

# **NATURAL RESOURCES COMMISSION**

## **Quarterly Meeting**

### **February 21, 2016**

# **M I N U T E S**

The quarterly meeting of the Natural Resources Commission was held on Sunday, February 21, 2016 at the West Virginia Division of Natural Resources Headquarters, South Charleston, West Virginia. The following individuals attended:

#### **NATURAL RESOURCES COMMISSIONERS**

Jeffrey S. Bowers  
David M. Milne  
Kenneth R. Wilson  
Gregory K. Burnette  
Thomas O. Dotson (via conference call)

#### **DIVISION OF NATURAL RESOURCES**

Robert A. Fala, Director (Presiding)  
Lysti Looney, Director's Office (Recording Secretary)  
Emily Fleming, Director's Office, South Charleston  
Paul Johansen, Wildlife Resources, South Charleston  
Jerry Jenkins, Law Enforcement, South Charleston  
Bret Preston, Wildlife Resources, South Charleston  
Chris Ryan, Wildlife Resources, South Charleston  
Scott Warner, Wildlife Resources, South Charleston  
Bobby Cales, Law Enforcement, Nitro  
David Trader, Law Enforcement, South Charleston  
Randy Kelley, Wildlife Resources, Logan  
Kem Shaw, Wildlife Resources, District 5  
Art Shomo, Wildlife Resources, South Charleston  
Gary Foster, Wildlife Resources, Elkins  
Rob Silvester, Wildlife Resources, French Creek  
Keith Krantz, Wildlife Resources, Elkins

Jim Crum, Wildlife Resources, Elkins  
Randy Tucker, Wildlife Resources, Elkins  
Colin Carpenter, Wildlife Resources, Beckley  
Bryan Hill, Law Enforcement, Nitro  
Verena Mullins, Administration, South Charleston

## **MEMBERS OF LEGISLATURE**

Senator Dave Sypolt, District 14, Preston County  
Delegate Bill Hamilton, District 45, Upshur County  
Delegate Dana Lynch, District 44, Webster County

## **MEDIA**

John McCoy, Charleston Gazette  
Matt Murphy, Charleston Daily Mail

## **ORGANIZATIONS AND OTHER MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC**

Larry Lawson, Belle, WV  
Bryan Elkins, West Virginia Bowhunters Association, Ashford, WV  
John Drangmeister, West Virginia Bowhunters Association, Hurricane, WV  
Roger Wolfe, National Wild Turkey Federation, Chapmanville, WV  
Dave Truban, Morgantown, WV  
Jeromy Ross, Richwood, WV  
Cory Booth, Quinwood, WV  
Frank Hughes, Elizabeth, WV  
Glen Jarrell, Charleston, WV  
Lee Orr, West Virginia Council Trout Unlimited, Charleston, WV  
Don Radcliff, West Virginia Bear Hunters Association, Elkview, WV  
Justin Conner, Chapmanville, WV  
Tabitha Linville, Milton, WV  
Jo Stern, Kanawha County Sunday Hunting, St. Albans, WV  
Neal Craig, Kanawha River Catfish Club, Eleanor, WV  
Michael Jordan, Kanawha River Catfish Club, Eleanor, WV  
Joe Eddy  
Virginia McDaniel  
Michelle Phillips, Kanawha River Catfish Club, Southside, WV  
Robert Phillips, Kanawha River Catfish Club, Southside, WV  
Jim Ashworth, West Virginia Bowhunters Association, Charleston, WV

Jeremy Jeffers, Kanawha River Catfish Club, Winfield, WV  
R. J. Callaway, Daniels, WV  
Scott Wilson, National Wildlife Turkey Federation, Clarksburg, WV  
Michael Downs, Morgantown, WV  
Ricky Haney, Williamson, WV  
Todd Anderson, Mason, WV  
Randy Clark, Mingo, WV  
Jason Cup  
Jeremy Preston, Mountaineer Quality Deer Management Association  
Danny Snyder, Riversville, WV  
Justin Covert  
Stevie Barnett, Buffalo, WV  
Jeromy Rose, West Virginia Better Bucks, Richwood  
Danny Snyder, Riversville, WV  
Trace Clark, Williamson, WV  
Ray Clark, Williamson, WV  
Mike Persinger, Oak Hill, WV  
Clifford Bennett, Mt. Nebo, WV  
Troy Jarrell, Clarksburg, WV  
Lance Murray, Mountaineer Quality Deer Management Association, Fairmont, WV  
Jeremy Dean, Beckley, WV  
Aaron Bowe, Danese, WV  
Robert Dickerson, Nitro, WV  
Tyler Dickerson, Poca, WV  
Chelsea Dickerson, Poca, WV  
Miriam Boucher, West Virginia University, Morgantown, WV  
Samantha Firo, West Virginia University, Morgantown, WV  
Lon Petraushi, West Virginia University, Morgantown, WV  
Steven Wilson, West Virginia University, Morgantown, WV  
Jim Anderson, West Virginia University, Morgantown, WV  
Bradley Toler, Baileysville Sportsmen's Club, Clear Fork, WV  
Lee Orr, West Virginia Trout Unlimited, Charleston, WV  
Larry Orr, West Virginia Trout Unlimited, Elkview, WV  
Tim Ickes, West Virginia Trout Unlimited, Cross Lanes, WV  
John Deitz, Teays Valley, WV  
Mark Edwards

**CALL TO ORDER**

Director Robert Fala called the meeting to order at approximately 1:00 p.m. Director Fala welcomed everyone to the meeting and asked the commissioners to introduce themselves and county they represent, as well as DNR staff members. Director Fala introduced and thanked Legislators for attending.

Director Fala presented a Certificate of Appreciation to Mr. Larry Lawson for his years of attendance and participation in the Natural Resources Commission Meetings.

### **RATIFICATION OF MINUTES**

Commissioner Wilson made a **MOTION** to approve the minutes of the October 25, 2015 meeting of the Natural Resources Commission as submitted. Commissioner Bowers seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

### **PUBLIC COMMENT**

Roger Wolfe, declined to speak.

Justin Conner voiced his concerns about catfish in the Kanawha River. Stated that poachers are poaching catfish from the Kanawha River and stocking in pay lakes in other states. Feels West Virginia is doing a good job with Blue Catfish but feels we should have better regulations to protect our catfish.

Joe Stern stated he would like to see all antlerless deer hunting regulations in Kanawha County be the same. Would like to see the doe harvest increased to two per year to keep deer herd in balance.

Bryan Elkins, President, West Virginia Bowhunters Association, invited Commissioners, Director, DNR staff and members of the public to the West Virginia Bowhunters Annual Banquet, Saturday, March 19, 2016, at the Days Inn, Flatwoods, WV. Thanked Director and staff for their efforts in the Elk Reintroduction Program. He further stated that the association is willing to work and help the DNR on legislature issues if needed.

Neal Craig, President, Kanawha River Catfish Club, stated that he feels there needs to be changes in the regulations on size and creal limits. Stated trot lines and drop lines are illegal in Kanawha River and that it takes many years for catfish to grow to trophy size.

Joey Eddy has concerns with the catfish and feels there should be regulations on flatheads. Commercial people are poaching 50 fish per person and taking to pay lakes

and are finding loopholes to get around the laws. Kentucky, Indiana and Ohio have changed their laws. Wants regulation changes before it is too late.

Don Radcliff, state that this past year there was a record bear kill with deer hunters killing 500 bear during the season running concurrent with the buck firearms season. Recommends that the early bear seasons (especially during the buck firearms season) be cut back. Concerns with the bear damage stamp, dog hunters have to buy stamp to be able to take dogs out. Feels everyone should have to buy stamp before the season they are going to participate in (i.e., would sell more stamps). DNR needs to have two stamps – one for dog hunters and one for other types of hunters. Bears should not be allowed to be hunted over bait. States stamps need to be purchased before hunting.

Jeremey Jeffrey, Kanawha River Catfish Club, the club started in 2011 with three boats participating in tournaments and in 2015 there were 22 boats participating. Catfish tournaments continue to grow in popularity. West Virginia needs to protect our fish.

Frank Hughes, Wetzel Co. deer hunter, feels total buck limit should be two per year. Suggest 1 buck on the Class X license and an additional buck bonus tag for a fee which could be used in other seasons.

Jason Kuhn in favor of lowering buck limit – buck to doe ratio way out of whack. There has been decrease in deer heard over past decade. Suggest when purchasing base license it should include one archery, one muzzleloader, one buck and one turkey

Ray Clark feels youth participating in the youth deer season should be able to harvest a buck. Thinks turkey youth season should be two days (Saturday and following Sunday). States bear gun season being open in the southern 4 deer archery only counties opens the door to poaching.

Jeremy Preston, President, Mountaineer Branch Quality Deer Management, appreciates DNR and Commission for their work. Far too many bucks are being harvested before they mature. Seventy five percent of bucks harvested are 2 ½ years old or less. There is a lot of information relating to this issue on social media. Stated that all options relating to bag limits, etc. should be on the table. Hunting tags are important – N resident license sales dropped 30% last year. West Virginia needs to act as they are getting left behind.

Corey Booth, thanked the DNR for their efforts and stated that license sales are up in Indiana, Maryland, Kentucky, Pennsylvania and Ohio, and that sales are down in West Virginia. Lowering the buck limit in WV would help with license sales. As sportsmen,

how can we help - we need to work together.

Justin Covert supports one-buck annual limit or at least 1 buck limit in gun season.

Troy Jarrell, declined to speak

Jeremy Rose, West Virginia Better Buck Management Association, thanked DNR for their efforts. Feels that there should be a reduced buck limit and possibly antler restrictions. The online petition (currently over 3,000 signatures) has grown in favor of a one-buck limit. I hope that we can find a solution that stratifies everyone. Look forward to working with DNR.

Lance Murray, Vice President, Quality Deer Management Association, states he is a huge fan of DNR's efforts (i.e., land acquisition). Feels that DNR needs to protect yearling bucks to have a more diverse buck age structure and will support whatever steps needed to achieve this. Hunters are leaving West Virginia to hunt mature bucks in other states and that hunter numbers are dropping all across the U.S.

Bradley Toller, Baileysville Sportsmen Club, stated that Director Fala is doing a good job and getting DNR back in shape. Stated the law should stay as is - no gun season in the four southern counties (Mingo, Logan, Wyoming and McDowell). Recommended that crossbow hunting be by permit only. Stated a reduced buck limit will not help the deer problem - it is coyotes killing the deer that is the problem. Recommends that all guns be cased during hunting seasons. Stated that DNR should look at big tracts of property along Wyoming and Logan County line for possible elk release areas. Also stated that he is opposed to timber cutting occurring on RD Bailey WMA.

Lee Oar, stated that he supports DNR's efforts and House Bill 4411.

Tim Ickes, stated that he has fostered three children and now that he has adopted the children has tried to purchase them lifetime licenses but was not permitted. The reason is that because they were foster children at the age of two, and now that he has adopted them, that they do not qualify for the purchase before their second birthday even though they were caring for the children at that time. Wanting to know if there is any way he may purchase their lifetime license at the infant price.

Randy Clark, request extending coyote trapping season to end of March. Stated that he does not agree with having to purchase tags before seasons. Stated that he was OK with a 2-buck annual bag limit.

## **ELK RESTORATION PROJECT/WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT AREAS UPDATE**

Randy Kelley, Elk Project Coordinator, gave update on the Elk Restoration Project, DNR has acquired 44,000 acres total to date. The Conservation Fund and other donors have made this possible. There is additional acreage we are looking at for public hunting that other companies own and we are in contact with them for possibilities of either leasing or buying. The elk soft release pen is in place for elk in the Tomblin Wildlife Management Area. DNR has been working with the State of Kentucky for elk but Kentucky has prior commitments, therefore we are looking at other options. Stated that he will be attending the Eastern Elk Workshop in April.

## **LEGISLATURE UPDATE**

Emily Fleming explained the procedures during legislature session. Stated DNR has seven (7) active bills that are progressing as expected. (Attachment A)

## **SUMMARY of the 2015 BIG GAME HARVEST**

Gary Foster spoke on the new electronic checking system. Have received good feedback during the first year. Chris Ryan and Michael Ingram have worked closely with JMT Technology Group. Overall, agency is very pleased with the harvest counts.

Gary reviewed the 2015 big game harvest. (Attachment B)

## **PROPOSED 2016 BIG GAME HUNTING REGULATIONS**

Gary Foster reviewed the 2016 proposed Antlerless Deer Season regulations. (Attachment C)

Chris Ryan reviewed the 2016 Proposed Black Bear Season regulations, 2016 Proposed Modification to the Fall Turkey Season Framework and the Proposed 2016-2017 all other Big Game Hunting and Trapping Season regulations. (Attachment C)

## **2017- 2018 Hunting and Trapping Regulations**

Chris Ryan reviewed the proposed 2017-2018 Hunting and Trapping Season regulations. (Attachment C)

Commissioner Wilson spoke with regard to the evaluation of reducing the annual buck

limit from 3 to 2. He stated that only 1.8% of deer hunters take 3 bucks. West Virginia is losing human population, which has something to do with the declining license sales. Commission has to look at the whole picture (biological, sociological and financial) when making decisions.

### **PROPOSED 2017 FISHING REGULATIONS**

Bret Preston reviewed the proposed 2017 fishing regulations. (Attachment D)

Commissioner Burnette asked whether flathead catfish were suitable for human consumption.

Commissioner Dotson requested that the handouts provided to the Commissioners in attendance be mailed to him. He also stated that he has concerns about the quality deer management issue and the financial impacts – and that we need to look at the economics of this issue.

Commissioner Dotson made a **MOTION** to add the following question to the Sectional Meeting questionnaires for 2016: “During years when Thanksgiving is the 3<sup>rd</sup> Thursday of November that the buck gun season open during the week of Thanksgiving, but if Thanksgiving is on the 4<sup>th</sup> Thursday of the month that buck gun season open one week earlier?” . There was no second to the motion and the motion did not carry.

### **NEXT MEETING DATE AND PLACE**

May 1, 2016, Twin Falls Resort State Park, Mullens, WV

### **ADJOURN**

Commissioner Wilson made a **MOTION** to adjourn. Commissioner Bowers seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously. The meeting adjourned at approximately 3:00 p.m.