

Minutes
Board of Natural Resources
2 Martin Luther King, Jr. Drive, S. E.
Suite 1252 East Tower
Atlanta, GA 30334

March 26, 2024
9:00 a.m.

Board Members

Joe Hatfield, Chair
Gary Vowell, Vice Chair
Lesley Reynolds, Secretary
Nancy Addison
Patrick Denney
Charles DePriest
Dan Garcia
Mark Hennessy
Duncan Johnson
Ray Lambert
Brent Layton
Paul Shailendra
Bodine Sinyard
Harley Yancey

Guests

Deb Phillips, GA Industry Environmental Coalition
Bryan Tolar, GA Urban Agriculture Coalition
Anna Edmondson, Robbins Government Relations

Staff Members

Walter Rabon, Commissioner
Thomas Barnard
Trevor Santos
Kyle Pearson
Kate Iannuzzi
Artica Gaston
Cathy Barnette
Alexus Thompson
Mike England
Steve Friedman
Doug Haymans
Angie Johnson
Thom Litts
Taylor Brown
Andre McLendon
Ellen Graham
Brent Womack

Jeff Cown, Director
James Boylan
Chuck Mueller
Anna Truszczynski

The March 26, 2024 Board of Natural Resources meeting was called to order by Chairman Joe Hatfield.

Chairman Hatfield called on Ms. Nancy Addison for an opening prayer for Mr. Kevin Jackson.

Chairman Hatfield called on Mr. Andre McLendon, Region 3 Manager, State Parks and Historic Sites Division, for a moment of inspiration.

Chairman Hatfield thanked Mr. McLendon for attending the meeting and providing words of inspiration to the board.

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

Chairman Hatfield called the March 26, 2024 meeting of the Board of Natural Resources to order.

Chairman Hatfield called for a motion to approve the minutes of the Board of Natural Resources meeting on February 27, 2024.

A motion was made by Mr. Sinyard, seconded by Mr. Johnson, to approve the minutes of the Board of Natural Resources meeting on February 27, 2024.

Chairman Hatfield called for a motion to approve the minutes of the Board of Natural Resources special called conference call meeting on March 13, 2024.

A motion was made by Mr. Sinyard, seconded by Ms. Addison, to approve the minutes of the Board of Natural Resources meeting on March 13, 2024.

Chairman Hatfield called on Jeff Cown, Director of the Environmental Protection Division, for his report.

Director Cown updated the Board on EPD's budget as we near the end of the legislative session, the introduction of EPD's agency legislation (HB 1453) that will amend and clean up the Solid Waste Management Act, and the success at the Georgia Adopt-A-Stream's Volunteer Water Quality Monitoring Annual Conference.

Director Cown stated this concluded his report.

Chairman Hatfield called on Walter Rabon, Commissioner of the Department of Natural Resources, for his report.

Commissioner Rabon provided a legislative update and stated the General Assembly will adjourn sine die at midnight on Thursday. He further stated that the department has been actively engaged with legislators on a number of issues including agency legislation, HB 244, which has passed both chambers and heads to Governor Kemp for consideration. He added other bills being watched are HB 1172, SB 542, and HR 1554 relating to navigable waters; HB 957 which will revise penalties for failing to remove an abandoned vessel; and HB 927 which will allow a hunter to wear florescent pink in addition to orange, extend the sunset date allowing air guns to be used for big game hunting, and allow for bow fishing for catfish statewide.

Commissioner Rabon stated the House and Senate Appropriations Subcommittees overseeing the department have approved the slate of projects to receive funding by the Georgia Outdoor Stewardship Program. He further stated that this slate of projects provides over 20 million dollars in funding for 12 conservation projects throughout the state.

Commissioner Rabon recognized Daniel Brown, Jill Clark, Carol Sanchez, Kathy Knowlton, Megan Gray, and Sgt. Casey Jones as they have been selected to serve on the inaugural Commissioner's Advisory Council. He stated the Commissioner's Advisory Council is a new initiative that will play a crucial role in opening the lines of communication between the five divisions, administrative unit, and the Commissioner's Office. He further stated that he looks forward to the feedback, suggestions, and guidance on the proposals and decisions that will come from this group.

Commissioner Rabon stated the Leadership Academy is in its ninth year and will kick off next month. He further stated the first session will be held from April 16-18, at Charlie Elliott Wildlife Center. He added that 18 emerging leaders from across all five divisions of the DNR will embark on a journey that consists of (5) three-day sessions that include activities to enhance leadership qualities such as communication, decision-making, and problem-solving. He further added that the goal of the DNR's Leadership Academy is to develop and equip employees to be effective leaders by providing tools, institutional knowledge, and relationship-building experiences that effectively advance the Department's mission.

Commissioner Rabon stated that today and at future board meetings, only two division reports will be presented during the meeting by division directors. He further stated that while the board will not hear from Director Haymans and Colonel England today, he will provide a brief update from Coastal Resources and Law Enforcement Divisions.

Commissioner Rabon stated that regarding CRD dock rules proposed in January, the Division received only 5 comments as of the close of the public comment period on March 15. He further stated that due to the number of impacted Georgians, as well as the fact that this issue

has not gone through a stakeholder process in the past, the CRD has decided to engage a facilitator to conduct a stakeholder process through the summer and bring these rules back to the board in late fall.

Commissioner Rabon provided several updates from the Law Enforcement Division and offered condolences to Game Warden First Class Jack Thain on the passing of K-9 Case on March 16. He stated that K-9 Case was diagnosed with an aggressive form of cancer the week prior to his passing. He asked everyone to keep Jack and his family in their prayers as they deal with the sudden loss of his partner of 7 years.

Commissioner Rabon announced that Doyte Chaffin was recently promoted to Major and joined the command staff at headquarters in Social Circle. He congratulated Major Chaffin.

Commissioner Rabon announced the addition of Pilot Sam Miller to the DNR Aviation Division. He stated that Sam has experience flying over 10 different types of aircraft in missions that range from flight instruction to low altitude powerline and pipeline patrols. He congratulated Sam and welcomed him to the DNR family.

Commissioner Rabon announced the retirement of Mr. Steve Friedman and stated that he will be retiring at the end of April, following a successful career of protecting our state's lands. He announced that Mr. Brent Womack has been selected as the new Chief of Real Estate and he will begin on April 1. He further stated that Mr. Womack comes to the position from the Wildlife Resources Division where he served as region supervisor. He added that Brent worked closely with the Real Estate Office on a number of real estate transactions, so he will be able to hit the ground running. He congratulated Brent and welcomed him to the Real Estate Office.

Commissioner Rabon called on Director Angie Johnson, State Parks and Historic Sites Division, for her report.

Director Johnson provided an update on the Georgia Park Ranger Academy, ADA Highlights and Initiatives, Certified Black Powder Safety Officer Training, Fleet Additions, Prescribed Burn Season, Annual Historic Sites Focus Meeting and Training, and a meeting with Representative Mike Collins staff.

Commissioner Rabon called on Thom Litts, Assistant Director of the Wildlife Resources Division, for his report.

Assistant Director Litts provided an update from the Wildlife Conservation Section and their work to trap 35 Oystercatchers on a high tide roost across from the Sapelo Island Ferry Dock, an update from the Game Management Section regarding their prescribed fires and

woodcock trapping and banding on Clybel as part of their ongoing efforts to monitor woodcock populations in Georgia, an update on the ongoing turkey trapping on wildlife management areas across the state as part of the Wildlife Turkey Population monitoring program, and an update from Fisheries Management regarding the spring fish spawning season, Georgia anglers' input on potential changes to the state's shoal bass regulations, and the replacement of the Lake Margery boat ramp at Marben Public Fishing Area.

Commissioner Rabon stated this concluded his report.

Chairman Hatfield called on Mr. Lambert, Chair of the Environmental Protection Committee, for his report.

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

A motion was made by Mr. Lambert, seconded by Mr. Shailendra, and carried unanimously that the Board adopt the Resolution to the Proposed Amendments to the Rules for Radioactive Materials, Chapter 391-3-17. (Resolution attached hereto and made a part thereof)

A motion was made by Mr. Lambert, seconded by Ms. Addison, and carried unanimously that the Board adopt the Resolution to the Proposed Amendments to the Rules for Safe Drinking Water, Chapter 391-3-5. (Resolution attached hereto and made a part thereof)

Mr. Lambert stated this concluded his report.

Chairman Hatfield called on Mr. Shailendra, Chair of the Land Committee, for his report.

A motion was made by Mr. Shailendra, seconded by Mr. Johnson, and carried unanimously that the Board adopt the resolution to authorize the Commissioner to seek State Properties Commission approval to purchase from Tean Jackson, 12± acres as an addition to the Altamaha Wildlife Management Area, Jackson Tract, McIntosh County.

A motion was made by Mr. Shailendra, seconded by Ms. Addison, and carried unanimously that the Board adopt the resolution to authorize the Commissioner to seek State Properties Commission approval to accept by donation from LSP Properties, LLC, 4± acres as an addition to the Chattahoochee Fall Line Wildlife Management Area, Marion County.

A motion was made by Mr. Shailendra, seconded by Ms. Addison, and carried unanimously that the Board adopt the resolution to authorize the Commissioner to seek State Properties Commission approval via Executive Order to demolish a beach day use building on Hard Labor Creek State Park, Morgan County.

A motion was made by Mr. Shailendra, seconded by Mr. Johnson, and carried unanimously that the Board adopt the resolution to authorize the Commissioner to seek State Properties Commission approval of the Granting of a Revocable License Agreement and Permanent Easement of up to 0.5± acres by the State Properties Commission and General Assembly to Chatham County Department of Engineering at Wormsloe Historic Site, Chatham County.

A motion was made by Mr. Shailendra, seconded by Mr. Johnson, and carried unanimously that the Board adopt the resolution to authorize the Commissioner to seek State Properties Commission approval of the Granting of a Revocable License Agreement and Permanent Easement of up to 6.2± acres by the State Properties Commission and General Assembly to Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA) at Ft. Mountain State Park, Murray County.

A motion was made by Mr. Shailendra, seconded by Mr. Johnson, and carried unanimously that the Board adopt the resolution to authorize the Commissioner to seek State Properties Commission approval of the Granting of a Revocable License Agreement and Permanent Easement of up to 0.3± acres by the State Properties Commission and General Assembly to Georgia Power at Ft. Yargo State Park, Barrow County.

Mr. Shailendra stated this concluded his report.

Chairman Hatfield stated the next board meeting will be held at 9:00 a.m., on Wednesday, April 24, 2024, at the Jekyll Island Convention Center, in Jekyll Island, GA.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned.

Joe Hatfield, Chairman

ATTEST:

Lesley Reynolds, Secretary