

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

October 27, 2020
9:00 a.m.
Via Teleconference Call

Attendees:

Board Members

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

Guests

Ronny Just, Georgia Power Company

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
Jason Roberson

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

The October 27, 2020 Board of Natural Resources meeting was called to order by Chair Nancy Addison.

In the absence of Captain Mike Burgamy, Chair Addison called on Corporal Jason Roberson 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 September 22, 2020 minutes.

A motion was made by Ms. Thomaston, seconded by Mr. Hatfield, and carried unanimously to approve the September 22, 2020 minutes.

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

Director Dunn updated the Board on the approval of a modification to DeKalb County's consent decree, operations on Golden Ray, and the permit status of a mining company with intent to mine near the Okefenokee Swamp.

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 called on Kyle Pearson, Executive Counsel.

Mr. Pearson stated this is an action item to approve the revised by-laws. He further stated the revisions will do two things: 1) delete the Historic Preservation Committee; and 2) delete the Technology Committee.

A motion was made by Mr. Lambert, seconded by Ms. Thomaston, and carried unanimously to approve the revision of the Board By-laws.

Commissioner Williams continued his report and stated on October 5, the department dedicated the renaming of Gordonia-Altamaha State Park as Jack Hill State Park. He further stated the formal ceremony was attended by a large group of community members, the Hill Family, and over 30 state-elected officials, all who enjoyed a program with speeches by Governor Kemp, Lieutenant Governor Duncan, Majority Leader Burns, Congressman Allen, and Senator Hill's son.

Commissioner Williams stated that he has received countless messages of gratitude for the quality of the event and just how much it meant to the family, the local community, and the whole state. He further stated he is so proud of the local park staff, the Parks division, and everyone at DNR who made the event happen and highlighted the professionalism of the department. He added that Senator Hill was a great supporter of the DNR, and we showed through the program just how much we appreciated him and will miss him for decades to come.

Commissioner Williams stated that the agency legislation package is still being vetted by the Governor's office. He further stated he had a great briefing with the Governor's staff at the beginning of the month and hopes to have an answer in the next couple of weeks.

Commissioner Williams stated that Trey Kilpatrick is the newly appointed Governor's Chief of Staff. He further stated that he looks forward to working with Trey in the days ahead.

Commissioner Williams stated the Georgia Outdoor Stewardship Program grants pre-application period just ended. He further stated the grants unit is now evaluating 51 applications with projects equaling over \$150 million in project costs, and \$79 million of requested funding. He added that once again the program has received significant attention and it will be a very competitive grant cycle.

Commissioner Williams provided an update on the State Parks Division. He stated that Vogel State Park, just outside of Blairsville, was named the No. 1 Best State Park in the Country for RVs by USA Today's 10Best program. He congratulated the Vogel team and entire Parks Division.

Commissioner Williams announced the upcoming retirement of Rusty Garrison, Director of the Wildlife Resources Division. He stated that Director Garrison will be retiring at the end of November, after over 20 years with the DNR. He thanked Director Garrison for his service and sacrifice to the division and the department and invited everyone to join him for the December board meeting, where we will celebrate Rusty's career and accomplishments.

Commissioner Williams provided an update on the Coastal Resources Division, with a focus on the recently concluded 2020 CoastFest. He stated that due to the public health protocols, the three-day event was virtual and featured nine live-stream sessions over YouTube and Facebook Live. He further stated that CRD creatively incorporated student involvement by having students introduce each session and highlight an aspect of CRD's mission via video recordings.

Commissioner Williams stated for the nine sessions, CRD recorded from a live studio where biologists answered real-time questions from students and teachers. He further stated that the livestreams can be viewed or shared by visiting www.CoastalGaDNR.org/CoastFest.

Commissioner Williams stated that although this was a new experience for CRD and certainly not expected earlier in the year, the CRD team attracted over 12,500 people who interacted with CoastFest content over the three-day period, and does not include the number of group viewings such as schools and repeat viewers.

Commissioner Williams stated that CoastFest 2021 is slated to be in-person, at Mary Ross Park in Brunswick on Saturday, October 2, 2021.

Commissioner Williams provided an update on the Wildlife Resources Division and stated the late summer and early fall has been a busy time for hunters in Georgia. He further stated that during the 2020 alligator hunting season, 1,030 permits were issued, and 371 alligators were harvested. He added this is the most alligators ever harvested and 96 more than the previous 5-year average.

Commissioner Williams stated the 2020 archery deer hunting has also had a record-breaking start so far. A total of 13,928 deer have been harvested, which is a 44% increase from the 2019 total of 9,644.

Commissioner Williams stated that WRD has equally been hard at work with new sporting facilities across the state. He further stated a state-of-the-art sporting and range facility, the Ranges at Oakfield, celebrated its grand opening on October 8, in Thomas County. He added that the facility, which was partially funded with a DNR grant, offers a 100-yard rifle range, a 25-yard pistol range, two trap and skeet fields, and a five-stand shotgun range. In addition, the WRD boating access team is finalizing the installation of a new boat ramp on the Chattahoochee River. He further added a ribbon cutting ceremony is being planned with the Chattahoochee Hills community for November.

Commissioner Williams stated he is proud that WRD has continued its national reputation and been recognized in recent months for exemplary work. He further stated that Wildlife Conservation's Shan Cammack received the Burner Bob Prescribed Fire Champion Award for the Longleaf Alliance Regional Longleaf Awards. He stated that Rick Lavender, Heidi Ferguson, and Amanda Hrubesh were awarded top Association for Conservation Information national honors.

Commissioner Williams stated the Go Fish Education Center is celebrating ten years of recruiting, retaining, reactivating, and educating current and future Georgia anglers and congratulated them for a job well done.

Discussion ensued.

Commissioner Williams stated this concluded his report.

Chair Addison called on Ray Lambert, Chairman of the Environmental Protection Committee, for his report.

A motion was made by Mr. Lambert, seconded by Mr. Evans, and carried unanimously that the Board adopt the Resolution to approve the Proposed Grant Criteria for Georgia High Hazard Potential Dams Grant, Chapter 391-3-21-.16.

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

A motion was made by Mr. Davis, seconded by Mr. Yancey, and carried unanimously that the Board adopt the Resolution to authorize the Commissioner to seek State Properties Commission approval of the Acquisition (purchase) of 7,958± acres of real property, Cabin Bluff WMA, Camden County. (Resolution attached hereto and made a part thereof)

A motion was made by Mr. Sinyard, seconded by Ms. Thomaston, and carried unanimously that the Board adopt the Resolution to authorize the Commissioner to seek State Properties Commission approval of the Granting of a Revocable License Agreement and Permanent Easement of up to 0.70± acres by the State Properties Commission and General Assembly to Comcast at Skidaway Island State Park, Chatham County. (Resolution attached hereto and made a part thereof)

A motion was made by Mr. Davis, seconded by Ms. Thomaston, and carried unanimously that the Board adopt the Resolution to authorize the Commissioner to seek State Properties Commission approval to enter into a lease agreement with Evans County to lease Brewton's Bridge Landing, 2.90± acres. (Resolution attached hereto and made a part thereof)

Chair Addison stated that the Nominating Committee will be appointed in the near future and she will inform the board members via email.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned.

Nancy A. Addison, Chairman

ATTEST:

A. W. Jones III, Secretary