

NATURAL RESOURCES COMMISSION
Quarterly Meeting
October 23, 2016
M I N U T E S

The quarterly meeting of the Natural Resources Commission was held on Sunday, October 23, 2016 at Chief Logan Lodge and Conference Center, Logan, West Virginia. The following individuals attended:

NATURAL RESOURCES COMMISSIONERS

Jeffrey S. Bowers
David M. Milne
Kenneth R. Wilson
Byron Chambers
Peter Cuffaro, via phone
Gregory Burnette
Dr. Thomas Dotson

DIVISION OF NATURAL RESOURCES

Robert A. Fala, Director (Presiding)
Lysti Looney, Director's Office (Recording Secretary)
Paul Johansen, Wildlife Resources, South Charleston
Scott Warner, Wildlife Resources, South Charleston
Jerry Jenkins, Law Enforcement, South Charleston
Bret Preston, Wildlife Resources, South Charleston
Chris Ryan, Wildlife Resources, Morgantown
Gary Foster, Wildlife Resources, Elkins/South Charleston
Jim Crum, Wildlife Resources, Elkins
Sam England, Parks and Receptions, South Charleston
Kem Shaw, Wildlife Resources, Pt. Pleasant
Zack Brown, Wildlife Resources, South Charleston
Verena Mullins, Administration, South Charleston
Larry Rockel, Law Enforcement, Logan

Jacob Miller, Law Enforcement, Logan
Dakoda Chattin, Law Enforcement, Logan
Randy Kelley, Wildlife Resources, Logan
Randy Tucker, Wildlife Resources, Elkins
Larry Harvey, Law Enforcement, Nitro
Charlie Kennedy, Administration, South Charleston
Brad Leslie, Planning, Engineering and Maintenance, South Charleston
Bruce Collinsworth, Parks and Recreations, Logan
Roger Wolfe, Planning, Engineering and Maintenance, South Charleston

ORGANIZATIONS AND OTHER MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC

Justin Hettick, West Virginia Bowhunters Association
Amy Hettick, West Virginia Bowhunters Association
Larry Lawson
Steve Ratz
Don Radcliff, West Virginia Bear Hunters Association
Jason Lingenfelter
Trevor Lingenfelter
Ross Lingenfelter
Eric Lingenfelter
Edison Adkins
Johnny Doss
Russell Brown
Clinton Grimmatt
Jeromy Rose, Better Bucks
Ronnie McCallister
Brian McCallister
Doug Wooten
Dan Cook, Branchland Hunt Club
Donald McCallister
Ronnie McCallister

CALL TO ORDER

Director Robert Fala called the meeting to order at approximately 1:05 p.m. Director Fala welcomed everyone to the meeting and asked the Commissioners to introduce themselves and to state the county in which they reside. In addition, he requested that the DNR staff and the public introduce themselves.

Steve Ratz of Keefer's Kawasaki of Logan donated a Kawasaki mule to the WVDNR – Wildlife Resources Section to be used on the elk project.

RATIFICATION OF MINUTES

Commissioner Burnette made a **MOTION** to approve the minutes of the July 17, 2016 meeting of the Natural Resources Commission as submitted. Commissioner Milne seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

ADMINISTRATION UPDATE

Verena Mullins, Chief of Administration presented a power point presentation on updates and changes within DNR Administration Unit.

CAPITAL IMPROVEMENTS UPDATE

Brad Leslie, Chief Engineer, presented a power point presentation on on-going capital improvement projects within DNR, which included repairs and improvements on boat ramps, wheelchair accessible ramps, roof at Spring Run Hatchery, additional parking and boat access at Tygart Lake State Park as well as numerous other projects. Plans for the immediate future include hatchery and dam repairs, water and waste treatment plant repairs, and the development of an education center (Claudia L. Workman Education Center) at the Forks of Coal facility.

ELK RESTORATION PROJECT UPDATE

Randy Kelley stated that a volunteer workday was held for constructing the elk holding pen and volunteers from Beckley, Elkins, Fairmont and other areas participated. Plans are for DNR staff to travel to Land between the Lakes in mid-November to assist with the capture of approximately 20 elk. Upon completion of the elk capture, animals will be held at LBL Facility while disease testing is completed. Plans are to move elk from Land between the Lakes to the Tomblin WMA elk pen site during mid to late December. Commissioner Burnette asked how DNR is going to address access to the area. Mr. Kelley stated that we are in the process of hiring a Wildlife Manager for the Tomblin Wildlife Management Area and we will be evaluating and developing an access plan for the WMA. Commissioner Chambers thanked Randy for the tour of the elk area.

LAW ENFORCEMENT UPDATE

Colonel Jenkins updated the Commission on officer positions within the Law Enforcement Section stating there are 125 positions statewide and that there are currently six vacancies. Currently there are two officers, which have graduated from the academy (one being a female officer). Plans are to have at least one officer in each county. Natural Resources Police Officers patrol the Hatfield and McCoy trails, which Hatfield & McCoy Trail pays 100% of officer's salaries; they are requesting an additional officer. Colonel Jenkins spoke about the youth deer hunt in which his officers and WRS staff participated in - seventeen youths participated and harvested 13 deer. Officers have spent significant time on illegal ginseng issues and solid waste complaints. Commissioner Cuffaro feels DNR should explore the acquisition of a K-9 unit. Commissioner Burnette commended the DNR LE and WRS staff for their involvement with the youth hunt program.

PARKS AND RECREATION UPDATE

Sam England updated the Commission on the current state of the State Park system, which consists of 35 state parks, recreational areas on 8 state forests and 2 rail trails. Sixty-five percent of the visitors to the State Park system are West Virginia residents and thirty-five percent are non-residents. Hiking is the most popular activity at state parks. State parks have 818 lodge rooms, which is the second highest number in the US. Parks and Recreations have 400 full time employees and 1,000 seasonal staff. Director Fala asked Bruce Collinsworth, Superintendent of Chief Logan State Park to come forward; he presented a knife to Sam England thanking him for his dedication and hard work.

2015 DEER HUNTER SURVEY

Randy Tucker reviewed the results of the 2015 West Virginia Deer Hunter Survey. One goal was to compare current findings with previous surveys. The goal of the survey was to profile the typical West Virginia deer hunter using various characteristics such as demographics (age, gender, residence, etc.), weapon of choice, seasons hunted and licenses class (landowner, resident, non-resident, lifetime and underage). Attachment A.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

Larry Lawson thanked everyone for the tour of the elk area. He congratulated Commissioner Milne on his reappointment to the Natural Resources Commission. He

also stated his opposition to crossbows and feels that as success rates increase with crossbows that economic benefits will decline.

Justin Hettick, West Virginia Bowhunters Association, thanked everyone for the tour of the elk area. The Bowhunters Association has delivered the new chest freezer and chainsaw to replace items lost in the recent flooding at the Wallback Wildlife Management Area. Mr. Hettick presented a donation check for \$800 to Paul Johansen, which is to be used for the purchase of a GPS elk radio collar.

Don Radcliff, WV Bearhunters Association. Board Member stated that at the last NRC meeting he spoke of some local stores selling bear bait. He thanked Commissioner Wilson and the LE Captain for talking to Cabela's, which as a result pulled the items from their shelves and have suspended sales. Commissioner Burnette thanked Mr. Radcliff for his dedication to the WV Bearhunters Association over the years.

Russ Lingenfelter stated that he is opposed to any type of change in the buck bag limit regulations.

Eric Lingenfelter stated that he is opposed to changing any buck bag limitations or implementing point restrictions on hunters, which he feels will result in the loss of young hunters.

Jeremy Rose thanked Colonel Jenkins and his officers for the work they do and complimented the State Parks staff. Mr. Rose stated that West Virginia Hunters for Better Buck Management is a Facebook group (i.e., 6,000 people signed up) which is trying to provide information on quality deer management. Their goal is to work with DNR in lowering the buck limit or implementing antler restrictions.

Doug Wooten would like to be able to harvest bucks in all seasons and does not want to see a reduction in the buck limit.

Eddie Adkins, Buffalo Creek Watershed, congratulated Commissioner Milne on his reappointment. He stated that the deer population is down on the National Forest and wants DNR to conduct survey.

Don Cook, Big Branch Hunting Club, opposes any changes to the buck bag limit.

Commissioner Wilson and his wife presented Paul Johansen, Chief of Wildlife Resources Section with a donation of \$800 in honor of their three grandchildren for the purchase of a GPS elk radio collar.

NEXT MEETING DATE & LOCATION

The dates and locations for the 2017 Natural Resources Commission meetings will be announced once determined.

ADJOURN

Commissioner Chambers made a MOTION to adjourn. Commissioner Milne seconded motion, motion carried and the meeting adjourned at 2:50 p.m.