

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

Tuesday, January 23, 2024
9:00 a.m.

Board Members

Dwight Davis, Chair
Joe Hatfield, Vice Chair
Gary Vowell, Secretary
Nancy Addison
Patrick Denney
Dan Garcia
Mark Hennessy

Penn Hodge
Kevin Jackson
Duncan Johnson
Bill Jones
Ray Lambert
Tim Lowe
Lesley Reynolds
Paul Shailendra
Bodine Sinyard
Harley Yancey

Guests

Bryan Tolar, GA Urban Ag Council
Rena Peck, Georgia River Network
Dave Williams, Capitol Beat News Service
Mark Woodall, Sierra Club
Nic Matthews, Office of Planning and Budget
Jud Turner, Gilbert Harrell Law Firm

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
Ted Will
Jill Andrews
Ouicia Jolly
Soheila Naji

Jeff Cown, Director
James Boylan
Chuck Mueller
Anna Truszczynski

The January 23, 2024 Board of Natural Resources meeting was called to order by Chairman Dwight Davis.

Chairman Davis introduced Kaitlin Goode, Program Manager of the Urban Wildlife Program at the Wildlife Resources Division, as the Employee Spotlight speaker.

Chairman Davis thanked Kaitlin for her informative presentation.

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

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

Chairman Davis called for a motion to approve the minutes of the Board of Natural Resources meeting on December 5, 2023.

A motion was made by Mr. Johnson, seconded by Mr. Jones, to approve the minutes of the Board of Natural Resources meeting on December 5, 2023.

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

Director Cown updated the Board on introducing department legislation regarding cleanup language to the Solid Waste Management Act. Director Cown called on Jim Boylan, Chief of the Air Protection Branch, to present a report on the Technology and Mercury Impact Review - Periodic Evaluation.

Director Cown stated this concluded his report.

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

Commissioner Rabon thanked Chairman Davis for his dedicated service to the Board as Chairman, as well as his entire tenure.

Commissioner Rabon called on Ms. Soheila Naji, Georgia Outdoor Stewardship Program Coordinator, to present the Board of Trustees of the Outdoor Stewardship Fund 2023-2024 Approved Proposal of Projects.

Ms. Naji began with an overview of the program and stated that the Georgia Outdoor Stewardship Act (GOSA) was approved by the voters in 2018 and became effective in 2019. She further stated that Georgia Outdoor Stewardship Program (GOSP) provides a dedicated funding mechanism to support parks and trails as well as protect and acquire lands critical to wildlife, clean water, and outdoor recreation across the state of Georgia. She added that applicants may apply for grants and loans for projects that support state parks and trails; support local parks and trails of state and regional significance; provide stewardship of conservation land; or acquire critical areas for the provision or protection of clean water, wildlife, hunting, fishing, military installation buffering, or for natural resource-based outdoor recreation. She added that the program consists of grants, known as Conserve Georgia Grants, and loans made available to local governments, certain nongovernmental organizations, and state government agencies. She further added that each year the official funding amount will be announced shortly before the funding cycle begins and are available without raising or enacting any new taxes.

Ms. Naji stated that for the current 2023-2024 cycle, the pre-application period opened on August 1 and closed on October 13, 2023. He further stated that projects were reviewed, scored, and ranked by the review team in November and December. She added that in accordance with the approved evaluation criteria, the Board of Trustees of the Outdoor Stewardship Fund approved the slate of projects, as noted under Tab B, Item A. She further added that once approved, the slate of proposed projects will be transmitted to the House and Senate Appropriations Subcommittees for final approval.

Ms. Naji stated if there are no questions, she requests the Board approve the Board of Trustees of the Outdoor Stewardship Fund 2023-2024 approved proposal of projects.

A motion was made by Ms. Reynolds, seconded by Mr. Shailendra, and carried unanimously that the Board approve the Board of Trustees of the Outdoor Stewardship Fund 2023-2024 Approved Proposal of Projects.

Commissioner Rabon called on Ms. Ouicia Jolly, Recreational Trails Program Grants Manager, for a report on the 2023-2024 list of approved projects.

Ms. Jolly stated the Recreational Trails Program (RTP) is administered by the GADNR and the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) provides support in financial and environmental matters. She further stated the funds are collected from motor vehicle fuel excise taxes and are later allocated to Georgia from the Federal Highway Trust Fund.

Ms. Jolly stated the pre-application cycle opened on September 1, 2023, and closed on November 1, 2023. She further stated the available funding types are nonmotorized, including hiking, walking, running, bicycles, equestrian trails and water trails; and motorized, including

ATVs, dirt bikes, full-sized offroad vehicles (trucks and Jeeps). She added that the funding limits are set at \$200,000 for nonmotorized projects and up to \$1,000,000 for motorized trail projects. She further added that the DNR scored the pre-applications and presented the projects selected for the second-level application to the Advisory Committee on January 11, 2024.

Ms. Jolly provided a list of the highest ranked RTP projects for 2023-2024 and a map of the statewide distribution and stated the total funding requested for all recommended projects is \$4,667,100.

Ms. Jolly stated this concluded her report.

Commissioner Rabon updated the Board on Keeping Georgia Wild Day or Sportsmen's Day, at the Capitol, and thanked Ms. Addison, Ms. Reynolds, and Mr. Shailendra for attending. He stated that later that morning, Governor Kemp delivered the State of the State Address, during which he recognized several of DNR's own game wardens for their bravery in evacuating a State Trooper who had been shot by a protestor at the site of the future Atlanta Public Training Center, a commendable action that undoubtedly saved the trooper's life.

Commissioner Rabon stated that Governor Kemp has released his budget report, which included funding for the DNR's portion of a new statewide public safety radio network and cost-of-living adjustments statewide for all full-time employees.

Commissioner Rabon provided an update on the ribbon cutting at Wormsloe Historic Site for the new visitor's center and trolley system; the DNR Leadership Academy reunion for all graduates; the number of applicants for the current DNR Career Academy; and a reminder about the 2024 Weekend for Wildlife.

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

Director Haymans provided an update on shrimp season, floating cage oyster harvest, Marta railcar reef deployment, and the latest issue of Coastlines Georgia.

Director Haymans stated this concluded his report.

Commissioner Rabon called on Colonel Mike England, Director of the Law Enforcement Division, for his report.

Colonel England provided an update on Game Warden staffing levels, ADAPT-Accelerated Degree Advancement Promotional Track, North Georgia serial poachers, Hunting Season 2023, and the promotion of Lt. Lynn (Bubba) Stanford to Special Permits Unit.

Colonel England stated this concluded his report.

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

Director Johnson provided an update on the 12th Annual Fort Mountain State Park Black Bear Plunge, 2024 First Day Hikes, Ribbon Cutting the Visitor Center at Wormsloe State Historic Site, Conservation Leaders for Tomorrow at Charlie Elliott Wildlife Center, State Parks Leadership Academy, and Keeping Georgia Wild/Sportsman Day at the State Capitol.

Director Johnson stated this concluded her report.

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

Director Will provided an update on the agency's 3rd adaptive Hunt & Learn for mobility impaired hunters, commercial shad season in the Altamaha and Savannah Rivers, fall/winter stocking season of warmwater fish species, the Lake Burton Hatchery, helicopter trout stocking, the Stream Survey Team in the Altamaha basin, and a winter hibernaculum count in north Georgia.

Director Will stated this concluded his report.

Commissioner Rabon stated this concluded his report.

Chairman Davis called on Ray Lambert, Chairman 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 Enhanced Inspection and Maintenance, Chapter 391-3-20. (Resolution attached hereto and made a part thereof)

Chairman Davis expressed appreciation to Board members Tim Lowe, Nancy Addison, Joe Hatfield, and Ray Lambert, who served on the Nominating Committee for the 2024 Board of Natural Resources Rock Howard Conservation Achievement Award. He called on Mr. Lowe, Chairman of the Nominating Committee, to present the nominee for the 2023 award.

Mr. Lowe stated that the Nominating Committee for the 2024 Board of Natural Resources Rock Howard Conservation Achievement Award convened via telephone conference on

November 14, 2023, and unanimously nominated Lindsay Thomas to receive the 2023 award. He further stated that the full board will vote on the nomination at the February board meeting and a date to present the award will be announced.

Chairman Davis called on Ray Lambert, Chair of the Nominating Committee for 2024 Officers.

Mr. Lambert stated the Nominating Committee consisted of himself as chairman, Nancy Addison, Bill Jones, and Bodine Sinyard. He further stated that the slate of Officers was presented at the December meeting and he would like to move they be approved.

A motion was made by Mr. Lambert, seconded by Mr. Johnson, and carried unanimously, that the Board elect Joe Hatfield as Chairman, Gary Vowell as Vice Chairman, and Lesley Reynolds as Secretary for the 2024 Board of Natural Resources Officers.

Chairman Davis expressed appreciation for the opportunity to have served as Chairman and to Board members, Commissioner Rabon, and staff for their service to the Department and to the Board during his tenure.

Chairman Davis turned the Office of Chairman over to Mr. Hatfield.

Chairman Hatfield presented an engraved gavel plaque to Mr. Davis and thanked him for his service on the Board and as Chairman in 2023.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned.

Joe Hatfield, Chairman

ATTEST:

Lesley Reynolds, Secretary