

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

August 16, 2023
10:00 am

Present: Mr. Jon Cooper, **Chair**, Mr. Brian Vincent, Mr. Leon Boyd **Absent:** Mr. Michael Formica, (alternate) **Board Members** in attendance: Mr. George Terwilliger, Mr. John Daniel, Mr. Tom Sadler; **Executive Director:** Mr. Ryan Brown; **Deputy Directors:** Ms. Becky Gwynn and Mr. Darin Moore; **Director’s Working Group:** Dr. Mike Bednarski, Mr. Bob Smet, Mr. Tom Guess, Mr. George Braxton (virtual), Ms. Paige Pearson, Mr. Paul Kugelman.

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 May 24, 2023, Committee Meeting Minutes:

The Chair called for a motion to approve the May 24, 2023, Wildlife and Boat Committee meeting minutes. Mr. Boyd made a motion to approve the minutes of the May 24, 2023, committee meeting. Mr. Cooper seconded the motion. Ayes: Cooper, Vincent, Boyd

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

Black Bear Mange Update: The Chair called on Dr. John Tracey for an update on Black Bear Mange.

Dr. Tracey gave an update on the status and distribution of mange in Virginia’s black bear population, including a newly funded cooperative research study with Virginia Tech.

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

Public Comment:

- Mr. Sean Clarkson spoke regarding Black Bear Mange

The Chair thanked Mr. Clarkson for his comments.

Boat Regulation Proposals: The Chair called on Mr. Tom Guess to report on the 2022 Boating Survey results.

Mr. Guess presented the 2022 Boating Survey Results. The DWR Board asked staff to survey boaters regarding their support for a child in lifejacket measure that would mirror the federal requirement. Additionally, staff asked other boating related and demographics questions that resulted in some good data to share with the board.

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

Committee and Board Meeting Schedule for 2023-2024: The Chair called on Dr. Mike Bednarski for his regulatory schedule.

Dr. Bednarski presented and discussed the Committee and Board Meeting regulatory schedule for 2023-2024 for Aquatic Wildlife and Boating.

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

The Chair called for a motion, Mr. Boyd made a motion, Mr. Chair, I move that the Wildlife and Boat Committee support the proposed meeting schedule as presented by staff. It was seconded by Mr. Vincent. Ayes: Cooper, Vincent, Boyd

Wildlife Division Update: The Chair called on Deputy Director Becky Gwynn for an update.

Ms. Gwynn reported:

- Virginia Black Bear Management Plan- draft management plan went out for public comment on August 3rd and the public comment period will continue through September 5. To date, we have received 79 comments from 53 counties/cities.
- Elk Conservation License Program
- New CWD Grant Awarded - \$221,413 Grant awarded from USDA-Wildlife Services
- Doe Creek with DU awarded Ducks Unlimited a \$476,000 Grant – Duck’s Unlimited received an additional \$200,000 in matching funds through the Virginia Migratory Waterfowl Stamp Grant Program
- Black Rail – Proposed at Doe Creek \$270, 000 - In collaboration with Atlantic Coast Joint Venture (ACJV) Black Rail Working Group, a multi- year Competitive State Wildlife Grant project entitled Black Rail Habitat creation and Restoration – Designing Management Techniques to Expand the Black Rail Population along the Atlantic Coast was approved and funded by the USFWS in late 2021.
- Ft. Wool and Barges Seabird Project - July 1 Royal Tern drive
Total birds banded 1,017; 844 with PFRs; Sandwich tern chicks banded, all with PFRs: 9

After comments and questions, the Chair thanked Ms. Gwynn for her update.

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

Dr. Bednarski reported:

- Aquatics Staff meeting on September 6 at Sweet Briar, covering topics Hatchery vs. Wild Trout, trends in snakehead abundance, movement of blue catfish, and the results of the F1 Bass stocking study.
- Trout Stocking begins in October and there is an open invitation for the Board. We have a variety of field opportunities.
- Dr. Muroso will be presenting at EPO – he’s the new professor at Virginia State University, and a collaborator on the DWR led aquaculture review of that facility.

After comments and questions, the Chair thanked Mr. Bednarski for his comments.

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

Mr. Guess reported:

- Approval to hire a new Boating Safety Program Manager to replace Stacy Brown who became the Deputy Director
- Still down 1 Customer Service Rep, but we did hire our third supervisor, so we are getting to full compliment, but never quite make it with turnovers. They are very busy up there and doing good work!
- Our Waterways Manager, Jim Patrillo is doing great things and getting his arms around all our waterways and waterways markers, cataloguing them and putting them into Google Earth and making it so we will have maps
- We have had 37 boating incidents to date, 29 injuries and 7 fatalities
- The NASBLA Annual Conference will be held in Denver, Colorado from September 19-22
- The Virginia Harbor Safety Committee will meet on August 30

After comments and questions, the Chair thanked Mr. Guess for his presentation.

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

The Director reported:

- Visited Ft. Wool and the sea bird colony
- New Wildlife Supervisor on Eastern Shore is off and running
- Met with Congresswoman Kiggans to look at land
- Attended Outdoor Sportsman Show – Thanked Staff for all their hard work
- Weekly reports are full of Outreach and events supported by staff
- Mentioned AdHoc Committee survey is complete and will be discussed at Board meeting

The Chair thanked the Director for his report.

Chair's Report: The Chair thanked everyone for attending the Wildlife and Boat Committee meeting and for the updates and presentations and can appreciate all the work that goes into putting them together.

The Chair also commented on how excited he is to work with this committee.

The Chair called on Mr. Leon Boyd, who thanked staff who attended the annual RMEF banquet, there were 400+ people and a good time was had by all...

The Chair asked if anyone had any further comments or questions, hearing none, he announced that the next meeting will be Wednesday, October 25, 2023, and adjourned the meeting at 11:30 am.

Respectfully submitted,

Frances Boswell

/s/