MINUTES OF MEETING OF WILDLIFE RESOURCES COMMISSION MARCH 11, 1953

All members of the Commission were present except Mr. Smith.

Chairman Warren said the main business of the meeting was to consider the charges brought by Rep. James A. Spruill, Jr., of Chesterfield against Game Warden W. R. Jones.

Mr. Jones was sworn by his counsel, Mr. James E. Leppard, and related what he said had happened during his conversation with Mr. Spruill at a campaign meeting at Ruby in July.

He denied threatening "to stick a knife" in Mr. Spruill's back and stated that he had said only "I might see you later" if Mr. Spruill again mentioned his name on the stump.

Mr. Spruill repeated his charges and Mr. Leppard read an affidavit from Mr. George Gregory in which Gregory said he had heard the conversation and that Mr. Jones had made no threat to knife Mr. Spruill.

Mr. Warren pointed out that the hearing was on the question of "whether on this occasion Mr. Jones was guilty of conduct unbecoming an officer," and that Mr. Jones reputation or record as a warden had nothing to do with the case.

Dr. R. M. Newsom and H. H. McCoy were presented as character witnesses for Mr. Jones.

Mr. Spruill, who had gone over his charges, said he would like an opportunity to cross-examine Mr. Gregory but, in order to expedite the hearing, he would waive this right.

The hearing was then concluded and the matter taken under advisement.

(Later in the meeting the Commission adopted the following resolution:

"After careful consideration and weighing of the testimony the Commission regrets exceedingly that the incident complained of between Mr. James A. Spruill and Game Warden W. R. Jones occurred and is convinced that the matter was substantially as related by the complainant.

However, it is the concensus of opinion that the conduct of Warden Jones, while deplorable and uncalled for, does not under the circumstances, warrant his discharge; having in mind that prior to July 1, 1952, wardens participated actively in politics."

"It is therefore the recommendation of the Commission that Mr. Jones be placed upon probation in the discretion of the Director.")

The new license plan was discussed and Mr. Wolling presented a number of letters from wardens stating that agents opposed the plan. Mr. Richardson said he expected no trouble in getting enough agents and the plan would eliminate many who shouldn't be handling licenses. Mr. Wolling was given authority to go ahead with the plan and to incur whatever expenses were necessary to put it into effect.

Mr. Warren brought up the extension of the crab trawling season, which had been recommended by Dr. Robert Lunz, and the Commission confirmed the action he had taken.

Mr. Warren said there had been many requests to extend the shad season and Mr. Seabrook said that he favored a season Jan. 15-April 1 for all waters, since the shad fishermen follow the fish upstream. Mr. Warren said he had told those requesting the extension that the Commission would have no opposition to the April 10 date if the Legislature passed it.

Mr. McKeithan brought up the question of Mr. Seabrook's policy of letting shad netters in Winyah bay put out nets before the legal time and leave them in longer. Mr. Seabrook said this was done because the strong tide in the bay made it impossible to handle the nets when it was running strong.

The Commission voted to have the letter of the law enforced.

The bill by Rep. Carter of Beaufort, which would turn the commercial fisheries division over to the advisory board, was discussed and it was agreed that the Commission could not afford to back down and agree not to oppose a move to take away its powers.

The refusal of the Senate Fish, Game and Forestry committee to grant the Commission powers to set seasons, limits and zones was discussed and it was agreed to make no further move to push the legislation.

Mr. Seabrook brought up several personnel matters involving inspectors in his division and he was instructed to use his own judgement. The investigation of the division by the Governor's office was brought up. Since Mr. Seabrook had not received a copy no action was taken.

Mr. Cantey brought up the possibility of placing one man in charge of wardens breaking up fish trapping and Mr. Johnson agreed that someone must correlate the activity of the wardens when they are working as groups.

Mr. Cantey suggested that each flying squadron man have charge of certain areas with authority to call in wardens.

It was agreed that the Director start an enforcement program by having the flying squadron men call in wardens from other counties and put them into squads where the director thought necessary, with not less than 60 wardens to be called in.

It was agreed that the fullest publicity be given this work after it is started.

On motion of Mr. Johnson it was agreed that if the Legislature takes no action in eliminating permits the Clarks Hill permit would go into effect immediately.

It was agreed that a study be made to determine how many fish were going through the locks of Santee-Cooper and up to $5,000 expended to determine the quantity, size, number and species of fish. Eddie Finlay