

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

**Tuesday, March 24, 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  
Penn Hodge  
Steve Hufstetler  
Duncan Johnson  
Ray Lambert  
Mike Peavy  
Lesley Reynolds  
Paul Shailendra  
Bodine Sinyard (via conference call)  
Harley Yancey (via conference call)

**Guests**

Bryan Tolar, Georgia Urban Agriculture Council  
Lyndy Rogers, Georgia Natural Resources Foundation  
Charles Burton, North Georgia Mountain Authority  
Scott Hendricks, Georgia Power  
Rosa Chi, Georgia Power  
David Copeland  
Lynn Smith, State Representative

**Staff Members**

Walter Rabon, Commissioner  
Thomas Barnard  
Trevor Santos  
Kate Iannuzzi  
Taylor Fisher  
Haley Chafin  
Jeff Cown  
Anna Truscynski  
Katie Bloomfield  
Chris Harper  
Allison Coulter  
Angie Johnson  
Andre McLendon  
Dan Roach  
Jim MacNamara  
Matt Owens  
Thom Litts  
James McLaughlin  
Bob Holley  
Brent Womack  
Doug Haymans  
Jim Cooley  
Jim Boylan  
Deanna Oser  
Chuck Mueller  
Colt Martin  
Chris Ivey  
Brandon Hardeman  
Kyle Smith  
West Malenke

The March 24, 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 David Copeland to deliver a moment of inspiration.

Chairman Denney recognized Rep. Lynn Smith, Chairwoman of the House Natural Resources and Environment Committee, who had announced her plans to retire after thirty years of dedicated service. He further stated that in recognition of her leadership and lasting contributions to the natural resources and environmental protection, this Board felt it fitting to present her with a Resolution in her honor.

**A motion was made by Mr. Lambert, seconded by Ms. Addison and carried unanimously that the Board adopt the Resolution Honoring Representative Lynn Smith, Chairwoman of the House of Natural Resources and Environment Committee.**

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

Chairman Denney called the March 24, 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 February 24, 2026.

**A motion was made by Mr. Johnson, seconded by Mr. Hatfield and carried unanimously to approve the minutes of the Board of Natural Resources meeting on February 24, 2026.**

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

Director Jeff Cown provided an update on upcoming agency activities, noting that EPD and the South Carolina Department of Environmental Services will co-host the Environmental Council of States (ECOS) Spring Conference in Savannah, Georgia the following week. He stated that the conference will include commissioners and secretaries from all fifty states and six territories, along with a fireside chat featuring Governor Brian Kemp and Governor Henry McMaster.

Director Cown then provided a brief legislative update, stating that House Bill 956 and House Resolution 1008 have both passed the General Assembly and are awaiting the Governor's signature. He also noted that the Fiscal Year 2026 budget has been signed and highlighted provisions including

a \$2,000 employee supplement, adjustments to the State Health Benefit Plan contribution rate, and one-time funding support for air emissions programs. He added that the FY27 budget is still under consideration in the Senate and includes continued support for air programs, capital investments, and funding for the Coastal District Office.

Director Cown then provided a brief drought update, noting that conditions remain largely unchanged with exceptional drought persisting in south central Georgia. He stated that eleven drought swap permits have been issued since the last report and emphasized ongoing efforts to support drought response, while noting that rainfall is still needed for meaningful improvement.

Director Cown concluded with employee recognition, honoring Derek Williams for thirty-five years of service, Jim McNamara for thirty-five years, and Larry Petty for thirty years, highlighting their combined more than one hundred years of service to the State and EPD.

Chairman Denney thanked Director Cown for his report.

Chairman Denney then recognized Commissioner Walter Rabon for receiving the 2026 Conservation Trailblazer Award at the Dallas Safari Club Convention and congratulated him on the honor.

Chairman Denney called on Commissioner Rabon for his report.

The Commissioner then thanked the Board for recognizing Chairwoman Lynn Smith, noting her long-standing support of the Department of Natural Resources and her leadership over a 30-year career.

Commissioner Rabon next recognized four individuals—Colt Martin, Chris Ivey, Kyle Smith, and Brandon Hardeman—for their response to a recent emergency on March 6, when an 88-year-old man became trapped under a tree while operating a tractor near the Burton Fish Hatchery. He stated that Mr. Martin and Mr. Ivey immediately responded and worked to free the individual after approximately an hour of entrapment. He noted that Mr. Ivey provided first aid and controlled bleeding using Stop the Bleed training until additional assistance arrived, while Mr. Martin coordinated with Camp Evergreen staff. He added that Mr. Smith and Mr. Hardeman used chainsaw training to clear access for EMS. He reported that the individual was transported to Northeast Georgia Medical Center and was released later that evening, and he commended the team for their quick and effective response.

Commissioner Rabon then provided a legislative update, stating that the Department is tracking approximately 280 bills affecting DNR operations and personnel.

He stated that Governor Kemp recently signed House Bill 973, the amended FY26 budget, and expressed appreciation to the Governor, OPB Director Rick Dunn, and the General Assembly for

continued support. He also stated that the FY27 budget includes additional positive provisions for the Department.

Commissioner Rabon then highlighted Senate Bill 420, which establishes a migratory fish endorsement for anglers targeting nine offshore species. He stated that the endorsement will support Coastal Resources Division efforts to improve participation tracking and catch data, with the goal of enhancing fisheries management and potentially shifting certain management responsibilities from federal to state oversight. He noted that the bill has passed the General Assembly and is awaiting the Governor's consideration.

He stated that April 2 is the final legislative day for gubernatorial action on bills.

Commissioner Rabon then highlighted recent outreach efforts, including a trout fishing event on the Chattahoochee River hosted by the Georgia Legislative Sportsmen's Caucus, WRD Fisheries, the Georgia Wildlife Federation, and Trout Unlimited. He noted that staff provided stocked trout, fishing instruction, and educational outreach to legislators regarding trout management and regulations.

He also reported on the 2026 Parks and Recreation Rangers Conference held at Lake Lanier Islands, noting presentations from leadership and partners and recognizing Park Ranger of the Year West Malenke for more than 20 years of service with the State Parks Division, particularly at Tallulah Gorge.

Commissioner Rabon then provided updates on the Game Warden Academy, noting that the 40th Academy is in its ninth week of training and will graduate on April 17. He stated that the 41st Academy applicant pool included 213 applicants, with 81 advancing to oral interviews following physical assessments.

He also noted increasing boating activity statewide and reported seven drowning incidents so far in 2026, including two in the current month, emphasizing ongoing boating safety outreach and upcoming "Belts and Buoys" safety campaigns.

Commissioner Rabon concluded by highlighting the Outdoor Beyond Barriers program's Adaptive Day and Open House event with Camp Lakeside, noting partnerships with YMCA Camp Lakeside and recognizing Board Member Duncan Johnson for his participation and support of the program.

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

Director Haymans provided a Coastal Resources Division update, noting that federal review of red snapper experimental fishing permits is ongoing with a May 1 target date, and that implementation of a related endorsement is planned for fall pending approval. He reported weather-

related delays for the Tug SAGA, nearing completion of the Champney boat ramp with a tentative May 1 ribbon cutting, and a successful CoastFest event. He also highlighted ongoing interdivisional work with WRD on oyster catcher nesting habitat.

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

Director Harper provided a Wildlife Resources Division update, highlighting training efforts through the WRD Training Academy and related safety courses, with more than 100 employees completing the academy and over 400 completing additional certifications such as CPR, first aid, and Stop the Bleed. He reported on the creation of a fisheries tournament committee to evaluate impacts of competitive bass fishing, with efforts underway to develop best practices, a centralized tournament information system, and tools such as a weigh-in trailer to reduce fish mortality. He also highlighted a “Ladies Only Learn and Burn” prescribed fire training event at Red Oak Plantation aimed at supporting female landowners and conservation partners and concluded with an update on a turkey restoration project on Sapelo Island, where 26 birds have been translocated and are being monitored as part of a multi-year effort to re-establish a sustainable population.

Commissioner Rabon stated that concluded his report.

Chairman Denney called on Mark Hennessy for the Land Committee report.

**A motion was made by Mr. Hennessy, seconded by Mr. Shailendra, and carried unanimously that the Board adopt the Resolution to authorize the Commissioner to seek State Properties Commissioner approval to grant an access easement to Timberlands II LLC by the State Properties Commission and General Assembly at Upatoi Ravines Wildlife Management Area, Talbot County.** (Resolution attached hereto and made a part thereof)

Chairman Denney called on Randy Dellinger for the Nominating Committee for the Rock Howard Conservation Achievement Award report.

**A motion was made by Mr. Dellinger, seconded by Mr. Shailendra, and carried unanimously that Mr. Harold F. Reheis be awarded the 2026 Board of Natural Resources Rock Howard Conservation Achievement Award.**

Chairman Denney stated that Diane, Harold’s wife, could not attend this meeting but plans to accept the award on behalf of the Reheis family at the May meeting.

Chairman Denney announced that the next Board meeting will be held Tuesday, April 28, 2026 at George T. Bagby State Park.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned.

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Patrick Denney, Chairman

ATTEST:

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Dan Garcia, Secretary

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

**Tuesday, March 24, 2026**

**9:00 a.m.**

**Committee Members**

Nancy Addison, Chair  
Harley Yancey, Vice Chair ([via conference call](#))  
Randy Dellinger  
Charles DePriest  
Joe Hatfield  
Mark Hennessy  
Penn Hodge  
Ray Lambert  
Mike Peavy  
Paul Shailendra  
Patrick Denney, Board Chair, Ex-Officio

**Board Members**

Jeff Andrews  
Dan Garcia  
Steve Hufstetler  
Duncan Johnson  
Bodine Sinyard (via conference call)  
Lesley Reynolds

The March 24, 2026, meeting of the Coastal Committee was called to order by Patrick Denney, Chairman of the Board of Natural Resources.

Chairman Denney called on Nancy Addison, Chairwoman of the Coastal Committee, who called on Doug Haymans, Director of the Coastal Resources Division, to re-brief the Committee on the Proposed Amendments to the Rules for Saltwater Fishing Regulations, Rule 391-2-4-.19.

Director Doug Haymans provided an update regarding the proposed extension of oyster harvest hours. He further stated that the item did not receive the required public notice prior to being brought forward for final action. As a result, the Department is restarting the public notice process. He added that the item will now proceed through public notice and will be brought back to the Board for final action at the April meeting.

Director Haymans noted that the materials included in the current packet are identical to those previously provided in January due to the need to restart the process

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, March 24, 2026**

**9:00 a.m.**

**Committee Members**

Ray Lambert, Chair  
Duncan Johnson, Vice Chair  
Nancy Addison  
Jeff Andrews  
Dan Garcia  
Penn Hodge  
Steve Hufstetler  
Lesley Reynolds  
Paul Shailendra  
Bodine Sinyard (via conference call)  
Patrick Denney, Board Chair, Ex-Officio

**Board Members**

Randy Dellinger  
Charles DePriest  
Joe Hatfield  
Mark Hennessy  
Mike Peavy  
Harley Yancey (via conference call)

The March 24, 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 DeAnna Oser, Assistant Chief of the Air Protection Branch, to present brief the Committee on the Proposed Amendments to the Rules for Air Quality Control, Chapter 391-3-1.

Ms. Oser presented the Environmental Protection Division's miscellaneous rule package. She stated that the package includes routine updates to rules that incorporate federal standards, as well as minor revisions made throughout the year, consolidated into a single package.

Ms. Oser stated that Rule 391-3-1-.02(2)(dd) updates language to add a definition and correct typographical errors. She further stated that Rule 391-3-1-.02(4)(b) adds requirements for the 24-hour secondary standard for SO<sub>2</sub> under NAAQS, noting that these standards include both primary and secondary components. She added that Rule 391-3-1-.02(8) incorporates updated New Source Performance Standards into the State's rules, and Rule 391-3-1-.02(9) updates the National Emission Standards for Hazardous Air Pollutants.

Ms. Oser stated that Rule 391-3-1-.03(6)(b) includes updates to combustion equipment exemptions to provide clarity and correct errors. She further stated that the package also includes updates to permit fees to incorporate the next year's fee schedule into the code.

Ms. Oser stated that the package will proceed to public notice, and that the Board will be asked to consider adoption at a future meeting.

Ms. Oser concluded her presentation.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned.

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

**Tuesday, March 24, 2026**

**9:00 a.m.**

**Committee Members**

Mark Hennessy, Chair  
Penn Hodge, Vice Chair  
Nancy Addison  
Jeff Andrews  
Randy Dellinger  
Dan Garcia  
Joe Hatfield  
Steve Hufstetler  
Duncan Johnson  
Lesley Reynolds  
Harley Yancey (via conference call)  
Patrick Denney, Board Chair, Ex-Officio

**Board Members**

Charles DePriest  
Ray Lambert  
Mike Peavy  
Paul Shailendra  
Bodine Sinyard (via conference call)

The March 24, 2026, meeting of the Land Committee was called to order by Patrick Denney, Chairman of the Board of Natural Resources.

Chairman Denney called on Mark Hennessy, Chair of the Land Committee, who then called on Brent Womack, Chief of Real Estate, to present the item.

Mr. Womack requested approval to grant an access easement to Timberlands II, LLC for a landlocked parcel located within the Upatoi Ravines Wildlife Management Area in Talbot County, subject to State Properties Commission and General Assembly approval. He stated that the easement would provide access via existing woods roads to the parcel, as reflected on the map presented.

Mr. Womack stated that the request is part of the Department's ongoing partnership with Timberlands II, LLC to preserve property at Upatoi Ravine. He explained that, during Phase II acquisition preparations, the parcel was identified as having unresolved title issues that prevented

its inclusion in the purchase. He further stated that Timberlands II, LLC agreed to proceed with the Phase II transaction based on the Department's commitment to seek authorization for a formal access easement to the parcel.

Mr. Womack stated that the Department is continuing to work with Timberlands II, LLC to resolve the title issues and anticipates pursuing acquisition of the parcel in the future. He added that granting the easement will ensure continuity of the Phase II acquisition and support the State's long-term interest in consolidating ownership within the Wildlife Management Area.

Mr. Womack further stated that, in recognition of the partnership and ongoing efforts to resolve the title issues, the Department recommends issuing the easement at no cost.

Mr. Womack requested favorable consideration.

**A motion was made by Mr. Johnson, seconded by Mr. Shailendra, and carried unanimously that the Committee recommend the Board adopt the Resolution authorizing the Commissioner to seek State Properties Commission approval to grant an access easement to Timberlands II LLC by the State Properties Commission and General Assembly at Upatoi Ravines Wildlife Management Area, Talbot County.**

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned.

**Minutes**  
**Rock Howard Conservation Achievement Award Nomination Committee**  
**DNR Boardroom**  
**2 MLK Jr. Drive, SE**  
**Suite 1252, East Tower**

**Tuesday, March 24, 2026**

**9:00 a.m.**

**Committee Members**

Randy Dellinger, Chair  
Nancy Addison  
Joe Hatfield  
Duncan Johnson  
Ray Lambert  
Bodine Sinyard (via conference call)  
Patrick Denney, Board Chair, Ex-Officio

**Board Members**

Dan Garcia  
Jeff Andrews  
Charles DePriest  
Mark Hennessy  
Penn Hodge  
Steve Hufstetler  
Mike Peavy  
Paul Shailendra  
Lesley Reynolds  
Harley Yancey (via conference call)

The March 24, 2026, meeting of the Rock Howard Conservation Achieve Award Nominating Committee was called to order by Patrick Denney, Chairman of the Board of Natural Resources.

Chairman Denney called on Randy Dellinger, Chairman of the Nominating Committee. Mr. Dellinger provided background on the award, noting that the Georgia Board of Natural Resources annually recognizes individuals who have made significant contributions to the Department's mission of managing, guiding, and promoting the wise use of Georgia's natural, historical, and recreational resources for the benefit of current and future generations.

Mr. Dellinger stated that the award is named in honor of the late R.S. "Rock" Howard, the first Director of the Environmental Protection Division, which was established under Governor Jimmy Carter in 1972. He described Mr. Howard as a pioneer in environmental protection who built the agency during a time when environmental laws and protections were limited or nonexistent, and credited him with establishing a strong foundation for environmental stewardship in the State.

Mr. Dellinger then opened the floor for nominations for the Rock Howard Conservation Achievement Award.

Mr. Hatfield made a nomination for Mr. Harold F. Reheis, former Director of the Environmental Protection Division, who dedicated his professional life to protecting Georgia's natural resources.

Mr. Hatfield stated that Mr. Reheis had a distinguished career spanning more than 60 years, including service with the U.S. Geological Survey, Georgia Jones and Gold, service as Director of the Environmental Protection Division of the Georgia Department of Natural Resources, and work with Tanner and Associates. He further stated that, as Director of EPD, Mr. Reheis oversaw programs protecting Georgia's air, water, land, public drinking water systems, dams, and waste management, contributing to significant environmental improvements across the State.

**A motion was made by Mr. Hatfield, seconded by Ms. Addison, and carried unanimously that the Committee recommend the Board approve the nomination of Mr. Harold F. Reheis to receive the 2026 Rock Howard Conservation Achievement Award.**

Chairman Denney thanked the Nominating Committee and stated that there was no further business.