

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

October 25, 2023  
10:00 am

**Present:** Mr. Jon Cooper, **Chair**, Mr. Michael Formica (alternate); **Absent:** Mr. Leon Boyd and Mr. Brian Vincent. **Board Members** in attendance: Mr. George Terwilliger, Mr. John Daniel, **Executive Director:** Mr. Ryan Brown; **Deputy Directors:** Ms. Becky Gwynn; **Director’s Working Group:** Dr. Mike Bednarski, Mr. Bob Smet, Ms. Stacey Brown, 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 August 16, 2023, Committee Meeting Minutes:**

The Chair called for a motion to approve the August 16, 2023, Wildlife and Boat Committee meeting minutes. Mr. Formica made a motion to approve the minutes of the August 16, 2023, committee meeting. Mr. Cooper seconded the motion. Ayes: Cooper & Formica

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

**Black Bear Management Plan:** The Chair called on Mr. Nelson Lafon to present the 2023 – 2032 Virginia Black Bear Management Plan.

Mr. Lafon gave a presentation on the 2023 -2032 Virginia Black Bear Management Plan.

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

Public Comments:

- Mr. Ed Clark spoke regarding 2023-2032 Virginia Black Bear Management Plan
- Mr. Steve Nicely spoke regarding the 2023-2032 Virginia Black Bear Management Plan
- Mr. Sean Clarkson spoke regarding the 2023-2032 Virginia Black Bear Management Plan

Ms. Sam Norman from The Farm Bureau attended the meeting.  
The Chair thanked the speakers for their comments.

The Chair called for a motion. Mr. Cooper made a motion, Mr. Chair, I move that the Wildlife & Boat Committee recommend that the Board endorse the 2023-2032 Virginia Bear Management Plan as presented by staff. It was seconded by Mr. Formica. Ayes: Cooper and Formica

**Wildlife Division and Nongame Program Updates:** The Chair called on Ms. Becky Gwynn for a Division Update.

Ms. Gwynn Reported:

- It is the beginning of Hunting Season, and a lot of work is going on with project leaders and staff in Wildlife Division
- It is the time of year for SEAFWA, NEAFWA, AWFA conferences
- The Wildlife Division has been filling vacancies and retirements with lateral moves and new hires and are getting caught up with filling vacancies.
- The Wildlife Division is in the process of hiring the Wildlife Chief
- Beginning on November 18, 2023, there will be CWD stations in several counties
- There will be a check station setup for the bear mange project
- Gave an update on Corridor Q in Southwest, VA
- DWR Access Teams have held 2 training sessions for new employees and existing employees for a refresher course
- DWR is hosting a Marine Mammal Conservation planning workshop next week in Virginia Beach

After comments and questions, The Chair thanked Ms. Gwynn for her Wildlife and Nongame Program Division report and update.

**Fish Division Update:** The Chair called on Mr. Mike Bednarski for his division update.

- Early January we will begin the regulatory scoping period in conjunction with Boating and Non-Game Section. We will present the results of that during the March meetings, the scoping period is when we reach out to the general public to get their feedback on issues that are of concern to them
- Urban Trout Stocking
- Update on Whirling Disease at the Fish Hatcheries
- Thanked Outreach for their news release on Whirling disease

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

Ms. Brown Reported:

- Announced Ms. Mindy Tucker as the new Boating Program Manager
- Customer Services is finally fully staffed.
- Customer Service has received around 100,000 phone calls this year
- Thanked Ms. Cindy Morgan for the great Customer Service
- Ms. Brown won an award - she is only the 6<sup>th</sup> person selected as a Certified Recreational Boating Professional
- Mr. Tom Guess has taken a job with the Coast Guard and his position is under recruitment

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

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

The Director reported:

- Congratulated Stacey Brown on being selected as the 6<sup>th</sup> person to be a Certified Recreational Boating Professional
- Fall hunting Seasons has opened with good weather and excellent hunting
- Gave out Harvest Numbers for early seasons:
  - Youth/Apprentice Deer Weekend – Harvest was 2,890 deer (up 22% from previous year)
  - 3 Day Early Firearms Bear Season – Harvest was 166 bears (usually around 120-180)
  - Statewide Archery Season (opening weekend) - Harvest was 3,201 (2022 was 1,434)
  - Youth/Apprentice Bear Weekend – Harvest was 173 (up from 129 in 2022)
- The Director thanked Nelson Lafon, Katie Martin and, Carl Tugend for their work on the Bear Management Plan

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 encouraged everyone to get outdoors and enjoy the fall weather and life and the hunting season.

The Chair asked if anyone had any further comments or questions, hearing none, he announced that the next meeting will be Wednesday, January 17, 2024, and adjourned the meeting at 11:20 am.

Respectfully submitted,

Frances Boswell

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