

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

January 22, 2025
10:00 am

Present: Mr. James Edmunds, **Chair**, Ms. Laura Walters, Mr. Will Wampler (alternate),
Absent: Mr. Woody Woodall, Mr. Brian Vincent; **Board Members** in attendance: Mr. Jon Cooper, Mr. Lynwood Broaddus, and Mr. Michael Formica; **Executive Director:** Mr. Ryan Brown; **Deputy Directors:** Ms. Becky Gwynn and Mr. Darin Moore; **Director’s Working Group:** Dr. Mike Bednarski, Ms. Stacey Brown, Mr. George Braxton, Mr. Michael Lipford, Ms. Shelby Crouch, Mr. Bob Smet.

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

Approval of the October 23, 2024, Committee Meeting Minutes:

The Chair called for a motion to approve the October 23, 2024, Wildlife and Boating minutes. Ms. Walters made a motion to approve the minutes of the October 2024, committee meeting. Mr. Wampler seconded the motion. Ayes: Edmunds, Walters, Wampler

Public Comment - Non-Agenda Item: The Chair called for Public Comment – Non-Agenda Items. Hearing none, he continued on with the meeting.

Proposals regarding Migratory Game Birds Seasons and Bag Limits: The Chair called on Mr. Ben Lewis for a presentation.

Mr. Ben Lewis gave a presentation on the Proposals regarding Migratory Game Birds Seasons and Bag Limits.

After comments and questions, The Chair thanked Mr. Lewis for his presentation.

The Chair called for a motion, Mr. Edmunds made a motion, I move that the Wildlife and Boat Committee of Wildlife Resources approve the preliminary 2025-2026 Migratory Game Bird Season and Bag Limit recommendations as presented by staff, for consideration by the full Board on January 23, 2025 meeting. It was seconded by Ms. Walters. Ayes: Edmunds, Walters, Wampler

Mr. Wampler made a motion to work with Ben Lewis and Michael Lipford, DWR’s liaison to the Atlantic Flyway Council, to split the Canada Goose hunting dates 3 ways rather than 2 ways

and to recommend to the full Board for approval. It was seconded by Mr. Edmunds and Ms. Walters. Ayes: Edmunds, Walters, Wampler

Public Scoping Overview of Wildlife Regulations: Mr. Edmunds called on Mr. Cale Godfrey for a presentation.

Mr. Godfrey gave a presentation on the Public Scoping Overview of Wildlife Regulations.

After comments and questions, The Chair thanked Mr. Godfrey for his presentation.

- Mr. Gary Kimberlin spoke regarding public scoping period (virtual)
- Mr. Sean Clarkson spoke regarding public scoping period and regulation changes (virtual)
- Mr. Steve Knicely spoke regarding public scoping period on Bears (virtual)

Smallmouth Bass Management Plans: Mr. Edmunds called on Mr. Jason Hallacher and Ms. Kristen Chestnut-Faull for a presentation.

Mr. Hallacher and Ms. Chestnut-Faulls gave a presentation on the Smallmouth Bass Management Plan explaining the objectives and next steps.

After comments and questions, The Chair thanked Mr. Hallacher and Ms. Chestnut-Faull for their presentation.

Wildlife Division Update: The Chair called on Mr. Michael Lipford for his Wildlife Division update.

Mr. Lipford reported:

- DWR Bear Mangle Task Update
- Wildlife Conflict
- Preliminary Harvest Figures
- Turkey Management Plan
- Overview of Migratory Game Bird Seasons and Bag Limits

After comments and questions, The Chair thanked Mr. Lipford for his update.

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

Dr. Bednarski reported:

- Seeking public comment on smallmouth bass Management Plan
- Working on a revision of stocked Trout Plan- will be sending a survey to anglers
- In peak season for muskellunge – benefit to local communities, as we estimate out of state anglers spend several hundred dollars on gas, hotel, food

After comments and questions, The Chair thanked Dr. Bednarski for his update.

Nongame Program Update: The Chair called on Ms. Amy Martin for a Nongame Program Update.

Ms. Martin reported:

- Ruth Boettcher, our Coastal Resources Biologist, won the “outstanding partner and contributor” award from the International American Oystercatcher Working Group. Ruth was also chosen to represent the Atlantic Flyway Council at the Waterbird Society Pacific Seabird Group Joint Meeting in Costa Rica, where she spent last week. The Council paid for all of Ruth’s expenses.
- The Marine Mammal Conservation Plan is currently undergoing internal review. Once we have it in final form, we will then send it out for external review by the administration and others.
- Next month we will begin our first piping plover habitat enhancement project with our partners at TNC and the USFWS. .
- The USFWS has proposed to list the eastern hellbender, found in the streams and rivers in western Virginia, as endangered
- During recent surveys at Big Woods WMA, our Herpetologist located Dwarf waterdogs. The finding of this salamander represents the 36th species of amphibian known from the WMA.
- Recent surveys for Henslow’s sparrow, a Tier 1a SGCN in the 2015 WAP, have documented new breeding territories on a site in Fauquier County.
- The second Breeding Bird Atlas, a cooperative project with the Virginia Society of Ornithology, is wrapping up. The Final Products Committee team plans to make the Atlas results available online by the end of this calendar year.
- Our nongame fishes team of Mike and Maddie recently collected federal endangered Candy Darters from Cripple Creek in Wythe County. These collected animals will be used as broodstock, allowing us to expand the population further upstream in support of the species’ recovery.

After comments and questions, the Chair thanked Ms. Martin for her Update.

Boating Division Update: The Chair called on Ms. Stacey Brown for a Boating Division Update.

Ms. Brown reported:

- We finished up the year with 90 boating incidents and 16 fatalities. While this is higher than the number of incidents and fatalities last year, last year was a record low and this year's numbers are more aligned with our average.
- We have a new staff member who has joined us as the Region 1 Boating Safety Education coordinator, Donald Shahan. Donald recently retired from the Coast Guard where he most recently was stationed at the Yorktown training center. Mr. Shahan also has a 100 Ton captain's license, which are impressive credentials and will allow us to provide some innovative trainings and outreach opportunities. We are pleased to welcome him aboard!
- We have been evaluating our boating regulations and will be doing some off-cycle proposals for boating regulations during this year. These will be presented at our March Committee meeting for consideration. We are also tracking some legislation at the General Assembly related to boat registrations and customer service functions.
- We have completed our annual performance report to the U.S. Coast Guard and are currently working on our annual certificate of number report. This report outlines the number of registered boats by vessel type, size, and use.
- We are continuing to develop our strategies and tactics for the Division for the next two years to ensure the Division provides the best service to the boating public and moving the agency's mission of conserving, connecting, and protecting forward, including the digital form of the dockside checklist for rental boats and the development of waterway marker maps for the boating public.

After comments and questions, The Chair thanked Ms. Brown for her Update.

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

- The General Assembly is in session, and he is busy attending meetings
- The December 31, 2024, report – Prioritize enforcement of prohibition against hunting outside of open season is being worked on and will be to the Board soon.

Chair's Report: The Chair appreciates and thanked staff for all their hard work for the agency and to make these committee meetings informative.

The Chair reported the next meeting will be Wednesday, March 19, 2025, and asked for any additional business or comments. The Chair adjourned the meeting at 12:10 pm.

Respectfully submitted,
Frances Boswell
/s/