

Minutes
Board of Natural Resources
DNR Boardroom
2 MLK Jr. Drive, SE
Suite 1252, East Tower

Tuesday, May 19, 2026
9:00 a.m.

Board Members

Patrick Denney, Chair
Randy Dellinger, Vice Chair
Dan Garcia, Secretary
Nancy Addison
Jeff Andrews
Charles DePriest
Joe Hatfield
Mark Hennessy
Steve Hufstetler
Duncan Johnson
Bill Jones
Ray Lambert
Brent Layton
Mike Peavy
Lesley Reynolds
Bodine Sinyard
Harley Yancey

Guests

Mike Worley, Georgia Wildlife Federation
Bryan Tolar, Tolar Capitol Partners
Lyndy Rogers, Georgia Natural Resources Foundation

Staff Members

Walter Rabon, Commissioner
Thomas Barnard
Trevor Santos
Taylor Fisher
Kate Iannuzzi
Haley Chafin
Jeff Cown
Anna Truscynski
Katie Bloomfield
James McLaughlin
Kathy Knowlton
Carolyn Belcher
Jared Flowers
Angie Johnson
Andre McLendon
Doug Haymans
Jill Andrews
Josh Noble
Chris Harper
Thom Litts
Sonja Daniels
Mikayla West
James Boylan
Anna Aponte
Chris Hodge
Casey Jones
Megan Gray
Beth Findlay
Brian Kent
Debi Kirkland
Jason Metzger
Stacy Shelton
Chuck Mueller
Veronica Craw
Jim Cooley
DeAnna Oser

The May 19, 2026, meeting of the Board of Natural Resources was called to order by Patrick Denney, Chairman of the Board of Natural Resources.

Chairman Denney called on Pastor Todd Rainwater to deliver a moment of inspiration.

Chairman Denney presented Colonel Mike England with a Resolution honoring his faithful service to the State of Georgia.

A motion was made by Mr. Johnson, seconded by Mr. Lambert and carried unanimously that the Board adopt the Resolution Honoring Colonel Mike England, Director of the Law Enforcement Division.

Chairman Denney called on State Representative Victor Anderson who presented a Resolution to the Parks and Historic Sites Division.

Chairman Denney presented the Rock Howard Conservation Award to Mr. David Ward, former Environmental Protection Division employee, who accepted the award on behalf of Mr. Harold Reheis.

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

Chairman Denney called the May 19, 2026, meeting of the Board of Natural Resources back to order.

Chairman Denney called for a motion to approve the minutes of the Board of Natural Resources meeting on April 28, 2026.

A motion was made by Mr. Sinyard, seconded by Mr. Johnson and carried unanimously to approve the minutes of the Board of Natural Resources meeting on April 28, 2026.

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

Director Jeff Cown reported on ongoing drought and water supply conditions, noting that EPD has received one request for additional water use restrictions and continues to monitor conditions as the summer season approaches. He also provided an air quality update, reporting several PM2.5 exceedances attributed to wildfire smoke in South Georgia and two ozone exceedances associated with metropolitan emissions and warm temperatures.

Director Cown informed the Committee that a recent storm caused damage to several EPD vehicles at the Tifton office but resulted in no injuries or damage to the office building. He also highlighted EPD's activities during Air Quality Awareness Week and noted Governor Kemp's proclamation recognizing the Air Protection Branch for its efforts to improve air quality in Georgia.

Director Cown concluded his report by recognizing Debi Kirkland for 35 years of state service and presented her with an award in appreciation of her contributions to EPD and DNR.

Chairman Denney called on Commissioner Rabon for his report.

Commissioner Rabon recognized members of the inaugural Commissioner's Advisory Council and thanked them for their efforts in strengthening employee communication and developing recommendations on cross-divisional issues. He noted the Council's role in establishing bylaws and creating a framework for ongoing employee engagement.

Commissioner Rabon provided a legislative update, highlighting several recently enacted bills affecting the Department. This included legislation creating a new saltwater fishing endorsement to improve angler data collection, expanded tools for feral hog management, penalties for vessel abandonment on public waterways, and enhanced retirement benefits for POST-certified law enforcement officers. He also noted that a special legislative session had been scheduled for June 17 and that the Department would continue monitoring developments.

Commissioner Rabon recognized State Employee Appreciation Week and thanked DNR employees for their service. He highlighted departmental appreciation events held across the state, including activities hosted at Fort Yargo State Park. He also announced upcoming grant cycles for the Georgia Outdoor Stewardship Program and Land and Water Conservation Fund and encouraged communities and partner organizations to participate.

The Commissioner announced the launch of the Vince Dooley Battlefield Trust Fund Program, which will provide grant funding to support the protection and preservation of historically significant battlefields in Georgia. He also highlighted the Department's participation in the Global Accessibility Awareness Day Resource Fair through the Outdoors Beyond Barriers program.

Commissioner Rabon recognized the renaming of the DNR Employee and Retiree Golf Tournament in honor of Joe Yeager and thanked Hard Labor Creek State Park for hosting the event.

The Commissioner provided an update on the 41st Game Warden Academy recruitment process, noting that the Law Enforcement Division received 213 applications for the upcoming class. He also reported that Georgia had experienced 14 drownings and four boating fatalities to date in 2026 and emphasized the importance of boating safety, education, and enforcement. He highlighted National Safe Boating Week outreach efforts and invited Board members to participate in ride-alongs with game wardens during summer boating patrols.

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

Director Haymans reported that NOAA Fisheries approved Georgia’s Exempted Fishing Permit for red snapper, allowing a 62-day recreational season from July 1 through August 31. The permit requires private recreational anglers to preregister, and report catches through a mandatory reporting system designed to improve harvest data collection.

Director Haymans noted that the permit represents a significant increase in fishing opportunities compared to recent years and recognized staff for their efforts in securing approval. He also provided an update on a legal challenge to the permit and answered questions from the Board.

Commissioner Rabon called on Chris Harper, Director of the Wildlife Resources Division, for his update.

Director Chris Harper recognized Wildlife Resources Division staff for their support of recent wildfire response efforts and highlighted the success of the Trout Fishing with Mom program, which served families during Mother’s Day weekend and resulted in more than 200 trout being caught.

Director Harper also provided updates on conservation efforts for the federally threatened trispot darter and the National Archery in the Schools Program, which now serves nearly 500 Georgia schools and approximately 20,000 students statewide.

Assistant Director Thom Litts recognized Sanja Daniels for 30 years of service to the Wildlife Resources Division.

Commissioner Rabon concluded his report.

Chairman Denney called Ray Lambert for a report of the Environmental Protection Committee.

A motion was made by Mr. Garica, seconded by Mr. Johnson, 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, Pertaining to the Miscellaneous Changes and Updates.

(Resolution attached hereto and made a part thereof)

Chairman Denney called on Kate Iannuzzi, Deputy Executive Counsel, to present the Sale of General Obligation Bonds pursuant to the FY 2023-2024 and FY 2026-2027 General Appropriations Acts.

Ms. Iannuzzi presented a resolution requesting the sale of general obligation bonds to fund Department projects authorized in the Fiscal Year 2023–2024 and Fiscal Year 2026–2027 General Appropriations Acts. The projects total approximately \$25.7 million, including \$3.8 million in federally taxable bonds for eligible projects at state facilities operated by private entities.

A motion was made by Mr. Garcia, seconded by Ms. Addison and carried unanimously that the Board approve the Sale of General Obligation Bonds pursuant to the FY 2023-2024 and FY 2026-2027 General Appropriations Acts.

Chairman Denney announced that the next Board meeting will be held Tuesday, June 23rd at F.D. Roosevelt State Park.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned.

Patrick Denney, Chairman

ATTEST:

Dan Garcia, Secretary

**Minutes
Coastal Committee
DNR Boardroom
2 MLK Jr. Drive, SE
Suite 1252, East Tower**

**Monday, May 18, 2026
2:00 p.m.**

Committee Members

Nancy Addison, Chair
Randy Dellinger
Charles DePriest
Joe Hatfield
Mark Hennessy
Bill Jones
Ray Lambert
Mike Peavy
Patrick Denney, Board Chair, Ex-Officio

Board Members

Jeff Andrews
Bodine Sinyard
Lesley Reynolds

The May 18, 2026, meeting of the Coastal Committee was called to order by Nancy Addison, Chairwoman of the Coastal Committee.

Chairwoman Addison called on Doug Haymans, Director of the Coastal Resources Division (CRD), for a briefing on proposed amendments to red drum regulations.

Director Haymans provided an overview of the management framework for red drum, explaining the roles of the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council and the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission (ASMFC). He stated that the ASMFC manages red drum in state waters and that recent stock assessment results require management action by Georgia and other southeastern states.

Director Haymans then called on Dr. Jared Flowers, Research and Surveys Program Supervisor, to present a briefing in advance of rule-making.

Dr. Flowers reported that the 2024 ASMFC benchmark stock assessment determined the southern red drum stock, which includes South Carolina, Georgia, and Florida, is overfished and experiencing overfishing. He explained that ASMFC has directed states to reduce fishing mortality

and that Georgia must implement regulatory changes to comply with the interstate management plan.

Dr. Flowers reviewed the history of red drum management in Georgia and summarized the stock assessment findings, management targets, and reduction requirements. He stated that Coastal Resources Division evaluated multiple bag and slot limit combinations and solicited input from anglers, charter captains, and stakeholders through advisory panel meetings, public town halls, and an online survey.

Dr. Flowers reported that the Division received 754 survey responses and reviewed several regulatory options with the public. Based on stock assessment projections and public input, the Division recommends reducing the daily creel and possession limit from five fish to three fish per person and modifying the slot limit from 14–23 inches to 15–24 inches. He stated that the proposed changes would achieve the required reduction in fishing mortality while providing a precautionary approach to stock recovery.

Committee members discussed the timeline for future stock assessments, potential environmental factors affecting red drum populations, enforcement considerations, and additional management tools that could be utilized if future conservation measures become necessary.

Chairwoman Addisons stated two people had signed up to address the committee on this item.

Susan Inman, representing One Hundred Miles, addressed the Committee and expressed support for updating Georgia's red drum regulations. She encouraged consideration of additional conservation measures to accelerate stock recovery and align Georgia's regulations more closely with neighboring states.

Mark Munn addressed the Committee and shared observations from his experience as a recreational angler. He expressed concern regarding the decline in red drum abundance and encouraged the Committee to consider stronger conservation measures to support long-term fishery recovery.

Chairwoman Addison thanked the Coastal Resources Division for their work on this issue.

Chairwoman Addison called on Jill Andrews, Chief of the Coastal Management Section, to provide a presentation on recreational docks.

Ms. Andrews explained that she was not presenting draft rules for consideration, but rather an update on progress made since the Board's 2024 briefing. She stated that CRD has spent the past two years gathering stakeholder and public input to identify opportunities for greater clarity, consistency, and flexibility in dock regulation while maintaining protection of coastal resources.

Ms. Andrews provided a refresher on the regulatory framework governing private recreational docks exempt from the Coastal Marshlands Protection Act (CMPA). She noted that since 1992 Georgia law has recognized the right of qualifying waterfront property owners to obtain reasonable access to adjacent waterways without undergoing the full CMPA permitting process. In 2008, the legislature expanded this exemption to include multifamily docks serving up to four lots.

Ms. Andrews explained that although these docks are exempt from CMPA permitting requirements, they are still located over state-owned tidal water bottoms and public trust resources, which remain subject to state oversight. She reviewed the state's authority to regulate these areas through the Protection of Tidewaters Act and Title 50, as well as the delegation of authority from Governor Harris in 1994 allowing DNR to administer revocable licenses for structures occupying state-owned tidal water bottoms.

She stated that CRD has administered revocable licenses since 1994 and that these licenses authorize use of state-owned water bottoms without conveying ownership or permanent rights.

Ms. Andrews reviewed the history of the Programmatic General Permit (PGP), under which CRD issued dock permits on behalf of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers while simultaneously issuing state revocable licenses. The PGP established standards and criteria for dock construction and was renewed every five years through coordination among federal and state agencies. She noted that the Army Corps elected not to renew the PGP in 2022 and resumed direct permitting responsibilities for private docks. CRD subsequently adopted the PGP standards as an internal Standard Operating Procedure (SOP), prompting the need for formal rulemaking.

Ms. Andrews stated that CRD evaluates approximately 150 to 200 private dock applications annually, making docks one of the Division's most visible regulatory activities. She emphasized that operating under an internal SOP rather than formally adopted rules presents challenges for enforcement, consistency, and transparency.

She discussed legal precedent supporting DNR's authority to regulate docks, including the 1995 Georgia Supreme Court decision in *Dorroh v. McCarthy*, which affirmed the Department's authority to manage riparian access and allocate use of state waterways.

Ms. Andrews explained that after the 2024 briefing, CRD revisited the initial draft rules and undertook additional review, including evaluation of the SOP, existing CMPA rules, regulatory approaches in neighboring states, scientific research, and stakeholder feedback.

She reviewed current CMPA standards for community docks and marinas and noted that many of the existing SOP standards align with those requirements. CRD also examined dock regulations in neighboring states and found Georgia's current standards to be comparatively flexible, particularly when compared to South Carolina.

Ms. Andrews discussed scientific research conducted in Georgia and elsewhere regarding dock impacts on marsh ecosystems. She noted that research identified fixed walkways located over vegetated marshlands as the dock feature with the greatest environmental impact, documenting reductions in marsh density and biomass beneath walkways. Additional studies reviewed by CRD examined impacts to marsh-dependent bird species. However, she emphasized that the research did not conclude that docks and marsh ecosystems are incompatible but rather identified measurable impacts that should be considered.

Ms. Andrews described the stakeholder committee established following the Board's recommendation in 2024. The committee included local officials, property owners, environmental organizations, consultants, engineers, and dock builders. The group met for approximately one year and reviewed the draft rule, scientific research, and operational concerns.

She reported that the committee reached consensus on several issues, including the need for clearer standards, greater predictability, improved enforcement tools, and flexibility for unique site conditions. The committee initially supported a requirement for dock builders to obtain a general contractor's license, although that consensus was later withdrawn. Significant disagreements remained regarding dimensional standards for fixed walkways and the extent of allowable flexibility, and a minority report was ultimately submitted.

Ms. Andrews also summarized extensive public engagement efforts, including public hearings, written comment periods, a town hall meeting, and open stakeholder meetings. Public comments consistently focused on flexibility for unique circumstances, reconstruction standards, siting criteria, appeals procedures, environmental protections, and walkway dimensions.

She noted that public opinion was particularly divided on walkway length, with some stakeholders advocating for expanded access and others emphasizing environmental protection and minimization of habitat fragmentation.

Ms. Andrews outlined several recommendations currently under consideration for the next draft of the proposed rule. These include additional definitions to improve clarity, requirements for electrical permits and lighting to address safety concerns, provisions for protection of marine species during construction and operation, and elimination of the previously proposed requirement for a general contractor's license.

She stated that CRD is also considering increasing the maximum size of fixed decks not located over vegetated marshlands from 300 square feet to 400 square feet to align more closely with CMPA standards.

Ms. Andrews further discussed potential variance provisions to address unique site conditions, including circumstances involving larger vessels, unusual lot configurations, navigation issues, or water depth constraints.

She explained that the most significant unresolved issue remains fixed walkway dimensions. Current standards allow walkways up to 1,000 feet in length, six feet in width, and 3,000 square feet in total area. She noted that a 1,000-foot walkway limited to 3,000 square feet results in a three-foot-wide structure, creating concerns about constructability and safe access. CRD is evaluating options that would provide flexibility while maintaining environmental protections.

Ms. Andrews concluded by stating that CRD hopes to present proposed dock rules to the Board later in the summer and potentially seek approval in the fall.

Chairwoman Addison commended Ms. Andrews for the presentation and noted the complexity of the issue.

Chairwoman Addisons stated two people had signed up to address the committee on this item.

Courtney Reich, Coastal Director for the Georgia Conservancy, addressed the Board and expressed appreciation for CRD's extensive stakeholder outreach. Ms. Reich stated that Georgia has successfully protected its coastal marshlands through the Coastal Marshlands Protection Act and the revocable license program and noted that Georgia contains approximately one-third of the salt marsh along the eastern seaboard. She encouraged the Board to remain vigilant in protecting coastal marshes and supported maintaining current dock standards. Ms. Reich cited concerns regarding habitat protection, storm resilience, debris removal costs following major storms, and the need to prevent erosion of public trust protections.

Megan Desrosiers, Chief Executive Officer of One Hundred Miles, also addressed the Board. Ms. Desrosiers expressed support for maintaining existing dock standards and emphasized the importance of balancing private access with public accountability. She stated that scientific evidence demonstrates cumulative impacts from dock construction on habitat and marsh-dependent bird species and argued that Georgia's standards are already consistent with neighboring states. Ms. Desrosiers encouraged the Board to focus on improving dock inventory data and understanding cumulative impacts rather than expanding allowable dock dimensions or creating variance processes.

Director Doug Haymans thanked Ms. Andrews and staff for their work and requested feedback from Board members regarding the direction of the proposed rules.

Bill Jones stated that he had received significant feedback regarding walkway width and the 3,000-square-foot limitation. He referenced DNR's Outdoors Beyond Barriers initiative and expressed concern that narrow walkways restrict access for elderly individuals and those with mobility impairments. Mr. Jones advocated for allowing six-foot-wide walkways throughout the entire permitted length of a dock and cited Corps of Engineers data indicating that cumulative marsh shading from docks remains a very small percentage of total marsh acreage.

Director Haymans agreed that facilitating public enjoyment of Georgia's natural resources is an important consideration and questioned whether the environmental impacts associated with wider walkways would be significant.

Member Mark Hennessy asked for clarification regarding CRD's proposed variance process. Director Haymans explained that staff had discussed a potential ten percent variance, which could allow limited flexibility beyond the 1,000-foot maximum length under certain circumstances.

Mike Peavy stated that six-foot-wide walkways are important both for accessibility and practical use, particularly for transporting equipment and supplies to boats. He expressed support for wider walkways.

Bodine Sinyard also expressed support for six-foot-wide walkways, citing both accessibility and structural stability. He stated that a practical, common-sense approach should balance public access with protection of marsh resources.

Director Haymans discussed the proposed electrical permit requirements and recounted a fatal electrocution incident involving a young dock worker as justification for requiring verification that electrical work is permitted and inspected by local authorities.

Mr. Jones asked about the effects of sea level rise on marsh acreage. Director Haymans responded that current research generally indicates a net loss of marsh habitat across the southeastern United States as marshes struggle to keep pace with rising sea levels.

Several Board members reiterated support for accessibility considerations, particularly for elderly individuals and persons with disabilities.

Discussion also focused on enforcement challenges, contractor accountability, and the potential role of local governments in inspections. Director Haymans noted that CRD currently lacks sufficient resources to inspect dock construction and emphasized the importance of formal rules that would allow citations and stronger enforcement tools. He also discussed the possibility of assigning greater accountability to dock builders when violations occur.

Additional discussion addressed permit costs, inspection fees, and the economic significance of dock construction in coastal counties. Director Haymans observed that private recreational dock applications currently do not require a fee despite substantial staff time devoted to processing applications.

Chairman Addison thanked staff, stakeholders, and Board members for their comments and input. She noted that accessibility concerns, particularly regarding six-foot-wide walkways, were important considerations and stated that the discussion would assist CRD as it continues development of the proposed dock rules.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned.

**Minutes
Environmental Protection Committee
DNR Boardroom
2 MLK Jr. Drive, SE
Suite 1252, East Tower**

**Tuesday, May 19, 2026
9:00 a.m.**

Committee Members

Ray Lambert, Chair
Duncan Johnson, Vice Chair
Nancy Addison
Jeff Andrews
Dan Garcia
Steve Hufstetler
Bill Jones
Brent Layton
Lesley Reynolds
Bodine Sinyard
Patrick Denney, Board Chair, Ex-Officio

Board Members

Randy Dellinger
Charles DePriest
Joe Hatfield
Mark Hennessy
Mike Peavy
Harley Yancey

The May 19, 2026, meeting of the Environmental Protection Committee was called to order by Chairman Patrick Denney.

Chairman Denney called on Ray Lambert, Chairman of the Environmental Protection Committee. Chairman Lambert called on James Boylan, Chief of the Air Protection Branch, to present the proposed amendments to the Rules for Air Quality Control, Chapter 391-3-1, pertaining to miscellaneous changes and updates.

James Boylan presented proposed amendments to the Georgia Rules for Air Quality Control and requested Board adoption of the annual miscellaneous rule updates. He explained that the updates are intended to incorporate new and revised U.S. Environmental Protection Agency regulations, remove obsolete requirements, align state rules with federal regulations, and update references.

Mr. Boylan outlined the proposed changes, including updates to volatile organic liquid handling and storage requirements; revisions to ambient air quality standards to incorporate the 2024 secondary standards for sulfur oxides; updates to certain New Source Performance

Standards and Emission Standards for Hazardous Air Pollutants; revisions to combustion equipment exemptions for clarity and correction of typographical errors; and updates to permit fee provisions. He noted that Fiscal Year 2027 emission and permit fees remain unchanged from Fiscal Year 2026.

Mr. Boylan reported that the Environmental Protection Committee received a briefing on March 24, 2026. A public hearing and the public comment period concluded on April 24, 2026, with no comments received.

Mr. Boylan requested favorable consideration.

A motion was made by Mr. Garcia, seconded by Mr. Johnson and carried unanimously that the Committee recommend that the Board adopt the Resolution to approve the Proposed Amendments to the Rules for Air Quality Control, Chapter 391-3-1, Pertaining to Miscellaneous Changes and Updates.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned.

**Minutes
Wildlife Resources Committee
DNR Boardroom
2 MLK Jr. Drive, SE
Suite 1252, East Tower**

**Tuesday, May 19, 2026
9:00 a.m.**

Committee Members

Steve Hufstetler, Chair
Joe Hatfield, Vice Chair
Jeff Andrews
Charles DePriest
Dan Garcia
Mark Hennessy
Duncan Johnson
Brent Layton
Mike Peavy
Lesley Reynolds
Bodine Sinyard
Patrick Denney, Board Chair, Ex-Officio

Board Members

Nancy Addison
Randy Dellinger
Bill Jones
Ray Lambert
Harley Yancey

The May 19, 2026, meeting of the Wildlife Resources Committee was called to order by Patrick Denney, Chairman of the Board of Natural Resources.

Chairman Denney called on Steve Hufstetler, Chair of the Wildlife Resources Committee, who called on Trina Morris, Wildlife Conservation Section Program Manager, to present a public scoping on Proposed Amendments to Subject 391-4-10, Protection of Endangered, Threatened, Rare or Unusual Species.

Ms. Morris provided an overview of the proposed update to Georgia's protected species list. Staff recommend adding 44 species, changing the status of 66 species, and updating the names of 76 species to reflect current taxonomy. Proposed additions and status changes will align with federal Endangered Species Act classifications where required by law.

Ms. Morris highlighted the salt marsh sparrow as an example of a species recommended for listing as threatened due to significant population declines. She noted that extensive data

collection and a range-wide conservation strategy are already in place, and that state listing would support proactive conservation efforts before federal listing becomes necessary.

Ms. Morris outlined the public review process, including release of a draft species list in June, a 30-day public comment period, review of nominations and recommendations in July, presentation of a revised rule to the Board in August, a formal public comment period in September, and final recommendations to the Board in October.

In response to a question regarding habitat protection, Ms. Morris noted that habitat loss is often the primary factor affecting species recovery, though some species also face challenges such as disease. She emphasized that habitat conservation remains one of the most effective tools for species recovery.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned.