

**Wildlife and Boat Committee Meeting Minutes
Board of Game and Inland Fisheries
Board Room, 4000 West Broad Street
Richmond, Virginia 23230**

May 11, 2009, 9:30am

Present: Richard E. Railey, Jr., Committee Chairman and Mr. Charles Yates. **Absent:** Mr. Ward Burton. **Senior Staff:** Bob Ellis, David Whitehurst, Larry Hart, Gary Martel, Lee Walker, Colonel Dee Watts, and Charlie Sledd.

The Chairman welcomed everyone and called the meeting to order at 9:30am.

Approval of Minutes: The minutes of the February 5, 2009 meeting have been posted to the Web site and copies were distributed to the Committee members for review. **Mr. Yates made a motion for the minutes to be approved as submitted. Mr. Railey seconded the motion: Ayes: Railey and Yates.**

The minutes of the October 8, 2008 meeting have been posted to the Web site and copies were distributed to the Committee members for review. **Mr. Yates made a motion for the minutes to be approved as submitted. Mr. Railey seconded the motion: Ayes: Railey and Yates.**

Review of Hunting and Trapping Regulation Amendment Proposals and Public Comments: Mr. Bob Ellis presented the following review of regulations stating there are 36 Regulations out for amendment and 74 Doe Day amendments. He presented information on the public comment period (March 11 to May 11, 2009) noting that there were forms filled out as well as web comments. There were a total of 423 written comments and 1,738 web comments (Approximately 600 were about the Bear license). Mr. Ellis noted that 10 public meetings were held with 505 attendees.

DEER:

4VAC15-90-23: Youth deer hunting day.
Web Comments – 76

4VAC15-90-21: Uniform 7-week firearms season in Pittsylvania
Web Comments – 5

4VAC15-90-70: (Archery) Remove Pittsylvania from late archery; allow archers to possess a muzzleloader
Web Comments – 41

4VAC15-90-80: (Muzzleloader) Shift ES hunting day during early season WBR; reduce ES hunting days on public and certain private land WBR; increase ES hunting days on private land in SW

Web Comments – 53

4VAC15-90-90: (Bag limits) Increase buck bag limit WBR in early muzzleloader; allow 4th antlered buck in SE counties

Web Comments – 74

4VAC15-90-91: (Firearms either-sex hunting days) Increase ES hunting days on private lands; reduce ES hunting days on public and certain private lands WBR

Web Comments – 85

BEAR:

4VAC15-50-10: (Firearms) Add closed counties to six-week season

Web Comments – 43

4VAC15-50-20: (Firearms) Remove certain public lands in SW from two-week season to be included in six-week season

Web Comments – 16

4VAC15-50-21: (Firearms) Six-day season in Southside

Web Comments – 14

4VAC15-50-22: (Firearms) Shift opening day from Monday to preceding Saturday in NW counties

Web Comments – 31

4VAC15-50-70: (Archery) Make archery bear season concurrent with archery deer season; allow archers to carry a muzzleloader

Web Comments – 99

4VAC15-50-71: (Muzzleloading) Add counties to season; extend current 4 day season to 6 days or 12 days depending on locale

Web Comments – 56

4VAC15-50-110: Make use of dogs consistent for hunting deer and bear; correct error regarding Roanoke County

Web Comments – 41

4VAC15-50-120: (Bear hound training season) Remove 2nd week of training season in Southside; make weapons possession consistent with other training seasons; correct error regarding Roanoke County

Web Comments – 28

SPECIAL BEAR LICENSE:

4VAC15-40-22: Special license for hunting bear

Web Comments – 468

4VAC15-20-65: Special license for hunting bear (license fees)

Web Comments – 141

4VAC15-50-81: (Bear Checking Procedure) Remove references to deer and turkey on license
Web Comments – 43

4VAC15-90-231: (Deer Checking Procedure) Remove references to bear on license
Web Comments – 33

4VAC15-240-81: (Turkey Checking Procedure) Remove references to bear on license
Web Comments – 18

TURKEY:

4VAC15-240-10: (Six-week fall season WBR) Add one day to two-week early segment
Web Comments – 47

4VAC15-240-11: (Six-week fall season EBR) Add one day to two-week early segment
Web Comments – 9

4VAC15-240-20: (Two-week fall season) Add one day to the end of the two-week season
Web Comments – 7

4VAC15-240-31: (Four-week fall season) Add one day to the two-week early segment
Web Comments – 6

4VAC15-240-81: (Turkey Checking Procedure) Remove references to bear on license; require telephone checking during spring turkey season
Web Comments – 18

4VAC15-240-91: (Checking Procedure – License exempt) Require telephone or online checking during spring turkey season
Web Comments – 4

SMALL GAME:

4VAC15-230-21: (Spring Season – Gray and Red Squirrel) Open private lands and additional public lands
Web Comments – 46

4VAC15-230-61: (Spring Season – Fox Squirrel) Open private lands and additional public lands
Web Comments – 20

4VAC15-230-60: (Fox Squirrel – General Season) Open season in 6 counties
Web Comments – 19

FURBEARER AND TRAPPING:

4VAC15-170-21: Establish uniform otter trapping season WBR
Web Comments – 12

4VAC15-210-20: Allow raccoon chase on public lands in SW; clarify weapons possession language

Web Comments – 38

4VAC15-40-210: Restricted use of certain steel foothold traps

Web Comments – 18

4VAC15-40-170: Marking of traps by person setting

Web Comments – 22

4VAC15-40-195: 72 hour trap visitation

Web Comments – 28

4VAC15-70-50: Bobcat pelts to be sealed before sale

Web Comments – 14

4VAC15-170-30: Otter pelts to be sealed before sale

Web Comments – 3

GENERAL:

4VAC15-40-60: (Cased Gun Law) Include crossbow in list of weapons; update definitions of loaded crossbow and muzzleloader to reflect new technology

Web Comments – 29

4VAC15-270-20: Remove Suffolk from list of counties/cities where rifles are prohibited for deer and bear hunting

Web Comments – 16

4VAC15-270-80: Allow unplugged shotguns for crow hunting

Web Comments – 35

Guiding Principles in Developing Regulation Recommendations:

Resource first

Utilize best science in decision making

Achieve population objectives

Consider biological, sociological, economical, political and enforcement impacts

Maximize hunting recreation

Equitable distribution of recreation

Simplify regulations

Questions and Answers:

Mr. Yates asked if Mr. Ellis knew how many of the commenters were from out of state. Mr. Ellis' response was that he saw a few that were from out of state but they had not been separated. Mr. Ellis said that he would get the figures for him and submit them at the Board meeting.

Mr. Yates asks if Mr. Ellis' staff has seen anything that they might change their recommendations on, based on the comments from the Bear Hunters' Association. Mr. Ellis responded by saying that it is too early to say anything about that. Mr. Ellis said that from what they have seen he believes the season changes are not a bad thing. Mr. Ellis reminded the Committee that the figures are basically coming from the web comments and he has approximately 300 written comments that are mostly opposed to any type of increase in season.

Mr. Yates asked if the 300 written comments mostly represent hound hunters. Mr. Ellis' response was yes.

Mr. Yates commented that as far as he is concerned if you are going to separate Bear from the Big Game license then the rest should be separated as well. He also said that it would be interesting to know how many other states consolidate the tags. Mr. Ellis stated that staff had this information but he did not have it with him. He will present it during the June meeting.

Mr. Yates commented that the more information the staff can submit to the Board is better for them to understand how staff came to its conclusions.

Public Opinion on Elk in SW Virginia: Mr. Ellis presented his report on Elk in SW Virginia stating that staff needed to come up with a process to look at whether Elk establishment in SW Virginia is feasible or not. The first place to look is to survey the landowners. The landowners would be surveyed in a cluster of counties such as Buchanan, Wise and Dickinson. Then an adjacent cluster of counties - Lee, Russell, Scott, Tazewell, Washington and Smith - would be surveyed. The landowners would be randomly selected off of the tax database from these counties.

Mr. Yates asked Mr. Ellis if he had drafted the survey instrument form and requested to see it when he had. Mr. Ellis told Mr. Yates that he had not drafted it yet and he would show it to him when it was written.

Mr. Ellis continued with his report stating that the survey would continue with the same survey questions to the National Forest, state parks and other public landowners. Staff will be working together between May and July to develop the questions for the survey. The first mailing of the questionnaire will probably be mailed in August and the second in September. Results should be back in time for the October Board meeting.

Mr. Railey thanked Mr. Ellis for his reports.

Status report on White Nose Syndrome in bats: Mr. David Whitehurst presented this report. Significant items to be reported are:

- 1) On April 8, Rick Reynolds responded to a report of a bat roosting on the side of a building in Cumberland County. Photographs sent to the VDGIF web site revealed signs of the fungus on the wing membranes. The bat was collected and sent to the USGS

National Wildlife Health Lab. The initial report indicates the bat was in poor health condition, weighing 4 grams (typical weight for this species should be 7-8 grams). We are waiting for the final report.

2) On April 21, Rick responded to a report of WNS at Endless Caverns in Rockingham County. Several symptomatic bats were collected and submitted to USGS for analysis. We are waiting for the final report. Note - this was the first report from Virginia of WNS in a “commercial” cave.

3) On April 24, staff from DCR-DNH and volunteer cavers from the Virginia Area Survey responded to a report of WNS in Newberry-Bane Cave in Bland County. Several specimens were collected and submitted to USGS for analysis. We are waiting for the final report.

Educational Efforts:

- VDGIF staff worked with staff from DCR-DNH, the Virginia Cave Board, USFWS, and caving groups (Virginia Area Region, Cave Conservancies of Virginia, Virginia Area Survey, and the National Speleological Society) to develop a “closed cave” list for Virginia. Though we recommend a voluntary moratorium on recreational caving until WNS is understood and controlled, we recognize that not all individuals will abide by this recommendation. The document, entitled “*Recommended measures to reduce the spread of White Nose Syndrome in Virginia*” lists 62 Virginia caves considered important hibernacula or maternity sites for our native bats, and also recommends specific gear decontamination protocols and restrictions on the use of caving gear. This document is posted on the VDGIF web site.
- VDGIF staff has worked with numerous media contacts to get the word out to the general public. Some of the media contacts include: Washington Post, Staunton News Leader, WFIR-Roanoke, Winchester Star, WTOP-Washington D.C., Richmond Times Dispatch, and WHSV-TV3-Harrisonburg.
- We continue to update the VDGIF web site with up-to-date information on WNS.

Survey and Management Efforts:

- Rick Reynolds will attend two interstate meetings in May to explore our current understanding of WNS, and to develop regional and state guidance for WNS monitoring and containment. The USFWS is sponsoring the first meeting, to address efforts relating to WNS and hibernacula management (May 11-13). Bat Conservation International is then sponsoring a scientific strategy meeting to prioritize research aimed at addressing the causes and management options for WNS (May 27-28). After these meetings, VDGIF will prioritize and develop final plans for our 2009 summer and fall WNS survey and management efforts.
- VDGIF has received a \$15,000 Endangered Species Grant from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to contract for additional staff support to conduct WNS surveys

and related research this calendar year. Additional federal funding to survey, contain, and manage WNS is anticipated.

- We banded 93 bats at Breathing Cave (Bath County) to: (1) determine survival rates of bats in WNS-affected caves; (2) track movement of bats from a WNS affected cave; and (3) collect physical data (weight, sex, reproductive condition, signs of WNS, etc.) from individuals from a WNS affected cave. Of the 93 bats banded, 35 (37.6%) showed signs of the fungus associated with WNS. This is higher than the estimated 15-20% of bats that exhibited the fungus when the site was first surveyed in February.
- We continue to participate in the biweekly WNS strategy conference calls with the USGS and USFWS.

Additional Developments:

- On request, VDGIF provided a Question and Answer factsheet regarding Virginia's bats and WNS to Senator Jim Webb's office, for his use in addressing constituent inquiries on this topic.
- On May 5th, thirteen U.S. Senators and 12 Congressmen, including Senators Mark Warner and Jim Webb, and Congressman Rick Boucher, cosigned a letter to Ken Salazar, Secretary of the Interior, expressing concern over WNS and requesting immediate, emergency funding to combat WNS.
- Upon return from the above-referenced interagency meetings regarding WNS, VDGIF staff will resume development of the Department's White-Nose Syndrome Response Plan.

Mr. Railey thanked Mr. Whitehurst for his report.

Coursey Springs Hatchery: Mr. Gary Martel presented this report. He presented a couple of slides showing before and during construction photos. He explained what the photos show including a new feed building that has been built. The project is currently on schedule. He noted the minimum anticipated production is 300,000 lbs which is approximately a 30 – 40% increase in production. The project started in June 2008 with about an 18 month completion time.

Mr. Yates asked if the bedrock issue had been resolved. Mr. Martel responded by saying that the bedrock is being removed where it needs to be and adjustments are being made to reduce the amount of cost wherever possible.

Mr. Railey thanked Mr. Martel for his report.

Recycling of Monofilament Line Project: Mr. Ron Southwick presented this report. This project is a partnership between the Department of Game and Inland Fisheries, Virginia Marine Resource Commission, and the Virginia Secretary of Natural Resources to recycle old fishing line. In February 2009, two recycling containers were installed at Ancarrows Landing in Richmond. A news release was sent out promoting the project. The project now has 20 sponsors and 89 sites for the containers:

Virginia's Fishing Line Recycling Program Sponsors
(as of 4/20/2009)

Virginia Bass Federation
Northern Virginia Kayak Fishing Club
Isle of Wight County Ruritan Club
Isle of Wight Isaac Walton League
International Paper
Bassjans Bass Club
Virginia Chapter, American Fisheries Society
Orange County High School Angling Club
Jetts Hardware – Rappahannock River – Reedville
Fairfax County Parks Authority
Bass Federation Nation
Dept of Conservation & Recreation – State Parks
Gloucester County
U.S.Army – Ft. Belvoir
Waverly Ruritan Club
Marine Resources Commission
Dept of Game & Inland Fisheries
Prince Edward County
Wakefield Ruritan Club
Hercules Incorporated

Used Line Collection Sites:

DGIF Richmond Office
DGIF Field Offices
VMRC Field Offices
BassPro Shop Stores (Hampton, Richmond)
Several Sponsor Locations

Mr. Southwick presented a sign for the project and a sample of collection from Ancarrows.

Other Business/ Comments: Mr. Whitehurst commented that some damage was sustained to the Clinch Mountain Wildlife Management Area due to a possible tornado. Trees were down but no one was trapped or injured. A contractor is being called in to clear up the debris. The road is currently closed and should be reopened in the next day or so.

Boy Scouts: Mr. Whitehurst reported that during the last Board meeting Pete Davis came and gave a proposal to move the Boy Scout Jamboree to the Goshen Boy Scout Camp, which is adjacent to the Department's Goshen Little North Mountain WMA. Last Monday he took the Deputy Secretary of Natural Resources to the site to show her the

property and also met with the Virginia Economic Development Partnership. Jay Jefferies met with the Chief Operating Officer for the consulting firm that is working on this for the Boy Scouts. A public meeting was also held in regards to this matter. This project is in its early stages. DGIF has made it clear that it owns the adjacent property and discussions are being held to determine what the Scouts needs may be and what our ability may be to accommodate those needs.

Jay Jefferies gave a brief overview of the issue with the Boy Scouts. He expressed his concerns during these meetings and expressed the facts that these lands are wildlife management lands. We can expect to see a proposal from Trinity Works within the next four months that detail what their plans are for use of the Department's land.

Fish Kills: Mr. Martel mentioned fish kills typically occur each year and start in April then peak in May. We are currently monitoring this situation. So far there haven't been any significant reports of fish kills.

Illegal Collection of State Endangered Fish Last Year: Mr. Whitehurst reported that the Department's Law Enforcement Officials launched an investigation which went to court in April. The morning of court the company's attorneys approached our attorneys and came to a settlement of \$45,000 being paid to the Department for restoration.

Depredation Permits of Resident Geese: Mr. Ellis reported that starting May 1, 2009 we began issuing depredation permits for resident geese on agricultural properties. This is the outcome of the EIS that was done on resident geese. The calls will go to the USDA Wildlife Services where they will be screened; then the request will be sent to us to issue the permit. To date, we have issued 10 permits.

Mr. Yates had a question regarding the attendance at the public meeting held on the regulation amendments. He wanted to know if people were there for other themes besides bear hunting. Mr. Ellis' responded that it was almost all bear hunters at the larger attended meetings. Mr. Ellis said that Buffalo Gap and Roanoke were the two largest hearings.

Mr. Yates asked if the Quail Action Plan is still moving forward. Mr. Ellis said we are doing quite a bit but would like to hold off until the next meeting on June 15, 2009, to give Mr. Yates an update. Mr. Yates commented that he will not be able to attend the meeting on June 15.

The next meeting of the Committee will be June 15, 2009 at 9:30AM. There being no further business the meeting was adjourned.

Respectfully Submitted,

Kimberly F. Crockett