

**Minutes**  
**Board of Natural Resources**  
**Jekyll Island Convention Center**  
**75 Beachview Drive North**  
**Jekyll Island, GA 31527**

**Wednesday, April 24, 2024**  
**9:00 a.m.**

**Board Members**

Joe Hatfield, Chair  
Lesley Reynolds, Secretary  
Nancy Addison  
Jeff Andrews  
Randy Dellinger  
Patrick Denney  
Charles DePriest  
Dan Garcia  
Mark Hennessy  
Penn Hodge  
Duncan Johnson  
Bill Jones  
Ray Lambert  
Brent Layton  
Paul Shailendra  
Bodine Sinyard  
Harley Yancey

**Guests**

Bryan Tolar, Georgia Urban Ag Council  
Mark M. Woodall, Sierra Club  
Anna Edmondson, Robbins Government Relations  
Alice Keyes, One Hundred Miles  
Rena Peck, Georgia River Network

**Staff Members**

Walter Rabon, Commissioner  
Thomas Barnard  
Trevor Santos  
Kyle Pearson  
Taylor Brown  
Cathy Barnette  
Mike England  
Steve Friedman  
Brent Womack  
Doug Haymans  
Angie Johnson  
Ted Will  
Tina Johannsen  
Jennifer Kline  
Clint Peacock  
Scott Robinson

Jeff Cown, Director  
Katie Hegarty

The April 24, 2024 Board of Natural Resources meeting was called to order by Chairman Joe Hatfield.

Chairman Hatfield welcomed Mr. Jeff Andrews to the Board of Natural Resources, representing District 4.

Chairman Hatfield thanked Mark Williams, Executive Director of the Jekyll Island Authority, and the Jekyll Island Convention Center for a warm welcome to the coast and for hosting the April Board of Natural Resources meeting.

Mr. Williams welcomed everyone to Jekyll Island and provided an update on the growth and progress in the area.

Chairman Hatfield thanked Director Doug Haymans and CRD staff for a wonderful dinner and evening at the Coastal Resources Division.

Chairman Hatfield called on Nancy Addison for a presentation.

Ms. Addison provided background information about Mr. Rock Howard, the first Director of the Environmental Protection Division and a pioneer for environmental protection in the State of Georgia, and the creation of the Board of Natural Resources Rock Howard Conservation Achievement Award. She stated that the award is an important reminder of what one person with a vision and strength can set in motion.

Ms. Addison welcomed The Honorable Lindsay and Mrs. Nancy Thomas to the board meeting. She stated the board voted unanimously to approve Mr. Thomas as the recipient of the 2023 Board of Natural Resources Rock Howard Conservation Achievement Award. She further stated that Lindsay Thomas' lifelong passion for protecting the environment was shaped by growing up in rural southeast Georgia while hunting and fishing amid bottomland hardwood forests, reveling in the quiet beauty of the Altamaha and Satilla Rivers and their tributaries, and being drawn to the lure of the nearby Georgia coastal marshes. She added that Mr. Thomas channeled those passions into service as an elected official, as a business leader, and as a volunteer in countless arenas of action to show how the state's natural wonders can be nurtured and preserved amid the growth that accommodates the lives and livelihoods of the families that call Georgia home.

Ms. Addison invited Mr. Thomas to the podium and presented the 2023 Board of Natural Resources Rock Howard Conservation Achievement Award.

Mr. Thomas thanked Ms. Addison and all the members of the board for the warm welcome and kind words. He stated that his passion has always been for the environment. He explained his concerns about the environment today and encouraged the members of the board

to continue to make the environment a priority. He thanked the board for the award and recognition and for their service on the board.

Chairman Hatfield called on Ms. Jennifer Kline, Marine Biologist 3 and Coastal Hazards Specialist, for a moment of inspiration.

Chairman Hatfield thanked Ms. Kline 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 April 24, 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 March 26, 2024.

**A motion was made by Mr. Johnson, seconded by Mr. Shailendra, to approve the minutes of the Board of Natural Resources meeting on March 26, 2024.**

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

Director Cown updated the Board on policy changes to agriculture water wells in southwest Georgia, highlighted EPD's District Manager for the Coastal District, Beth Stevenson, and discussed key speaking engagements he had during the month of April.

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 began his report by announcing the passing of board member, Mr. Kevin "Catfish" Jackson, and asking for a moment of silence to honor and remember Mr. Jackson and his significant contributions to the board and the State of Georgia.

Commissioner Rabon recognized Steve Friedman, Chief of Real Estate. He stated that after 19 years with the department, protecting and conserving our lands for future generations, Mr. Friedman will officially retire on April 30 from the Department of Natural Resources. He congratulated Steve on his retirement, thanked him for his dedication to the Real Estate Office, and wished him all the best in retirement.

Commissioner Rabon stated that two weeks ago he met with the newly formed Commissioner's Advisory Council for the first time and knows this group will be successful in creating a better tomorrow for our department.

Commissioner Rabon stated that last week he had the pleasure of speaking at the 2024 Ranger's Conference at Fort Yargo State Park and offered congratulations to all of the award winners. He further stated that the Parks Division is fundamental to DNR because they protect our natural and cultural resources while still offering outdoor recreational opportunities where people can create lasting memories.

Commissioner Rabon stated that the 9<sup>th</sup> year of the DNR Leadership Academy kicked off last week at Charlie Elliott Wildlife Center. He further stated the class will meet 4 more times this year at different locations around the state. He added that his group of leaders will help pave the way for the future of the department.

Commissioner Rabon provided a brief division update from the Wildlife Resources Division, including expansion of the Deer Management Assistance Program, the State Wildlife Action Plan (SWAP) advisory committee meeting at Charlie Elliott Wildlife Center on May 10, and the Fisheries Management staff's engagement in the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission relicensing process for several dams across the state.

Commissioner Rabon provided an update from the State Parks and Historic Sites Division, and stated the division has extended the reservation window for Georgia residents to 14 months to provide Georgians a one month advance on making reservations at Georgia state parks. He further stated that out-of-state visitors will still be able to book reservations 13 months in advance. He added that the Parks Division leadership is developing a strategic plan for 2024 to 2026 and anticipates the implementation of that plan very soon.

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

Director Haymans stated that a copy of the current issue of Coastlines Georgia is at their seats and features the sand-sharing system and how CRD administers the Shore Protection Act of 1979 to balance development with protection of the coast's natural resources. He further stated that the issue also includes improvement updates on the Champney boat ramp in Darien, Fishing for Flounder with B. J. Tilton and Sean Tarpley, and recognized retired Marine biologist Jim Music.

Director Haymans provided an update on the 10<sup>th</sup> Annual Coastal Georgia Ecosystem Report Card for 2023. He stated that water quality, fisheries, and wildlife are examined and a commendable score of "B" or 78 percent was received.

Director Haymans announced a state record Almaco Jack was caught offshore in 180 feet of water on March 25 by Hayden W. Mundy, 24, of Midway, GA. The Almaco Jack weighed 19 lbs. 10.53 oz.

Director Haymans announced a state record Queen Triggerfish, a new species category, was caught offshore at South Ledge on April 7 by Ryan R. Simons, 38, of Richmond Hill, GA. The Queen Triggerfish weighed 7 lbs. 0.58 oz.

Director Haymans provided an update on the Cumberland Dividings and the beneficial use of the sediment project.

Director Haymans stated the recent reef deployment was a 40-foot tug, Miss Laci, from Drury Land and Marine Services, in about 50 feet of water and 15 nautical miles east of Little St. Simons Island.

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 the new remote operated vessels (ROV). He stated that the ROVs will be used by specially trained Game Wardens on the Sonar Team to locate and recover drowning victims. He further stated the Sonar Team is comprised of 32 Game Wardens across the state, and they will be attending training in the coming weeks to prepare for boating season.

Colonel England announced the passing of Game Warden K-9 “Case” on March 16, 2024. He stated that Case was diagnosed with a very aggressive form of cancer on March 13. He further stated that while awaiting a prognosis from a veterinary oncologist, he passed away at the residence of his handler, Game Warden Jack Thain.

Colonel England provided an update on Specialized Aviation Training, which included 40 hours of Initial Tactical Flight Officer training provided by the United States Customs and Border Protection, Air and Marine branch. He stated the training consisted of U. S. Airspace review, aviation weather training, aircraft preflight, and Forward Looking Infrared Operations. He added that upon passing a final exam, Game Wardens were presented with their TFO Wings.

Colonel England announced the promotion of Captain Sam O’Neal for Region III in Thomson, GA. He stated that Captain O’Neal is a 27-year veteran of the LED and he spent most of his career at LE Headquarters. He further stated that Captain O’Neal’s promotion fills the vacant position created when Captain Doyte Chaffin was promoted to Major.

Colonel England invited the board to attend the 38<sup>th</sup> Game Warden Academy Graduation on Friday, April 26, at the Georgia Public Safety Training Center in Forsyth, GA. He stated that 15 Game Wardens will graduate and encouraged everyone to attend.

Commissioner Rabon stated this concluded his report.

Chairman Hatfield called on Charles DePriest, Chair of the Wildlife Resources Committee, for his report.

**A motion was made by Mr. DePriest, seconded by Mr. Shailendra, and carried unanimously to approve the Proposed Amendment to Chapter 391-4-2, Hunting Regulations, pertaining to Quail Season, Special Opportunity Hunts, and Cochrans Creek and Featherfield Wildlife Management Areas.**

Mr. DePriest stated this concluded his report.

Chairman Hatfield called on Paul 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 Kathy Strickland, 81± acres as an addition to the Paulding Forest Wildlife Management Area, Paulding 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 to purchase from Kathy Strickland and Claudia Morrison, 41± acres as an addition to the Paulding Forest Wildlife Management Area, Paulding 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 to purchase from David Bert White, 82± acres as an addition to the Paulding Forest Wildlife Management Area, Paulding 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 by the State Properties Commission to Spectrum at Chattahoochee Bend State Park, Coweta County.**

Mr. Shailendra stated this concluded his report.

Chairman Hatfield called on Mr. Shailendra to read the resolution honoring Steve Friedman.

Mr. Shailendra stated since his appointment to the DNR, Steve Friedman has been a fixture, a resource, and a friend and someone he truly admires and respects. He further stated that being from the real estate world, he appreciates Steve Friedman and his talent, his commitment to the DNR for 19 years, and his impact on each division. He added that whether it be for the State Parks and Historic Sites Division, Coastal Resources Division, or the Wildlife Resources Division, Steve has created so many areas for preservation, habitat restoration, hunting, fishing, and boat ramps, etc. for the State of Georgia. He further added that Steve Friedman's ability to find funding resources and his focus on fiscal responsibility is appreciated and valued. Mr. Shailendra thanked Steve Friedman and congratulated him on his retirement.

Mr. Shailendra read the resolution honoring Steve Friedman. Chairman Hatfield called for a motion to approve.

**A motion was made by Ms. Addison, seconded by Mr. Sinyard, and carried unanimously that the Board adopt the Resolution honoring and expressing appreciation to Steve Friedman for his outstanding career with the Georgia Department of Natural Resources.**

Chairman Hatfield and Mr. Shailendra presented the resolution to Steve Friedman.

Mr. Friedman thanked Mr. Shailendra for the kind words and thanked Commissioner Rabon and the Board of Natural Resources for the opportunity to work for the department and for all their support along the way.

Chairman Hatfield stated the next board meeting will be held in the DNR Boardroom in Atlanta, on Monday, May 20, 2024.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned.

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Joe Hatfield, Chairman

ATTEST:

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Lesley Reynolds, Secretary