

MINUTES

SOUTH CAROLINA WILDLIFE AND MARINE RESOURCES COMMISSION MEETING

Marine Resources Center
Charleston, S. C.
April 17, 1981

The regular monthly meeting of the South Carolina Wildlife and Marine Resources Commission was held at the Marine Resources Center located at Fort Johnson, Charleston, S. C., at 10:00 a.m., on April 17, 1981, with Vice-Chairman Dawson presiding. Notice of the date, time and place of the meeting was mailed to the state's media. Commissioners present at the meeting included Commissioners Dawson, Owen, Stubbs, Altman, Compton, Shuler, and Harrelson. Directors and staff members present included Dr. Timmerman, Larry Cartee, Dan Dobbins, Benny Reeves, Pat Ryan, Dr. Ed Joseph, Jeff Fuller, Sonny Baines, and other staff members. Guests at the meeting included Al Cannon of the South Carolina Wildlife Federation, W. D. Toler of the South Carolina Shrimpers Association, and various other shrimpers who attended the meeting to discuss opening of the shrimp season.

CALL TO ORDER

Vice-Chairman Dawson called the meeting to order at 10:00 a.m., noting that Chairman Edens was not at the meeting due to recent major surgery.

ITEM I. READING OF THE MINUTES

Commissioner Stubbs moved to dispense with the reading of the March 20, 1981 Commission meeting minutes and approve them as submitted. Commissioner Compton seconded the motion and it was adopted by the Commission.

ITEM II. COMMENTS

Dr. Timmerman expressed his pleasure at holding the Commission meeting in Charleston and to be able to discuss the opening of the shrimp season with South Carolina shrimpers which will be later on the agenda.

Dr. Timmerman noted that he had held a staff meeting this week and imposed a freeze on expenditures for the remainder of the fiscal year. A memorandum regarding this action was distributed to the Commission and discussed.

Dr. Timmerman discussed the status of the Department's budget and the proposed license fee increase. Dr. Timmerman noted that various cutbacks in federal funds will drastically affect some of our operations. The main area

of impact is in the Division of Marine Resources. Dr. Timmerman recommended that the three upstate Commissioners meet with the Chairman of the Senate Fish, Game and Forestry Committee and Senator Drummond to discuss if hearings are advisable on a proposed bill to extend the deer season. Vice-Chairman Dawson noted that this would be good and he asked Dr. Timmerman to arrange such a meeting.

Dr. Timmerman asked Tommy Edwards to inform the Commission of a matter involving Lake Thicketty Creek. Mr. Edwards noted that when the lake was constructed, the land around the lake was purchased for intended use by the Department which was in the deed. The family of the original property owner has expressed an interest in repurchasing this property at its original price if the property is not put to its original intended use, which is an option in the deed. Mr. Edwards stated that we have a legal position that the lake and property are being put to their original intended use, but the family may want to meet with the Commission at the May meeting to present their request. Dr. Timmerman asked Mr. Edwards to send the Commission some background material on this matter prior to the May meeting and any recommendations he may have regarding such.

Dan Dobbins distributed a copy of the Legislative Report and various bills to the Commission and went over these briefly. Mr. Dobbins noted that the Joint Legislative Shellfish Study Committee has completed its work and two bills have been introduced. Dr. Timmerman stated that we may want to bring the license fee bill back to the Rules Committee and a list of its members was passed out to the Commission for its information.

Dr. Timmerman advised the Commission that he met recently in Washington with members of the South Carolina Delegation and the National Marine Fisheries Service to discuss problems of shrimpers with fuel prices and the situation with sea turtles. Letters were sent regarding these matters and copies have been sent to the Executive Board of the South Carolina Shrimpers Association. Dr. Timmerman stated that he understood the Fish and Wildlife Service was seeking to establish rules and regulations on loggerhead turtles, but no regulations will be forthcoming this year. The Department will not be coming out with any regulations any stricter than those of the federal government, if they are promulgated.

ITEM III. DISCUSSION ON SHRIMP SEASON

Dr. Timmerman noted that the Commission had agreed last year to meet in the coastal area this year with shrimpers to discuss the opening date of the shrimp season for this year. Dr. Timmerman presented an agenda for discussing this matter and to give the opportunity for shrimpers to make comments and ask questions. Dr. Joseph presented an in-depth discussion of the status of the shrimp fishery and noted that the shrimp season opens May 15th, unless the Commission decides to back up or extend the time for opening. Dr. Joseph stated that the division has surveyed extensively since January, but have not found any white shrimp which is due primarily to the cold weather as we had in 1976-77. Dr. Joseph noted that he had two alternatives to present and a recommendation, neither of which would turn a bad season into a good one. One alternative is to allow the season to open May 15th as the law calls for. The other is to keep the season closed until around mid-June to protect the few parent stock which may exist in order to get a better return on the fall crop. Dr. Joseph noted that the picture is bleak for the upcoming season and after a lot of discussion, he recommended to the Commission that the season open on May 15th as the law now calls for. If the predictions are correct, there will not be a spring fishery, thus, there will be little incentive to fish which won't damage the resource. This opening date will also allow for an opportunity to fish if the predictions are wrong and shrimp move into the coastal area. There is a danger that if just enough shrimp move back in to fish, then we may pay for this in the fall fishery. Dr. Joseph noted that neither alternative is a good one, but the risk is worth going with the May 15th opening. At this point Tommy Edwards discussed the agreement with the Shrimpers Association adopted on June 3, 1980, noting that it was agreed that advisory ballots would be sent out to licensed resident shrimpers concerning an opening date for the season. In regard to the latter, Mr. W. D. Toler of the Shrimpers Association noted that perhaps the Executive Committee could meet with the Department and work out something not costly to the Department relative to the advisory ballots. Following this, various in-depth comments were made by members of the Shrimpers Association, shrimpers and other individuals at the meeting. After hearing this discussion and upon Dr. Joseph's recommendation, Dr. Timmerman advised the Commission to set the tentative opening date of May 15th and decide if we need to conduct the advisory ballots with licensed shrimpers. Tommy Edwards noted that we are under a legal obligation to conduct the advisory ballot unless the Shrimpers Association waives this requirement. Commissioner Compton moved for the Commission to set the tentative opening date of the shrimp season on May 15th and to determine if we need to conduct the advisory ballot. Commissioner Stubbs seconded the motion

and it was adopted by the Commission. Following this action, other discussion was held with shrimpers regarding shrimping.

ITEM IV. NEW BUSINESS

A. Division Reports:

1. Administrative Service: There was nothing further to report.
2. Wildlife and Freshwater Fisheries: There was nothing further to report.
3. Law Enforcement & Boating: Commissioner Harrelson noted that the Colleton County Sheriff's Department and the Deputy Sheriff at Edisto Beach had indicated they could assist the Department if they had a departmental radio to use. Vice-Chairman Dawson asked Mr. Ryan to look into this matter.
4. Information & Public Affairs: There was nothing further to report.
5. Marine Resources: There was nothing further to report.

B. Advisory Board Reports:

1. Wildlife & Freshwater Fisheries: Commissioner Owen noted that the Board met on April 9th and he went over the minutes of that meeting. The Board discussed developing marginal areas in the upstate for duck habitat.
2. Law Enforcement & Boating: There was no report from the Board this month.
3. Marine Resources: Commissioner Compton noted that the Board has endorsed a newsletter being developed by the Marine Resources staff to improve communications between the Department and fishermen. A request was made from the Crabbers Association to assist them in exempting them from the 11¢ gasoline tax and the 4% sales tax. This is being looked into by various legislators and it is recommended by the Board. The Board also discussed Leases #18 and #35 regarding the neglect to properly maintain the leases. Hearings were heard and testimony was taken by the Board. The Board recommends to the Commission that the Commission Chairman inform the leaseholders, by letter, that they will be required to bring their leases up to standards or their leases will be cancelled. Commissioner Compton placed this in the form of a motion for the Commission to adopt. Commissioner Owen seconded the motion

and it was adopted by the Commission. Other items discussed by the Board were brought to the Commission's attention.

4. Heritage Trust: There was no report from the Board this month.

C. Salary Review Committee: Dr. Timmerman stated that this report is in order and a copy has been sent to Chairman Edens.

D. Appointments: Dr. Timmerman distributed a copy of the recommendations for appointments and re-appointments of Conservation Officers and Deputy Wildlife Conservation Officers (copy attached to original Commission minutes). All appointments, re-appointments and those not recommended were approved by the Commission as recommended.

E. Other Remarks: Al Cannon of the South Carolina Wildlife Federation noted that they would get the word out to their members to help get the license fee increase proposal adopted.

Commissioner Harrelson noted that a bill regarding trawling at Edisto Beach is up for consideration and Charlie Bearden has indicated there is no biological reason to oppose the bill. Commissioner Altman stated that this bill will be before the full House Agriculture and Natural Resources Committee and there will probably be hearings on the bill before it is passed out of committee.

F. Time and Place of Next Meeting: The Commission agreed to meet on May 15, 1981, at the Dennis Building.

ITEM V. ADJOURN

There being no further business to come before the regular meeting, a motion was adopted to adjourn the regular meeting.

