

MINUTES OF MEETING OF WILDLIFE RESOURCES COMMISSION IN SPARTANBURG, APRIL 25, 1962

Present were Commissioners Johnson, Cantey, Cox, Heyward, Hopkins and Oliphant, Directors Lunz and Webb and Jeff Fuller.

The meeting had been called in connection with the fire ant control program and the opposition expressed by the Commission through the Division of Commercial Fisheries in view of possible damage to larval shrimp and other marine life.

Also present at the meeting were: Dr. R. C. Edwards, Clemson College President; Dr. Seton Thompson, U. S. Bureau of Commercial Fisheries, St. Petersburg Beach, Fla; L. H. Senn, Crop Pest Commission, Clemson; C. C. Fancher, U. S. D. A. Gulfport, Miss.; J. P. Mikell, U. S. D. A., Charleston; J. W. Kelley, U. S. D. A., Raleigh; Dr. W. L. Popham, U. S. D. A. Washington; D. B. Garrison, Clemson Experiment Station Director; William H. Gibbes, Assistant Attorney General, Columbia; W. L. Watkins, attorney for Clemson College, Anderson; W. T. Linton, Director, Water Pollution Control Authority, Columbia; Dr. H. P. Nicholson, Public Health Service, Atlanta; Dr. J. H. Cochran, State Entomologist, Crop Pest Commission, Clemson; Rear Adm. D. P. Polatty, Ret., President of the S. C. Wildlife Federation; C. S. Harris, Entomologist, Bureau of Yards and Docks, Naval Base, Charleston.

Chairman Johnson presided.

Dr. Edwards stated that there was a serious infestation of fire ants in Charleston county and under the law the State Crop Pest Commission had the responsibility for quarantine, control and elimination. He said that due to an oversight, Director Lunz had not been contacted prior to the start of a control program in early April, but that after his protest had been lodged the work had been stopped. He said that he and all others connected with the control program were concerned over the possibility of the slightest damage to marine fisheries and other wildlife, and that all possible steps are taken to avoid this. The problem, he said, is to eliminate the fire ant with the possible damage to shrimp and to game and fish reduced to the minimum, and he hoped a basis of operation satisfactory to all concerned could be worked out.

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Dr. Popham discussed the history of the fire ant in the United States and the progress of control methods. He pointed out that the amount of heptachlor used in spraying had been reduced from the initial two pounds per acre--which had definitely harmful effects on wildlife--to the present quarter pound per acre, two applications at six-month interval. He said a bait, which had only one-seventh of an ounce per acre of Mirex, looks very promising in experiments but has not been tried extensively in the field. He said that the residual effects from treatment had also been reduced.

The chemicals used, particularly heptachlor, are admittedly toxic, he said and the problem is how to use them effectively with the widest margin of safety.

Mr. Heyward said that the Commission was not opposing the overall program but asked that in coastal areas where there might be damage to larval shrimp and other valuable marine life through the heptachlor entering the headwaters of rivers that the program be delayed until October or November. He said that by this time the larval shrimp would have moved on out to salt water.

He said that shrimpers and others were extremely concerned that the coming shrimp crop might be destroyed by spraying and asked whether land application would be as effective.

Citing the importance of the shrimp industry, he said that 285 boats were licensed for shrimping, employing 2 1-2 men per boat and that for every man on a boat there were several working on shore. He pointed out the livelihood of at least 3,000 persons was involved, along with an investment of millions in boats and equipment and a crop worth from three and one-half to five million dollars annually.

Director Lutz stated that the Division of Commercial Fisheries had the legal responsibility of protecting commercial fisheries. He said that following spraying of areas near the Ashley River several surveys had been made. He added that although he could not put his finger on the cause, post larval shrimps and larval spot near where the spraying took place, showed signs of distress.



Lunz stated that there must be guarantees that shrimp would not be affected before he could withdraw opposition to the control program in that sensitive area, adding that he would be glad to furnish information on when the young shrimp move out of the area, which includes the headwaters of three river systems.

Lunz said he was also concerned with possible residual effect on oysters in case heptachlor got in the water, and would there be possible to danger to humans from eating them.

He further said that in view of the value of the shrimp and the admitted toxicity of heptachlor it was not up to the Division to prove that shrimp were adversely effected by the spraying but up to those handling the program to prove that they would not be harmed.

Dr. Popham said he believed it would be possible to carry on the program with no significant effect on shrimp or wildlife, and discussed the precautions that were taken.

Dr. Nicholson and Dr. Thompson said they knew of no work done on the residual effects on oysters.

Mr. Fancher explained how plane distribution of heptachlor was handled.

Mr. Linton quoted a report compiled by some eminent authorities stating that with proper care fish losses could be avoided.

In answer to a question whether there were any areas in Charleston county that could be treated at present without heptachlor getting in the water, Mr. Mikell said there were 15,000 to 20,000 acres that could be treated where damage to shrimp would be practically impossible. Infested areas in Charleston County were set at 36,000 acres, of which 6,000 have already been treated.

There was a general discussion of the areas and what distance from the water the treatment would stop.



Mr. Heyward asked what would happen if spraying were discontinued until the fall, and Dr. Cochran said this was the time of year when the ants swarm and best results could be achieved.

Dr. Thompson discussed work done by the FWS on the effect of pesticides. He said heptachlor was exceptionally toxic to shrimp and quoted a report that it should be used as a last resort after every other possible alternate had been explored.

Mr. Gibbes explained the position of the Attorney General's office, saying the Pest Control Commission has the legal authority to control the fire ants and the Commission a public responsibility to protect commercial fisheries. He suggested that the two groups get together and map out a mutually agreeable program.

Dr. Edwards asked Mr. Heyward whether it would be possible to work out a joint agreement, the details of which would be carried in the Charleston papers.

Mr. Cox moved that a committee be appointed--two named by Mr. Johnson, and two by Dr. Edwards with Mr. Gibbes acting along with the committee. The motion was adopted after being amended to include Mr. Linton.

Mr. Johnson appointed Mr. Heyward and Director Lunz and Dr. Edwards appointed Dr. Cochran and Mr. Mikell.

It was agreed that a plan be worked out whereby treatment be continued on an area where there was no possibility of damage and that details of future treatment be worked out. It was further agreed that any report of the committee would have to be unanimous.

Dr. Edwards said if unanimous agreement were reached that would be fine, but if not he would have to turn to the Attorney General and attorneys for Clemson as to what steps to take.

Mr. Senn asked whether it would be all right to continue treatment with ground equipment and Director Lunz said there had been a fish kill adjacent to where ground treatment was carried on, although he could not prove this was responsible.



Mr. Johnson said he hoped the committee could make a report within 10 days.

Following lunch, the Commission met briefly to hear two proposals from Admiral Polatty.

One proposal was that five members of the Greenville County Federation Chapter be commissioned as deputy wardens to patrol the trout streams of Zone One. Director Webb said that the Governor opposed such commissions except to protect a specific area, but if the Governor would agree he would have no opposition. The Commission approved the suggestion, subject to the approval of the Governor, and Director Webb said the applications should follow the routine procedure.

Admiral Polatty also suggested working out agreement with farmers so as to provide some public dove shooting near the areas of heaviest populations, saying the plan was working out well in North Carolina.

It was agreed that he should send all the pertinent information to Director Webb, who would pass it on to the Commissioners.

The Commission considered a request from the Darlington County Delegation and approved the extension of the shad season in that county to May 20, 1962.

It was agreed that the next meeting be postponed until May 10 at Belmont.

*Eddie Finlay*

