River WMA. Assistant Chief Willie Simmons gave an overview of repairs and maintenance on WMAs in Regions 1 and 3. Properties reviewed were Clemson Waterfowl Area, Love WMA, Wateree River HP/WMA, and Hickory Top. Dukes and Kneece provided an update on a planned NAWCA Small Grant for improved water management capability and expansion of the green-tree reservoir at Wateree River WMA from 20 to approximately 60 acres.

### **Update on Cat I WMAs Habitat Conditions**

Waterfowl Biologist Molly Kneece reviewed Category I habitat conditions on various properties including Donnelley. Currently conditions are very wet, and she has had discussions with various property managers regarding planting and crops. Annual in-field habitat assessment is planned for all moist-soil and planted crop Category I areas prior to beginning of waterfowl season. Assistant Chief Chappellear gave a presentation on Category I habitat conditions at Broad River and Ramsey Grove, as well as white marsh eradication at Samworth WMA. Bill Mace commended Assistant Chief Chappellear and his staff on their hard work and progress at Samworth WMA.

### **Waterfowl Management Program Status Report**

Waterfowl Biologist Molly Kneece gave a status update of waterfowl management program activities since May of this year. However, Molly reported the annual waterfowl status report document is delayed due to other priorities assigned to her.

### **Procedures and Rules of Conduct for DNR Board and Committee**

DNR Chief Legal Counsel Susan Porter gave a presentation regarding Freedom of Information Act procedures for DNR Boards and Committees.

### **Other, Old and/or New Business**

Will Carlisle gave an overview of Sandy Beach WMA.

Chairman Perry distributed maps of the proposed solar farm discussed earlier by Marc Johnson.

**Field Review:** A field tour of Sandy Beach WMA was conducted immediately after the meeting adjournment. The consensus of WAC members was that excellent work has been completed and is ongoing at Sandy Beach WMA. Habitat conditions for this time of year are very favorable.

**Date, Time, and Location of Next Meeting**

The next meeting of the Waterfowl Advisory Committee will be held at 9:30 AM, Tuesday, November 14, 2024, at a site to be determined.

**Adjournment**

The meeting was adjourned at 12:45 PM.