

Minutes
Board of Natural Resources
Charlie Elliott Wildlife Center
543 Elliott Trail
Mansfield, GA 30055

Tuesday, April 22, 2025
9:00 a.m.

Board Members

Lesley Reynolds, Chair
Patrick Denney, Vice Chair
Randy Dellinger, Secretary
Jeff Andrews
Charles DePriest
Dan Garcia
Mark Hennessy
Penn Hodge
Steve Hufstetler
Duncan Johnson
Ray Lambert
Mike Peavy
Bodine Sinyard
Harley Yancey

Staff Members

Walter Rabon, Commissioner
Thomas Barnard
Trevor Santos
Kyle Pearson
Taylor Fisher
Jeff Cown
Mike England
Doug Haymans
Ted Will
Angie Johnson
Dominic Guadagnoli
Brent Womack
Katie Bloomfield
James McLaughlin
Ania Truszczynski
Andre McLendon
Thom Litts
Lee Taylor

Guests

Rena Peck, Georgia River Network
Lyndy Rogers, Georgia Natural Resources Foundation
Charles Burton, North Georgia Mountain Authority
Mike Vaquer, Water Utility Management
Brian Foster, Georgia Conservancy
Rusty Garrison, speaker

The April 22, 2025 meeting of the Board of Natural Resources was called to order by Chairwoman Lesley Reynolds.

Chairwoman Reynolds called on Rusty Garrison, former Director of the Wildlife Resources Division, to deliver a moment of inspiration.

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

Chairwoman Reynolds reconvened the April 22, 2025 meeting of the Board of Natural Resources to order.

Chairwoman Reynolds called for a motion to approve the minutes of the Board of Natural Resources meeting on March 25, 2025.

A motion was made by Mr. Johnson, seconded by Mr. Sinyard, and carried unanimously to approve the minutes of the Board of Natural Resources meeting on March 25, 2025.

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

Director Cown updated the Board on EPD's legislative priorities following the end of the 2025 Legislative Session, as well as upcoming events at EPD.

Director Cown stated this concluded his report.

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

Commissioner Rabon stated a ribbon cutting ceremony was held for the new Joe Tanner Discovery Center at the Charlie Elliott Wildlife Center on Monday, April 21, 2025. He further stated the Discovery Center, which was funded in part by a Georgia Outdoor Stewardship Program grant, includes exhibit space, facilities for the animal collection, and a classroom with a movable partition that can be converted and used as an indoor, five-lane archery range. He thanked the Board members for attending the ceremony.

Commissioner Rabon stated the first session of the 2025 Leadership Academy would begin later that afternoon at Charlie Elliott Wildlife Center. He further stated the DNR Leadership Academy was created with the vision of developing and equipping our employees by providing the tools, institutional knowledge and relationship building experiences that will help advance their career as well as advance the mission of DNR. He added that each year 18 employees are invited to participate

in five, three-day long, sessions focused on honing leadership skills, gaining organizational knowledge, and increasing intra-departmental cooperation.

Commissioner Rabon gave an update on the 2025 legislative session. He stated the House and Senate both adjourned sine die on April 4th and each of the DNR agency bills finished the legislative process and await signature by Governor Kemp. He further stated the FY26 budget included appropriated funds to assist with offshore fishing surveys for our Coastal Resources Division, provide additional support for our Wildlife Resources Division in combatting the recently-discovered Chronic Wasting Disease, further enhancing the Hunters for the Hungry program, and the construction of a new Region 2 Headquarters Office in Gainesville.

Commissioner Rabon stated the Outdoors Beyond Barriers program hosted a partners meeting with representatives from various organizations on April 15, 2025. He further stated the objective of the meeting was to provide background information about the program and discuss future growth and next steps, private land opportunities and provide an overview of available adaptive equipment.

Commissioner Rabon stated the Department would host six additional adaptive fishing events throughout the spring.

Commissioner Rabon stated 130 youth birders participated in the Youth Birding Competition which is designed to encourage awareness and appreciation of Georgia's birds and the outdoors.

Commissioner Rabon stated the Mutual of Omaha's Wild Kingdom series is currently filming a story about gopher tortoises on Penholoway Swamp WMA. He further stated the hosts are working with UGA scientists and local schools to weigh, measure, tag and place young gopher tortoises. He added the filming was coordinated with the help of the Wildlife Resources Division's Game Management and Wildlife Conservation Section personnel.

Commissioner Rabon gave an update on Chronic Wasting Disease in Georgia. He stated since the initial detection by the National Services Veterinary Laboratory, staff have collected a total of 26 samples from taxidermists, road kills, and deer taken by landowners and cooperators within the CWD Management Area. He further stated Georgia has had a second deer that tested positive for CWD. He added the deer was a 4 ½ year old buck taken through routine disease monitoring in Berrien County, approximately 400 yards from where the first CWD-positive deer was harvested. He concluded by stating since the confirmation comes from within the same county already in the management area, the protocol will remain the same moving forward.

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

Colonel England updated the Board on turkey season opening day; the Hunting Regs App for reporting poaching; annual boating incident and drowning statistics; boater education; the rescue at Panther Creek Falls; and the 39th Game Warden Academy graduation.

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

Director Johnson updated the Board on the US Postal Service Appalachian Trail Forever stamp dedication at Amicalola Falls State Park; recently completed capital projects; safety improvements at Tallulah Gorge State Park; spring programming; and Resource Management Unit's burning season.

Commissioner Rabon stated this concluded his report.

Chairwoman Reynolds call on Randy Dellinger, Vice Chair of the Coastal Committee, for his committee report.

A motion was made by Mr. Dellinger, seconded by Mr. Johnson, and carried unanimously that the Board adopt the Resolution to approve the Proposed Amendments to the Rules of the Georgia Department of Natural Resources, Saltwater Fishing Regulations, 391-2-4. (Resolution attached hereto and made a part thereof)

Chairwoman Reynolds called on Ray Lambert, Chair of the Environmental Protection Committee, for his committee report.

A motion was made by Mr. Lambert, seconded by Mr. Yancey, and carried unanimously that the Board adopt the Resolution to the Proposed Amendments to the Rules for Safe Drinking Water, Chapter 391-3-5. (Resolution attached hereto and made a part thereof)

Chairwoman Reynolds announced the next meeting of the Board of Natural Resources would be on Tuesday, May 20, 2025 in the DNR Boardroom in Atlanta.

There being no further business, Chairwoman Reynolds adjourned the meeting.

Lesley Reynolds, Chairwoman

ATTEST:

Randy Dellinger, Secretary

**Minutes
Coastal Committee
Charlie Elliott Wildlife Center
543 Elliott Trail
Mansfield, GA 30055**

**Tuesday, April 22, 2025
9:00 a.m.**

Committee Members

Randy Dellinger, Vice Chair
Charles DePriest
Mark Hennessy
Penn Hodge
Ray Lambert
Mike Peavy
Harley Yancey
Lesley Reynolds, Board Chair, Ex-Officio

Board Members

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

Guests

Rena Peck, Georgia River Network
Lyndy Rogers, Georgia Natural Resources Foundation
Charles Burton, North Georgia Mountain Authority
Mike Vaquer, Water Utility Management
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The April 22, 2025 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 Chair of the Coastal Committee, who called on Dominic Guadagnoli to present the proposed amendments to the Rules of the Georgia Department of Natural Resources, Saltwater Fishing Regulations, Rule 391-2-4.

Mr. Guadagnoli stated HB 501 was passed in 2019 to support oyster mariculture. He further stated the Shellfish and Mariculture Advisory Panel was established in 2019 and rules were developed in 2020. He added that since 2020, three mariculture zones have been established, and Georgia currently has eight contracted harvesters.

Mr. Guadagnoli stated the proposed amendments would establish rules for the harvest of oysters during *Vibrio* control months. He further stated the rules would establish the Georgia *Vibrio* Control Plan, shellstock temperature controls, tagging requirements for all shellstock, shading requirements for all shellstock, confirmed illness response, requirements for harvest, and minimum eligibility requirements for harvest.

Mr. Guadagnoli stated the Board was briefed on this item at the February board meeting and the public notice period began on February 26, 2025. He further stated three comments were received during the public notice period and all three were in favor of the rule.

Mr. Guadagnoli answered questions from the Board members concerning the summer harvest season, production and capacity and distribution of harvested oysters.

Mr. Guadagnoli requested a favorable consideration.

A motion was made by Mr. DePriest, seconded by Mr. Yancey, and carried unanimously that the Committee recommend the Board adopt the Resolution to approve the Proposed Amendments to the Georgia Department of Natural Resources, Saltwater Fishing Regulations, Rule 391-2-4.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned.

**Minutes
Environmental Protection Committee
Charlie Elliott Wildlife Center
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9:00 a.m.**

Committee Members

Ray Lambert, Chair
Bodine Sinyard, Vice Chair
Jeff Andrews
Patrick Denney
Dan Garcia
Penn Hodge
Steve Hufstetler
Duncan Johnson
Lesley Reynolds Board Chair, Ex-officio

Board Members

Randy Dellinger
Charles DePriest
Mark Hennessy
Mike Peavy
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The April 22, 2025 meeting of the Environmental Protection Committee was called to order by Chairwoman Lesley Reynolds.

Chairwoman Reynolds called on Ray Lambert, Chairman of the Environmental Protection Committee. Chairman Lambert called on Ania Truszczynski, Chief of the Watershed Protection Branch, to present action on Proposed Amendments to the Rules for Safe Drinking Water, Chapter 391-3-5.

Ms. Truszczynski stated that the purpose of these rules is to implement the provisions of House Bill 1146 pertaining to private water systems operating within the coastal aquifers of Georgia.

Ms. Truszczynski stated that House Bill 1146 was enacted on May 6, 2024, and allows private water systems in coastal counties to provide treated groundwater as potable water to the public if the local government utility cannot provide treated groundwater within 18 months of a request in writing. She further stated that if the local government utility is unable to provide the water, then a private water system with delegated authority from EPD under the rule can provide the water where they have the capacity.

Ms. Truszczynski stated that House Bill 1146 is limited in application to the “coastal aquifers” of the state, but does not define that term, so the proposed amendments utilize the existing definition for an 11-County “coastal area” in the Georgia Coastal Management Act at O.C.G.A. § 12-5-322(4). She further that House Bill 1146 has a sunset provision, and the proposed amendments will accordingly expire on January 1, 2029.

Ms. Truszczynski stated that EPD held a public meeting on November 14, 2024, and accepted comments through November 21, 2024, where EPD received 27 public comments. She further stated that 24 private citizens and One Hundred Miles expressed concern about the legislation and requested that the proposed amendments be limited to Bryan County. She added that one private water system, Water Utility Management, requested that Bulloch County be added to the list of coastal Counties in the proposed amendments, and the Georgia Association of Water Professionals suggested clarifying language.

Ms. Truszczynski stated that the language in paragraph (6) for privately owned community public water systems was amended to add permit modifications. She further stated that sub-paragraph (6)(a) was amended to include clarifying language (“local government, water authority or other public entity which has the power to provide water for consumptive use”). She added that where all the following conditions are met, a letter of concurrence for a new or expanded privately-owned public water system will not be required in the following counties, and the requirements of this paragraph (b) shall expire on January 1, 2029. She further added that those conditions are the source water for the new or expanded permit to operate a public water system would be provided from groundwater within the Counties of Brantley, Bryan, Camden, Charlton, Chatham, Effingham, Glynn, Long, Liberty, McIntosh, and Wayne; a person seeking water service has made the request for such service in writing via certified

mail to the local government, water authority or other public entity which has the power to provide water for consumptive use; the local government lacks the capability or permitted capacity to provide the requested water service within a period of 18 months from the date of such request; and the owner of the privately owned community public water system has delegated authority as specified in paragraph (2) and demonstrated that it has the capability and permitted ground water capacity to provide the requested water service within a period of 18 months from the date of such request.

Ms. Truszczynski stated that following the briefing of the Environmental Committee of the DNR Board on February 25, 2025, EPD issued a public notice requesting comments on proposed amendments to the Rules for Safe Drinking Water, Chapter 391-3-5, Rule 391-3-5-.04. She further stated a public hearing was held at 10:00 a.m. on March 21, 2025, using Zoom, a free web conferencing platform that also allows participation by phone. She added that during the public hearing, EPD received no verbal or written comments, and no comments were submitted regarding the proposed rule amendments during the public comment period.

Ms. Truszczynski requested a favorable consideration.

A motion was made by Mr. Andrews, seconded by Mr. Garcia, and carried unanimously that the Committee recommend the Board adopt the Resolution to approve the Proposed Amendments to the Rules for Safe Drinking Water, Chapter 391-3-5.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned.