

Minutes
Wildlife Resources Committee
2 Martin Luther King, Jr. Drive, S. E.
Suite 1252 East Tower
Atlanta, GA 30334

Tuesday, June 25, 2024
9:00 a.m.

Committee Members

Harley Yancey, Vice Chair
Jeff Andrews
Randy Dellinger
Patrick Denney
Dan Garcia
Mark Hennessy
Penn Hodge
Steve Hufstetler
Duncan Johnson
Brent Layton
Lesley Reynolds
Bodine Sinyard
Joe Hatfield, Board Chair, Ex-officio

Board Members

Nancy Addison
Ray Lambert
Paul Shailendra
Gary Vowell

Guests

Mark Woodall, Sierra Club
Scott Hendricks, Georgia Power
Bryan Tolar, GA Urban Agriculture Council
Debbie Phillips, GA Industry Environmental Coalition
R. J. Gipaya, Flint Riverkeeper

Staff Members

Walter Rabon, Commissioner
Thomas Barnard
Taylor Brown Fisher
Cathy Barnette
Kyle Pearson
Kate Iannuzzi
Mike England
Doug Haymans
Angie Johnson
Ted Will
Brent Womack
Clint Peacock
Scott Robinson
GWFC David Wright

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

The June 25, 2024 meeting of the Wildlife Resources Committee was called to order by Chairman Joe Hatfield.

Chairman Hatfield called on Harley Yancey, Vice Chair of the Wildlife Resources Committee, in the absence of Chairman Charles DePriest. Mr. Yancey called on Scott Robinson, Chief of Fisheries, Wildlife Resources Division, to present the Proposed Amendments to Fishing Regulations, Subject 391-4-3.

Mr. Robinson stated that the board was previously briefed on the proposed amendments, and he wanted to provide an overview of the proposal and updated information from the public comment period. He further stated that the plan is to implement a 15-inch minimum length limit on Shoal Bass statewide and in order to do so they will need to remove the 14-inch minimum length limit on Lake Lanier. He added that they also want to implement a 15-20-inch minimum in total length from the Flint River or any of its tributary streams downstream of Warwick Dam at Lake Blackshear. He further added that they want to implement a reduced creel limit from 10 to 5 on Shoal Bass and as well as other fish with limited populations and habitats, including some unique fish only found in Georgia. He stated that the most common species that will remain at a 10-creel limit will be Largemouth bass and the Spotted bass, also known as the Kentucky bass or Alabama bass.

Mr. Robinson stated there was a large angler survey that was sent via email to anglers around the state and over 5,000 responses were received with mostly overwhelming support for the regulation changes.

Mr. R. J. Gipaya, representing Flint Riverkeeper, spoke in favor of the proposed amendments.

A motion was made by Mr. Hennessy, seconded by Mr. Garcia, and carried unanimously that the Committee recommends the Board approve the Proposed Amendments to Fishing Regulations, Subject 391-4-3.

Mr. Yancey called on Clint Peacock, Assistant Chief of Fisheries, Wildlife Resources Division, to present the Proposed Repeal of Submerged Cultural Resources Regulations, Subject 391-5-9.

Mr. Peacock stated the proposed repeal, which applies to Rule 394-5-9-.08, was discussed in detail at the April board meeting and relates to the state's compensation for the removal of deadhead logs from its rivers. He further stated that the General Assembly repealed the permit procedure, O.C.G.A. § 12-3-82.1, effective January 1, 2008, so there is no permit procedure for

deadhead logging. He added that since there is no statutory basis for deadhead logging, Rule 394-5-9-.08 likewise needs to be repealed.

Mr. R. J. Gipaya, representing Flint Riverkeeper, spoke in support of the proposed repeal. He stated that he would also like the board to be aware of the evolving situation with what they refer to as log mining or the removal of dead wood from the rivers. He further stated the issue needs to be revisited soon by the Department of Natural Resources and the General Assembly, as these deadhead logs are valuable to anglers as structure for fish and their food, and in certain areas they are the only structures available to store insect larvae production. He requested that the board consider meaningful action and relatively soon for a healthy future for Georgia's fisheries.

Mr. Yancey thanked Mr. Gipaya for his support and comments.

A motion was made by Mr. Garcia, seconded by Mr. Denney, and carried unanimously that the Committee recommends the Board approve the Proposed Repeal of Submerged Cultural Resources Regulations, Subject 391-5-9.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned.