

Minutes
Board of Natural Resources
Go Fish Education Center Theater
1255 Perry Parkway
Perry, Georgia 31069

Tuesday, May 24, 2022
9:00 a.m.

Board Members

Bill Jones, Chair
Dwight Davis, Vice Chair
Duncan Johnson, Secretary
Nick Ayers
William Bagwell
Randy Dellinger
Patrick Denney
Dwight Evans
Joe Hatfield
Ray Lambert
Rob Leebern
Tim Lowe
Billy New
Bodine Sinyard
Miki Thomaston
Gary Vowell
Dee Yancey

Guests

Rena Ann Peck, Georgia River Network

Staff Members

Mark Williams, Commissioner
Walter Rabon
Kyle Pearson
Donald Kirkland
Cathy Barnette
Artica Gaston
Alexandrea Solomon
Thomas Barnard
Jeff Cown
Steve Friedman
Ted Will
Doug Haymans
Tina Johannsen
Kara Nitschke
Meghan Angelina
Eric Bentley

Richard Dunn, Director
John Eunice
Karen Hays

The May 24, 2022 Board of Natural Resources meeting was called to order by Chairman Bill Jones.

Chairman Jones thanked Director Ted Will and Director Doug Haymans and staff for a nice evening of great food and fellowship.

Chairman Jones introduced Suzanne Passmore, Region IV Supervisor, State Parks and Historic Sites, for a moment of inspiration.

Chairman Jones called on Cathy Barnette for a declaration of quorum.

Chairman Jones adjourned the Board meeting to move into the Committee meetings.

Chairman Jones called the meeting of the Board of Natural Resources to order.

Chairman Jones called for a motion to approve the minutes of the Board of Natural Resources meeting on April 26, 2022.

A motion was made by Mr. Johnson, seconded by Mr. Hatfield, and carried unanimously that the Board approve the minutes of the Board of Natural Resources meeting on April 26, 2022.

Chairman Jones called on Richard Dunn, Director of the Environmental Protection Division, for his report.

Director Dunn updated the Board on PFAS health advisory level and water sampling, drought conditions, economic development projects, EPD staff changes, and Twin Pines.

Director Dunn stated this concluded his report.

Chairman Jones called on Mark Williams, Commissioner of the Department of Natural Resources, for his report.

Commissioner Williams began his report by thanking Director Ted Will, Director Doug Haymans and the Go Fish Education Center staff for hosting the May board meeting.

Commissioner Williams recognized and congratulated Meghan Angelina, Coastal Resources Division Wetlands Biologist, as a recent award recipient at the 2022 Association of State Floodplain Managers Conference in Orlando, Florida.

Commissioner Williams provided a legislative update and stated the Department's legislation has been signed by the Governor. He further stated the budget has been signed and all state employees received state merit increases.

Commissioner Williams stated that the Leadership Academy recently met on Sapelo Island and are nearing the halfway mark through the 2022 program.

Commissioner Williams informed the board about a recent tabletop exercise with several key stakeholders to discuss a positive case of Chronic Wasting Disease (CWD) in Georgia and pre-planning CWD management. He stated the exercise was headed up by Wildlife Resources Division Director Ted Will and staff.

Commissioner Williams stated that Amicalola Falls State Park will host a groundbreaking ceremony of the new Visitors Center and invited everyone to attend.

Commissioner Williams stated the pre-application window for the Georgia Outdoor Stewardship Program will open on August 2. He further stated that the educational workshops will be held on Tuesday, June 7 and Wednesday, June 15. He encouraged everyone to spread the word in their local communities.

Commissioner Williams called on Kyle Pearson, Executive Counsel, to present the Sale of General Obligation Bonds pursuant to the FY2022-2023 General Assembly Appropriations Act.

Mr. Pearson stated the General Assembly included items for DNR projects with a total value of \$36,975,000 that are to be funded by General Obligation bonds. He further stated the General Assembly also included items for Lake Lanier Islands Development Authority projects with a total value of \$10,000,000 that are to be funded by the General Obligation bonds. He added the Georgia State Financing and Investment Commission (GSFIC) determined that it would be most advantageous to sell the bonds for these projects, along with bonds for other agencies and authorities, in several sales spread throughout the year.

Mr. Pearson stated that one of those sales is now being considered and includes all \$36,975,000 for DNR projects and all \$10,000,000 for Lake Lanier Islands Development Authority projects. He further added that the projects that DNR will fund with the proceeds of this sale are: \$36,975,000 for facility major improvements and renovations, statewide; and \$10,000,000 for projects for Lake Lanier Islands Development Authority, statewide. Mr. Pearson stated that all \$10,000,000 for projects for Lake Lanier Islands Development Authority will be issued as federally taxable bonds, which means that they can be used for projects at state owned facilities that are privately operated.

Mr. Pearson stated the State Law Department has prepared two Resolutions concerning these bonds for consideration by the Board: One Resolution deals with the bonds for the \$36,975,000 for DNR projects, and the other Resolution deals with the bond for the \$10,000,000

for Lake Lanier Islands Development Authority projects. He further stated each Resolution will require a vote.

A motion was made by Mr. Bagwell, seconded by Ms. Thomaston, and carried unanimously that the Board adopt the Resolution to approve the Sale of General Obligation Bonds pursuant to the FY2022-2023 General Appropriations Act – Department of Natural Resources Projects. (Resolution attached hereto and made a part hereof)

A motion was made by Mr. Hatfield, seconded by Mr. Sinyard, and carried unanimously that the Board adopt the Resolution to approve the Sale of General Obligation Bonds pursuant to the FY2022-2023 General Appropriations Act – Lake Lanier Islands Development Authority Projects. (Resolution attached hereto and made a part hereof)

Commissioner Williams called on Colonel Thomas Barnard, Director of the Law Enforcement Division, for his report.

Colonel Barnard provided an update on the Bryan County tornado response; Sergeant Tim Vickery named the Safari Club International, Georgia Chapter's 2021 Investigative Game Warden of the Year and their presentation of a \$2,500 contribution to the Ranger Hotline; and the LED's work on Atlanta crime suppression.

Colonel Barnard stated this concluded his report.

Commissioner Williams called on Jeff Cown, Director of the State Parks and Historic Sites Division, for his report.

Director Cown provided an update on the new High Falls ADA walkway; the grand opening of the Hard Labor Creek ADA Kayak launch; the new day use restroom at Magnolia Springs; the Black Rock Mountain Kids Fishing Rodeo, which was the first in 11 years; the 18th annual Family Fun Day at Sweetwater Creek; the 2022 Ranger's Conference at Lake Blackshear Georgia Veteran's State Park; and the 14th annual State Park Leadership School.

Director Cown announced the retirement of Mr. Eric Bentley, Assistant Director of the State Parks and Historic Site Division. He stated that Mr. Bentley began his career in 1988 as seasonal maintenance at Unicoi State Park. He further stated that Eric also worked at Roosevelt's Little White House, Kolomoki Mounds, and Fort Yargo. He added that Eric was Region 3 Manager (now Region 5), and NGMA Resource Manager for lodge parks. He further added that Eric will retire with 30 years, nine months of service.

Director Cown thanked Mr. Bentley for his many years of faithful service and wished him all the best in his retirement.

Director Cown stated this concluded his report.

Commissioner Williams called on Doug Haymans, Director of the Coastal Resources Division, for his report.

Director Haymans announced the return of the Coastlines Georgia magazine. He provided an update on the Red Drum Catch and Unit of Effort Data. He updated the Board on the SE Red Drum recreational regulations, and the Angler and Guide Saltwater Satisfaction Survey.

Director Haymans stated this concluded his report.

Commissioner Williams called on Ted Will, Director of the Wildlife Resources Division, for his report.

Director Will announced a new state record rooster redbreast was caught by Mr. Lester Roberts on the Satilla River, weighing in at 1 lb. 12 oz. He provided an update on the 2021-2022 Turkey Season and stated that during spring turkey season, 9,798 gobblers were harvested in Georgia. He also updated the Board on the Chronic Wasting Disease tabletop exercise and stated that planning and public awareness are key measures that Georgia DNR is taking to prepare and prevent potential spread into the state.

Director Will provided a fisheries stocking and research update and stated that so far more than 264,000 black crappie, 1.3 million largemouth bass, 645,000 white bass, 650,000 walleye, 970,000 hybrid striped bass, and 1.4 million striped bass fingerlings have been stocked into public waterbodies with another five striped bass ponds still to be harvested. He further stated that Wildlife Conservation, Fisheries Management, and volunteers from several Universities teamed up to complete annual monitoring of Sicklefin Redhorse in Brasstown Creek. He added that 29 untagged and 7 tagged adult Sicklefin Redhorse were captured from 3 difference sections of Brasstown Creek.

Director Will provided an update on the Wildlife Conservation and stated that after a 9-year break, Coastal WCS staff resumed flying helicopter surveys for manatees this spring near Cumberland Island and Kings Bay Naval Submarine Base. He further stated that the objective is to see if the number of manatees that migrate to Georgia from Florida each summer has declined since 2013.

Director Will stated this concluded his report.

Chairman Jones called on William Bagwell, Acting Chairman of the Environmental Protection Committee, for his report.

A motion was made by Mr. Bagwell, seconded by Ms. Thomaston, and carried unanimously that the Board adopt the resolution to approve the Proposed Amendments to the Rules for Air Quality Control, Chapter 391-3-1. (Resolution attached hereto and made a part thereof)

Chairman Jones called on Mr. Patrick Denney, Chairman of the Wildlife Resources Committee for his report.

A motion was made by Mr. Denney, seconded by Mr. Hatfield, and carried unanimously that the Board approve the Proposed Amendments to Hunting Regulations, Chapter 391-4-2, Pertaining to Migratory Bird Regulations.

Chairman Jones called on Mr. Tim Lowe, Chairman of the Land Committee for his report.

A motion was made by Mr. Lowe, seconded by Mr. Ayers, and carried unanimously that the Board adopt the Resolution to authorize the Commissioner to seek State Properties Commission approval for Acquisition (Purchase) of a 3,900+ acres conservation easement, as an addition to the Canoochee Sandhills WMA-Georgia-Alabama Land Trust, Inc. Tract, Bulloch and Bryan Counties. (Resolution attached hereto and made a part thereof)

A motion was made by Mr. Lowe, seconded Ms. Thomaston, and carried unanimously that the Board adopt the Resolution to authorize the Commissioner to seek State Properties Commission approval for Acquisition (Purchase) of approximately 368.9± acres as an addition to the Altama Plantation WMA-Hammersmith Tract, Glynn County. (Resolution attached hereto and made a part thereof)

A motion was made by Mr. Lowe, seconded by Mr. Davis, and carried unanimously that the Board adopt the Resolution to authorize the Commissioner to seek State Properties Commission approval for Acquisition (Purchase) of approximately 267.3± acres as an addition to the Altama Plantation WMA-Indigo Tract, Glynn County. (Resolution attached hereto and made a part thereof)

A motion was made by Mr. Lowe, seconded by Mr. Sinyard, and carried unanimously that the Board adopt the Resolution to authorize the Commissioner to seek State Properties Commission approval for Granting of a Revocable License Agreement and Permanent Easement of up to .25± acres by the State Properties Commission and General Assembly to Blue Ridge EMC at Brasstown Valley Resort & Spa, Towns County. (Resolution attached hereto and made a part thereof)

A motion was made by Mr. Lowe, seconded by Ms. Thomaston, and carried unanimously that the Board adopt the Resolution to authorize the Commissioner to seek State Properties Commission approval to enter into a 25-year lease agreement with Wilcox County for the 1.56+ acres at Statham Shoals Landing Boat Ramp. (Resolution attached hereto and made a part thereof)

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned.

A. W. Jones, III, Chairman

ATTEST:

Duncan N. Johnson, Jr., Secretary