

Minutes
Wildlife Resources Committee
Jekyll Island Convention Center
75 Beachview Drive North
Jekyll Island, GA 31527

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

Committee Members

Charles DePriest, Chair
Harley Yancey, Vice Chair
Jeff Andrews
Randy Dellinger
Patrick Denney
Dan Garcia
Mark Hennessy
Penn Hodge
Duncan Johnson
Brent Layton
Lesley Reynolds
Bodine Sinyard
Joe Hatfield, Board Chair, Ex-officio

Board Members

Nancy Addison
Bill Jones
Ray Lambert
Paul Shailendra

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 meeting of the Wildlife Resources Committee was called to order by Chairman Joe Hatfield.

Chairman Hatfield called on Charles DePriest, Chair of the Wildlife Resources Committee. Mr. DePriest called on Tina Johannsen, Assistant Chief of Game Management, to present the proposed amendments to Chapter 391-4-2, Hunting Regulations, pertaining to Quail Season, Special Opportunity Hunts, and Cochrans Creek and Featherfield Wildlife Management Areas.

Ms. Johannsen stated that the board was briefed on the proposed changes at the February 27, 2024 board meeting. She further stated that the hunting regulation proposals will adjust the opening day of quail season to the 2nd Saturday in November; establish hunting seasons on two newly acquired wildlife management areas beginning with the 2024 turkey season at Featherfield WMA in Seminole County and Cochrans Creek WMA in Dawson County; and provides for department sponsored specialty hunts on department-managed lands to be scheduled, planned, and implemented by working closely with volunteers on an impromptu or short-term timeframe that is not allowed by the current process. She added that the proposals were posted on the department's website for public comment and a link was emailed to all who have signed up for such notifications. She further added that most emails received were supportive and/or requested additional hunting opportunities.

Ms. Johannsen stated if there are no questions, she requests board approval of the proposed amendments.

A motion was made by Mr. Garcia, seconded by Mr. Sinyard, and carried unanimously that the committee recommend the board approve the Proposed Amendments to Chapter 391-4-2, Hunting Regulations, pertaining to Quail Season, Special Opportunity Hunts, and Cochrans Creek and Featherfield Wildlife Management Areas.

Mr. DePriest called on Scott Robinson to provide a briefing on the proposed amendment to Fishing Regulations, Subject 391-4-3.

Mr. Robinson stated the proposed amendments to the fishing regulations make two changes: length limits related to Shoal bass are updated to make them easier to understand and maintain healthy populations and daily creel limits are modified for native black bass species with limited range and populations.

Mr. Robinson stated the changes apply to creel and possession limits on Black Bass with a 10-fish combined limit for black bass but only 5 fish can be Altamaha bass, Bartram's bass, Chattahoochee bass, Redeye bass, Shoal bass, Smallmouth bass, Suwannee bass and Tallapoosa

bass. He further stated changes will remove specific size limits for Shoal bass on Lake Lanier; modify length limit for Shoal bass on the Lower Flint River; and apply this limit statewide, except for the Flint River below Warwick Dam.

Mr. Robinson stated that the public notice will be distributed and posted on the website beginning on April 26, 2024, a virtual public hearing will be held live via WRD's Facebook page at 7:00 p.m. on May 21, 2024, and the deadline for submitting comments on the proposed amendments is May 27, 2024.

Mr. DePriest called on Clint Peacock, Assistant Chief of Fisheries, to provide a briefing on the proposed repeal of Submerged Cultural Resources Regulations, Subject 391-5-9.

Mr. Peacock stated that the WRD is proposing the repeal of Rule 391-5-9-.08, pertaining to compensation for deadhead logs and that it is necessary because the General Assembly repealed its permit procedure for deadhead logging in 2008. He further stated the plan for receiving and considering public input will include putting the proposed rule changes on Public Notice and the acceptance of written, verbal, and electronic comments. He added that a public hearing is not currently scheduled because this is not a substantive rule change, but a public hearing can be scheduled if requested by 25 persons who will be directly affected by the proposed rule, by a governmental subdivision, or by an association having not less than 25 members. He further added that following the public comment process, the proposed rule repeal and any comments received will be presented to the board for consideration at the June 25, 2024 board meeting.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned.