

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

April 28, 2020
9:00 a.m.
(Via Teleconference Call)

Attendees:

Board Members

Nancy Addison, Chair
Dee Yancey, Vice Chair
Bill Jones, Secretary
William Bagwell
Dwight Davis
Dwight Evans
Joe Hatfield
Duncan N. Johnson, Jr.
Ray Lambert
Rob Leebern
Tim Lowe
Mike Phelps
Billy New
Paul Shailendra
Jeff "Bodine" Sinyard
Brother Stewart
Miki Thomaston

Staff Members

Mark Williams, Commissioner
Walter Rabon
Kyle Pearson
Cathy Barnette
Amber Carter
Artica Gaston
Courtney Hall
Thomas Barnard
Jeff Cown
Steve Friedman
Rusty Garrison
Doug Haymans
Tina Johannsen
Mike Burgamy

Richard Dunn, Director
Lauren Curry
Jac Capp
Karen Hays
Chuck Mueller
Laura Williams

The April 28, 2020 Board of Natural Resources meeting was called to order by Chair Nancy Addison.

Chair Addison called on Captain Mike Burgamy, Law Enforcement Division, to provide an opening prayer for the Board meeting.

Chair Addison called on Cathy Barnette to do roll call and verify a quorum is present. Those in attendance on the conference call were Nancy Addison, Chair, Dee Yancey, Vice Chair, Bill Jones, Secretary, William Bagwell, Dwight Davis, Dwight Evans, Joe Hatfield, Duncan Johnson, Ray Lambert, Rob Leebern, Tim Lowe, Billy New, Mike Phelps, Paul Shailendra, Bodine Sinyard, Brother Stewart, and Miki Thomaston.

Chair Addison called for a motion to approve the minutes of the March 24, 2020 Board of Natural Resources meeting.

A motion was made by Mr. Sinyard, seconded by Ms. Thomaston and carried unanimously to approve the minutes from the March 24, 2020 Board of Natural Resources meeting.

Chair Addison called on Richard Dunn, Director of the Environmental Protection Division, for his report.

Director Dunn updated the Board on EPD operations under COVID-19, Air Quality Awareness Week beginning May 4, and emergency operations relating to storm debris management. He further updated the Board on the environmental protection barrier for Golden Ray and Sterigenics resuming operation following a court order.

Director Dunn stated this concluded his report.

Chair Addison called on Mark Williams, Commissioner of the Department of Natural Resources, for his report.

Commissioner Williams thanked everyone for participating in the board meeting and for their understanding regarding the tele-conference format.

Commissioner Williams informed the Board of the recent passing of Captain Chris Hodge's daughter, Rachel, and stated the Hodge family will continue to be in the thoughts and prayers of their DNR family.

Commissioner Williams informed the Board of the passing of Senator Jack Hill, Chairman of the Appropriations Committee and Dean of the senate. He stated Senator Hill spent 29 years in the senate and was a great friend of the DNR.

Commissioner Williams stated that Senator Blake Tillery from Vidalia was appointed Chairman of the Appropriations Committee and he looks forward to working with another good friend as the DNR navigates future budgets.

Commissioner Williams updated the Board on the COVID-19 response, the recent tornado outbreak and minor damage reports at a couple of DNR properties, and a brief legislative update.

Commissioner Williams provided an update on the Coastal Resources Division. He stated the CRD is continuing to provide high-quality service during the COVID-19 crisis. He further stated that marsh and shore permit requests are up to 96 from 86 in 2019. He added \$300 million dollars has been set aside through the CARES act for the fishing industry, nationally. He further added that fishermen will need to prove at least a 35% loss of income to qualify. He stated the overall 2019 shellfish landings equaled 7.7 million pounds with a value of \$22.5 million, a 37% increase.

Commissioner Williams stated that the CRD recently released its sixth annual Coastal Georgia Ecosystem Report Card and Georgia's coast received an "A-" grade, or 80 percent, a good score and the same as last year.

Commissioner Williams updated the Board on the Golden Ray and stated the pile driving was completed and next will be the completion of the environmental barrier, followed by the arrival of the VB10,000 in June.

Commissioner Williams provided an update on the Law Enforcement Division. He stated the LED's game wardens and entire staff have been deeply involved in the COVID-19 response. He further stated DNR's game wardens spent nearly 10,000 man-hours in patrol and issued 476 verbal warnings for noncompliance and arrested one individual in clear defiance.

Commissioner Williams stated DNR's game wardens continued to enforce hunting regulations during a busy turkey season. He further stated there were 66 incidents of hunting over bait, 17 incidents of hunting without permission, and 15 incidents of hunting on closed WMAs.

Commissioner Williams announced that Game Warden Ryan Locke received the National Torch Award from the North American Wildlife Enforcement Officers Association. He stated the award honors overall performance by an officer with less than 5 years of experience. He added that Ryan Locke has served DNR since January 2017.

Commissioner Williams provided an update on the Wildlife Resources Division. He stated the WRD has welcomed new senior staff members: Ted Will, Assistant Director and Alan Isler, Chief of Game Management.

Commissioner Williams stated that WRD is observing an increase in turkey hunting based on WMA sign in data and anecdotal reports from hunters. He further state that over the first 31 days of the season, hunters have reported harvesting a total of 11,454 turkeys, a 25% increase compared to last year. He added that over 1,500 harvested turkeys have been reported on public land, a 40% increase over last year. He further added that 4,453 WMA hunters have signed-in online this turkey season, a 54% increase over 2019.

Commissioner Williams stated that trout fishing and stocking activity remains high across the state. He further stated that 28,000 full size trout have been stocked across 17 North Georgia counties so far this Spring. He added that to keep up this effort and future plans to expand, the Burton Hatchery reconstruction continues with 95% of sewer line work complete and the beginning of wastewater pond filling.

Commissioner Williams stated this concluded his report.

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

A motion was made by Mr. Lambert, seconded by Mr. Stewart and carried unanimously that the Board adopt the Resolution to approve the proposed amendments to the Rules for Water Quality Control, Chapter 391-3-6. (Resolution attached hereto and made a part thereof)

Chair Addison called on Mr. Joe Hatfield, Chairman of the Wildlife Resources Committee, for his report.

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

Chair Addison called on Mr. Dwight Davis, Chairman of the Land Committee for his report.

A motion was made by Mr. Davis, 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 an Intergovernmental Agreement with Miller County, Mayhaw WMA, Miller County. (Resolution attached hereto and made a part thereof)

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned.

Nancy A. Addison, Chairman

ATTEST:

A. W. Jones III, Secretary