

**Minutes**  
**Board of Natural Resources**  
**A.W. Jones Heritage Center**  
**610 Beachview Drive**  
**St. Simons Island, GA 31522**

**Tuesday, January 30, 2026**  
**9:00 a.m.**

**Board Members**

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

**Guests**

Spud Woodward, citizen  
Mike Worley, Georgia Wildlife Federation  
Bill Hodges, citizen  
Alice Keyes, One Hundred Miles  
Megan Desrosiers, One Hundred Miles  
Rena Peck, Georgia Rivers

**Staff Members**

Walter Rabon, Commissioner  
Thomas Barnard  
Trevor Santos  
Kate Iannuzzi  
Taylor Fisher  
Haley Chafin  
Jeff Cown  
Anna Truscynski  
Katie Bloomfield  
Doug Haymans  
Karl Burgess  
Brent Womack  
Angie Johnson  
Andre McLendon  
Carolyn Belcher  
Mike England  
James McLaughlin  
Dominic Guadagnoli  
Chris Harper  
Matt Elliott  
Tim Keyes  
Brett Albanese  
Chris Hodge  
Thom Litts  
Dewey Richardson

The January 30, 2026, meeting of the Board of Natural Resources was called to order by Chairwoman Lesley Reynolds.

Chairwoman Reynolds called on Spud Woodward, former Director of the Coastal Resources Division, for a moment of inspiration.

Chairwoman Reynolds adjourned the Board meeting to move into the Committee meetings.

Chairwoman Reynolds called the January 30, 2026, meeting of the Board of Natural Resources back to order.

Chairwoman Reynolds called for a motion to approve the minutes of the Board of Natural Resources meeting on December 2, 2025.

**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 December 2, 2025.**

Chairwoman Reynolds called on Jeff Cown, Director of the Environmental Protection Division, for his report.

Director Cown provided a brief overview of materials included in the board packet, noting that quarterly reports were available, along with the FY25 annual reports for the Solid Waste Trust Fund and the Hazardous Waste Trust Fund. He highlighted the importance of these trust funds in supporting permitting, inspection, cleanup efforts, and grants to local governments, including examples of recent projects on the coast.

Director Cown reported on current legislative activity, including House Bill 956 related to expansion of allowable uses of the Solid Waste Trust Fund, and provided an update on the State Water Plan resolution, which passed unanimously in the House and is now advancing in the Senate.

Director Cown briefly summarized EPD's amended FY26 and FY27 budget requests and capital needs.

Director Cown recognized Dewey Richardson for 30 years of service with EPD and announced his appointment as Acting Manager of the Wetlands Unit.

Chairwoman Reynolds thanked Director Cown for his report.

Chairwoman Reynolds called on Walter Rabon, Commissioner of the Department of Natural Resources, for his report.

Commissioner Rabon began by calling on Deputy Commissioner Trevor Santos to present the Board of Trustees of the Georgia Outdoor Stewardship Trust Fund 2025-2026 Approved Proposal of Projects.

Deputy Commissioner Santos summarized the purpose of the program, funding source, application process, and statewide impact. He stated that not including the funds that would be voted on today, the Georgia Outdoor Stewardship Program has awarded more than \$142 million to support 74 conservation and outdoor recreation projects statewide. He added that grantees have committed \$237 million in matching funds, bringing a total investment of \$379 million to Georgia.

Deputy Commissioner Santos stated that on January 14, 2026, the Board of Trustees of the Outdoor Stewardship Trust Fund met and approved the slate of projects. He further stated the Department now seeks approval by the Board of Natural Resources. He reported that the proposed slate would commit \$33.2 million toward conservation land acquisition and outdoor recreation projects and requested Board approval.

Deputy Commissioner Santos stated that upon approval, the slate of projects would be forwarded to the Chairs of the State Appropriations Subcommittees of the House and Senate for final approval.

Deputy Commissioner Santos responded to a question from Mr. Hennessy concerning the funding amount, stating that last year the program saw a twenty percent reduction in this trust because of a dip in collections. He stated that this year, twenty percent has been restored as well as an additional \$5 million.

Commissioner Rabon thanked Deputy Commissioner Santos for his presentation.

Commissioner Rabon stated two speakers had requested to give comments on the item. He called on Megan Desrosiers from One Hundred Miles.

Ms. Desrosiers spoke in favor of the proposed slate of projects, stating that the Georgia Outdoor Stewardship Program is a wonderful program that reflects the values of the people of Georgia. She further stated she particularly wanted to list support for the project located in Charlton County.

Commissioner Rabon called on Rena Peck, Georgia Rivers, for comment.

Ms. Peck spoke in favor of the proposed slate of projects, highlighting the project located in Charlton County.

Commissioner Rabon requested favorable consideration.

**A motion was made by Mr. Hufstetler, seconded by Mr. Jones, and carried unanimously that the Board approve the Board of Trustees of the Georgia Outdoor Stewardship Fund 2025-2026 Approved Proposal of Projects.**

Commissioner Rabon began by thanking the Board for approval of the Georgia Outdoor Stewardship Trust Fund slate of proposed projects. He noted that, as outlined by Deputy Commissioner Trevor Santos, the final step in the process will be review by the House and Senate Appropriations Subcommittees. He publicly thanked Deputy Commissioner Santos, Sahala Naji, and her team for the significant work completed throughout the year to bring the proposed slate forward, noting that the presentation reflected only a portion of the effort involved.

The Commissioner provided an update on legislative activity, noting that the General Assembly had returned to session and that the Department has been actively engaged at the Capitol. He highlighted DNR's participation in Keeping Georgia Wild Day at the Capitol on January 15, which brought together elected officials, conservation partners, and members of the sporting community to celebrate Georgia's natural, historic, and cultural resources. He thanked Chairwoman Reynolds, Vice Chairman Denney, and Secretary Dellinger for attending.

Commissioner Rabon also noted that on January 15, the Parks and Historic Sites Division hosted its second annual student art contest at the Capitol. He stated that more than 260 entries were received from Georgia high school students, with the top 13 artworks displayed, and described the winning entry as an exceptionally realistic wood duck.

Commissioner Rabon reported that on January 22, he presented DNR's AFY26 and FY27 budget requests to the Joint Appropriations Committee, followed by a presentation to the House Appropriations Subcommittee on General Government on January 27. He also noted a recent meeting with the Game, Fish, and Parks Committee, during which he provided a high-level overview of the Department and its priorities. While DNR is not sponsoring legislation this session, he stated that the Department is actively monitoring several bills and encouraged Board members to reference the regularly updated legislative tracking sheet and to contact him or Deputy Commissioner Santos with questions.

Commissioner Rabon then provided an update on Winter Storm Fern, which impacted north Georgia earlier in the week. He reported that DNR operated a unified incident command with the Georgia Forestry Commission and the Department of Agriculture, with more than 200 personnel assigned to the response. He noted that quick reaction teams and chainsaw teams were deployed to assist with road debris removal and public safety needs. He stated that state parks opened warming stations throughout affected areas and that DNR supported multiple Emergency Support

Functions at the State Operations Center. He commended the professionalism and dedication of DNR personnel involved in the response.

The Commissioner highlighted recent Outdoors Beyond Barriers activities, noting that 25 game wardens partnered with the Wildlife Resources Division and Parks Division to support three hunts held at Richard B. Russell State Park, Clybel Wildlife Management Area, and a private property in Oconee County. He described the assistance provided to participants, including transportation, equipment support, and retrieval of harvested deer. He emphasized the life-changing impact of the program and referenced a letter included in Board binders that described how the program restores dignity and creates lasting memories for participants.

Commissioner Rabon reported that the 40th Game Warden Academy began on January 11 at the Georgia Public Safety Training Center in Forsyth, with 23 cadets currently enrolled. He noted the anticipated graduation date of April 17 and encouraged Board members to mark their calendars.

Commissioner Rabon provided law enforcement activity statistics, reporting that from September through December, game wardens checked more than 17,500 hunting licenses and over 4,000 fishing licenses, documented approximately 5,200 violations, responded to 18 hunting incidents including three fatalities, and conducted 34 search and rescue missions statewide. He also announced a partnership with Georgia Power to place automated external defibrillators (AEDs) in all DNR law enforcement boats and patrol vehicles, noting that all wardens have been trained in their use.

Commissioner Rabon concluded by highlighting Parks Division initiatives related to the upcoming 250th anniversary of the signing of the Declaration of Independence. He announced the launch of the annual theme, “Monumental Moments: America’s 250,” which began with a record-breaking First Day Hikes program on January 1. He reported that 93 hikes were offered across 55 sites, with 3,102 participants logging 6,768 miles, including two Outdoors Beyond Barriers First Day Hikes.

He also announced the launch of the Parks Division’s first specialty license plate, noting that plates are now available for purchase and that the PRK001 plate would be auctioned during Weekend for Wildlife.

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

Director Harper provided a brief updated noting the positive developments in right whale calving activity along the Georgia coast and summarized current Chronic Wasting Disease monitoring efforts, emphasizing that all confirmed cases remain localized within the established management area.

He also briefly highlighted outreach efforts, summer camp programming, and upcoming license and specialty plate initiatives.

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

Director Haymans provided a brief update on recent fisheries management actions, including seasonal closures, compliance with interstate management requirements, and public engagement related to upcoming red drum rule considerations. He also noted recent reef deployment activity and highlighted upcoming outreach and education events.

Commissioner Rabon stated that this concluded his report.

Chairwoman Reynolds called on Harley Yancey, Chair of the Land Committee, for his committee report.

**A motion was made by Mr. Yancey, seconded by Mr. Shailendra, and carried unanimously that the Board adopt the Resolution to authorize the Commissioner to seek State Properties Commissioner approval via Executive Order to demolish the Red Top Mountain State Park well house Bartow County.** (Resolution attached hereto and made a part thereof)

Chairwoman Reynolds called on Charles DePriest, Chair of the Wildlife Resources Committee, for his report.

**A motion was made by Mr. DePriest, seconded by Ms. Addison, and carried unanimously that the Board approve the Proposed Amendments to Bird Island Rule 391-4-7-.03.**

Chairwoman Reynolds expressed her appreciation for the opportunity to have served as Chair and to the Board members, Commissioner Rabon and staff for their service to the Department during her tenure.

Chairwoman Reynolds called on Ray Lambert, Chair of the Nominating Committee for the committee's report.

Mr. Lambert stated the slate of officers was presented to the Board 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 Patrick Denney as Chairman, Randy Dellinger as Vice Chairman, and Dan Garcia as Secretary for the 2026 Board of Natural Resources Officers.**

Chairwoman Reynolds turned the Officer of Chairman over to Mr. Denney.

Chairman Denney thanked Ms. Reynolds for her service to the Board.

Chairman Denney expressed his appreciation for the Board’s support and that he looked forward to working with them throughout the next year.

Chairman Denney announced the next meeting of the Board of Natural Resources would be on Tuesday, February 24, 2026, in the DNR Board Room.

There being no further business, Chairman Denney adjourned the meeting.

---

Patrick Denney, Chairman

ATTEST:

---

Dan Garcia, Secretary

**Minutes  
Coastal Committee  
A.W. Jones Heritage Center  
610 Beachview Drive  
St. Simons Island, GA 31522**

**Tuesday, January 30, 2026  
9:00 a.m.**

**Committee Members**

Nancy Addison, Chair  
Randy Dellinger, Vice Chair  
Charles DePriest  
Joe Hatfield  
Mark Hennessy  
Bill Jones  
Ray Lambert  
Mike Peavy  
Paul Shailendra  
Harley Yancey  
Lesley Reynolds, Board Chair, Ex-Officio

**Board Members**

Patrick Denney  
Jeff Andrews  
Dan Garcia  
Steve Hufstetler  
Duncan Johnson  
Bodine Sinyard

The January 30, 2026, meeting of the Coastal Committee was called to order by Lesley Reynolds, Chairwoman of the Board of Natural Resources.

Chairwoman Reynolds called on Randy Dellinger, Vice Chairman of the Coastal Committee, who stated that the Committee had one briefing on the agenda. Vice Chairman Dellinger called on Dominic Guadagnoli, Program Manager, to present an update on the Shellfish Mariculture Program.

Mr. Guadagnoli provided an overview of the growth and development of the Shellfish Mariculture Program since 2020, noting significant changes to shellfish code provisions and rules adopted in recent years that established a new foundation for the program. He stated that the number of shellfish leases has nearly doubled, with nine active subtidal leases currently in place across three mariculture zones. He noted that the most recent leases were established in Glynn County in 2025 and that site marking and charting activities were underway.

Mr. Guadagnoli discussed the closed-season harvest rules adopted in 2024, which allow for summer harvest of mariculture oysters under specific time and temperature controls to manage risks associated with Vibrio bacteria. He stated that in 2025, two growers in Chatham County were permitted for summer harvest and both elected to harvest without ice, placing product into

refrigeration within two hours. He noted that average harvest times were approximately one hour and fifteen minutes.

In response to a question from Mr. Hennessy regarding refrigeration, Mr. Guadagnoli stated that the average harvest time included placement into refrigeration and that growers' operations vary based on lease location and facility capacity.

Mr. Guadagnoli provided an overview of a second *Vibrio* study conducted in coordination with industry stakeholders and University of Georgia Marine Extension. He stated that the study examined whether the two-hour harvest window could be extended. He summarized the results, noting that oysters refrigerated by 10:00 a.m. at two, three, and four hours post-harvest all tested below established *Vibrio* thresholds, while oysters refrigerated by 11:00 a.m. did not meet standards. He added that no *Vibrio*-related oyster illnesses were reported in 2025.

Mr. Guadagnoli responded to questions from Committee members regarding *Vibrio* management, including definitions, comparative practices in South Carolina, and illness reporting thresholds.

Mr. Guadagnoli requested the committee's consideration of a proposed rule change to remove the two-hour harvest limit and instead allow harvest from legal harvest time until 10:00 a.m., provided product is refrigerated by that time. He explained that legal harvest time begins 30 minutes before sunrise and that the proposed change aligns with study findings and practices in neighboring states.

In response to a question, Mr. Guadagnoli explained that the maximum harvest window would be approximately four hours and nine minutes near the summer solstice and would shorten to approximately three and eleven minutes on September 30, when water temperatures are higher.

Mr. Guadagnoli stated that law enforcement oversight would continue to be handled by the Law Enforcement Division and noted increased surveillance efforts during the previous year.

Mr. Guadagnoli concluded by providing an update on additional shellfish operations expected to come online in Glynn and McIntosh counties and noted that current growers in Chatham County are distributing product to local restaurants.

Vice Chairman Dellinger thanked Mr. Guadagnoli for the briefing and stated that there being no further business, the meeting of the Coastal Committee was concluded.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned.

**Minutes  
Land Committee  
A.W. Jones Heritage Center  
610 Beachview Drive  
St. Simons Island, GA 31522**

**Tuesday, January 30, 2026  
9:00 a.m.**

**Committee Members**

Harley Yancey, Chair  
Duncan Johnson, Vice Chair  
Nancy Addison  
Jeff Andrews  
Randy Dellinger  
Dan Garcia  
Joe Hatfield  
Mark Hennessy  
Steve Hufstetler  
Paul Shailendra  
Lesley Reynolds, Board Chair, Ex-Officio

**Board Members**

Patrick Denney  
Charles DePriest  
Bill Jones  
Ray Lambert  
Mike Peavy  
Bodine Sinyard

The meeting of the Land Committee was called to order by Lesley Reynolds, Chairwoman of the Board of Natural Resources.

Chairwoman Reynolds called on Harley Yancey, Chairman of the Land Committee, who stated that the Committee had one action item for consideration.

Chairman Yancey called on Brent Womack, Chief of Real Estate, to present the item. Mr. Womack requested approval, via executive order, to demolish the Red Top Mountain State Park well house located in Bartow County. He stated that the approximately 80-square-foot structure is in significant disrepair, noting that an exterior wall has begun separating from the studs, there is a hole in the ceiling, and the door is missing entirely. He added that the structure is no longer needed.

Mr. Womack explained that structures of historical significance, those 2,000 square feet or larger, or those 50 years old or older require an executive order for removal. He stated that the Office of the State Archaeologist determined the well house is not historic and that demolition would not negatively impact the Georgia National Register of Historic Places. However, because

the structure is more than 50 years old, an executive order is required. He noted that upon receipt of the executive order, the Department would remove the structure and all debris from the site.

Mr. Womack requested favorable consideration.

Chairman Yancey asked if there were any questions. Hearing none, he entertained a motion.

**A motion was made by Mr. Hennessy, seconded by Mr. Johnson, and carried unanimously that the Committee recommend the Board adopt the Resolution to authorize the Commissioner to seek State Properties Commission approval via Executive Order to demolish the Red Top Mountain State Park well house, Bartow County.**

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned.

**Minutes  
Wildlife Resources Committee  
A.W. Jones Heritage Center  
610 Beachview Drive  
St. Simons Island, GA 31522**

**Tuesday, January 30, 2026  
9:00 a.m.**

**Committee Members**

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

**Board Members**

Nancy Addison  
Patrick Denney  
Randy Dellinger  
Bill Jones  
Ray Lambert  
Paul Shailendra  
Harley Yancey

The meeting of the Wildlife Resources Committee was called to order by Lesley Reynolds, Chairwoman of the Board of Natural Resources.

Chairwoman Reynolds called on Charles DePriest, Chairman of the Wildlife Resources Committee, who stated that the Committee had one action item on the agenda. Chairman DePriest called on Tim Keyes, WCS Program Manager, to present the item.

Mr. Keyes provided an overview of the proposed amendment to the Bird Island Rule, noting that he had previously briefed the Committee on the proposal at the October meeting. He stated that the Bird Island Rule was originally adopted in 1998 to protect critical nesting habitat for seabirds and shorebirds along Georgia's coast. He explained that these habitats are limited, highly dynamic, and extremely vulnerable to disturbance, particularly during nesting season.

Mr. Keyes explained that the existing rule identified five sites that were critical at the time of adoption but that changes to the coastal landscape, including erosion and the creation of dredge spoil islands, have necessitated updates to the rule. He outlined the proposed amendments, which include removing a site that no longer exists, adding newly created dredge spoil islands and a natural sandbar that have become important nesting and foraging areas, clarifying authority to

close the intertidal zone during nesting season, renaming a site to reduce confusion, and clarifying that pets are prohibited on bird islands year-round.

Mr. Keyes reviewed the public input received on the proposed amendments, stating that a public meeting was held in Brunswick and that written comments were accepted through the end of November. He reported that all comments received were supportive of the proposed changes. He noted that commenters included federal and state conservation partners, nonprofit organizations, and members of the public.

Mr. Keyes discussed education, enforcement, and monitoring efforts associated with the proposed rule changes. He stated that the Law Enforcement Division supports the amendments and that staff will work with partners to provide public outreach and ensure areas are clearly marked during closure periods

Mr. Keyes requested a favorable consideration.

Chairman DePriest recognized Megan Desrosiers of One Hundred Miles who provided brief remarks in support of the proposed rule amendment. Ms. Desrosiers spoke in favor of the Bird Island Rule update, highlighting the ecological importance of Georgia's coast for shorebirds and seabirds, the role of protected habitats in supporting wildlife and ecotourism, and the need for continued evaluation and adaptive management of coastal protections.

Chairman DePriest then called for a motion.

**A motion was made by Mr. Garcia, seconded by Mr. Johnson, and carried unanimously that the Committee recommend that the Board approve the Proposed Amendments to Bird Island Rules 391-4-7-.03.**

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned.