

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

Tuesday, September 24, 2024
9:00 a.m.

Board Members

Joe Hatfield, Chair
Gary Vowell, Vice Chair
Lesley Reynolds, Secretary
Nancy Addison
Jeff Andrews
Randy Dellinger
Patrick Denney
Charles DePriest
Mark Hennessy
Duncan Johnson
Ray Lambert
Brent Layton
Paul Shailendra
Bodine Sinyard
Harley Yancey

Guests

Bryan Tolar, GA Urban Ag Council
Anna Edmondson, Robbins Governmental Relations
Rosa Chi, Georgia Power Company

Staff Members

Walter Rabon, Commissioner
Thomas Barnard
Trevor Santos
Taylor Brown Fisher
Cathy Barnette
Kyle Pearson
Kate Iannuzzi
Artica Gaston
Doug Haymans
Angie Johnson
Thom Litts
James McLaughlin
Brent Womack

Jeff Cown, Director
James Boylan
Chuck Mueller
Anna Truszczynski
Katie Hegarty

The September 24, 2024 Board of Natural Resources meeting was called to order by Chairman Joe Hatfield.

Chairman Hatfield stated that Nancy Addison and Harley Yancey were on conference call for the meeting.

Chairman Hatfield called on Doug Haymans, Director of the Coastal Resources Division, for a moment of inspiration.

Chairman Hatfield thanked Director Haymans.

Chairman Hatfield adjourned the Board meeting to move into the Committee meetings.

Chairman Chairman Hatfield called the September 24, 2024 meeting of the Board of Natural Resources to order.

Chairman Hatfield called for a motion to approve the minutes of the Board of Natural Resources meeting on August 27, 2024.

A motion was made by Mr. Sinyard, seconded by Mr. Johnson, to approve the minutes of the Board of Natural Resources meeting on August 27, 2024.

Chairman Hatfield called on Jeff Cown, Director of the Environmental Protection Division, for his report.

Director Jeff Cown introduced Chuck Mueller, Chief of the Land Protection Branch, who provided an educational briefing to the Board on the Hazardous Waste Trust and the Solid Waste Trust Annual Reports. Director Cown then updated the Board on the House Study Committee on Private Water Systems, and played an EPD video that won an award at the 2024 Environmental Council of the States Fall Meeting.

Director Cown stated this concluded his report.

Chairman Hatfield called on Walter Rabon, Commissioner of the Department of Natural Resources, for his report.

Commissioner Rabon began his report by commending the State Parks and Historic Sites Division, along with Director Angie Johnson, for their continued leadership to promote outdoor recreational opportunities for all and embracing the department's new Outdoor Beyond Barriers

(OBB) program. He stated that in the 67-year history of the National Association of State Parks Directors, Georgia has rarely been nominated for an award. He further stated that for the first time, the Division was named the winner of the National Innovation Award for their efforts on the OBB program. He added that he and Director Johnson accepted the award on behalf of all Parks employees.

Commissioner Rabon stated that to further the OBB efforts, (4) GRIT Freedom Chairs, funded by the America's State Parks/Bronco Wild Fund, are anticipated to arrive very soon. He further stated that initially the chairs will be located at Sloppy Floyd, Mistletoe, F.D. Roosevelt, and Fort McAllister State Parks.

Commissioner Rabon invited everyone to attend Roosevelt's Little White House for the 100th Anniversary of FDR's first swim at Warm Springs, on October 4, at 1:00 p.m.

Commissioner Rabon announced that Governor Brian Kemp signed a proclamation recognizing National Hunting and Fishing Day on September 28, 2024. He stated that the Department is grateful to have a Governor Kemp who enjoys the outdoors and acknowledges the importance of protecting and conserving Georgia's natural resources for the next generation. He further stated that National Hunting and Fishing Day recognizes hunters and anglers for their efforts in supporting conservation work through their purchase of hunting and fishing licenses, as well as excise taxes collected on outdoor sporting goods and equipment, such as firearms, ammunition, archery equipment, fishing gear, and more.

Commissioner Rabon announced events planned across the state by the Wildlife Resources Division, including kids fishing events and Outdoor Adventure Days. He stated there are three annual free fishing days in Georgia.

Commissioner Rabon stated that Dove Season kicked off on Saturday, September 7, and Archery Season began on September 14. He further stated that the Wildlife Resources Division has been busy prepping the WMAs for Georgia hunters and non-residents. He added that the first OBB hunt will be held at Richmond Hill WMA.

Commissioner Rabon announced that recently the Department signed an agreement with the Shepherd Center officializing the partnership for the OBB program. He stated that the new partnership will allow the department to further meet the needs of those with disabilities, by having professionals from the Shepherd Center provide training to DNR staff on best practices for working and communicating with those participating in the adaptive events. He further stated that the first training session was held at Charlie Elliott Wildlife Center and the staff were able to review various equipment for the hunts, including the newly purchased EcoRover adaptive chairs, and participate in real-life scenarios to prepare them for these upcoming hunts.

Commissioner Rabon stated that earlier this year the Wildlife Resources Division started offering online disability licenses and recently launched Online Lifetime License sales. He further

stated that the removal of requiring paper applications improves and streamlines the process for customers and removes an administrative burden on the staff.

Commissioner Rabon stated the 2025 Weekend for Wildlife will be held January 31 – February 2, 2025, and sponsor registration opens October 1.

Commissioner Rabon called on Doug Haymans, Director of the Coastal Resources Division, for his report.

Director Haymans provided an update on the deployment of retired MARTA subway cars for artificial reefs in December 2023 and diver inspections in July 2024. He noted that The Weather Channel interviewed Paul Medders regarding the success of the artificial reef creation project to provide essential fish habitat, diving opportunities, and another great offshore fishing location.

Director Haymans provided an update on Cobia and the NOAA Right Whale rule. He invited everyone to attend CoastFest on Saturday, October 5, from 10:00 a.m. – 4:00 p.m., at Mary Ross Waterfront Park in Brunswick.

Director Haymans stated this concluded his report.

Commissioner Rabon called on Lt. Colonel James McLaughlin for a report from the Law Enforcement Division.

Lt. Colonel McLaughlin provided an update on Aviation Support Unit training and activity, the 11th Annual Game Warden Awards Banquet, 2024 Statewide Summer Boating Season stats, and the 39th Game Warden Academy.

Lt. Colonel McLaughlin stated this concluded his report.

Commissioner Rabon state this concluded his report.

Chairman Hatfield called on Paul Shailendra, Chair of the Land Committee, for his report.

A motion was made by Mr. Shailendra, seconded by Mr. Johnson, and carried unanimously that the Board adopt the resolution to authorize the Commissioner to seek State Properties Commission approval to purchase Phase 2 from Corinne Gordon Grizzard, 3± acres as an addition to the Black Rock Mountain State Park, Rabun County.

A motion was made by Mr. Shailendra, seconded by Mr. Johnson, and carried unanimously that the Board adopt the resolution to authorize the Commissioner to seek State Properties Commission approval to submit an application to the National Park Service for the

transfer of 129± acres known as the Bo Ginn National Fish Hatchery as an addition to the Magnolia Springs State Park, Jenkins County.

A motion was made by Mr. Shailendra, seconded by Mr. Johnson, and carried unanimously that the Board adopt the resolution to authorize the Commissioner to seek State Properties Commission approval of the Lease Extension No. DACW21-1-12-2022 for Recreational Purposes Supplemental Agreement No. 1, U.S. Department of Army, Corps of Engineers (COE), 393.12± acres of real property at Hartwell Lake and Reservoir, Tugaloo State Park, Franklin County.

A motion was made by Mr. Shailendra, seconded by Mr. Johnson, 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 the City of Rome to lease the 2.75± acres Etowah River Boat Ramp, Floyd County.

A motion was made by Mr. Shailendra, seconded by Mr. Johnson, 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 0.19± acres by the State Properties Commission and General Assembly to Georgia Power Company at Paulding Forest Wildlife Management Area, Paulding County.

Chairman Hatfield stated the next board meeting will be held at 9:00 a.m., on Tuesday, October 22, 2024, in the DNR Boardroom, 2 Martin Luther King, Jr. Drive, SE, 1252 East Tower, Atlanta, GA 30334.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned.

Joe Hatfield, Chairman

ATTEST:

Lesley Reynolds, Secretary