

SCDNR Wildlife and Freshwater Fisheries Advisory Committee
Minutes, April 11, 2012
Edisto Beach State Park

MEMBERS PRESENT:

Chair Mike Hutchins, Milton Brazell, John Troutman, Billy Hoole, Charles Howard, Bryson Thomason, John Gramling, Cleve Smith

MEMBERS ABSENT:

Paul Bennett, Stan Halliday

STAFF PRESENT:

Emily Cope, Ken Prosser, Tim Ivey, Derrell Shipes, Ross Self, Sam Chapplelear, Dean Harrigal, Major Chisholm Frampton, Sgt. Michael Paul Thomas, Bruce Rawl, Bess Kellett, Susan Johnson

Chair Hutchins called the meeting to order and the minutes of the 2012 meeting were approved as submitted.

ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEMBER COMMENTS:

Committee Member Smith read a statement he prepared requesting the Committee to consider initiating conversations (through the DNR Board) to create a DNR application (App) for electronic devices that could be used by the public and DNR staff. Mr. Smith stated he felt it could potentially yield tremendous benefits for all parties now and in the future. He said licenses and other related information could be made immediately available to officers in the field, and noted individuals could download their licenses, permits, boat titles/registrations and related documents. E-blasts could be utilized for tide warnings, missing persons, weather alerts, and other notifications. Mr. Smith stated advances in technology are here to stay and will move forward with or without us.

A motion was made and unanimously approved by the Committee to initiate conversations (through the DNR Board) to create a DNR app for electronic devices that can be utilized by the public and DNR staff. Chair Hutchins stated he will report this action item to the DNR Board at their April meeting.

There were no constituents present.

OVERVIEW OF FISH HATCHERY OPERATIONS AND FUNDING:

Ross Self, Chief of Freshwater Fisheries, delivered a presentation updating the Committee on the fish hatchery program. He provided a history of hatcheries in the state and said South Carolina has operated or assisted in operating 19 hatcheries since 1931. Mr. Self stated that DNR currently operates the following five freshwater fish hatcheries: Walhalla, Spring Stevens, Cheraw, Cohen Campbell and Dennis Wildlife Center/Jack D. Bayless. Species in production include: American Shad, Bluegill Sunfish, Channel Catfish, Largemouth Bass, Redbreast Sunfish, Robust Redhorse, Smallmouth Bass, Striped Bass, Striped Bass X White Bass Hybrid, Redear Sunfish (Shellcracker)

Threadfin Shad, and Trout (Rainbow, Brook, Brown). Mr. Self reported that the Fiscal Year 2011 hatchery budget was \$1,759,457, in which Sport Fish Restoration contributed \$945,378 and fishing license revenue contributed \$778,080. He said other funding sources include the Santee Accord (American shad restoration), mitigation from Lake Richard B. Russell, Duke Energy, and a small amount from hydropower relicensing. Mr. Self provided the 2011 stocking report, the 2012 stocking requests, and grass carp certification statistics. A copy of Mr. Self's presentation is attached to the original minutes.

Deputy Director Emily Cope informed Committee members that the Robust Redhorse was a species biologists had recognized as being in a very critical state. As a result of work completed in South Carolina by Mr. Self, his staff, and partnerships with nearby states, this species had been kept from being included on the Endangered Species List.

PROPOSED CHANGES TO APPLICATION AND FEES FOR PUBLIC DRAW HUNTS:

Derrell Shipes, Chief of Statewide Projects, distributed copies of draw hunt statistics on wildlife management areas from 1987 to present (copies attached to the original minutes). He said staff has been working on developing a new process to reduce DNR's fees associated with refunds for draw hunts. Based on data from the past few years, Mr. Shipes said individuals are drawn every two to three years at a cost of \$50. He stated that staff has recommended set fees for each hunt based on application/selection rates and they would like to implement a combination on-line and paper process. The cost for each applicant is a \$20 non-refundable fee. Mr. Shipes reported the Waterfowl Advisory Committee indicated their support for the change at their February meeting. A motion was made to support the proposal and it passed unanimously.

REVISED HUMAN-BEAR INTERACTION PROTOCOL:

Sam Chappellear, Wildlife Region 4 Coordinator, distributed copies of the updated protocol (copy attached to the original minutes) and noted the document clarifies DNR's role and responses to interaction between humans and bears. Mr. Chappellear stated these guidelines are intended to protect the bears, promote public safety, protect property, educate the general public, and minimize negative impacts on bears. As indicated in the protocol, he noted that DNR's approach to managing problem bears will be to encourage the coexistence of bears and humans. Mr. Chappellear said educating the general public and other governmental agencies on how to address potential conflicts is the first step in the process.

Ms. Cope stated she wanted the Committee to be aware that DNR has existing protocol in place for human/bear encounters. She noted that Sam Chappellear will update the DNR Board on the updates at their April meeting. Ms. Cope further advised the Committee that DNR staff has been made aware of the revised protocol and will have access to the document.

ENDANGERED SPECIES TAG UPDATE:

Derrell Shipes displayed the proposed sea turtle design for the new Endangered Species License Plate and said it has been submitted to the Department of Motor Vehicles for final approval and production. Funds derived from the sale of the tags will be used in the Endangered Species Program.

CHAPTER 13 IMPLEMENTATION:

Mr. Self distributed copies of regulation changes for freshwater fishing that will become effective on July 1 as a result of approved changes to the Chapter 13 legislation by the General Assembly (copy attached to the original minutes). He stated the changes will benefit South Carolina's fishery resource for generations to come.

Ms. Cope advised the Committee that within the next few weeks, a lunch and learn is planned for DNR administrative assistants in the Wildlife and Freshwater Fisheries Division in anticipation of telephone calls from the public once the Chapter 13 changes become effective.

Committee Member Hoole stated that since his business is surrounded by several lakes, he would like to have something to give his customers reflecting the changes specific to bodies of water.

Mr. Self stated 8 additional pages (specific to the freshwater fishing changes with a larger font size) will be added to the Freshwater Fishing section of the upcoming Rules and Regulations.

SAVANNAH RIVER SITE COYOTE TRAPPING UPDATE:

Ms. Cope advised the Committee that Deer/Turkey Project Leader Charles Ruth could not attend the meeting and noted there had been a lot of interest regarding coyotes and their impact on deer. She reported that the study was initiated to gauge the association between fawn mortality and coyotes on the Savannah River Site. Ms. Cope stated approximately 167 deer fawns were radio-collared and initial results reflected a 70% mortality rate, with a large percentage caused by coyotes. She said Phase II of the study involved trapping coyotes to examine what impact trapping might have on mortality rates. Due to inconsistencies in data from Phases I and II of the study, Ms. Cope said a third year of coyote control has been added. Overall, she noted 474 coyotes have been trapped and removed from target areas over the past three years, which has yielded a reduction in coyote density and an improvement in fawn survival. However, due to the high reproduction rates of coyotes, trapping has to be increased. Ms. Cope said the study is still underway and final results are pending. Once a final report has been issued, she stated the Committee will be given a full presentation.

LEGISLATIVE UPDATE:

Ms. Cope stated the agency has made great strides in progress regarding the budget during the legislative session and noted that the trapping bill is moving forward with amendments clarifying DNR's authority to issue depredation permits for wildlife management purposes.

She noted other items of interest include legislation relating to deer baiting in Games Zones 1 and 2, as well as efforts to control hogs, coyotes and armadillos.

OLD BUSINESS:

Committee Member Howard stated DNR needs to work on the management and control of hogs on wildlife management areas.

ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEMBER COMMENTS:

John Gramling stated this meeting had been one of the better meetings he has attended. He further stated that although committee members have different passions among the group, he wondered if subcommittees within the group might prove useful. Mr. Gramling volunteered to visit properties where the propagation of quail is taking place and suggested other members volunteer to spend time in areas of their particular interest and report their findings at future meetings.

Chair Hutchins stated this suggestion was worthy of further discussion and should be an item on the agenda for the next meeting.

DATE, TIME AND PLACE OF NEXT MEETING:

July 11, 2012, Jocassee (time and location to be confirmed).