



MINUTES
July 24, 2025

N.C. Wildlife Resources Commission Meeting
Raleigh, North Carolina

Chairman Monty Crump called the July 24, 2025 N.C. Wildlife Resources Commission meeting to order at 9:00 a.m. Crump announced that the meeting audio is being streamed live and will be available on www.ncwildlife.gov.

ROLL CALL

Margo Minkler, *Commission Liaison*, called the roll. Thomas Fonville, Brad Stanback, and Joe Budd were absent.

COMMISSIONER ATTENDANCE

Monty Crump	Wes Seegars	Jim Ruffin	Hayden Rogers	John Alexander
Mark Craig	John Coley	Ray Clifton	Reid Smith	Justin Boyd
David Hoyle	Tom Berry	Kelly Davis	Mike Alford	
JC Cole	Steve Windham	Tom Haislip	Landon Zimmer	

MANDATORY ETHICS INQUIRY

Chairman Crump advised the Commission of the mandatory ethics inquiry as mandated in NCGS §138A-15. Commissioner Zimmer recused himself from discussion and action on **EXHIBIT E-1**.

MINUTES OF JUNE 5, 2025 MEETING

On a motion by David Hoyle and second by John Coley, the Minutes of the June 5, 2025 meeting were approved as presented in **EXHIBIT A**.
EXHIBIT A is incorporated into the official record of this meeting.

ADMINISTRATION

Jason Cottle, Chief Financial Officer, presented a status report in **EXHIBIT B** on the Wildlife Resources Commission General Fund, Capital Improvement Fund, and the Endowment Fund.

EXHIBIT B is incorporated into the official record of this meeting.

COMMITTEE MEETING REPORTS

Executive Committee Report – July 23, 2025 – *Monty Crump, Chair* reported the Executive Committee met on July 23, 2025 and adjourned into a closed session after opening the meeting to review Executive Director’s 2024/2025 performance evaluation under NCGS 143-318.11(a)(6). After returning to open session, the meeting was adjourned.

Boating Safety Committee Report – July 23, 2025 – *J.C. Cole, Chair* reported the Boating Safety Committee met on July 23, 2025. *Betsy Haywood, No Wake Zone Coordinator*, walked the committee through proposed permanent rulemaking Notice of Text for Caldwell and Davidson counties. Next, *Will Casola, Policy Analyst*, presented proposed permanent rulemaking Notice of Text for Catawba, Iredell, Lincoln, and Mecklenburg counties. These were presented for consideration as exhibits later this morning. There being no further business the committee adjourned.

Fisheries Committee Report – July 23, 2025 – *John Stone, Chair* reported the Fisheries Committee met on July 23, 2025. *Ben Ricks, Coastal Region Fisheries Supervisor*, discussed how restoration of Striped Bass in the Neuse and Tar rivers has not been successful since the harvest moratorium was implemented in 2019. Staff recommend a limited Striped Bass harvest season for both the Neuse and Tar rivers while continuing to investigate reasons for the limited natural reproduction. *Scott Loftis, Aquatic Habitat Coordinator*, described how well the King’s Bridge floodplain restoration project along the French Broad River functioned during Hurricane Helene flooding. The project illustrates the need for additional floodplain restoration efforts throughout the mountain region. *Kelsey Roberts, Piedmont Fisheries Research Coordinator*, introduced the Reservoir Striped Bass and Bodie Bass Fisheries Management Plan, which includes focal areas of fish management, habitat, angler opinions, and research opportunities. The plan will be reviewed by the committee and presented to the Commission for final adoption. *Christopher Smith, District 1 Fish Biologist II*, discussed the excellent Largemouth Bass fishing opportunities in northeast North Carolina and how regional and national bass fishing trails are targeting these fisheries due to their quality. *Corey Oakley, Inland Fisheries Division Chief*, announced that the flounder harvest season will be September 1-14 with a daily creel limit of 1 fish per day and a minimum size limit of 15 inches, which is consistent with the season set by the NC Division of Marine Fisheries. With no additional topics, the meeting was adjourned.

Habitat, Nongame and Endangered Species Committee Report – July 23, 2025 – Landon Zimmer, Vice Chair reported the Habitat Nongame Endangered Species Committee met on July 23, 2025. *Dr. Sara Schweitzer, Wildlife Management Division Assistant Chief*, started the meeting by providing a presentation of the 30-day public review of the Eastern Black Rail Conservation Plan. Of the twenty-five responses received, thirteen were in support of the Plan and twelve provided no comment. The Committee endorsed the Plan, which was presented for consideration in Exhibit L later during this meeting. *Vann Stancil, Habitat Conservation Biologist*, followed with a summary of barrier removal projects. In 2021, the NC Legislature appropriated \$7.2 million to the agency for dam removals in Western North Carolina with a deadline of June 30, 2025, to expend the funds. With help from partners, staff prioritized nine dam removal projects, of which two have been removed and others are scheduled. Next, *Shannon Deaton, Habitat Conservation Division Chief*, provided an update on the Draft 2025 NC Wildlife Action Plan. The 10-year revision is due to the US Fish and Wildlife Service by September 30, 2025. After a 30-day comment period, the agency received 16 online comments and 12 detailed written comments with overwhelming support of the updated Plan. Last, *Christian Waters, Chief Deputy Director*, presented a draft Resolution in support of the Wildlife Action Plan. The Habitat, Nongame, and Endangered Species Committee recommended the Commission approve the Resolution by acclamation.

Wildlife Action Plan Endorsement – The Commission, by acclamation, adopted a resolution endorsing the 2025 revision of the North Carolina Wildlife Action Plan.

Land Acquisition and Property Committee – July 23, 2025 – Tom Berry, Chair reported the Land Acquisition and Property Committee met on July 23, 2025. The Committee began by reviewing public comments on the proposed archery zone on the Southport tract of Green Swamp Game Land. All public comments were in support of the proposed archery zone. The Committee also reviewed and approved seven Phase I land acquisition proposals, six Phase II land acquisition proposals, and three other property matters. The Committee reviewed just over 10,000 acres of land, with projects benefitting native brook trout populations, nesting bird and reptile habitat, as well as many other SGCN aquatic and terrestrial species. In addition to resource conservation, many of these properties will unlock and expand public access to previously inaccessible portions of game land. With no additional topics, the meeting was adjourned.

Committee of The Whole Report – July 23, 2025 – Monty Crump, Chair reported the Committee of the Whole met on July 23, 2025. The meeting began with *Brian McRae, Deputy Director*, providing an update on the U.S. Forest Service Helene Recovery Good Neighbor Agreement. Next, Commissioner *Jim Ruffin*, gave an update on the Quail Restoration Working Group. Following that, Policy Analyst Will Casola presented three Notices of Text: 10D .0295 Paynes Branch Game Land, 10H .1100 Furbearer Propagation, and 10G .0400 Wildlife Service Agents readoption. *Kyle Briggs, Executive Director*, then reviewed proposed revisions to the 2025 Commission meeting schedule. The committee concluded with a conversation about the upcoming election of officers.

AGENCY SPOTLIGHT – Pathways of Progress – 20 Years of Conserving North Carolina’s Aquatic Species of Greatest Conservation Need – *Rachael Hoch, Inland Fisheries Division Assistant Chief*, gave a presentation highlighting the conservation actions taken since the first NC Wildlife Action Plan identified and prioritized Species of Greatest Conservation Concern in 2005. She described the various types of activities and research conducted by the agency and partners to develop and implement conservation management actions for four imperiled aquatic species, the Magnificent Ramshorn, Tar River Spinymussel, Appalachian Elktoe, and Roanoke Logperch; and, how these efforts have resulted in positive change for the four species, bringing them closer recovery.

2025 WILDLIFE RESOURCES COMMISSION MEETING SCHEDULE – On a motion by Tom Berry and second by John Alexander, the Commission approved the proposed revisions to 2025 Wildlife Resources Commission meeting schedule presented in **EXHIBIT C** by *Kyle Briggs, Executive Director*

EXHIBIT C is incorporated into the official record of this meeting.

LAND ACQUISITIONS AND PROPERTY MATTERS

Phase II Land Acquisition – On a motion by Jim Ruffin and a second by Mike Alford, the Commission approved to proceed with the acquisitions of the following properties presented in **EXHIBITS D-1, D-2, D-3, D-4, D-5** by *Ben Solomon, Land and Water Access Division Assistant Chief and Land Acquisition Manager*

- Dennis Creek – Watauga and Caldwell Counties (**EXHIBIT D-1**)
- Buffalo Creek Headwaters – Watauga and Caldwell Counties (**EXHIBIT D-2**)
- Caddell/BLATCO – Richmond County (**EXHIBIT D-3**)
- Loblolly Group LLC – Hoke County (**EXHIBIT D-4**)
- Great Dismal Swamp Restoration Bank – Camden County (**EXHIBIT D-5**)

Phase II Land Acquisition – On a motion by Wes Seegars and a second by Tom Berry, the Commission approved to proceed with the acquisition of the property presented in **EXHIBIT D-6** by *Ben Solomon*

- Shark Island Reallocation – Carteret County (**EXHIBIT D-6**)

EXHIBITS D-1, D-2, D-3, D-4, D-5, and D-6 are incorporated into the official record of this meeting.

Other Property Matters – With Commissioner Landon Zimmer recused, and on a motion by Steve Windham and a second by Mike Alford, the Commission approved an easement request from the North Carolina Department of Transportation in Henderson County presented in **EXHIBIT E-1** by *Ben Solomon*:

- Easement Request – Request from NCDOT for a permanent right of way and temporary construction easement on Green River Game Land in Henderson County (**E-1**)

Other Property Matters – On a motion by Tom Berry, seconded by John Coley, the Commission approved the property matters presented in **EXHIBITS E-2 and E-3**, with the approval of **EXHIBIT E-3** contingent upon receiving approval from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to dispose of the 15.83 acres, presented by *Ben Solomon*:

- Disposition – Request to demolish a storage building at Armstrong Fish Hatchery (**EXHIBIT E-2**)
- Property Trade – City of Salisbury Property Trade (**EXHIBIT E-3**)

EXHIBITS E-1, E-2, and E-3 are incorporated into the official record of this meeting.

WATER SAFETY RULEMAKING

On a motion by John Alexander and second by Ray Clifton, the Commission approved the following water safety rules presented in **EXHIBITS F-1, F-2, G-1, and G-2** by *Betsy Haywood, Water Safety Rules Coordinator*:

Permanent Rulemaking Notice of Text – 10F .0338 Caldwell County – The Commission approved publishing the Notice of Text in the *NC Register* with an open comment period and a public hearing for proposed amendment to 10F .0338 (**EXHIBIT F-1**) and approved fiscal note for proposed rules and the no-wake zone around the Adam W. Klutz Bridge in Granite Falls (**EXHIBIT F-2**)

Permanent Rulemaking Notice of Text – 10F .0324 Davidson County – The Commission approved publishing the Notice of Text in the *NC Register* with an open comment period and a public hearing for proposed amendments to 10F .0324 (**EXHIBIT G-1**) and approved fiscal note for proposed rules (**EXHIBIT G-2**)

EXHIBITS F-1, F-2, G-1, and G-2 are incorporated into the official record of this meeting.

Permanent Rulemaking Notice of Text – 10F .0307 Catawba, Iredell, Lincoln, and Mecklenburg Counties – On a motion by Steve Windham and a second by Mike Alford, the Commission approved publishing the Notice of Text in the *NC Register* with an open comment period and a public hearing for proposed amendments to 10F .0307 presented in **EXHIBIT H-1** and approved fiscal note for proposed rules presented in **EXHIBIT H-2** by *Will Casola, Policy Analyst*

EXHIBITS H-1 and H-2 are incorporated into the official record of this meeting.

RULEMAKING

On a motion by Tom Berry and second by Jim Ruffin, the Commission approved the following rules presented in **EXHIBITS I-1, I-2, J-1, J-2, K-1, and K-2** by *Will Casola*:

Permanent Rulemaking Notice of Text – 10D .0295 Paynes Branch Game Land – The Commission approved publishing the Notice of Text in the *NC Register* with an open comment period and a public hearing for proposed adoption of 10D .0295 (**EXHIBIT I-1**) and approved fiscal note for proposed rules (**EXHIBIT I-2**)

Permanent Rulemaking Notice of Text – 10H .1100 Furbearer Propagation – The Commission approved publishing the Notice of Text in the *NC Register* with an open comment period and a public hearing for proposed amendments to 10H .1100 Rules (**EXHIBIT J-1**) and approved fiscal note for proposed rules (**EXHIBIT J-2**)

Permanent Rulemaking Notice of Text – Rule Readoption: 10G .0400 Wildlife Service Agents – The Commission approved publishing the Notice of Text in the *NC Register* with an open comment period and a public hearing for proposed amendments to 10G .0400 Rules (**EXHIBIT K-1**) and approved fiscal note for proposed rules (**EXHIBIT K-2**)

EXHIBITS I-1, I-2, J-1, J-2, K-1, and K-2 are incorporated into the official record of this meeting.

SPECIES CONSERVATION PLAN – On a motion by Landon Zimmer and a second by David Hoyle, the Commission approved staff recommendations for final adoption of the Black Rail Conservation Plan presented in **EXHIBIT L** by *Dr. Sara Schweitzer, Wildlife Management Division Assistant Chief*

EXHIBIT L is incorporated into the official record of this meeting.

ELECTION OF OFFICERS

Vote for Vice Chairman

On a motion by Steve Windham and a second by John Coley, the Commission elected Commissioner Landon Zimmer as Vice Chairman for a term of two years or until his successor is elected and qualified pursuant to NCGS §143-243.

Vote for Chairman

On a motion by Tom Berry and a second by John Alexander, the Commission elected Commissioner Mark Craig as Chairman for a term of two years or until his successor is elected and qualified pursuant to NCGS §143-243.

COMMENTS FROM THE CHAIRMAN – Chairman Crump remarked that the Commission is in great hands with the newly elected Chairman and Vice Chairman, noting that all members are well qualified for leadership roles. He expressed appreciation for the support he received during his time as Chairman, emphasizing the strong teamwork and commitment within the agency. He encouraged continued support for incoming Chairman Craig as he transitions into the role. He also encouraged commissioners to attend the upcoming 61st graduation of the Wildlife Law Enforcement Training Academy, highlighting its significance in welcoming the next generation of officers. In closing, he formally transferred leadership by presenting the gavel to Chairman Craig.

COMMENTS FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR – Executive Director Briggs began by congratulating the newly elected Chairman and Vice Chairman and thanking them for their willingness to serve. He also extended congratulations to the commissioners who were reappointed, as well as to the newly appointed Commissioner Boyd, expressing that he looked forward to working with him. He thanked all commissioners for their guidance and support, noting in particular the advice and leadership provided by outgoing Chairman Crump. He added that while Chairman Crump will be missed in that role, he is glad he will continue to serve on the Commission.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, the Commission meeting was adjourned at **10:02 a.m.**
All exhibits are incorporated into the official record of this meeting by reference and are filed with the minutes.



Mark Craig, Chairman

10/16/2025

Date



Kyle Briggs, Executive Director

10/16/2025

Date