



MINUTES
April 18, 2024
N.C. Wildlife Resources Commission Meeting
Raleigh, North Carolina
Hotel Ballast, Cape Fear/Starboard Room
Wilmington, North Carolina

Chairman Monty Crump called the April 18, 2024 N.C. Wildlife Resources Commission meeting to order at 9:00 a.m. in the Cape Fear/Starboard Room at the Hotel Ballast in Wilmington. Crump reminded everyone that the meeting is being audio streamed live and will be available at www.ncwildlife.org.

Commissioner Landon Zimmer led the Pledge of Allegiance.

Commissioner Mike Alford gave the invocation.

ROLL CALL

Margo Minkler, Commission Liaison, called the roll. Tommy Fonville, Ray Clifton, John Stone, Hayden Rogers, and J.C. Cole were absent.

COMMISSIONER ATTENDANCE

Monty Crump	Jim Ruffin	Steve Windham	Mike Alford
Mark Craig	John Coley	Wes Seegars	Joe Budd
David Hoyle	Tom Berry	Kelly Davis	John Alexander
Brad Stanback	Landon Zimmer	Tom Haislip	

VISITORS

Reid Smith, Prospective Commissioner

MANDATORY ETHICS INQUIRY

Chairman Crump advised the Commission of the mandatory ethics inquiry as mandated in NCGS §138A-15. Vice Chairman Craig recused himself from discussion and action on **EXHIBIT E-4** and Commissioner Coley recused himself from discussion and action on **EXHIBIT K-2**.

MINUTES

On a motion by Landon Zimmer and second by Wes Seegars, the Commission approved the Minutes of the following meetings:

DECEMBER 19, 2023 MEETING – The Wildlife Resources Commission Minutes of the December 19, 2023 meeting were approved with an amendment to attendance, as presented in **EXHIBIT A**.

FEBRUARY 22, 2024 MEETING – The Wildlife Resources Commission Minutes of the February 22, 2024 meeting were approved as presented in **EXHIBIT B**.

EXHIBITS A and B are incorporated into the official record of this meeting.

ADMINISTRATION

Jason Cottle, Chief Financial Officer, presented a status report in **EXHIBIT C** on the Wildlife Resources Commission General Fund, Capital Improvement Fund, and the Endowment Fund.

ENDOWMENT FUND EXPENDABLE INCOME ALLOCATION – On a motion by Landon Zimmer and second by Brad Stanback, the Commission approved the Calendar Year 2023 Investment Income Allocation presented in **EXHIBIT D** by *Jason Cottle*

EXHIBITS C and D are incorporated into the official record of this meeting.

COMMITTEE MEETING REPORTS

Habitat, Nongame, & Endangered Species Committee – April 17, 2024 – *Kelly Davis, Chair*, reported the Habitat Nongame Endangered Species Committee met on April 17, 2024. *Sarah Finn, Coastal Wildlife Diversity Biologist*, who focuses primarily on sea turtles, provided an informative presentation on the five federally and state listed sea turtles that occur in North Carolina during nesting and wintering seasons. Sarah highlighted threats faced by sea turtles, both on land and in water, as well as conservation actions WRC biologists, partners, and volunteers are taking to avoid or alleviate the impacts from these threats. Likely a result of dedicated conservation actions, the numbers of loggerhead sea turtle nests have increased slightly since the early 1990s. North Carolina boasts more than 2,000 volunteers contributing their time to sea turtle conservation.

Dr. Sara Schweitzer, Wildlife Management Division Assistant Chief, followed Sarah Finn's presentation with a summary of the Sea Turtles and Virginia Big-eared Bat conservation plans.

The Committee voted to release the Sea Turtles Conservation Plan for public comment and endorsed the approval of the Virginia Big-eared Bat Conservation Plan to the full Commission.

Dr. Heather Evans, Conservation Genetics Manager, provided a presentation on the Roanoke Logperch and use of environmental DNA (eDNA) to increase detection of this small, endemic fish in tributaries to the Roanoke River. Detections of Roanoke Logperch using eDNA were much greater, less time-consuming, and less costly than those from backpack electrofishing. Environmental DNA survey data can be used to direct focused electrofishing efforts to confirm species presence and collect samples. Finally, she outlined plans for continued use of eDNA in other projects. There being no further business, the committee was adjourned.

Migratory Birds & Waterfowl Committee – April 17, 2024 – *John Coley, Chair*, reported the Migratory Bird and Waterfowl Committee met on Wednesday, April 17, 2024. First, *Brad Howard, Wildlife Management Division Chief*, presented the committee with staff recommendations on peregrine falcon take for use in falconry. Next, the Committee received information from *Doug Howell, Migratory Game Bird Coordinator*, on the federal migratory bird hunting season frameworks and staff recommendations for migratory bird hunting seasons including the special falconry season. Doug also provided the Committee with an update on the impoundment at Mattamuskeet that had issues with lead last year and gave us an update on the Atlantic Flyway's eastern mallard project. Having no further business the meeting was adjourned.

Fisheries Committee – April 17, 2024 – *John Stone, Chair*, reported the Fisheries Committee met on Wednesday, April 17, 2024. *Christian Waters, Inland Fisheries Division Chief*, shared 10 rule proposals to be considered during the 2025-2026 annual rules cycle. Eight proposals address Public Mountain Trout Waters with the other two dealing with Harris Reservoir crappie and mullet. Christian then presented temporary rules on Mandatory Fish Harvest Reporting and the creel limit for Striped and White Mullet to be noticed for public comment. Christian provided an update on the Watha State Fish Hatchery located in Pender County. It is the Commission's primary warmwater fish hatchery producing Striped Bass, Bodie Bass, Channel Catfish, and other species. Commissioners are invited to tour the hatchery and see the work firsthand. There being no further business, the committee was adjourned.

Big Game Committee – April 17, 2024 – *David Hoyle, Chair*, reported the Big Game Committee met on Wednesday April 17, 2024. The meeting began with a summary of this past year's deer and bear harvest. Harvest for both species were all time highs. Next, *Chris Kreh, Wildlife Management Division Assistant Chief*, gave an update on the CWD sampling results for this year. Over 36,000 deer were sampled this year with 13 new positive deer detected. Thankfully, we did not find CWD in any new counties this year. The total CWD positives count is now up to 24. Staff presented their recommendations for next year's Surveillance Area counties and mandatory testing windows. The Surveillance Area counties will not change next year but the number of mandatory testing days will be reduced in both areas, there will be 3 days in SA1 which is the original area in the northwest and 8 days in SA2 which is the southeast area. Finally, the committee had a roundtable discussion of where we are with CWD and what the future might look like. Lots of good questions and ideas discussed with plenty more to come. Having no further business the meeting was adjourned.

Land Acquisition & Property Committee – April 17, 2024 – *Brad Stanback, Chair*, reported the Land Acquisition and Property Committee met on April 17, 2024. The Land Acquisition and

Property Committee began by reviewing the 2025-2026 Land and Water Access rule proposals. The Committee also reviewed and approved 13 real property proposals which included 6 Phase I land acquisition proposals, 6 Phase II land acquisition proposals, and 1 disposition request from the City of Salisbury. The Committee approved the conceptual phase of the disposition request and directed staff to gather more information before the project returns to the Board for final approval. There being no further business, the committee adjourned.

Committee of the Whole Report – April 17, 2024 – *Monty Crump, Chair*, reported the Committee of the Whole met on April 17, 2024. The meeting began with *Jason Cottle, Chief Financial Officer*, presenting an update on the Endowment Fund balance and the expendable income calculation for 2023. Next, *Brad Howard, Wildlife Management Division Chief*, presented two rule proposals for the 2025-2026 annual rules cycle. *Melva Bonner, Regulatory Analyst*, then presented permanent rulemaking for license fees, commercial use permitting, and 2024-2025 Land and Water Access Rules to align deer seasons on game lands with the changes already approved in the western deer season. Finally, *Betsy Haywood, Water Safety Rules Coordinator*, presented no wake zone rules for Pender, Bladen, Dare, and New Hanover counties. There being no further business, the committee adjourned.

AGENCY SPOTLIGHT

AGENCY SPOTLIGHT – Law Enforcement Technology in the 21st Century –*Lt. Scott Strickland* gave a presentation titled “Law Enforcement in the 21st Century.” The presentation provided an overview of the Law Enforcement Division’s Drone Program and how officers use of drones in law enforcement work. He discussed the use of drones in detecting violations, search and rescue operations and accident investigations. He highlighted the emergence of thermal and night vision scopes in hunting and how some people are using them to violate the law. Lastly, he covered the Body Worn Cameras that are employed by our officers and how they have been very beneficial for officers’ safety and accountability.

Land Acquisitions and Property Matters

Phase II Land Acquisition – On a motion by Tom Berry and second by David Hoyle, the Commission approved the acquisition of the following properties presented in **(EXHIBITS E-1, E-2, E-3, E-5, E-6)** by *Ben Solomon, Assistant Chief and Land Acquisition Manager*.

- Hancock Tract – Halifax County **(E-1)**
- Klatt Wetland Tract – Macon County **(E-2)**
- Huckleberry Hill – Surry County **(E-3)**
- Southport White Springs Tract – Brunswick County **(E-5)**
- Taylor Swamp Tract – Hertford County **(E-6)**

With Vice Chairman Craig recused, and on a motion by Brad Stanback and second by Mike Alford, the Commission approved the acquisition of the following property presented in **(EXHIBIT E-4)** by *Ben Solomon*

- Mayo Tract – Beaufort County **(E-4)**

EXHIBITS E-1, E-2, E-3, E-4, E-5, E-6 are incorporated into the official record of this meeting.

WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT DIVISION

2024-2025 Webless Migratory Birds, Resident Canada Geese, Extended Falconry, and Waterfowl Seasons – On a motion by *David Hoyle* and a second by *John Coley*, the Commission reviewed U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service frameworks (**EXHIBIT F-1**), public comments (**EXHIBIT F-2**), and approved staff recommendations for the 2024-2025 season dates and bag limits for webless migratory birds, resident Canada geese, extended falconry, and waterfowl presented in (**EXHIBITS F-3, F-4**) by *Brad Howard, Wildlife Management Division Chief*

2024 Migrant Peregrine Falconry - On a motion by John Coley and a second by Landon Zimmer, the Commission approved staff recommendations to allow the take of up to 5 migrant peregrine falcons for use in falconry in 2024 presented in (**EXHIBIT G**) by *Brad Howard*

Species Conservation Plan – On a motion by Kelly Davis and a second by Brad Stanback, the Commission approved the final adoption of the Virginia Big-eared Bat Conservation Plan presented in (**EXHIBIT H**) by *Dr. Sara Schweitzer, Wildlife Management Assistant Chief*

EXHIBITS F-1, F-2, F-3, F-4, G, H are incorporated into the official record of this meeting.

WATER SAFETY RULEMAKING

On a motion by Wes Seegars and second by Jim Ruffin, the Commission approved the following water safety rules presented in **EXHIBITS I-2 & J-2** by *Betsy Haywood, Water Safety Rules Coordinator*

Permanent Rulemaking Adoption – 15A NCAC 10F .0304 Bladen County –The Commission reviewed public comments presented in (**EXHIBIT I-1**) and adopted proposed changes to create a no-wake zone at the Elwell Ferry adjacent to the Elwell’s Ferry Boating Access Area (BAA) on the Cape Fear River, clarify the description and regulated activities in the Restricted Area at White Lake, and incorporate into the NC Administrative Code (NCAC) BAA’s on the Cape Fear River and one BAA on the Black River presented in (**EXHIBIT I-2**) by *Betsy Haywood, Water Safety Rules Coordinator*

Permanent Rulemaking Adoption – 15A NCAC 10F .0310 Dare County –The Commission reviewed public comments presented in (**EXHIBIT J-1**) and adopted an amendment to correct a coordinate at a point near the mouth of Motts Creek at Cape Hatteras National Seashore presented in (**EXHIBIT J-2**) by *Betsy Haywood*

EXHIBITS I-1, I-2, J-1, J-2 are incorporated into the official record of this meeting.

Permanent Rulemaking Adoption – 15A NCAC 10F .0314 New Hanover County – With Commissioner Coley recused, and on a motion by Steve Windham and a second by John Alexander, the Commission reviewed public comments presented in (**EXHIBIT K-1**) and approved the rulemaking petition to extend the no-wake zone in Bradley Creek shore to shore to a point closer to the mouth of the creek presented in (**EXHIBIT K-2**) by *Betsy Haywood*

EXHIBITS K-1, K-2 are incorporated into the official record of this meeting.

Permanent Rulemaking Application and Fiscal Note – 15A NCAC 10F .0321 Pender County – On a motion by Steve Windham and a second by John Coley, the Commission approved to publish Notice of Text in the *NC Register* with an open comment period and public hearing, to create two no-wake zones in parts of Topsail Sound and Topsail Creek, north and south of the Intracoastal Waterway from east of the N.C. Highway 210 Surf City Bridge to points approximately 500 yards eastward; and to incorporate into the NC Administrative Code (NCAC) four BAA’s in Pender County presented in **(EXHIBIT L-1)** and approved fiscal notes for proposed rules presented in **(EXHIBIT L-2)** by *Betsy Haywood*

EXHIBITS L-1, L-2 are incorporated into the official record of this meeting.

RULEMAKING

Permanent Rulemaking Adoption – 10A .1601 License Fees Rule – On a motion by Landon Zimmer and a second by Jim Ruffin, the Commission reviewed public comments presented in **(EXHIBIT M-1)** and adopted 10A .1601 License Fees rule. **(EXHIBIT M-2)** by *Melva Bonner, Regulatory Analyst*

EXHIBITS M-1, M-2 are incorporated into the official record of this meeting.

Notice of Text – 10H .1800 Commercial Use Permitting Rules – On a motion by David Hoyle and a second by John Coley, the Commission approved publishing Notice of Text in the *NC Register* with an open comment period and a public hearing for the proposed rule 10H .1801 through .1803 Commercial Permitting rules presented in **(EXHIBIT N-1)** and approved fiscal notes for proposed rules presented in **(EXHIBIT N-2)** by *Melva Bonner*

EXHIBITS N-1, N-2 are incorporated into the official record of this meeting.

Notice of Text – 2024-2025 Land and Water Access Rules – On a motion by John Alexander and a second by Mike Alford, the Commission approved publishing Notice of Text in the *NC Register* with an open comment period and a public hearing for the 2024-2025 Annual Cycle deer season companion rules presented in **(EXHIBIT O-1)** and approved fiscal notes for proposed temporary and permanent rules presented in **(EXHIBIT O-2)** by *Melva Bonner*

EXHIBITS O-1, O-2, are incorporated into the official record of this meeting.

Notice of Text – 10C .0422 Striped Mullet and White Mullet Rule – On a motion by *Tom Berry* and a second by *John Coley*, the Commission approved publishing Notice of Text in the *NC Register* with an open comment period and a public hearing for 10C .0422 Striped Mullet and White Mullet temporary rule presented in **(EXHIBIT P)** by *Christian Waters, Inland Fisheries Division Chief*

EXHIBIT P is incorporated into the official record of this meeting.

Notice of Text – 10C .0218 Harvest Reporting Requirements Rule – On a motion by Jim Ruffin and a second by Brad Stanback, the Commission approved publishing Notice of Text in the *NC*

Register with an open comment period and a public hearing for 10C .0218 Harvest Reporting Requirements temporary rule presented in **(EXHIBIT Q)** by *Christian Waters*

EXHIBIT Q is incorporated into the official record of this meeting.

COMMENTS FROM THE CHAIRMAN – *Chairman Crump* opened his comments by expressing his gratitude to Commissioner Windham and Commissioner Zimmer for their gracious hospitality in welcoming the board to their community. He also expressed appreciation to the staff for their diligent efforts in coordinating and executing a successful away commission meeting.

COMMENTS FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR – *Executive Director Ingram* opened his comments by reiterating Chairman Crump's appreciation for Commissioner Windham and Commissioner Zimmer's hospitality, as well as the diligent efforts of staff in ensuring the success of the away commission meeting. He further extended gratitude to Orton Plantation for graciously hosting the board and providing a tour showcasing their commendable conservation efforts. Additionally, he thanked Chairman Crump for the opportunity to convene the away commission meeting, underscoring the value of such gatherings in fostering collaboration and progress within the commission's mission.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, the WRC webinar meeting was adjourned at 10:08 a.m.
All exhibits are incorporated into the official record of this meeting by reference and are filed with the minutes.

June 6, 2024

Monty Crump, Chairman

Date

June 6, 2024

Cameron Ingram, Executive Director

Date