

Minutes
Board of Natural Resources
2 Martin Luther King, Jr. Drive, S. E.
Suite 1252 East Tower
Atlanta, GA 30334

September 22, 2020
9:00 a.m.
Via Teleconference Call

Attendees:

Board Members

Nancy Addison, Chair
Dee Yancey, Vice Chair
Bill Jones, Secretary
William Bagwell
Dwight Davis
Denney, Patrick
Dwight Evans
Joe Hatfield
Duncan N. Johnson, Jr.
Ray Lambert
Rob Leebern
Tim Lowe
Mike Phelps
Billy New
Paul Shailendra
Brother Stewart
Miki Thomaston

Staff Members

Mark Williams, Commissioner
Walter Rabon
Kyle Pearson
Kate Iannuzzi
Josh Hildebrandt
Cathy Barnette
Amber Carter
Artica Gaston
Courtney Hall
Thomas Barnard
Jeff Cown
Steve Friedman
Rusty Garrison
Doug Haymans

Richard Dunn, Director
Lauren Curry
Jac Capp
Karen Hays
Chuck Mueller
Laura Williams

The September 22, 2020 Board of Natural Resources meeting was called to order by Chair Nancy Addison.

Chair Addison called on Captain Mike Burgamy to give the invocation.

Chair Addison called on Cathy Barnette for roll call and declaration of quorum.

Chair Addison adjourned the Board meeting to move into the Committee meetings.

Chair Addison called the meeting of the Board of Natural Resources to order.

Chair Addison called for a motion to approve the August 25, 2020 minutes.

A motion was made by Mr. Davis, seconded by Ms. Thomaston, and carried unanimously to approve the August 25, 2020 minutes.

Chair Addison called on Richard Dunn, Director of the Environmental Protection Division, for his report.

Director Dunn updated the Board on upcoming proposed rule revisions, budget developments, the impact of the pandemic on air pollution, Dr. Jim Boylan's appointment to serve on the EPA Clean Air Scientific Advisory Committee, and the status of Florida v. Georgia at the Supreme Court.

Director Dunn stated this concluded his report.

Chair Addison called on Mark Williams, Commissioner of the Department of Natural Resources, for his report.

Commissioner Williams began his report with the passing of Captain Stan Elrod, a committed officer and 28-year veteran of the DNR Law Enforcement Division. He stated Captain Elrod spent his entire career with the DNR as a game warden, and rose to the position of region supervisor over the Region 2 office in Gainesville, GA. He further stated that Captain Elrod will be remembered for his selfless service and complete devotion to the safety of his fellow officers, fellow Georgians, and his state's natural resources. He added the DNR family is beyond grateful to have worked with and known Captain Elrod.

A moment of silence was observed in remembrance of Captain Stan Elrod.

Commissioner Williams provided a brief update on the upcoming legislative session. He stated at the beginning of the month, the department turned in an agency legislation package to the Governor's office and are now waiting to hear what will be approved for the department to pursue. He added that the budget was submitted for the upcoming year and, stemming from the directions that were given, the department drafted and submitted a flat budget.

Commissioner Williams updated the Board on the federal Land and Water Conservation Fund grant program. He stated that approximately \$9 million is available for local governments this year, which is a large increase from the normal \$2-3 million in funds. He further stated the program is designed to assist states and local governments with funds to acquire, develop, and

renovate outdoor recreation facilities and encouraged the Board members to share the information about the program with their communities. He added the pre-application period is open and will remain open through October 31.

Commissioner Williams thanked the Board for donating \$3,100 to the agency to purchase COVID-19 masks for DNR employees. He stated these monies have been distributed to the divisions and their actions have undoubtedly protected the DNR family.

Commissioner Williams provided an update on the Law Enforcement Division and shared a bit of information regarding Captain Elrod. He stated that Captain Elrod was struck and killed by a motor vehicle the evening of September 3, while in the line of duty and physically training in Danielsville, GA. He further stated that the driver crossed the centerline and struck Captain Elrod near the shoulder. He added the driver was arrested at the scene and is facing a long list of charges, including 1st Degree Vehicular Homicide and has been denied bond.

Commissioner Williams stated Captain Elrod's funeral service in Toccoa, GA, was attended by over 1,000 mourners, including Governor Brian Kemp. He further stated that 300 LE personnel attended from the Georgia State Patrol, Georgia Bureau of Investigation, South Carolina, Alabama, Florida, Tennessee, Kentucky, North Carolina, and numerous counties and cities across the state. He added the eulogy was given by Colonel Thomas Barnard, and the following graveside service included a 21-gun salute by DNR LE Honor Guard, a Last Radio Call ceremony, and a missing man flyover by DNR/GSP Aviation.

Commissioner Williams stated the DNR family is currently collecting one big donation to send to the Outdoor Dream Foundation, to help honor Captain Elrod's legacy.

Commissioner Williams stated the Law Enforcement Division wrapped up a wildlife smuggling ring investigation coordinated with Florida conservation officers. He further stated that over 3,600 southern flying squirrels were caught in Florida and smuggled through Georgia. He added that 7 suspects, including the head trafficker and lead smuggler, were charged with smuggling.

Commissioner Williams stated that the passage of a bill in the 2019 session, boat titling in Georgia, began on July 1. He further stated that since then, numerous boats have been reported stolen or abandoned. He added that in August, LED recovered 6 stolen vessels across the state.

Commissioner Williams stated that opening weekend for dove season in Georgia was a busy one for game wardens, as countless Georgians enjoyed the time-honored tradition. He further stated that over 4,000 hunters and 370 fields were checked, and a harvest of nearly 9,000 birds was reported.

Commissioner Williams stated on September 10, the DNR celebrated the standing up of three new LED K-9 units. He further stated that this year's celebration was extra special as the ceremony took place at the Governor's Mansion in Atlanta. He added that the First Lady of Georgia personally hosted all 7 DNR K-9 units and the LED command staff. He further added that the First Lady Marty Kemp made her great support and appreciation for DNR and the hard-working officers of LED abundantly clear by handing out badges, taking pictures and loving on the dogs. He stated he is grateful to the First Lady for making this happen.

Commissioner Williams provided an update for the Parks, Recreation and Historic Sites Division and thanked Director Jeff Cown and his team for their hard work to oversee a reorganization, similar to what WRD and LED did last year. He stated the reorganization will result in the establishment of the same region boundaries across LED, WRD, and Parks, which will bring consistency to the department's cross-division communications, reduce duplication of services, and improve operational efficiency for headquarters and region level supervisors. He stated the reorganization process will span over FY21 and FY22, with a projected completion date in late FY 22.

Commissioner Williams stated that as the pandemic continues to impact our state for the eighth month, Georgians are still showing that they are eager to get outdoors to seek safe recreation with family and friends. He further stated that no one sees and experiences this more than our world-class parks and historic sites staff. He added that camping, cottages, and yurts rentals remain high and golf courses rarely have empty tee times. He further added that as days cool and sites explode with fall color, demand will only continue to increase.

Commissioner Williams stated that site managers from across Georgia gathered at Indian Springs State Park in late August for the statewide managers conference and awards luncheon. He further stated it was his honor to be there and recognize the dedication of the staff and celebrate the success of the division during this very different year.

Commissioner Williams announced the Most Outstanding Site Operation Award, which is the highest annual honor for a property, went to A. H. Stephens State Park. He stated Brad Gibson of Cloudland Canyon State Park was awarded as Manager of the Year. He further stated that these awards are quite competitive, and the winners are well-deserving of the honors.

Commissioner Williams called on Kyle Pearson, Executive Counsel, for an action item.

Mr. Pearson stated that the department is requesting approval to see the redirection of \$2,805,000.00 of General Obligation Bond funds from DNR 159 to DNR 144 for the acquisition of approximately 4,400 acres of the Ceylon Tract. He further stated DNR 159 provided funding for renovations for various State Park facilities, as well as renovations for fish hatcheries, barrier

island improvements, and the Radium Springs run bridge and trail system. He added the amount remaining in DNR 159 after the proposed redirect will be sufficient to complete the necessary renovations as detailed in the original scope of the project. He further added that DNR 144 provided funding for land acquisition to preserve wildlife.

Mr. Pearson stated the Ceylon Tract consists of approximately 16,082 acres bordering the lower Satilla River in Camden County. He further stated the Department plans to acquire approximately 4,400 acres of this tract in this phase, and the rest of the property in a future purchase. He added in order to acquire this portion of the Ceylon Tract, a redirect from DNR 159 to DNR 144 is needed.

A motion was made by Mr. Jones, seconded by Mr. Yancey, and carried unanimously that the Board approve the Redirect of General Obligation Bond Funds.

Commissioner Williams stated this concluded his report.

Chair Addison called on Dwight Davis, Chairman of the Land Committee, for his report.

A motion was made by Mr. Davis, seconded by Mr. Shailendra, and carried unanimously that the Board adopt the Resolution to authorize the Commissioner to seek State Properties Commission approval to enter into a Supplemental Agreement No. 2 to the Memorandum of Understanding with the Georgia Department of Transportation, a First Amendment to the Intergovernmental Agreement with Cobb County, and a Short-Term Agreement with PATH Foundation for the Silver Comet Trail Addition in Cobb County. (Resolution attached hereto and made a part thereof)

A motion was made by Mr. Davis, seconded by Mr. Evans, and carried unanimously that the Board adopt the Resolution to authorize the Commissioner to seek State Properties Commission approval to enter into an agreement with Meriwether County to lease Meriwether County Landing, 1.656± acres. (Resolution attached hereto and made a part thereof)

A motion was made by Mr. Davis, seconded by Mr. Evans, and carried unanimously that the Board adopt the Resolution to authorize the Commissioner to seek State Properties Commission approval of the Executive Transfer to acquire the Georgia Welcome Center Buildings in Screven and Sumter Counties. (Resolution attached hereto and made a part thereof)

Mr. Davis informed the Board of the passing of Ms. Mary Iazard, the wife of Mr. John “Jack” Iazard, a retired partner of King & Spalding. Ms. Iazard was an early conservationist and was the first woman appointed to the Georgia Board of Natural Resources.

Chair Addison stated the latest Georgia EMC Magazine mentions RV travel and includes an interesting article on Georgia's state parks.

Chair Addison stated a vacancy has been announced on the Coastal Marshlands Protection Committee and Shore Protection Committee and the Coastal Resources Division is seeking nominees for appointment.

Chair Addison asked the Board to please remember the family of Captain Stan Elrod in their prayers.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned.

Nancy A. Addison, Chairman

ATTEST:

A. W. Jones III, Secretary