

SC DNR Wildlife and Freshwater Fisheries Advisory Committee  
November 12, 2014 Meeting Minutes  
Rembert Dennis Building, Columbia, SC

MEMBERS PRESENT:

Chair Mike Hutchins, Vice-Chair Cleve Smith, Bobby Garmany, John Gramling, Stan Halliday, Sam Hiott, Stephen Thomas

MEMBERS ABSENT:

Martha Herbert

STAFF PRESENT:

Emily Cope, Billy Dukes, Derrell Shipes, Ken Prosser, Ross Self, Lynn Quattro, Susan Johnson

Chair Hutchins called the meeting to order and the minutes of the August 21, 2014 meeting were approved as submitted.

BEAR SEASON UPDATE:

Billy Dukes, Chief of Wildlife, distributed copies of the SC Mountain and Coastal Bear Harvest reports from 2000-2014 (copy attached to the original minutes). Mr. Dukes reported the season recently concluded and 63 bears were harvested in the mountain hunt unit, a significant decline from the previous year of 127. A total of 3 bears were harvested in the coastal hunt unit, the same number harvested in 2013. Mr. Dukes stated this year a total of 1,263 tags were sold, a slight decline from 1,285 in 2013.

OPENING DAY DOVE SEASON RESULTS:

Mr. Dukes distributed copies of Public Dove Fields Opening Day Results for 2014 (copy attached to the original minutes). A total of 3,068 hunters participated on 31 public dove fields that were monitored. Participants harvested 10,164 doves with an average of 3.31 doves per hunter and an average of 6.59 shots per dove. Mr. Dukes was quite pleased with these results. Youth dove hunts on 9 fields resulted in 207 participants, 411 doves harvested with an average of 1.99 doves per hunter and 13.71 shots per dove. A discussion followed regarding the quality and quantity of these hunts.

LOTTERY HUNT CHANGES AND TRENDS:

Derrell Shipes, Chief of Statewide Projects, distributed several handouts relating to DNR Lottery Hunts which reflected data since 1987 (copies attached to the original minutes). Mr. Shipes reported that in 2013, a total of 14,316 hunters applied for the hunts, which produced revenue of \$222,845. He stated that significant changes to the program have been made over the past few years and DNR has saved thousands of dollars utilizing the online application process. Mr. Shipes announced most of the adult/youth hunts have been changed to youth only. A total of 60 youth were not selected for the youth only waterfowl hunts this year, but Mr. Shipes said Ducks Unlimited, Delta Waterfowl, SC Waterfowl Association and the Harry Hampton Fund will be hosting a hunt for them. It will be held on privately owned impoundments on January 31 in the Rimini area.

Mr. Shipes stated future plans are to continue the online application process and make it the only means available to apply for a lottery hunt, and also to continue with email notifications for timelines and whether or not an applicant was successful. Mr. Shipes said he would like to create a link for successful applicants directing them to a site that will provide all necessary information pertaining to their hunt, including the ability to print the required permits.

UPDATE ON DNR PROPERTY ACQUISITIONS:

Ken Prosser, Assistant Deputy Director for Wildlife and Freshwater Fisheries, distributed copies of DNR Property Acquisitions in 2013 and 2014 (copy attached to the original minutes). He noted the agency owns approximately 285,000 acres and 90,000 of that amount is dedicated as a Heritage Preserve. A total of 1,083,000 acres is in the WMA Program, with 852,000 acres leased and 231,000 owned by DNR. Twenty-one conservation easements are

held protecting an additional 23,000 acres. Mr. Prosser presented background information on the following 10 properties and the number of acres added during the two-year period: Sassafras Mountain (5 acres); Bundrick Island (3 acres); Santee Delta WMA addition (80 acres); Lake Russell/Calhoun Falls WMA (691 acres); Lewis Ocean Bay HP/WMA addition (754 acres); Gopher Tortoise HP/WMA addition (66 acres); Jocassee Gorges WMA addition (24 acres); Dungannon HP/WMA addition (88 acres); Liberty Hill WMA (1,629 acres); and Waccamaw River HP/WMA addition (1,304 acres). The total number of acres added was 4,643 at a cost of \$5,038,872. The approximate value of all donated property was \$10 million.

Mr. Prosser reported that work is underway to acquire three tracts of land that will be donated to DNR as mitigation for the reopening of the Haile Gold Mine in Lancaster County. Two are in Richland County along the Wateree River and the third adjoins Forty Acre Rock Heritage Preserve in Lancaster County.

#### FALL FISH STOCKING UPDATE:

Lynn Quattro, Assistant Chief of Freshwater Fisheries, distributed copies of DNR's Fall Fish Stocking Progress Report (copy attached to the original minutes). She reported to date this fall, 928,268 fish have been distributed during 131 stocking runs. The stockings occurred at 46 separate publicly accessible fishing areas. Ms. Quattro said the stocking effort is ongoing and they plan to stock Redear sunfish, bluegill, redbreast, and trout during the remainder of this year.

Ross Self, Chief of Freshwater Fisheries, announced staff is in the process of bringing the Barnwell Hatchery back on line. It was closed during budget reductions approximately ten years ago, but continued to be used by staff for office space. Mr. Self stated appropriated funds will be used to restore part of the ponds, which will produce bass and bluegill for stocking in DNR's State Lakes Program. An announcement regarding production at the Barnwell Hatchery will be made in the near future. Ms. Quattro added staff is slated to receive \$4.9 million from the Haile Gold Mine mitigation to work on the Carolina Heelsplitter, an endangered mussel.

#### OLD and/or NEW BUSINESS:

John Gramling asked about status of eye worms in quail being responsible for the decline in quail populations. Billy Dukes reported although eye worms have been found in quail in Texas, they have not been implicated in any population-level declines. Mr. Gramling also asked about flight correlation and the woodcock season. Mr. Dukes reported typically if there is going to be a population of Woodcock, they will have arrived by January. He added the 2015 Woodcock season in SC is December 18 through January 31. Stephen Thomas asked about the possibility of a meeting to discuss more hunting opportunities on DNR's waterfowl management areas, which was a topic of discussion by the now defunct Waterfowl Advisory Committee. Mr. Thomas inquired whether there was a way to test a site to see if more hunters could be selected on the area without a negative effect on the quality of the hunt. Chairman Hutchins stated that was certainly a possibility. Chairman Hutchins updated the committee on the new DNR app, which is scheduled to go live on November 22<sup>nd</sup>. He thanked Cleve Smith for initiating this idea.

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

Tuesday, February 10, 2015, Donnelley Wildlife Management Area. Time to be announced.