

SC DNR Wildlife and Freshwater Fisheries Advisory Committee
Minutes, October 12, 2010 Meeting
Rembert Dennis Building, Columbia, South Carolina

MEMBERS PRESENT:

Chair Stephen Davis, Vice Chair Ed Muckenfuss, Milton Brazell, Paul Bennett, Charles Howard, John Troutman, Cleve Smith, and Billy Hoole (via tele-conference)

MEMBERS ABSENT:

John Gramling, Bryson Thomason

STAFF PRESENT:

Breck Carmichael, Ken Prosser, Ross Self, Derrell Shipes, Jay Butfiloski, Charles Ruth, Don Winslow, Capt. Harvin Brock

Chair Davis opened the meeting and the minutes of the July 13, 2010 meeting were approved as submitted.

ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEMBER COMMENTS:

John Troutman reported a pond he built three years ago had recently yielded a 2 lb. 12 oz. bass and a 3/4 lb. bream.

Ed Muckenfuss reported his 10 year old grandson recently harvested his first deer; an 11 point weighing 201 lbs. Muckenfuss also stated the referendum on the upcoming election ballot regarding the constitutional right to hunt and fish was a good idea. Milton Brazell stated he feels the new migratory bird permit proposal is a very important issue and that as a member of the Migratory Waterfowl Committee, his interest is in keeping the integrity of the program going. Paul Bennett commented on how nice the new DNR Florence office is and suggested the Committee meet there. Chair Davis apologized for the change in the meeting location from McCormick County to Columbia. He stated he was looking forward to updates listed on the agenda. Davis further stated that seven years ago, he hoped to see the comprehensive deer management plan (on the agenda today and the DNR Board meeting next week) for the state be proposed or passed during his tenure on the DNR Board.

There were no constituents present.

PUBLIC DOVE FIELD OPENING DAY RESULTS:

Breck Carmichael stated due to Tim Ivey's absence (attending the Longleaf Pine Symposium Committee Meeting) he would be presenting this topic. Carmichael distributed a spread sheet showing opening day results on some of DNR's public dove fields (copy attached to the original minutes). Carmichael stated numbers appear to be average for opening day. The Canal WMA fields (Berkeley County) had the high mark with 325 hunters, 9,984 shots fired and 2,038 doves harvested. The best field in terms of doves per hunter was the Tuomey overflow field (Manchester State Forest). Hunting on the original Toomey field was by drawing only this year to alleviate overcrowding, with 75 hunters selected. The Forestry Commission also planted a field across the road from the Tuomey tract which became an overflow field for those hunters who were not aware of the drawing. There were 93 hunters on that field, 2,898 shots fired with 739 doves harvested. Carmichael reported the youth hunts continue to be very popular (6 fields were hunted). DNR continues to be challenged to provide public dove hunting opportunities due to time and staffing required in field preparation and upkeep.

ALLIGATOR HUNT RESULTS:

Wildlife Biologist Jay Butfiloski delivered a power point presentation on the preliminary 2010 public alligator hunting season results. Butfiloski reported 1,200 tags were allocated for the 2010 season (300 per hunt unit) which was an increase by 200 tags over last year. New legislation required all nonresidents to pay a \$200 additional nonresident alligator hunting fee (plus license and tag costs). The fee was required of any nonresident hunter or assistant 16 years of age or older. Butfiloski stated the fee is in line with Georgia's cost for a nonresident to hunt or participate in alligator hunting. The new nonresident fee was well publicized on the DNR Website, Alligator Hunting Brochure and at training seminars. Four alligator hunting seminars were held during August in Georgetown, Moncks Corner, Columbia, and Spartanburg. Approximately 300 attendees participated in all four seminars.

A total of 3,784 applications were received (an increase of 66 from previous year) from 34 different states and one from Puerto Rico. Butfiloski reported 85% of applicants were SC residents. Eighty-seven percent of those that were successful in the drawing were SC residents. A total of 951 of the 1,200 drawn applicants purchased their tags (around the same rate from the past two years). The total reported alligator harvest to date is 356. The harvest total for the previous year was 452. Butfiloski provided harvest by hunt zone and county. Two alligators harvested measured 13'8" (from the upper portion of Lake Marion), and another 13'7" from Lake Moultrie. The heaviest reported harvested alligator weighed 1,025 lbs. and was taken from the Diversion Canal area. Butfiloski stated the total revenue generated by the Public Alligator Hunting Program was \$175,140 (does not include regular resident/nonresident hunting licenses sold as required to hunt alligators).

FISHERIES CHAPTER 13 REVISION UPDATE:

Ross Self, Freshwater Fisheries Chief, provided an update on the efforts to revise Title 50, Chapter 13 of the South Carolina Code of Laws dealing with freshwater fisheries. Self provided an overview of the public input process that supported the effort. Self also provided a summary of the changes proposed for creel and size limits for game fish species and the changes proposed for the use of non-game fishing devices (copies attached to the original minutes). Self stated the goal is to have the proposal introduced as a bill in the upcoming session of the General Assembly.

MIGRATORY BIRD PERMIT PROPOSAL:

Derrell Shipes, Chief, Statewide Projects, Research and Surveys distributed copies of a document outlining the development of a proposed new Migratory Game Bird Permit (copy attached to the original minutes). Shipes stated the Wildlife and Freshwater Fisheries Division (WFF) and the Outreach and Support Services Division (OSS) staffs were directed to review the history of the Migratory Game Bird Permit (HIP) and the Migratory Waterfowl Permit (State Duck Stamp) and to address the problems of over-certification of HIP permittees and the interest and efforts of waterfowl hunters to increase the amount of revenue dedicated to the conservation of waterfowl in South Carolina.

After several meetings staff recommends combining the current Migratory Game Bird (HIP) and Migratory Waterfowl permits and charge \$11.00 for residents and \$21.00 for nonresidents, one dollar of each going to the providing vendor. The permit would be called the Migratory Game Bird Permit and would be required of all persons hunting waterfowl, mourning doves, woodcock, snipe, marsh hens, common moorhens and purple gallinules.

Shipes further stated this would generate approximately \$451,500 in revenue (\$63,000 from nonresidents and \$388,500 from residents). Seventy-five percent (75%) of these dollars would be administratively designated for waterfowl work, which would accomplish the objective of the waterfowl interests who supported a previous attempt to increase the cost of the Migratory Waterfowl Permit from \$5.50 to \$10.50. Remaining funds would be used in conservation efforts of other migratory game birds in South Carolina. The proposal was presented to the Migratory Waterfowl Committee at its August 3, 2010 meeting. The Committee unanimously approved staff recommendations. Additionally, a presentation was made to the Waterfowl Advisory Committee at its August 10, 2010 meeting. This Committee also (unanimously) endorsed staff recommendations. A motion was made and approved endorsing staff's proposed recommendations submitted by Mr. Shipes. Staff recommendations will be submitted to the DNR Board at their October 21st meeting.

SC DEER MANAGEMENT PROGRAM:

Deer/Turkey Project Supervisor Charles Ruth distributed copies of an Executive Summary regarding deer hunters' attitudes regarding harvest limits and tagging of deer. Ruth also distributed copies of Options for Deer Management Legislation, September 2010 (DNR Board Approved; copies attached to the original minutes). The DNR Board has approved the following components of a new comprehensive deer management program for SC: 1) all harvested deer must be tagged; 2) eliminate either sex days but allowing every day after September 15 be an either sex day providing the hunter has antlerless deer tags; 3) establish a bag limit of three per hunter on antlered deer, statewide; 4) eliminate the resident big game permit; 5) issue resident hunters three antlered and three antlerless deer tags at a cost of \$30; 6) nonresident hunters would continue to purchase a big game permit at \$100. Issue nonresident hunters one antlered and one antlerless deer tag at a cost of \$100. Additional sets of tags (up to two more sets) at \$100 per set could be issued (not exceeding the number of tags resident hunters are afforded); and 7) continue the antlerless deer quota program (ADQP) increasing the application fee to \$200. The program would continue to provide larger properties the management flexibility for which it was designed. Derrell Shipes stated once the DNR Board approves the agency's 2011 legislative package, DNR staff will immediately meet with House and Senate staff/leadership for discussion. The Committee voted unanimously to endorse the language as drafted. The Committee also voted unanimously to provide the public the chronology and results of the surveys/public meetings beginning in 2003.

Committee member Hoole asked Mr. Ruth for an update on the turkey brood survey. Ruth stated he was currently compiling the brood survey data and results are the best they have been in 5 years.

LEGISLATIVE AND BUDGET UPDATE:

Breck Carmichael stated DNR's 2011 legislative package has not been finalized. The agency will likely be seeking a number of revenue enhancement actions (i.e. Migratory Game Bird Permit, a charge for turkey tags, recommended deer tag changes). Carmichael also stated DNR is not expecting any mid-year cuts this fiscal year; however, the agency is looking at a minimum 15% reduction beginning on July 1, 2011. Carmichael also discussed the referendum to be included on the November 2 ballot relating to the constitutional right to hunt and fish. Carmichael asked committee members to mention the importance of this referendum passing to family, friends and colleagues and to encourage people to vote. Chairman McShane stated that he had received some media inquiries on the referendum and asked if staff could provide a summary white paper of the importance of passing this referendum.

OLD/NEW BUSINESS:

Committee member Howard stated the committee needs to consider the future growth of boating in South Carolina that it continues to be a challenge and the possibility of attaining additional revenue from boaters.

DATE, TIME AND PLACE OF NEXT MEETING:

To be determined. Possible location will be the new DNR office in Florence.