



MINUTES
June 18, 2026
N.C. Wildlife Resources Commission Meeting
Raleigh, North Carolina

Chairman Mark Craig called the June 18, 2026, N.C. Wildlife Resources Commission meeting to order at 9:00 a.m. in the Commission Room at the agency's headquarters in Raleigh. Craig reminded everyone that the meeting is being audio streamed live and will be available at www.newildlife.gov.

Commissioner Wes Seegars led the Pledge of Allegiance.

Commissioner Tom Berry gave the invocation.

ROLL CALL

Margo Minkler, Commission Liaison, called the roll. David Hoyle, John Coley, Jim Ruffin, Steve Windham, John Alexander, Mike Alford, and Justin Boyd were absent.

COMMISSIONER ATTENDANCE

Mark Craig	Tom Berry	John Stone	Joe Budd
Landon Zimmer	Brad Stanback	Hayden Rogers	Reid Smith
Wes Seegars	Ray Clifton	Tom Haislip	
Tommy Fonville	Monty Crump	J.C. Cole	

MANDATORY ETHICS INQUIRY

Chairman Craig advised the Commission of the mandatory ethics inquiry as mandated in NCGS §138A-15.

MINUTES OF APRIL 16, 2026, MEETING

On a motion by Landon Zimmer and second by Monty Crump, the Minutes of the April 16, 2026, 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

Rules Committee – April 23, 2026 – *Wes Seegars, Chair*, reported that the Rules Committee met virtually on April 23, 2026, to review the 2027-2028 annual cycle rule proposals for Inland Fish, Land and Water Access, Wildlife Management, and Wildlife Education. Twenty-eight proposals were discussed and reviewed by the committee for clarity, impact, implementation, and stakeholder interest. With only one clarifying change to rule language for the proposal to prohibit shining artificial light in search of coyotes or feral swine from a motorized conveyance, all proposals will move forward, as presented, for approval to notice text. With no further business, the meeting adjourned.

Fisheries Committee – June 17, 2026 – *John Stone, Chair*, reported that the Fisheries Committee met on June 17, 2026. Inland Fisheries Division staff delivered four presentations. Staff summarized Chowan River creel and trap net data to assess the Chowan River Black Crappie population. Results from this effort indicate that the Black Crappie population in the Chowan River is robust, and anglers are satisfied with the crappie fishing opportunities. Staff discussed habitat use of Bodie Bass in Lake Norman. Bodie Bass uses different habitats during summer months to avoid low oxygen unlike Striped Bass. Staff reviewed the Division's Aquatic Plant Program and the new Sykes Depot Aquatic Plant Nursery. Finally, staff discussed ongoing renovations of the Bobby N. Setzer State Fish Hatchery and current spring trout stockings. The renovation is on schedule and purchasing fish this spring helped boost stocking numbers above what was anticipated. With no further business, the meeting adjourned.

Small Game Committee – June 17, 2026 – *Ray Clifton, Committee Member*, reported that the Small Game Committee met on June 17, 2026, and staff presented several topics related to the agency's efforts to develop habitat on private land. First, the Committee received an overview and update on the Wildlife Conservation Lands Program which continues to be successful in allowing private landowners to keep and manage their land for wildlife benefits. Next staff presented the results from a survey of private landowners that have worked with the agency to develop wildlife habitat on their properties. Results from the survey will help guide the agency's efforts on private land habitat work into the future. Finally, the Committee received a presentation

from retiring *John Isenhour, Wildlife Habitat Coordinator* who shared his perspective of working with private landowners for over 20 years helping them develop wildlife habitat on their properties. Having no further business, the meeting adjourned.

Committee of the Whole – June 17, 2026 – *Mark Craig, Chair* reported that the Committee of the Whole met on June 17, 2026, and began with review and approval of the Phase I land acquisition for the Rhodes Pond Depot relocation in Harnett County. The committee then considered temporary rulemaking adoption related to chronic wasting disease management areas. Following that, the committee reviewed permanent rulemaking notices of text for the 2027–2028 annual cycle, including proposals for Wildlife Management Rules, Inland Fisheries Rules, Land and Water Access Rules, Wildlife Education Rules, and Endangered, Threatened, and Special Concern Species Rules. The committee also received the final determinations for the periodic rules review. An update was then provided on the Holly Shelter Game Land Restoration Project. There being no further business, the committee adjourned.

AGENCY SPOTLIGHT – Blazing the Trail: NC BearWise® – *Ashley Hobbs, District 9 Special Projects Biologist*, gave a presentation outlining her role as Statewide BearWise Coordinator and the current status of human-bear interactions in Buncombe County. She provided an overview of how Commission staff across all departments use the resources from the NC and national BearWise programs to provide education and technical guidance to the public. Ashley emphasized the importance of BearWise education for addressing human-bear interactions statewide, especially in urban and suburban communities. NC’s BearWise program is gaining national and international attention and is used by the national BearWise program as a model for other state wildlife agencies.

RULEMAKING

Temporary Rulemaking Adoption – CWD Management Areas – On a motion by Wes Seegars and a second by Tom Berry, the Commission reviewed public comments presented in **EXHIBIT C-1** and adopted temporary amendments to 10B .0203 & 10B .0502 presented in **EXHIBIT C-2** by *Will Casola, Policy Analyst*

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

Notice of Text – 2027-2028 Annual Cycle Wildlife Management Rules – On a motion by Landon Zimmer and a second by Brad Stanback, the Commission approved publishing the Notice of Text in the *NC Register* with an open comment period and a public hearing for amendments to Wildlife Management rules (**EXHIBIT D-1**) and approved the fiscal note for the proposed rules (**EXHIBIT D-2**) presented by *Will Casola*

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

Notice of Text – 2027-2028 Annual Cycle Inland Fisheries Rules – On a motion by John Stone and a second by Hayden Rogers, the Commission approved publishing the Notice of Text in the

NC Register with an open comment period and a public hearing for amendments to Inland Fisheries rules (**EXHIBIT E-1**) and approved the fiscal note for the proposed rules (**EXHIBIT E-2**) presented by *Will Casola*

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

Notice of Text – 2027-2028 Annual Cycle Land and Water Access Rules – On a motion by Landon Zimmer and a second by Brad Stanback, the Commission approved publishing the Notice of Text in the *NC Register* with an open comment period and a public hearing for amendments to Land and Water Access rules (**EXHIBIT F-1**) and approved the fiscal note for the proposed rules (**EXHIBIT F-2**) presented by *Will Casola*

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

Notice of Text – 2027-2028 Annual Cycle Wildlife Education Rules – On a motion by Tom Berry and a second by Tommy Fonville, the Commission approved publishing the Notice of Text in the *NC Register* with an open comment period and a public hearing for amendments to shooting range rules (**EXHIBIT G-1**) and approved the fiscal note for the proposed rules (**EXHIBIT G-2**) presented by *Will Casola*

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

Notice of Text – 2027-2028 Annual Cycle Endangered, Threatened, and Special Concern Species Rules – On a motion by Hayden Rogers and a second by Wes Seegars, the Commission approved publishing the Notice of Text in the *NC Register* with an open comment period and a public hearing for amendments to 15A NCAC 10I .0102 (**EXHIBIT H-1**) and approved the fiscal note for the proposed rules (**EXHIBIT H-2**) presented by *Will Casola*

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

Periodic Rules Review – Final Determinations – On a motion by Monty Crump and a second by Brad Stanback, the Commission approved the final determinations on all WRC rules and joint WRC/MFC rules (**EXHIBIT I**) presented by *Will Casola*

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

COMMENTS FROM THE CHAIRMAN – Chairman Craig opened by expressing appreciation to staff for their diligent work in preparing the meeting and then thanked all involved in keeping the Setzer Fish Hatchery renovations on schedule, noting the project's complexity and the importance of staying on track. He also acknowledged the significance of the Good Neighbor Agreement with the U.S. Forest Service. He then invited Commissioner Smith to comment on the new commissioner orientation. Commissioner Smith commended staff for the thorough and helpful presentations, particularly the section on rulemaking, and recommended that the orientation be recorded for future reference by new and current commissioners. Chairman Craig concurred, noting that he also gained new insights, and then concluded his remarks.

COMMENTS FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR – Executive Director Briggs opened by thanking the Commissioners for their attendance and for their support during the recent orientation, noting that the agency’s staff are exceptionally dedicated and truly love the work they do. He wished everyone a safe Fourth of July and 250th anniversary celebration, and briefly addressed ongoing drought conditions, explaining how staff, much like the state’s farmers, are adapting to the challenges, from planting dove fields to maintaining fish at the hatcheries. He concluded by congratulating retiring Wildlife Habitat Coordinator John Isenhour and acknowledging his more than twenty years of valuable service working with private landowners.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, the WRC meeting was adjourned at **9:32 a.m.**

All exhibits are incorporated into the official record of this meeting by reference and are filed with the minutes.



07/30/2026

Mark Craig, Chairman

Date



07/30/2026

Kyle Briggs, Executive Director

Date