

South Carolina Department of Natural Resources
Wildlife and Freshwater Fisheries Advisory Committee
Meeting Minutes, August 9, 2016
Styx Classroom, West Columbia, SC

MEMBERS PRESENT:

Chair Mike Hutchins, Bobby Garmany, Stan Halliday, Stephen Thomas, Jonathan Rabon, Titus Duren

MEMBERS ABSENT:

Vice Chair Cleve Smith, Sam Hiott, Martha Herbert

STAFF PRESENT:

Emily Cope, Ken Prosser, Billy Dukes, Derrell Shipes, Sam Chappelle, Ross Self, Lynn Quattro, Dean Harrigal, Chad Holbrook, Willie Simmons, Sam Stokes

OTHERS PRESENT:

Molly Kneece, Research Specialist, James C. Kennedy Waterfowl and Wetlands Conservation Center

Chair Hutchins opened the meeting and asked everyone to keep Cleve Smith in their prayers due to an ongoing health issue. He stated Martha Herbert was absent due to an inner ear problem. He thanked Stephen Thomas and Titus Duren for attending the recent Liberty Hill property dedication in Kershaw County.

The minutes of the May 3, 2016 were approved as submitted.

There were no constituents present.

AERIAL WATERBIRD SURVEYS:

Derrell Shipes, Chief of Statewide Projects, introduced Molly Kneece as a Research Specialist with the Clemson University/James C. Kennedy Waterfowl and Wetlands Conservation Center at Baruch Institute of Coastal Ecology and Forest Science.

Mr. Shipes reported in 2008, Mr. James C. Kennedy established the James C. Kennedy Endowed Chair in Waterfowl and Wetlands Conservation in the Department of Wildlife, Fisheries and Aquaculture of the College of Forest Resources at Mississippi State University. Mr. Kennedy's gift sustains in perpetuity the teaching research and service focused on (1) gaining science-based knowledge for understanding and conserving waterfowl and other wetland wildlife species, populations and communities, as well as their habitats; (2) educating current and future waterfowl and wetlands scientists and conservationists; and (3) providing outreach and waterfowl and wetlands ecology and conservation for public and private stake-holders. The Department of Natural Resources has partnered with Clemson University in these efforts. Ms. Kneece is one of the first employees at the Center under the Director, Dr. Rick Kaminski.

Mr. Shipes stated staff is hopeful the Center will grow to represent the Atlantic Flyway or at least the southern part of the Atlantic Flyway so that out-of-state funds might be secured.

Ms. Kneece delivered a power point presentation outlining the technique for monitoring waterfowl within a state. The technique was developed primarily at Mississippi State University. This technique will be used to not only count ducks and geese, but other water birds as well.

Ms. Kneece reported their objectives are: 1) identify ecologically important geographic regions in SC used by waterfowl and other waterbirds detectable by biologists from fixed winged-aircraft; 2) design an aerial survey encompassing these important regions within SC with a goal of estimating waterfowl and waterbird populations with reliability; 3) evaluate statistical and practical utilities of using 1 or 2 observers to simultaneously survey target wildlife, 4) relate waterbird abundances to environmental factors (weather, habitat, etc.).

Ms. Kneece outlined how the survey will work, i.e., pre-determined transects, fly at an altitude of approximately 200 feet with only one pass over of a wetland. The survey biologist will record numbers of waterbirds by species and record spatial locations of each individual or group of waterbirds within a 260 yard transect boundary. After each survey waterbird species and abundance data, population density maps will be made available on the DNR website. Tentative survey dates for 2016 are: September 12-16, November 14-17 and December 12-15.

Announcements of the aerial counts will be in the form of news releases so the public will be aware of the purpose of the low flying aircraft.

PROPOSED CHANGES TO DIADROMOUS FISHERIES LAWS,

Chad Holbrook, Assistant Diadromous Fisheries Coordinator, delivered a power point presentation. Mr. Holbrook reported there are five species of diadromous fish (fish that travel between freshwater to saltwater for spawning) in South Carolina; American Shad, Blueback Herring, Shortnose Sturgeon, Atlantic Sturgeon, American Eel. DNR is proposing changes to the diadromous fisheries laws because the current laws governing these species are found in two different chapters (5 and 13) within Title 50. Staff would like to consolidate them into a new chapter (7). He outlined the proposed changes for each of the five species.

Mr. Holbrook stated the laws need clarification so they are easier for anglers to understand and law enforcement to enforce. These changes would maintain sustainable fisheries so that licensed commercial and recreational anglers can continue to utilize the resource and would also maintain compliance with federal management agencies.

Mr. Holbrook reported public meetings were held during the month of July and all participants in the fishery who obtained a permit to use commercial gear in 2016 received a mailed invitation to attend a public meeting. He outlined the next steps in the process: (1) A Chapter 7 working group will review comments from the public meetings and those received on line. A response to each comment will be posted on DNR's website. (2) When appropriate, changes will be made to Chapter 7 in response to public comments. (3) A finalized draft of Chapter 7 will be completed for approval by senior DNR staff and will then be presented to the DNR Board for recommendations.

Chair Hutchins commended staff on their efforts in this process and the good work they have done. WFF Deputy Director Emily Cope stated staff hopes to include these changes in DNR's legislative package for the next legislative session, which will be the beginning of a two-year session. Chair Hutchins suggested the Committee meet in October so the final Chapter 7 draft can be presented to the WFF Advisory Committee for its recommendation to the DNR Board at its October or November meeting.

WATEREE RIVER HERITAGE PRESERVE/WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT AREA DRAFT MANAGEMENT PLAN: DNR's Wildlife Region 3 Coordinator Willie Simmons delivered a power point presentation. He reported the property consists of the former Cook's Mountain tract and a portion of the Goodwill tract. Ownership was transferred to DNR on June 2, 2015. It contains 3,677 acres adjoining the Wateree River in Richland County, and is located 17 miles east of Columbia.

Mr. Simmons stated the Wateree River HP/WMA was protected as partial mitigation for the Haile Gold Mine Project in Lancaster County. DNR must protect the property and complete wetlands protection and enhancement projects as the first objective. This is required by the terms of ownership of the property. The project is dedicated as a South Carolina Heritage Preserve, the highest protection in the state. The primary objective of all heritage preserves is to protect the natural or cultural character of any area or feature for which the property was dedicated. The Heritage Trust Act also requires that heritage preserves be managed to provide the maximum public usage compatible and consistent with the character of the area.

Mr. Simmons distributed copies of the Wateree River Heritage Preserve Wildlife Management Area Management Plan and a map of the property (copies attached to the original minutes). He reported the draft management plan was made available for comments from the public for a one month period on DNR's website. Additionally, a public meeting was held on July 14 to solicit input on the proposed management plan.

The property will be managed to protect and enhance wetlands and restore natural ecosystems. It will also be managed as a natural area. Fishing, hunting, hiking, nature observation and outdoor education will be encouraged. It will be open to the public year-round during daylight hours, except during draw deer, turkey and waterfowl hunts. There are roads and firelines for walking/hiking bicycling, bird watching, photography and general nature study. The property includes a pond which is open to the public and a fishing license is required. Public fishing rodeos for children and family fishing clinics will be conducted. The property offers access to the Wateree River by foot for fishing.

Mr. Simmons reported all cultural and historic features will be protected. No ATVs will be allowed and a road network will be maintained to allow limited access to the property. Educational opportunities will be available and can be set up by prior appointment.

Daily Visitation and Use Cards are available at a kiosk. Data collected from cards from January through June indicate a total of 793 visitors, but Mr. Simmons feels there were more who did not complete data cards.

Mr. Simmons announced a field day is planned for September 10, 2016.

Committee Member Duren suggested workshops for teachers at DNR facilities via a letter to various school districts. Mr. Simmons reported there is a lack of funds in the school districts for travel. Mr. Duren replied with the availability of educational STEM grants, travel funding should not be a problem.

Chief of Wildlife Billy Dukes commended Willie Simmons and his staff on their ground work and public outreach efforts at WRHP/WMA. Mr. Dukes gave a special thank you to Travis Bennett, Drew Robb and John Flemming for their hard work in making the property available to the public following the flood.

ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEMBER COMMENTS:

Mr. Stephen Thomas thanked the Committee for giving him a chance to speak on several topics. He reported he reached out to Chair Hutchins and all the Committee Members via snail mail letter with a copy to Emily Cope and Susan Johnson.

Mr. Thomas stated he looked at the advisory committee page on DNR's website and read the following: "Advisory Boards and Committees serve to keep South Carolina citizens in active participation with the SCDNR Board and the SC Department of Natural Resources." Mr. Thomas stated Committee Members are to bring to their Committee a review of South Carolina's constituency that does not come from a professional staff. He takes nothing away from DNR staff and stated Committee Members bring an outside perspective which is important and he believes is written in the Code of Laws as these committees exist.

Mr. Thomas provided as much data as he could in his letter which offered suggestions to 1) improve the throughput of the Category I Waterfowl Draw program, 2) restructure the application process to cover the cost of handling the applications while ensuring that DNR benefits from each additional hunter drawn and 3) continue collecting the data needed to properly manage Category 1 and II WMAs.

He distributed graphs (copy attached to the original minutes).

Mr. Thomas stated the previous Waterfowl Advisory Committee was very active in making recommendations that were taken to the DNR Board. At times these recommendations were not completely in line with staff recommendations. Mr. Thomas said that is the purpose of the Committee; otherwise, it is not bringing anything new to the table. He does not think Committee Members are encumbered by the same concerns as staff (i.e., labor, budget, etc.).

Mr. Thomas referred to his Cat I graph and reported in the past 29 seasons, the average is approximately six hunters per season day and that number has gone as high as 27. There were two seasons where the average was 27 hunters for every day in the season. Based on these findings, he wanted to offer a motion that staff consider going to 21.5 for a total number of 1,273 hunters in the Cat 1 program during the 2016-2017 waterfowl season.

Mr. Thomas stated one of the reasons he is proposing this change is the number of applications has gone through the roof. Every year there is a backlog of hunters and it stays behind the curve because more people apply than there are slots available, making it longer to get drawn. He would like to see the backlog decreased and provide more opportunity to additional people for a super quality hunt.

Mrs. Cope asked Mr. Thomas to go through all of his comments and stated this item was placed on the meeting agenda as information therefore, no action can be taken due the FOIA statute.

Mr. Thomas replied we are already into the next season. Mrs. Cope stated the Rules and Regulations have already been printed. Mr. Thomas stated he was keenly aware of the calendar and these items were all picked on purpose and they do not affect the Rules and Regulations, which is why he sent them in early enough to be placed on the agenda.

Mr. Thomas stated when he was a consultant he walked away from his daily consulting salary to attend advisory committee meetings which amounted to many hundreds of dollars per day. Attending the meetings has been a big investment on his part. He further said all the committee members have an

investment in the committee and having their voices heard is the only thing they are asking for out of the investment.

Mr. Thomas announced the other two items he requested be placed on the agenda involves changing the way the draw hunt system is paid for. Mr. Thomas stated currently there is no financial incentive to handle more hunters. He would like to recommend the application cost go to \$10 per hunter whether they are drawn or not then a cost of \$50 for hunters who are selected.

Chair Hutchins stated making these changes would make the applicant numbers go down. Mr. Thomas replied that he did not know that they would.

Mr. Thomas reported his third agenda item request was to reinstate the collection of data needed to properly manage the Category I and II WMAs. Mr. Thomas stated there are reasons DNR has not done these things and he fully expects Emily Cope to bring them up with the committee, but he feels those things do not go into the committee's consideration, these are things the DNR Board has to consider. Committee members are serving to bring ideas before this committee and offer suggestions that could possibly help in some ways, i.e., having an outside committee make the request to the DNR Board that could show a need for additional resources.

Mrs. Cope stated that she, Mr. Thomas and Derrell Shipes had spent a considerable amount of time discussing these items over the telephone. Mrs. Cope reported staff has spent a tremendous amount of time looking at how to put more hunters through on the Category 1 waterfowl hunts. Staff wants to put as many hunters through as possible. Their goal is to get people out there hunting. At the same time, staff has a limited capacity to maintain a quality hunt. Not all people who participate in a Category 1 waterfowl hunt limits out. The average harvest is three ducks per person. Mrs. Cope reported if there are no ducks on one impoundment the hunters will be moved to another one. Staff needs the flexibility to move hunters around. The other limiting factor is a lack of staff. DNR is making good strides with the General Assembly for additional staff, but it is going to take a while. DNR did receive additional funding this year, but it has not yet been tied to staff. Also, this is not recurring funding yet.

Mrs. Cope also addressed substantial changes in the Fair Labor Standards Act and the impact that has on staff. There are 43 employees going from "exempt" status to "non-exempt" status, which will necessitate comp time or pay them overtime if they work over 40 hours per week. Currently, Mrs. Cope does not have FTEs to hire more staff and she does not have the money to pay employees overtime and if they get time and one-half off, a lot of job duties will not be completed. If staff adds more waterfowl hunts on areas where staff is already limited, that will create problems with overtime and comp time. Logistically, her hands are tied and it is a very real problem for staff.

Mrs. Cope stated if adding more hunters is a recommendation from the advisory committee, it is putting a mandate on staff they do not have the capability to meet. While an individual may move from 3.6 years to 3.2 to the average time of being drawing for a waterfowl hunt, the additional burden this creates is not getting a gain that is needed.

Mrs. Cope reported there have been additional hunt slots added within the past few years and she knows that Billy Dukes, Sam Chappelle and Dean Harrigal have been looking at these hunts. Mrs. Cope stated there are currently 13 vacancies in two DNR regions and it has become extremely hard to employ technicians because of the low salary we can offer. Mrs. Cope suggested the advisory board could help

staff in this regard, getting the message to the General Assembly that there are real limitations on what DNR can accomplish because of these issues.

Mr. Thomas stated that is the tool the committee has, to make recommendations and have Chair Hutchins take them to the Board versus rounding troops and going on SC Ducks and saying please call your congressman. Mr. Thomas stated the real help is to actually put it in the record, have it show up in the minutes and have Chair Hutchins take it to the Board and put them in the spot of having to make a decision of seeking funding. He is constantly asked to do things he does not want to do or thinks he can't do but the human spirit never ceases to amaze him, that he can actually do some of the things he is asked to do that he thinks are unreasonable.

Mrs. Cope stated if that is the case shouldn't the recommendation from the advisory committee be that the Board needs to work with the General Assembly to get more staffing and funding so that staff can work toward enhancing and expanding opportunities? Mr. Thomas replied by bringing a number is something that is justifiable. Mrs. Cope stated what he is talking about is a different recommendation. If the Board takes the recommendations that he has offered and accepted those recommendations, then the burden is on the Board to say staff cannot accomplish these things.

Mr. Thomas stated none of the committee members know the staff limitations as those are things they are not privy to. What the committee members know are real surface details. Mr. Thomas said the way the committee can address in the time allotted is to put a number out, give it to Chair Hutchins and Mrs. Cope make the case based on what the committee and the Board ask for. He further stated if he was managing crews in the field, he could better address that Mrs. Cope needs additional FTEs at certain places, but he does not know that. Mrs. Cope responded that is why she is letting him know and that she would tell the Board exactly what she is telling him. This situation would transfer the burden of the problem to the Board.

Mr. Shipes (with Mrs. Cope's permission) asked to address the first two recommendations. Mr. Shipes stated he feels very strongly that creating a number of slots based solely upon the length of the season without regard to how many areas that can be hunted, what the environmental conditions are on the areas, is off base. Mr. Shipes further stated that other variables need to be considered before it is determined how often an area is going to be hunted and how many hunters will be hunting on that area. Staff makes these determinations based on staffing and environmental conditions. Mr. Shipes reported Samworth WMA has been on and off of the lottery hunt system for years and this year the area will not be hunted because of one or two major breaches and staff cannot back up the water in the fields. He asked what staff would do in a situation like this on an area that is open. It would result in an unreasonable condition. He reiterated there are more variables than season length upon which to create a number. Staff does not eliminate hunts that by calendar day, fall on holidays. They are scheduled on other days. The number of hunts in the lottery hunt system increased 7.2 percent last year and over the past two years they have increased by 9.7 percent. Staff is adding hunters.

Mr. Shipes stated that he recommended years ago to make the lottery hunt process more efficient. Staff no longer enters data from applications, no refunds have to be issued, and he really appreciates Chair Hutchins support of that recommendation when it went to the DNR Board. The process has become much more simplified and staff mistakes have been eliminated. Mr. Thomas's second recommendation to create a two-step process similar to the alligator lottery hunt will make the process more complicated, less efficient and will cost the agency money and something he would like to avoid.

Mr. Shipes reported the alligator hunt was added to the system after the one-step process was created. It was designed that way because the tag was so expensive it should only be paid by people who were selected. It is something staff was forced to do. He currently has an administrative assistant putting alligator tags in envelopes and mailing them as the second step in that process. He fails to see how that is more efficient. Mrs. Cope said any changes such as these would require programming through SCI and DNR has been experiencing problems with them to make adjustments in existing lottery hunt formats.

Mrs. Cope added changes will place more of a burden on the person being drawn and on staff; the agency does not have the capability to make the changes because we are dependent on an outside vendor and are operating under a legal contract. Logistically speaking, Mrs. Cope said she did not see how this could be accomplished. Another challenge is none of these things will ever cover all of DNR's costs. The agency is not in this to solely make money. Even if there is a financial incentive for DNR to run more hunters through its draw hunts, staff will not let money be the driving factor in how many people are being placed on DNR's waterfowl areas. Staff wants to provide opportunities to our constituents, doing as much as they can without compromising the quality of the hunts. Mrs. Cope further stated this would be viewed as a money grab by DNR and Chair Hutchins replied the agency does hear that frequently.

Mrs. Cope said with recommendations that come from the Committee, making more money from running more people through the WMA draw hunt program, will not work as an incentive. She further stated while DNR wants to see more people hunting and fishing so more licenses can be sold, staff is not going to compromise the ethic of doing what is right versus putting more money into this account.

Mr. Thomas replied there are currently four applications for every slot, which amounts to one every four years. That number keeps getting bigger, which will result in a loss of constituency support. If this continues, the agency will lose the great advocates they have for DNR's Category 1 program if they only get drawn once every five years.

Mrs. Cope explained some individuals apply once or twice, then drop out and never apply again, while others apply every year. Mr. Thomas reported this situation has gotten worse recently because now a preference point is not dropped if they fail to apply. Mrs. Cope stated more people applying for the hunts is a good thing and shows people appreciate what DNR does and they want to participate in the process. While she does not like that it takes the individual hunter longer to get drawn, more people putting in for hunts means the agency is doing something right.

Region 4 Wildlife Coordinator Dean Harrigal stated from a biological point, staff walks the fence all of the time. Their top priority on waterfowl management areas is to provide wintering habitat for waterfowl to send them back to their breeding grounds. As a wildlife biologist, this is his number one goal. His second goal is to provide compatible, recreational opportunities in the form of public hunts. Mr. Harrigal explained that if the first goal is completed but not the second, biologically, the most important goal has been met. In response to the question of "What quality of waterfowl hunts does DNR provide the constituents," Mr. Harrigal said the answer is in the eye of the beholder. He stated if another duck was never hunted in South Carolina on DNR's WMAs and we winter 50,000 to 100,000 ducks and send them back to Canada or wherever they go to breed, we have done our job and met the mandate of the Wildlife Restoration Act. When these recommendations and decisions are being discussed, our obligation to the resource should be considered. Chair Hutchins reported DNR

frequently asks neighboring states what they are charging for waterfowl draw hunts. Mr. Harrigal reported over the years they have received numerous calls from other states about DNR's waterfowl management and draw hunt program. Mr. Hutchins stated he would like to know what Georgia and North Carolina (particularly the Outer Banks area) are charging for draw hunts. Mr. Thomas replied in North Carolina you are given five chances for a fee of \$5.00. You can get drawn every time or none of the time. He further responded if he applies for five dates at Suggs Mill in NC, he will get drawn 2 or 3 times. Additionally, Mr. Thomas said the quality of the hunts is nothing like Bear Island. Mr. Harrigal replied there is the quandary and asked what price is an individual willing to pay in time or money for quality hunting.

Mr. Thomas stated once the Delta West area was too flooded to hunt, so hunters had to move to the Delta East. The number of hunters on the Delta East was doubled and everyone had a good hunt. Mrs. Cope responded staff had the flexibility to move the hunters because the property was not maxed out. Mr. Thomas replied on some of the properties, there can be only 1 hunter for every 40 acres. He noted Sandy Beach and Broad River had 1 hunter for every 4 acres, yet some of the coastal areas are 1 hunter for every 40 acres. Is there a potential to put more hunters out there? He is not asking for something that has not already been done.

Mr. Shipes suggested he look at part of the curve on the chart where in the last three to four years where the number of slots have been increased. He reminded everyone the decision to charge \$50 per hunt was not a staff recommendation or decision. It occurred as a result of the end of a lease period at Santee Gun Club and Santee Coastal Reserve and the politics associated with it. For an individual to hunt one of DNR's waterfowl areas, he must have a hunting license, a WMA permit, state and federal duck stamps and pay \$50.00 to go on the hunt. On the National Forest lands, only the first four items are required. From a staff perspective, we have difficulty making a decision to charge individuals additional money. Staff does not want to make these opportunities any more exclusive through financing. We want these hunts to appeal to everyone. Mr. Thomas reported it is up to \$80 now and Mr. Shipes reminded him it was not staff's decision to charge the \$50, it was the DNR Board's decision at the time.

Mrs. Cope reported staff works through WFF chiefs to decide where we do surveys of hunters. Even on data cards collected from people who visit WMA lands has been switched around over the past couple of years because we get information at a point in time to help us make decisions does not mean we need to continue to gather that information. It becomes a question of where do we as staff feel like we need the data to make good decisions, where do we have staff and the capabilities to do that. In looking at a lot of these areas Mr. Thomas is recommending for data collection, Mrs. Cope referred him to Chief of Wildlife Billy Dukes to find out what plans staff have to collect data on these areas. In the Santee Cooper Lakes area, as Molly Kneece presented, there is going to be an intensive waterfowl survey. Staff feels confident that the survey will give staff the data needed.

Mr. Thomas voiced his desire to see data collection cards printed and made available at landings. He stated data on some of the waterfowl properties goes back to the 1960s and 1970s and to no longer collect it is essentially saying the data no longer matters. Mrs. Cope replied staff is not saying they will never collect data at some of these areas again, but they will not collect data everywhere on every species on everything we do. Data is collected in situations where staff needs it to make good management decisions.

Mr. Thomas replied that on almost every agenda item at the meeting today, collecting data has been discussed. Mrs. Cope responded that we are not collecting data on all WMAs everywhere. She further stated check stations were once utilized and are no longer in use. There have been changes in how the division conducts business to be more efficient and more effective in getting what we need, but not spending time, effort and money getting information we do not need. Staff is looking at the new waterfowl survey because it fits a need we have. Staff has shown over the years waterfowl has gone down in the Santee Cooper area because of how hydrilla has been managed, but how Santee Cooper manages hydrilla has not changed. Staff has the basis to show the things we feel they need to show as far as these areas where staff is looking at swapping out how we do data.

Mr. Garmany referred to the application process and stated there are a lot more people living in the State of South Carolina than there was 10 years ago. He does not feel more hunters should be put on the properties because there are more ducks, because we could go through a period of no ducks.

Chair Hutchins addressed Mr. Thomas that he has come before the committee with three issues which he is passionate about. Chair Hutchins stated he appreciates his passion and asked out of the three topics, which one has the most priority to him. Mr. Thomas stated he loves having the data. He stated he applies for the waterfowl hunts alone and his frequency of being drawn is higher than the average hunter because of the way the system works. Mr. Thomas said that it is not personal but he knows folks think about these things and improving Category I areas is his highest priority. Everyone he has talked to that sees these huge properties note they see 10 people hunting them once a week.

Chair Hutchins stated while this is not an action item on the agenda, he is not allowed to take it to the DNR Board.

Mrs. Cope asked for thoughts from other committee members. Mr. Garmany stated we have had the discussion about the draw system and that the committee supported the framework for the new system while on the Waterfowl Advisory Committee. Other states have modeled their draw hunts after DNR's because theirs has been so messed up. He said if you talk to people that go to Bear Island or Santee Delta, they have a real quality hunt. He thinks if you start putting more hunters and more days it would not be as good a hunt in his opinion. Mr. Garmany further stated Mr. Tadpole Baldwin, former Waterfowl Advisory Committee member, manages more ducks than anyone in the state and he does not hunt them 7 days a week. He feels the system is great just the way it is.

Mr. Thomas replied to clarify that he is not asking for 7 days a week, he is saying putting an extra two to four hunters on a wagon when you are driving around.

Mr. Halliday responded that he read Mr. Thomas's letter and had spoken to Mrs. Cope. He expressed his concern over the statement "advisory boards and committees serve to keep South Carolina citizens in active participation with the SCDNR Board and the SC Department of Natural Resources." He feels the committee's role is more about supporting what DNR is doing in trying to disseminate information back to locals and peers as to why certain things happen. He further stated committee members do not know what really goes on 100 percent behind what DNR staff does. He feels DNR staff is 100 percent committed and he trusts them. Mr. Halliday said it is great to say we want more days, but it has to be in staffs' hands and the Committee needs to be confident that they are making the right decisions.

Mr. Thomas replied the Advisory Committee "statement" in his letter is from the DNR website.

Mr. Rabon responded that he hunted The Cape this past January and he had an excellent hunt, it was wonderful. He has been drawn twice in the past six years and he hunted Murphy one time and both hunts have been phenomenal. He stated the properties are huge and he did notice on the day Murphy was hunted, he never saw another person and he never heard another gun and it did make him wonder if it could hold more people, but there again he does not know the limitations of the staff. Being a part of those two hunts in the past six years, he noticed it could hold more people on the days it was scheduled to be hunted.

Chair Hutchins made a recommendation that staff look into the lesser of the evil of the three. He asked if there was something in Mr. Thomas's package that is possibly doable and he did not know of any other way to handle it. Chair Hutchins reiterated his hands are tied.

Mr. Thomas asked what he needs to do going forward if he has a crusade. Mr. Hutchins replied it has to be an action item on the agenda, not as a discussion. Mr. Thomas said he understands and responded that he sent the information out months ahead of time and asked what he needs to do to get something that is on the agenda.

Mrs. Cope responded that even if it is an action item, what she is hearing from the other Committee members and knowing that three are missing the meeting today, there is a lot of apprehension and thoughts both ways. If there is a message that comes out of this and goes to the DNR Board and Chair Hutchins is taking that message, what she would say the message is would be the advisory board sees the challenge DNR faces trying to accommodate the demands on the draw hunts and there is a need for additional staffing, funding and places where we can provide opportunities to meet that demand. This is the message that is coming out of this discussion. It is not can you force staff to do this, it is what do we need to provide the agency to meet this demand. It's additional places to hunt, it is additional staffing and additional funding. Until those things happen, there is no way it can be fixed. Mrs. Cope stated that would be the recommendation she feels should be carried to the DNR Board.

Chair Hutchins asked Mrs. Cope to shorten her statement in terms of the message. Mrs. Cope replied the Advisory Committee discussed the challenges of draw hunts keeping up with the requests for participation, and is interested in efforts to increase opportunities through additional properties, staffing and funding.

Chair Hutchins stated it is not a vote and it does not have the support of the committee, it is not unanimous and is a discussion only. It has been discussed to no end and if there is room to wiggle in some part of the three categories, it will be examined.

Mrs. Cope replied while she has made this commitment before and she feels the committee has seen this, especially with information Derrell Shipes has put out over the past couple of years, staff is committed and will look at the areas and continue to expand opportunities on the lottery hunts. Over the past two years, opportunities have expanded, but not at nearly the rate of the applications received. She cannot control that and there is no way staff can keep up with it, but their commitment remains the same. They will continue to look at these areas and add opportunities wherever possible in finding that balance and walking that line.

Mr. Shipes endorsed Mrs. Cope's statement that staff will look at every option to increase opportunities on these areas, and he thinks a 10 percent increase in the past two years or 9.7 percent, is laudable. He

would like for everyone who wants to go, go every single year, himself included, but it does not work that way.

Wildlife Chief Billy Dukes stated we can look at data collection methods and where we have an opportunity, to collect the data.

There were no additional advisory committee member comments.

Chair Hutchins stated that as a DNR Board member, he receives a lot of calls regarding the coyote situation. There is a predator management permit (like a depredation permit) for people to trap coyotes in the off season. Pelts are not allowed to be sold during the predator management permit times. Chair Hutchins would like to get a recommendation that staff look into this issue and report back to this Committee to discuss allowing people to sell their pelts. Mrs. Cope replied that staff will definitely look into it and by the next meeting staff will have a solid plan on how to implement the coyote/lottery tagging reward program and this will be placed on the agenda as an information item. At that time the predator management permit can be discussed, what the issues are and what is needed.

There was no old or new business.

DATE, TIME AND PLACE OF NEXT MEETING:

October 11, 2016, Wateree River Heritage Preserve, Columbia.