

MINUTES

SOUTH CAROLINA WILDLIFE AND MARINE RESOURCES COMMISSION MEETING

ADMINISTRATION BUILDING AUDITORIUM
MARINE RESOURCES DIVISION
FT. JOHNSON, S.C.
February 12, 1988
11:00 a.m.

The regular monthly meeting of the South Carolina Wildlife and Marine Resources Commission was held at 11:00 a.m., Friday, February 12, 1988, in the Marine Research Institute at Ft. Johnson, with Vice-Chairman Compton presiding. Notice of the date, time and place of meeting was mailed to the State's media. Commissioners present included Commissioners Compton, Stokes, Quackenbush, Harrelson, Owen, Thomason, Senator Drummond and Representative Bennett.

CALL TO ORDER

Vice-Chairman Compton called the meeting to order at 11:00 a.m. and welcomed all guests who were attending the meeting.

ITEM I. PRESENTATION OF RESOLUTION

Vice-Chairman Compton then presented a Resolution commending Sen. Rembert C. Dennis for his years of service to the Commission, the Department and the State, and naming him Commissioner Emeritus. Following the reading of the Resolution, Commissioner Stokes moved that it be adopted, Commissioner Quackenbush seconded, and the motion was unanimously adopted. Vice-Chairman Compton then introduced Senator John Drummond and his staff, welcoming Senator Drummond to the Commission as the Chairman of the Senate Fish, Game and Forestry Committee.

ITEM II. READING OF THE MINUTES

Vice-Chairman Compton asked for approval of the minutes of the January 15, 1988 meeting as presented. Commissioner Stokes made a motion for approval, Commissioner Owen seconded, and motion was adopted.

ITEM III. COMMENTS

Vice-Chairman Compton then called on Dr. Timmerman for his comments. Dr. Timmerman stated that there is a need to evaluate the hiring policy of Conservation Officers. When we were hiring on a statewide basis, the policy of hiring only once a year was necessary because of the volume of people that we had to consider for a position. This is no longer the case since we have returned to the county-wide procedure. Also, officers may now retire at the end of any quarter instead of only at the end of

the fiscal year. Therefore, a vacancy could occur and it could possibly be over a year before this vacancy would be filled. Some solution to this problem should be considered.

Dr. Timmerman reported to the Commission that his office, working with Clemson University and our Congressional Delegation, had been successful in adding money to the federal budget for additional Wildlife Cooperative Units in the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Services budget, and had gotten South Carolina added to the list of potential new units in that budget. He stated that he was pleased to report that the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service had elected to create a new unit this year at Clemson University. He stated that this action was taken much sooner than we had believed possible, and that the creation of such a unit at Clemson would be a tremendous addition to the Department's cooperative effort with Clemson.

Dr. Timmerman then reported briefly on the staff's progress in investigating the Corps of Engineers' proposed pump storage project at Lake Richard B. Russell, and stated that the effort had already begun in the evaluation of the effects of this project.

ITEM IV. LEGISLATIVE UP-DATE

Dan Dobbins then distributed to the Commission the most recent report on legislation before the General Assembly this year that affected the Department. Vice-Chairman Compton asked for a report on the Reckless Use of a Firearm Legislation; Dobbins reported that the bill had been successfully reported out of a Senate Fish, Game, and Forestry Sub-Committee and was scheduled to be considered by the full Committee on the morning of March 2. Commissioner Bennett then circulated a copy of draft legislation that would create a series of lifetime hunting and fishing licenses for the State, indicating that it would be considered by the Wildlife Subcommittee of the House Agriculture and Natural Resources Committee in the near future.

ITEM V. OLD BUSINESS

A. Project Wild Up-date: Commissioner Thomason then distributed a letter from Governor Carroll Campbell to Ms. Susan Yelton indicating that Project Wild had been selected to receive State recognition in the "Take Pride In America" campaign and that the Project Wild program had been submitted to the Department of the Interior for consideration by the National Blue Ribbon Panel. Commissioner Thomason then introduced Don Winslow who distributed material to the Commission and presented a detailed briefing of Project Wild.

B. 1988 Objectives: Dr. Timmerman then distributed to the Commission a copy of the Department's accomplishments for 1987 and goals and objectives for 1988. He indicated that each year, he is asked to deliver a State of Wildlife message to the Awards Banquet of the South Carolina Wildlife Federation, and that he had presented the material outlined in this report at that time. He indicated that it was very well received, and the report indicates the depth and breath of Department's involvement throughout the State.

C. Hunter Safety/Rifle Ranges: Bill Chastain then gave a brief status report on the construction of rifle ranges under the Department's Hunter Safety Program. He stated that because of the need to increase the safety features on the projects, as well as the need for additional construction work for sound baffling and other unforeseen construction difficulties, the total cost of these projects was double what the original estimation had been. Benny Reeves then gave a brief description of some of the changes that had resulted in these overruns and described several other aspects of the projects that had caused problems during their construction. Because of these overruns, it will be necessary for the Department to very severely budget the Hunter Safety Program expenditures for some time in the future to be sure that the basic program does not suffer. Dr. Timmerman stated that because of these funding problems, it may not be possible to fully fund the mandatory Hunter Safety Bill without the General Assembly providing money from the general fund. He advised, were this law to pass, making effective date 1990 before full implementation takes effect.

D. Proposed Striped Bass Creel Limit: Brock Conrad stated this matter had been discussed at last month's Commission meeting and that additional information had been sent to the Commissioners since that time. The basic proposal was to reduce the daily creel limit on striped bass in the Santee Cooper Lake and River systems from ten to five. He then introduced Miller White to discuss the proposal in detail. Mr. White stated that the proposal had been publicized in the State's news media, along with a request for comments from the general public and that he had received written comments from nine individuals, all of whom were in favor of the proposal. Vice-Chairman Compton then called on Jim Muckenfuss who spoke on behalf of striper fishermen from the Santee Cooper area and spoke in favor of the proposal. Following a brief discussion of the issue, Commissioner Owen moved approval of the staff recommendations, the motion was adopted.

ITEM VI. NEW BUSINESS

A. Proposed Addition of Lands to Bunch Arrowhead Preserve in Greenville County: Stuart Greeter then stated that the Heritage Trust Advisory Board had recommended that an additional twenty-two acres be added to the Bunch Arrowhead Heritage Preserve in Greenville County. After a brief discussion, Commissioner Owen made a motion that the proposal be approved; Commissioner Stokes seconded; the motion was adopted.

B. Proposed Grass Carp Stocking in Lake Marion: Brock Conrad stated that the State's Aquatic Weed Control Committee and the Water Resources Commission approved a project for stocking grass carp in the head waters of Lake Marion in an attempt to control noxious weeds in that area. He stated that the Wildlife and Freshwater Fisheries Advisory Board had voted to recommend that the Commission approve the plan, but the vote had been a split vote. He reported that there was some concern based on information from Florida where the use of these animals had greatly reduced the amount of plant food material for waterfowl. After a brief discussion of this issue, Commissioner Stokes moved that the matter be carried over until additional information could be provided to the Commission at the next meeting, the motion was adopted.

C. Proposed Deer Limit Increase in Central and Western Piedmont Hunt Units: John Frampton stated that he and his staff had undertaken a complete study of the State's deer management programs and that recommendations will be reported to the Commission at the next meeting. He stated that there was a great deal of concern across the State over the issue of deer depredation of crops, and passed out a copy of the 1988 Policies and Recommendations of the South Carolina Farm Bureau which addressed this issue. He also stated that a draft bill had been circulated among interested individuals calling for an agricultural crop land restitution program which would, among other things, allow farmers to commercialize deer killed through a program to reduce deer depredation. He then called on Tim Ivy who gave a detailed briefing of the statewide problem of over-harvesting of buck deer and button bucks, and pointed out the continuing problem of under-harvest of does. Following this detailed discussion, he stated that the staff was recommending that the season limit in the Central and Western Piedmont Hunt Units be changed to allow seven (7) deer per season during the still gun hunt season to include not more than five (5) bucks, with male fawns or button bucks applying toward the buck limit. He stated that this would give hunters the option of killing two (2) additional "bonus" doe deer during the season. After brief discussion, Commissioner Thomason moved that the Commission adopt the recommendations; Commissioner Owen seconded; the motion was adopted.

D. Division Reports:

1. Administrative Services: Benny Reeves gave a brief synopsis of the progress of the budget and Department's bonding recommendations.

2. Wildlife and Freshwater Fisheries: Mr. Conrad reported that staff had undertaken a survey of other State's dealing with payments to the U.S. Forest Service for lands included in the public hunting program. He stated that recommendations will be made to Commission based on this report at the next meeting.

3. Law Enforcement and Boating: No report.

4. Conservation, Education, and Communication: No report.

5. Marine Resources: Mr. Miglarese welcomed the Commission on behalf of Dr. Sandifer, who was out of the State on business. He reported that the red tide organism present in State's waters had caused some problems with the closing of shellfish grounds, but the problems were not severe. He indicated that the most recent testing had indicated that the concentrations of the red tide organism were dropping rapidly and should dissipate very soon. He also reported that there have been some substantial white shrimp kills in early January when the water temperature dropped into the low forties for a period of several weeks. He stated that the staff was still hopeful that there may be some spawning shrimp surviving, but he stated that the Division would probably recommend that the commercial season be delayed next spring because of this problem.

E. Advisory Board Reports:

1. Wildlife and Freshwater Fisheries: Commissioner Owens stated that the grass carp program had already been discussed, but they would like to discuss the issue of requiring the wearing of international orange during deer hunts statewide and the issue of hunting from public roads at another meeting.

2. Marine Resources Division: Commissioner Harrelson reported that the shrimp baiting legislation had been signed into law. He also stated that members of his Board had brought up the possibility of allowing marine saltwater game fish caught in gill nets to be retained by the persons using the gill nets up to the legal limit. He stated that he understands there may be some serious law enforcement considerations on this issue and asked that the Law Enforcement Advisory Board look into this matter so that any law enforcement problems could be considered before recommendations are made to the Commission.

3. CEC: Commissioner Thomason reported that a "Hooked on Fishing not on Drugs" rodeo will be held at the Dennis Center in the spring, and that this will be used to train staff from across the State so that they will be able to put on similar programs in their home districts. He stated that Mr. David

Maybanks of Charleston agreed to chair a committee of handicapped individuals, to assist the Department in developing and expanding its service to handicapped hunters, fishermen, and those who enjoy the outdoors.

4. Law Enforcement: Commissioner Quackenbush asked the staff to report on the radio system. Director Chastain and Steve Walters reported that the radio system installation is moving according to plan and everything should be on line by the first of June.

5. Heritage Trust: Stuart Greeter reported that Heritage Trust Board had approved expenditures of the Heritage Land Trust Fund on seventy projects, and that the projects will be brought before the Commission when negotiations are completed.

At this time, Commissioner Harrelson made a motion that the commission go into executive session, and Commissioner Stokes seconded; the motion was adopted.

RETURNS REGULAR SESSION

Following the executive session the regular meeting was resumed and participants were invited into the meeting. Commissioner Harrelson moved that the recommendations, as amended for approval, of reappointments and promotions be approved as recommended by the staff; Commissioner Thomason seconded; and motion was approved.

F. Further Remarks: There were no further remarks from the Commission.

G. Appointments: This matter was previously acted upon by the Commission.

H. Time and Place of Next Meeting: After a brief discussion, the Vice Chairman announced that the next meeting will be held March 18 in the Columbia office.

ITEM VII. ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned.