

**Department of Wildlife Resources
Hound-Hunters & Private Landowners Stakeholder Advisory Committee
September 29, 2023**

Virginia Department of Environmental Quality
4949-A Cox Road, Glen Allen

Executive Summary

Eleven primary members and eight alternate members attended the fourth meeting of the Department of Wildlife Resources (DWR) Stakeholder Advisory Committee (SAC), held at the Department of Environmental Quality in Glen Allen. Members heard presentations from Lieutenant Jessica Fariss (DWR) and Major Ryan Shuler (DWR) regarding law enforcement, and from Nelson Lafon (DWR) about the approaches of other states regarding hunting with hounds.

The next meeting of the SAC will be on September October 19th.

Welcome and Introductions

Kelly Altizer (*Associate Director of Operations, Institute for Engagement & Negotiation*) opened the meeting along with Chamie Valentine (*Project Consultant, Institute for Engagement & Negotiation*).

Stakeholder Advisory Committee (SAC) members were asked to introduce themselves by sharing their name and organization or seat represented on the committee, and what connects them to this issue.

Meeting attendance was as follows:

- Greg Austin, Virginia Bear Hunter's Association (alternate)
- Kirby Burch, Virginia Hunting Dog Alliance
- Sean Clarkson, Virginia Chapter, American Bear Foundation
- Bill Collins, Citizen Representative
- Troy Cook, Virginia Hound Heritage (alternate)
- David Griffith, Virginia Deer Hunters Association
- Jim Hackett, Sporting Dog Coalition of Virginia
- Michael Hayes, Virginia Property Rights Alliance (alternate)
- Jared Hubbard, Virginia Chapter, American Bear Foundation (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
- Sam Norman, Virginia Farm Bureau (alternate)
- Chris Patton, Virginia Property Rights Alliance
- Amanda Savignano, Property Rights Coalition of Virginia
- 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 included:

- Jenn Allen, Assistant Chief, Wildlife Division
- Ryan Brown, Executive Director
- Jon Cooper, Board of Wildlife Resources
- Lieutenant Jessica Fariss
- Nelson Lafon, Forest Wildlife Program Manager
- Aaron Proctor, Policy Manager
- Major Ryan Shuler, Deputy Chief of Law Enforcement (virtually)

Ground Rules, Meeting Summary, and Process Review

Ms. Altizer reviewed the ground rules developed by the SAC at the first meeting. She also provided an overview of the Meeting Summary of the September 11th meeting, which members received as a handout, and previewed the agenda for the day. She shared that IEN's team had originally intended for virtual meetings to be part of the SAC process, but many members had indicated obstacles that would prevent them from being able to participate in that way. For that reason, the IEN team has added a sixth in-person meeting to the SAC process. Tentative dates have been shared with SAC members for input on their availability on those dates.

Presentation: Law Enforcement

Lieutenant Jessica Fariss (DWR) presented to SAC members on the agency's law enforcement, including how various complaints are classified within their system. She explained the changes that were made effective February 2023 to improve the collection and categorization of complaints, which more accurately delineates where and how hunting hounds are or are not involved in complaints being made. The presentation included maps to reflect the geographic distribution of complaints statewide. Major Ryan Shuler (DWR) joined Lt. Fariss virtually to answer SAC member questions.

Several SAC members expressed frustration that the way the data was categorized prior to February 2023 makes it difficult to clearly identify areas where complaints have increased or decreased. The group largely acknowledged that the changes made in February will be helpful to having a more accurate understanding of complaints moving forward. A member inquired about how to learn about the Call for Service (CFS) data connected to complaints that they had made. Case files can be requested from the responding officer under the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA). There was also discussion around the concern that some people are filing false complaints, such as indicating that a hunting hound is on their property when it is someone's pet dog. Some members expressed interest in establishing a consequence for people making false complaints.

Following the presentation by Lt. Fariss, Ryan Brown shared an update with members regarding discussion from previous meetings around possible revisions to code § 18.2-132.1. Trespass by hunters using dogs; penalty. Based on those SAC discussions, he is planning to meet with the Attorney General's office to explore what possibilities might exist for how to improve enforceability of this statute.

Discussions also included the right-to-retrieve statute (code § 18.2-136), and how it creates an exception to criminal trespassing laws to allow hunters to retrieve their hunting dogs if fully adhering to the requirements of § 18.2-136. (It does not negate liability for other types of civil trespass.)

SAC members also discussed common scenarios that are of concern by landowners:

1. Allowing hounds to run at night without any oversight.
2. Directly releasing hounds on a landowner's property without consent of that landowner.
3. Releasing hounds on neighboring lands and then run across the adjacent landowner's property without consent of that landowner.

Presentation: Hunting with Hounds Approaches by Other States

Nelson Lafon (DWR) presented to the SAC members on the approaches used by other states that allow hunting with hounds for deer and bear.

For hunting with hounds for deer, Mr. Lafon used with permission the 2020 article "Best management practices and current status of dog-deer hunting in the southeastern United States" by D'Angelo, G. J, T.J. Prebyl, D.A. Osborn, and J.A. Rosenberger in 2020 for the Southeastern Association of Fish and Wildlife as a foundation for the presentation. Mr. Lafon conducted outreach to each of the states identified in the article and provided updates on state-specific regulation changes made since the article was published, as they were provided to him by staff members of state wildlife agencies representing those respective states. This

outreach resulted in a few changes to the state regulation information presented in Tables 1 and 2 of the D'Angelo et al. (2020) paper. If they have not reviewed it already, SAC members can find this scientific paper here:

<https://seafwa.org/journal/2020/best-management-practices-and-current-status-dog-deer-hunting-southeastern-united>

For hunting with hounds for bear, Mr. Lafon conducted outreach to biologists with state wildlife agencies in the following states: Maine, New Hampshire, New York, North Carolina, Tennessee, Vermont, and West Virginia. His presentation to the SAC included the summary of that outreach.

Next Steps

Ms. Altizer shared that the last two meetings of the SAC would be focused on moving forward the ideas that group members have shared to this point to create recommendations from the SAC to DWR's Board. She thanked everyone for attending, and the meeting adjourned.