

Final Meeting Minutes
Wildlife and Boat Committee
Board of Wildlife Resources
7870 Villa Park Drive – Board Room
Henrico, VA 23228

January 18, 2023
10:00 am

Present: Mr. Leon Boyd, **Chair**, Mr. Jon Cooper, Ms. Catherine Claiborne; **Absent:** Mr. Michael Formica, Mr. George Terwilliger, **Board Member** in attendance: Mr. G. K. Washington, Tammy Franklin (virtual); **Executive Director:** Mr. Ryan Brown; **Deputy Director:** Ms. Becky Gwynn; **Director’s Working Group:** Mr. Darin Moore, Dr. Mike Bednarski, Dr. Gray Anderson, Mr. Bob Smet, Ms. Paige Pearson, Mr. Tom Guess, Mr. Paul Kugelman, Mr. George Braxton (virtual)

The Chair called the meeting to order at 10:00 am and noted for the record that a Quorum was present for today’s meeting.

Approval of the October 18, 2022, Committee Meeting Minutes:

The Chair called for a motion to approve the October 18, 2022, Wildlife and Boat Committee meeting minutes. Ms. Claiborne made a motion to approve the minutes of the October 18, 2022, committee meeting. Mr. Cooper seconded the motion.

Ayes: Boyd, Cooper, and Claiborne

Public Comment - Non-Agenda Item: The Chair called for Public Comment – Non-Agenda Items.

- Mr. Sean Clarkson spoke regarding the Virginia Chapter of the America Bear Foundation.

The Chair thanked Mr. Clarkson for his comments.

Migratory Bird Regulation Proposals: The Chair called on Dr. Gary Costanzo for a presentation.

Dr. Costanzo gave a presentation on the Migratory Bird Regulation Proposals.

After comments and questions, the Chair thanked Dr. Costanzo for his presentation.

The Chair called for a motion. Ms. Claiborne made a motion, Mr. Chair, I move that the Committee approve the preliminary 2023-2024 Migratory Game Bird Season and Bag Limit recommendations as presented by staff, for consideration by the full Board at the January 19, 2023, meeting. It was seconded by Mr. Cooper. Ayes: Boyd, Claiborne, Cooper

Proposed Property naming: The Chair called on Dr. Gray Anderson for a presentation.

Dr. Anderson gave a presentation on the Proposed Property naming.

The Chair thanked Dr. Anderson for his presentation.

The Chair called for a motion. Ms. Claiborne made a motion, Mr. Chair; I move that the Wildlife and Boat Committee recommend to the Board of Wildlife Resources the proposed property name and designation as present by staff. It was seconded by Mr. Cooper.

Ayes: Boyd, Claiborne, and Cooper

Wildlife Regulation Cycle Schedule & Public Scoping: The Chair called on Dr. Gray Anderson for an update.

Dr. Anderson gave an update of the Wildlife Regulation Cycle schedule and public scoping.

After comments and questions, the Chair thanked Dr. Anderson for his update.

Wildlife Division Update:

Dr. Anderson reported:

- Harvest Update:
 - Bear – 2,284 (-23% from last year)
 - Deer – 185,626 (-2% from last year)
 - Turkey – 1,501 (stable with last year’s figure so far, season runs through January 28th)

- Mast Crop – Acorn production was extremely high with a bumper crop across Virginia and in most surround states. Such food abundance leads to decreased movement of wildlife and frequently results in decreased harvest levels.

- Hemorrhagic Disease (EHD) – multiple scattered reports in late July/early August, likely reduced deer harvest in a few areas (e.g., southwestern Patrick County where larger numbers of deer were reported around Primland.)
- Final Numbers - should be available in mid-February after remaining turkey seasons close

Bear Plan – Draft Population Objective Review

- Last Wednesday (Jan 11th) the Wildlife Division began soliciting feedback on the draft population objectives as part of the process to update/revise Virginia’s Black Bear Management Plan
- The draft population objectives outline “cultural carrying capacity” for the bear population in each bear management zone, indicating if the bear population should remain stable or be increased or decreased to achieve “cultural carrying capacity”.
- Wildlife Division staffs have been coordinating with Outreach to:
 - Create a webpage where comments can be submitted
 - Distribute background information and appropriate weblink to constituents via an email blast and social media campaign
 - Comments will be received through February 1st
 - To date, more than 1,500 comments have been received

Elk Program, Items:

- Largest bull harvested in inaugural elk hunt was officially B&C scored and certified. It scored under the non-Typical American Elk category; Gross 433 5/8 inches and Net 413 7/8 inches. It ranked 85th all-time record under category. Ranked #1 for Virginia. (This bull weighted 852 lbs live weight and was an 8x9. Killed by our 15-year old hunter.)
- Application period for 2023 elk hunt lottery will open Feb 1st and run through March 30th. Same as last year in terms of license number and allocation.
- Two elk were harvested outside the EMZ this year. A spike bull in Lee County and a 6x6 bull in Tazewell County.

After comments and questions, the Chair thanked Dr. Anderson for his update.

Fish Division Update: The Chair called on Dr. Mike Bednarski for an update.

Dr. Bednarski reported:

- Front Royal Fish Hatchery renovations are almost complete and will be online, there will be a ribbon cutting
- Trout stocking is ongoing
- Keeping tabs on PFAS concentrations in fish

Boating Division Update: The Chair called on Mr. Tom Guess for an update.

Mr. Guess reported:

- Boating accidents – 94; Injuries 42; Fatalities – 17- the rest was in property damage
- Boating Survey has been sent out to 235,000 boaters and being returned
- 24,000 boaters have taken the boating course online and in person
- Customer Service handles 400 phone calls a day

Director's Report: The Chair called on Executive Director Ryan Brown for his report.

The Director reported:

- The General Assembly is in session and gave an update on legislation for the Department..

Chair's Report: The Chair thanked everyone for attending the Wildlife and Boat Committee meeting and for the updates and presentations.

The Chair asked if anyone had any further comments or questions, hearing none, he announced that the next meeting will be March 15, 2023, and adjourned the meeting at 11:20 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Frances Boswell

/s/

