

SC DNR Wildlife and Freshwater Fisheries Advisory Committee  
Minutes, October 11, 2011  
Whispering Pines, Lone Star, SC

MEMBERS PRESENT:

Chair Johnny Evans, Vice Chair Mike Hutchins, Milton Brazell, John Troutman, Billy Hoole, Jr., Charles Howard, Bryson Thomason, Cleve Smith, Stan Halliday

MEMBERS ABSENT:

Paul Bennett, John Gramling

STAFF PRESENT:

Breck Carmichael, Emily Cope, Ken Prosser, Tim Ivey, Derrell Shipes, Ross Self, Sam Chappellear, Jay Butfiloski, Charles Ruth, Jamie Rader, Susan Johnson, Col. Alvin Taylor, Lt. Tim Baxley

Mary Shriner of Santee Cooper Country was in attendance. Several other constituents also attended.

Chair Evans called the meeting to order and the pledge of allegiance recited. The minutes of the June 15, 2010 were approved as submitted.

PUBLIC DOVE FIELD OPENING DAY RESULTS:

Chief of Wildlife Tim Ivey distributed copies of opening day results (copy attached to the original minutes). Ivey stated there were 44 fields available this year in the public dove field program in approximately 24 counties. Ivey further stated some fields were not planted due to lack of staff. Twenty-eight (adult) fields were monitored on opening day and 9 youth fields. In comparing this year to previous years, it was a little better than average. There was some crop failure due to drought conditions and hog damage. The most successful field was Canal WMA (Berkeley County, 100 acres). There were approximately 500 hunters on this field on opening day, 11,000 shots were fired and over 2,000 birds were harvested. On the Pee Dee Station field, over 4,000 shots were fired and over 4,000 shots were also fired on the Crackerneck field. The Draper and Pickens Rifle Range fields were also very successful. Public dove hunting is very popular, and staff remains concerned about hunter density on some of the public fields.

Ivey stated next year there is a high probability the youth hunts will not be draw hunts. Staff determined the draw process may be prohibiting youth from applying. Vice Chair Hutchins asked how well fields are advertised, especially youth fields. Ivey stated the fields are listed on the annual Public Dove Field List which is posted on the DNR web site and distributed by hard copy upon request. A news release is also circulated prior to the opening of dove season. Many of the public fields have been established for a number of years and are well known to the public. Ivey also stated next year more effort will be put forth to advertise the youth hunts locally.

Breck Carmichael stated last year DNR experienced a mid-year budget cut which could have resulted in a reduction of one-third of the public dove fields. However, staff requested and received county game and fish funds through the county legislative delegations to replace the lost revenue for planting dove fields in the program. Carmichael encouraged members to thank their local legislators for their support of the program.

#### PRELIMINARY ALLIGATOR LOTTERY HUNT RESULTS:

Wildlife Biologist Jay Butfiloski distributed copies of the 2011 alligator season preliminary report (as of October 9<sup>th</sup>, copy attached to the original minutes). Butfiloski stated for the public draw hunt, 6,396 applications were received (an increase of 2,612 from 2010). Applications received represented 42 states and Canada, although 92% were from South Carolina. Butfiloski reported 88% of successful applicants were SC residents. There were 1,060 tags purchased this season compared to 1,047 in 2010. Also, alligator hunting seminars were held in Moncks Corner, Greenville and Irmo this year. Attendance was 250 people for all three combined.

Alligator hunts were added on 2 Wildlife Management Areas (WMA) this season, Bear Island and Santee Coastal Reserve. There was a \$15 non-refundable application fee, and the cost of the tag was \$500 for residents and \$800 for non-residents (in addition to a WMA permit) for these special hunts. A \$200 alligator hunting fee is also required of non-residents for all alligator hunting. There were 131 applications received for the WMA hunts.

Alligator harvest information received thus far indicates a harvest of 379 animals, with an average size of 9 feet 3 inches, and the largest reported thus far being 13 feet 6 inches.

#### STATUS OF RESERVOIR HABITAT ENHANCEMENT PROGRAM:

Freshwater Fisheries Chief Ross Self gave a status report on efforts to initiate freshwater fish habitat enhancement in some reservoirs in South Carolina. Self stated plans are being finalized for habitat enhancement activities on Lakes Marion, Moultrie, Wateree, Wylie and Hartwell. There is the potential to initiate similar work at Lake Greenwood in the near future. As these major reservoirs have aged, underwater structure has deteriorated resulting in less cover for fish spawning and feeding. Permits for activities on Marion, Moultrie, Wateree and Wylie are being developed and communications are underway with the Corp of Engineers and the Department of Health and Environmental Control concerning these permit applications. Funds for work at Lakes Wateree and Wylie are available through Duke Energy's Habitat Enhancement Program that is supported by dock permit fees from these lakes. Self informed committee members Santee Cooper Country is partnering with DNR at Marion and Moultrie to support enhancement activities there.

#### UPDATE ON COMPREHENSIVE DEER MANAGEMENT STRATEGY:

Deer/Turkey Project Leader Charles Ruth distributed copies of the "Options for Deer Management Legislation, Approved by SCDNR Board 9/16/2011" (copy attached to the original minutes). Ruth stated the Board endorsed revisions to the proposed deer management legislation at their September meeting. The recommendation for the limit on antlered deer has been changed from 4 to a total of 5 bucks per hunter per season statewide, with no more than three coming from Game Zones 1 and 2 combined.

A revision to the pricing schedule sets a fee of \$20 for a package of tags which includes 5 buck tags, and 4 antlerless deer tags (\$30 for nonresidents). However, the Department must retain the authority to adjust the number of antlerless tags issued per hunter annually to meet management goals. Antlerless tags will be of different coloration than the buck tags. Alternatively, hunters will be offered the option of making a one-time purchase of 1 buck tag and 1 antlerless tag for a total cost of \$10 for residents and \$15 for nonresidents if they do not want the full tag package.

The Antlerless Deer Quota Program (ADQP) has been revised to a Deer Quota Program, in which owners/managers of large properties can be issued a quota of buck and doe tags that may be used only on that property. Lastly, the Board recommends a “trigger clause” in the legislation requiring the Department to make recommendations, after study, on any needed modifications to the restrictions in this section before January 1, 2017.

Ruth stated he believes a bill will be introduced in the 2012 legislative session. He asked committee members to contact their legislators for support of the bill once it has been introduced.

Chair Evans distributed copies of a list of members of the General Assembly and their contact information. He requested each committee member select five Senators and ten House members they know personally and provide this information to him. Chair Evans will provide committee members a summary of the deer management bill and a list of Senators and House Members (derived from information members furnish him) he would like for them to contact in support of the bill.

Breck Carmichael announced an upcoming public meeting to be held at the National Wild Turkey Federation in Edgefield on October 18<sup>th</sup> to discuss a variety deer management issues. Rep. Bill Hickson requested DNR staff assist him with the meeting.

#### 2011-12 WATERFOWL SEASON FORECAST:

Wildlife Biologist Jamie Rader reported waterfowl data from 2010 reflects 274,000 birds harvested in South Carolina, 60% of which included mallards and wood ducks. Additionally, three states in the Atlantic Flyway harvested more birds than the entire Flyway combined last year as far as wood ducks (SC, GA and NC). Waterfowl hunter numbers in the 2010-11 season in SC were down slightly from 2009 (23,000) at 20,200 hunters. Rader stated for the 5 –year period from 2006-2010 hunters averaged 10.3 birds per hunter in SC, which is the second highest on record.

Based on prairie breeding habitat surveys the greatest fall flights of migrating waterfowl since 1999 (the historic high) are expected. All species are up with the exception of widgeon and scaup, which have similar breeding habitat in the boreal forest, possibly indicating some negative habitat impacts happening in that region. Rader stated the 2011-12 waterfowl season will be open November 19-26, 2011 and December 10- January 29, 2012, with a State youth day designated on December 3 and Federal youth days on February 4 and 5, 2012.

Rader also informed the committee that the DNR has cooperated with Ducks Unlimited the past few years to leverage a portion of the state’s duck stamp funds for habitat enhancement projects using North American Wetland Conservation Act (NAWCA) grant funds. The DNR has most recently received a NAWCA grant for an enhancement project at Bear Island WMA.

#### LEGISLATIVE UPDATE:

Breck Carmichael stated 2012 will be the second year of a 2-year session in the General Assembly so legislation active at the end of the 2011 session will be picked up again. Carmichael is hoping the Freshwater Fisheries Chapter 13 revisions will pass quickly as all that is needed is 3<sup>rd</sup> reading in the Senate and signature by the Governor. Hopefully, deer management strategy legislation will be introduced. The agency will also likely be putting an emphasis on getting some lost State appropriated funding restored for critical functions.

#### CONSTITUENT COMMENTS:

Jim Glenn (retired DNR Fisheries Technician) stated it is encouraging that the Reservoir Habitat Enhancement Program is moving forward and it will be very much appreciated by fishermen. Mr. Glenn also voiced his concern regarding the decline in the blue catfish population in the Santee Cooper lakes and suggested staff revisit size limits and commercialization of the resource using trotlines. He also stated there did not appear to be enough law enforcement presence on the lakes.

Breck Carmichael announced as a result of DNR organizational changes, this is his last meeting as the Deputy Director of the Wildlife and Freshwater Fisheries Division, and he has accepted a position as Special Assistant to the DNR Director. Carmichael introduced Emily Cope as his successor, and asked Committee Members for their support as Emily begins her new responsibilities. He also expressed his enjoyment in having worked with the Committee over the years.

Chair Evans stated on behalf of the Advisory Committee, he appreciated Breck's service to the Committee and the work he has done in the Division as Deputy Director. A round of applause was given Carmichael.

Derrell Shipes distributed copies of the recently published SC Migratory Game Bird Hunting Guidebook. Shipes credited Lt. Billy Downer (Law Enforcement) and Denise Froehle (OSS/Graphics) for their hard work and efforts in the publication of this document. Shipes stated 7 publications previously written by WFF staff were assimilated to create the Guidebook, resulting in saving the Agency quite a bit of money. The document was paid for by the Hunter Education Section along with match received by two advertisements. Shipes reported the publication was placed on DNR's website on September 9<sup>th</sup> and by the end of September, the Guidebook had 81,000 hits on the web site already. Committee member Billy Hoole stated he has received very positive feedback regarding the Guidebook.

Vice Chair Hutchins stated he had recently participated in a Take One Make One deer hunt for youth from two different homes for boys (one in Charleston County, one in McCormick County). Hutchins expressed the joy the boys experienced in every aspect of the hunt. He encouraged members to attend such an activity when the opportunity presents itself. He further stated the Take One Make One program is certainly a program the agency needs to continue.

Emily Cope provided a brief biography relating to her years at DNR. She stated she is very excited about being back in the WFF Division, where she began her career and she remains optimistic about the challenges ahead. She looks forward to working with the WFF Advisory Committee as well.

#### OLD/NEW BUSINESS:

Committee member Charles Howard stated he would like to see "hog issues" placed on the agenda for the January meeting, particularly possible improvement of hog trapping laws.

TIME AND PLACE OF NEXT MEETING:  
January 10, 2012. Location to be announced.