

**Department of Wildlife Resources
Hunting with Hounds - Stakeholder Advisory Committee
September 11, 2023**

Virginia Department of Forestry
900 Natural Resources Dr. Charlottesville, VA 22903

Executive Summary

Fifteen primary members and six alternate members attended the third meeting of the Department of Wildlife Resources (DWR) Stakeholder Advisory Committee (SAC), held at the Department of Forestry office in Charlottesville. Members participated in small groups discussions about three topics identified as common themes in the Stakeholder Assessment Report and by the SAC at the first SAC meeting. Members also heard presentations from Bill Gray (*Outdoor Dog Supply*) about technology used in hunting with hounds, and from Ryan Brown (*Executive Director, DWR*) and Paul Kugelman, Jr. (*Legal Compliance Officer, DWR*) about Virginia's current hunting laws and regulations.

The next meeting of the SAC will be on September 29th.

Welcome and Introductions

Kelly Altizer (*Associate Director of Operations, Institute for Engagement & Negotiation*) opened the meeting along with colleagues Mike Foreman (*Special Projects Manager, Institute for Engagement & Negotiation*), and Chamie Valentine (*Project Consultant, Institute for Engagement & Negotiation*). The IEN team serves as facilitators for the SAC.

Stakeholder Advisory Committee (SAC) members were asked to introduce themselves by sharing their name and organization or seat represented on the committee. Members attending for the first time were also asked to share their connection to the issue.

Meeting attendance was as follows:

- Greg Austin, Virginia Bear Hunter's Association (alternate)
- Kirby Burch, Virginia Hunting Dog Alliance
- Daryl Butler, Virginia Farm Bureau
- Joel Cathey, Citizen Representative
- Sean Clarkson, Virginia Chapter, American Bear Foundation
- Bill Collins, Citizen Representative
- Troy Cook, Virginia Hound Heritage (alternate)
- Sherry Crumley, Citizen Representative
- Dave Griffith, Virginia Deer Hunters Association

- Jim Hackett, Sporting Dog Coalition of Virginia
- Michael Hayes, Virginia Property Rights Alliance (alternate)
- Kevin Marshall, Spotsylvania County
- Kristi Martel, Citizen Representative
- Jim Medeiros, Property Rights Coalition of Virginia (alternate)
- John Morse, Virginia Hunting Dog Alliance (alternate)
- Nolan Nicely, Appalachian Habitat Association
- Steve Nicely, Virginia Bear Hunter's Association
- Debbie Oliver, Citizen Representative
- Chris Patton, Virginia Property Rights Alliance
- Andrew Pullen, Citizen Representative
- Billy Stafford, Sport Dog Coalition of Virginia (alternate)

Participants listed above are primary members unless otherwise noted. Alternate members participated in observer role only, except those who were representing their organization in place of the primary member

DWR team members attending to observe included:

- Ryan Brown, Executive Director
- Jon Cooper, Board of Wildlife Resources
- Paul Kugelman, Jr., Legal Compliance Officer
- Aaron Proctor, Policy Manager
- Major Ryan Shuler, Deputy Chief of Law Enforcement

Steve Living, Habitat Education Coordinator, attended the meeting to assist with small group facilitation.

Ground Rules, Meeting Summary, and Process Review

Mr. Foreman reviewed the ground rules developed by the SAC at the first meeting. Ms. Altizer provided an overview of the Meeting Summary of the August 31st meeting, which members received as a handout, and previewed the agenda for the day.

Small Group Work: Continue Development of Recommendations

Building upon the previous SAC meeting, members were divided into three groups and rotated through stations to continue exploration of what components might need to be included in recommendations about each of the following topics:

Safety

- What changes are needed with regard to safety to improve relationships between hound hunters and landowners?

Increase Ethical Hunting Practices

- How would you like to increase the use of ethical hunting practices? In your view, what changes are needed?

Consideration of Other State Approaches

- In what ways might the approaches of other states be useful for improving relationships between landowners and hound hunters in Virginia?

Below please find the notes for each group listed (a reminder that these constitute initial ideas and points for exploration only):

Safety

The small group discussion reflected a broad spectrum of concerns, including those related to the safety of all stakeholders in the hunting context, including hunters, landowners, hounds, pets, and livestock. Road hunting was noted as a challenge regarding safety, due in large part to varying rules and regulations across counties. There are additional difficulties when the right to retrieve coincides with an area where someone is still hunting and might not be aware that a person has entered their property to retrieve a hound. Effective communication, public education, and enforcing accountability are crucial to prevent hounds from entering unsafe areas and ensuring dog safety. Contacting CPOs in a timely manner should also be prioritized.

Increase Ethical Hunting Practices of Public Lands

Discussion in this small group included the idea of implementing a comprehensive dog identification system, distinguishing between pets and hunting dogs with collars, paint markings, identification numbers, and hunter contact information. Some members feel it's crucial to reconsider the complaint-to-response ratio, ensuring that violators who put dogs onto properties without permission are held accountable. Enforcement efforts should focus on repeat offenders within the hunting community while leveraging technological advancements and improving coordination between local and state law enforcement agencies. Moreover, for private property, establishing better contact mechanisms, including advance preparation, written permissions, and clear permission acquisition requirements, along with considering mechanisms for addressing larger properties like national forests are suggested. For some group participants, trespassing is the central focus of any conversation on ethics.

Other States Practices

Discussion in this group focused on what steps other states have taken around hunting with hounds and the impact those regulations have had on hunters and the population of wildlife. SAC members expressed interest in understanding the statutes of Southeastern states regulating deer hound hunting, Northeastern states regulating bear dog hunting, Texas' deer dog prohibition, and Kentucky and West Virginia's regulations. They also sought information on how Virginia laws address fox hound hunting, with a particular interest in preserve/pen use and written permission requirements. Concerns about the accountability of deer dog hunters and the potential for lawsuits were raised. Additionally, members discussed the importance of

examining laws in Georgia, Florida, Alabama, and the Northeast regarding deer and bear dog hunting, acreage requirements, and control mechanisms, including the "right to retrieve" and baiting practices.

When small groups finished their work, facilitators for each station shared a brief recap of the notes on what group had covered.

Technology Presentation – Bill Gray, Outdoor Dog Supply

Bill Gray (*Outdoor Dog Supply*) presented to SAC members on the technology involved in hunting with hounds, including the abilities and constraints of tools like GPS collars and geofencing. The summary of Mr. Gray's presentation is being reviewed by him to confirm accuracy, and a final version of this document will be shared following his review.

Virginia's Hunting Laws and Regulations Presentation – Ryan Brown and Paul Kugelman, Jr.

Ryan Brown and Paul Kugelman, Jr. from the Department of Wildlife Resources shared with SAC members a presentation on Virginia's current hunting laws and regulations. They noted how property rights and hound hunting intersect by explaining crimes against real property and personal property, as well as different classes of penalties and fines. Codes involving trespassing are as follows:

- 18.2-132 *Trespass by hunters and fishers;*
- 18.2-132.1 *Trespass by hunters using dogs; penalty;*
- 18.2-133 *Refusal of person on land, etc., of another to identify himself, and*
- 18.2-134 *Trespass on posted property.*

There was discussion within the group around code 18.2-132.1, specifically:

Any person who intentionally releases hunting dogs on the lands of another which have been posted in accordance with the provisions of § [18.2-134.1](#) to hunt without the consent of the landowner or his agent is guilty of a Class 3 misdemeanor. A second or subsequent violation of this section within three years is a Class 1 misdemeanor and, upon conviction, the court shall revoke such person's hunting or trapping license for a period of one year. The fact that hunting dogs are present on the lands of another alone is not sufficient evidence to prove that the person acted intentionally. 2016, c. [373](#).

A member raised the issue of dogs that are repeatedly dropped on land that is adjoining other properties, and how it creates issues for those who experience the dogs running through their property even when the dogs weren't dropped there. As the code is currently written, it only applies to the hunter and landowner where the dogs were dropped. Members discussed possible changes to the language that could address repeat offenders who cannot currently be cited due to the constraints of the code, with conversation around what constitutes "intention", and where phrases like "willful action" or "due regard" might be more appropriate.

Data from tracking collars can prove where a dog was dropped but isn't always accessible by law enforcement.

Slides from this presentation will be shared with SAC members, as well as posted on DWR's website.

Next Steps

Ms. Altizer shared that the IEN team would continue working with DWR to arrange the additional presentations that had been requested by the SAC, and that IEN expects that these will continue at the next meeting on September 29th.

Ms. Altizer thanked everyone for attending, and the meeting adjourned.