



MINUTES
December 5, 2024
N.C. Wildlife Resources Commission Meeting
Raleigh, North Carolina

Chairman Monty Crump called the December 5, 2024 N.C. Wildlife Resources Commission meeting to order at 9:00 a.m. in the Commission Room at the agency's headquarters in Raleigh. Crump reminded everyone that the meeting is being audio streamed live and will be available at www.ncwildlife.org.

Commissioner Tom Berry led the Pledge of Allegiance.

Commissioner Joe Budd gave the Invocation.

ROLL CALL

Margo Minkler, *Commission Liaison*, called the roll. Hayden Rogers, Ray Clifton, Steve Windham, and Landon Zimmer were absent.

COMMISSIONER ATTENDANCE

Monty Crump	Wes Seegars	Jim Ruffin	Tom Haislip	Reid Smith
Mark Craig	Thomas Fonville	Kelly Davis	J. C. Cole	
David Hoyle	Tom Berry	John Stone	Mike Alford	
John Coley	Brad Stanback	John Alexander	Joe Budd	

VISTORS

Ingram Family (7)

Erik Christofferson

MANDATORY ETHICS INQUIRY

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

MINUTES OF OCTOBER 3, 2024 MEETING

On a motion by David Hoyle and second by Mike Alford, the Minutes of the October 3, 2024 meeting was 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.

2025 WILDLIFE RESOURCES COMMISSION MEETING SCHEDULE

On a motion by Joe Budd and second by John Alexander, the Commission approved the proposed 2025 Wildlife Resources Commission meeting schedule as presented in **EXHIBIT C**

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

SPECIAL PRESENTATION

Presentation of the Order of the Long Leaf Pine Award – Chairman Crump introduced members of the Ingram Family to present the Order of the Long Leaf Pine Award to Executive Director Cameron Ingram.

COMMITTEE MEETING REPORTS

Boating Safety Committee Report – December 4, 2024 – *J.C. Cole, Chair* reported the Boating Safety Committee met on December 4, 2024. *Betsy Haywood, No Wake Zone Coordinator*, presented permanent rulemaking adoption for Brunswick, Carteret, Alexander, and Mecklenburg and Gaston counties. She then presented Rulemaking Notice of Text requests for Craven, Caswell, and Person counties. The committee recommends approval of these items. There being no further business, the committee adjourned.

Small Game & Wild Turkey Committee Report – December 4, 2024 – *Jim Ruffin, Chair* reported the Small Game and Wild Turkey Committee met on December 4, 2024. *Chris Kreh, Wildlife Management Division Assistant Chief*, provided a presentation on the Caswell Small Game Focal Area, highlighting current and long-term small game surveys and monitoring efforts. He also shared examples of habitat work conducted in the area and the positive response of quail and turkey populations to increased usable habitat on the landscape. Chairman Ruffin provided a high-level update on a workgroup formed to develop a plan for quail restoration across the state. The results of this workgroup will be brought back to the committee and the full Commission for consideration in the future. With no further business, the committee adjourned.

Fisheries Committee Report – December 4, 2024 – *John Stone, Chair* reported the Fisheries Committee met on December 4, 2024. *Christian Waters, Inland Fisheries Division Chief*, presented staff recommendations for Enhanced Delayed Harvest Trout Waters. The program will enhance a select number of delayed harvest streams with an increased number of larger trout, exceeding 18 inches in length. Initial stockings will occur once renovations are complete on all trout hatcheries. Program name, site locations, and further details will be incorporated in the review of the Mountain Trout Management Plan. *Corey Oakley, Inland Fisheries Division Assistant Chief*, discussed trout production impacts from Hurricane Helene which included severe damage to the infrastructure at Armstrong State Fish Hatchery and stream damage at the Bobby N. Setzer Fish Hatchery. Repairs at Armstrong are expected to be completed by January 2026, and the renovation of Setzer has been delayed temporarily to maintain the Commission's stocked trout program until the Armstrong hatchery can be restored. Fisheries staff stocked available delayed harvest locations in November, will stock delayed harvest locations again in December as well as winter small impoundments, and plan to stock delayed harvest and hatchery supported waters as scheduled in the spring. Corey also gave an overview of the Gladly Fork Fish Hatchery, a private facility in Transylvania County being considered for acquisition. With no additional topics, the meeting was adjourned.

Land Acquisition and Property Committee Report – December 4, 2024 – *Tom Berry, Chair* reported the Land Acquisition and Property Committee met on December 4, 2024. The Committee reviewed and approved ten Phase I land acquisition proposals, totaling just over 6,400 acres. It was noted the Hickorynut Mountain project would establish a new game land in McDowell County. The Committee also reviewed and approved seven Phase II land acquisition proposals, totaling 3,577 acres. The Committee noted the 2,475-acre Big Swamp tract in Robeson County will establish a new game land in an underserved region of state. The Committee reviewed two other property matters, including a right of way request at Sandhills Game Land, and a right of way request at Neuse River Game Land. The Committee tabled the Sandhills Game Land right of way request and asked that staff to obtain more information about the request prior to any decision from the Committee and Board. The Committee denied the Neuse River Game Land right of way request. With no additional topics, the meeting was adjourned.

Big Game Committee Report – December 4, 2024 – *David Hoyle, Chair* reported the Big Game Committee met on December 4, 2024. *Brad Howard, Wildlife Management Division Chief*, briefed

the committee on potential statutory language that would accommodate a raffle and auction for elk hunting permits, possibly in the 2026 season. The Committee decided to include in the statute the condition that anyone entering the raffle would be required to provide proof of a North Carolina hunting license. Next, staff discussed ideas and upcoming decisions that would be required relative to new rules designed to manage our areas where CWD is known to exist, including potentially examining new carcass disposal rules. The goal of all the rules will be to maintain hunter participation and satisfaction while attempting to implement herd management strategies designed to minimize or delay the spread of the disease on the landscape. Having no further business, the meeting was adjourned.

Executive Committee Report – December 3, 2024 – *Monty Crump, Chair* reported the Executive Committee met on December 3, 2024 and adjourned into a closed session after opening the meeting review and discuss candidates for the Executive Director position under NCGS 143-318.11(a)(6). After returning to open session, the meeting was adjourned.

Committee of The Whole Report – December 4, 2024 – *Monty Crump, Chair* reported The Committee of the Whole met on December 4, 2024 and began with an excellent presentation on the agency's response to Hurricane Helene, including the significant emergency response performed by our Law Enforcement officers and especially our swift water rescue team, and the impacts to fish and wildlife in western North Carolina and the agency's infrastructure. *Carrie Ruhlman, Rulemaking Coordinator*, reviewed rulemaking adoptions and Notices of Text. *Cameron Ingram, Executive Director* reviewed the Commission Meeting schedule for 2025. *Commissioners Wes Seegars* and *Kelly Davis* briefly discussed the history of canids on the Albemarle Peninsula and their participation, along with WRC staff, on the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's Red Wolf Recovery Team. The discussion concluded with a recommendation to adopt a new resolution, read into the minutes by *Kyle Briggs, Chief Deputy Director*, to replace the Commission's previous resolutions. The committee then went into closed session to consult with agency counsel to preserve attorney-client privilege and discuss candidates for the Executive Director position.

Motion from the Committee of Whole Regarding AP Candid Resolution – On a motion by Wes Seegars and a second by Brad Stanback, the Commission approved a motion to adopt a Resolution on Red Wolves.

Motion from the Committee of Whole Regarding Delegation of Authority – On a motion by Mark Craig and a second by J. C. Cole, the Commission approved a motion to delegate authority to the Executive Director to investigate alleged encroachments upon, usurpation of, or other actions in violation of the public trust rights of the people of the State and to initiate civil actions to remove or restrain any unlawful or unauthorized encroachment, usurpation of, or any other violation of the public trust rights of the people of the State or legal rights of access to such public trust areas pursuant to NCGS 113-131.

Motion from the Committee of Whole Regarding Executive Director Position – On a motion by John Alexander and a second by John Coley, the Commission approved a motion to appoint Michael Kyle Briggs to be the Commission’s Executive Director effective January 1, 2025.

Having no further business, the meeting was adjourned.

AGENCY SPOTLIGHT

AGENCY SPOTLIGHT – Invasive Catfish Management in the Coastal Plain – *TD VanMiddlesworth, District 2 Fisheries Biologist II*, gave a presentation to provide an overview of NCWRC invasive catfish and management of them in the North Carolina coastal plain. The focus was invasive Flathead Catfish and Blue Catfish biology and distribution, conservation concerns, recreational and commercial opportunities, management, and monitoring and research.

LAND ACQUISITION AND PROPERTY MATTERS

Phase II Land Acquisition – On a motion by Tom Berry and second by Brad Stanback, 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, D-6, D-7)** by *Ben Solomon, Assistant Chief and Land Acquisition Manager*

- Pork Palace Tract – Bladen County **(D-1)**
- Big Swamp – Robeson County **(D-2)**
- Morris Tract Donation – Pender County **(D-3)**
- Heitman Tract – Davidson County **(D-4)**
- Randy Mabry Tract – Davidson County **(D-5)**
- Ripshin Ridge – Caldwell County **(D-6)**
- White Oak-Ardaman Tract – Haywood County **(D-7)**

EXHIBITS D-1, D-2, D-3, D-4, D-5, D-6, D-7 are incorporated into the official record of this meeting.

Other Property Matters – On a motion by Tom Berry and a second by Jim Ruffin, the Commission tabled the Sandhills Game Land Easement Request presented in **(EXHIBIT E-1)** and denied the Neuse River Game Land Easement Request presented in **(EXHIBIT E-2)** by *Ben Solomon*

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

WATER SAFETY RULEMAKING

On a motion by John Alexander and second by J. C. Cole, the Commission approved the following water safety rules presented in **EXHIBITS F-2, G-2, H-2, & I-2** by *Betsy Haywood, Water Safety Rules Coordinator*

Permanent Rulemaking Adoption – 15A NCAC 10F .0305 Brunswick County – The Commission reviewed public comments presented in **(EXHIBIT F-1)** and adopted proposed technical corrections to a coordinate at Odell Williamson Bridge in the Town of Ocean Isle Beach and remove Dutchman Creek BAA in Southport from the NCAC as it is a duplicate entry presented in **(EXHIBIT F-2)** by *Betsy Haywood*

EXHBITS F-1, F-2 are incorporated into the official record of this meeting.

Permanent Rulemaking Adoption – 15A NCAC 10F .0330 Carteret County – The Commission reviewed public comments presented in **(EXHIBIT G-1)** and adopted proposed text changes to clarify address and incorporate into the NC Administrative Code the names and addresses of ten Boating Access Areas maintained by the WRC in Carteret County presented in **(EXHIBIT G-2)** by *Betsy Haywood*

EXHBITS G-1, G-2 are incorporated into the official record of this meeting

Permanent Rulemaking Adoption – 15A NCAC 10F .0332 Alexander County – The Commission reviewed public comments presented in **(EXHIBIT H-1)** and adopted proposed amendments to extend the no-wake zone on Lake Hickory in Taylorsville east of Rink Dam; to create a Restricted Area where vessel entry is prohibited at the Wittenburg Access Area on Lake Hickory in Bethlehem; to incorporate into the NCAC the Dusty Ridge BAA and the Wittenburg BAA; to correct names of some facilities; and to assign responsibility for placement of markers to Alexander County in some areas, and placement and maintenance of markers at some areas to the Wildlife Resources Commission and to Duke Energy LLC presented in **(EXHIBIT H-2)** by *Betsy Haywood*

EXHBITS H-1, H-2 are incorporated into the official record of this meeting

Permanent Rulemaking Adoption – 15A NCAC 10F .0333 Mecklenburg and Gaston Counties – The Commission reviewed public comments presented in **(EXHIBIT I-1)** and adopted a no-wake zone within 50 yards of the docks at Joyner’s Marina and the cove southeast of the docks; define the no-wake zone around the Buster Boyd Bridge with coordinates in North Carolina waters; and remove responsibility from the Lake Wylie Marine Commission at some areas and facilities that are not the responsibility of the LWMC unless specifically stated in Rule presented in **(EXHIBIT I-2)** by *Betsy Haywood*

EXHBITS I-1, I-2 are incorporated into the official record of this meeting

On a motion by J. C. Cole and second by Wes Seegars, the Commission approved the following water safety rules Notice of Text presented in **EXHBITS J and K** by *Betsy Haywood*

Permanent Rulemaking Notice of Text – 15A NCAC 10F .0347 Craven County – The Commission approved publishing the Notice of Text in the *NC Register* with an open comment period and a public hearing to establish a no-wake zone in Brice’s Creek near Merchant’s Grocery, docking facilities and fuel dock, and public boat access area, beginning north of Brice’s Creek Bridge to a line southeast of the peninsula and sharp curve on the east side of Brice Creek as presented in **(EXHIBIT J)** by *Betsy Haywood*

EXHIBIT J is incorporated into the official record of this meeting

Permanent Rulemaking Notice of Text – 15A NCAC 10F .0363 Caswell and Person Counties – The Commission approved publishing the Notice of Text in the *NC Register* with an open comment period and a public hearing for proposed technical corrections to assign responsibility for place and maintenance of markers on Hyco Lake to the Boards of Commissioners of Caswell and Person counties as presented in **(EXHIBIT K)** by *Betsy Haywood*

EXHIBIT K is incorporated into the official record of this meeting

RULEMAKING

On a motion by David Hoyle and second by Kelly Davis, the Commission approved the following Rulemaking Adoptions presented in **EXHIBITS L-2 and M-2** by *Carrie Ruhlman, Rulemaking Coordinator*

Permanent Rulemaking Adoption – Periodic Review Rules – The Commission reviewed public comments presented in **(EXHIBIT L-1)** and adopted proposed changes to 10G .0501 and 10J .0103 and .0104 presented in **(EXHIBIT L-2)** by *Carrie Ruhlman*

EXHIBITS L-1, L-2 are incorporated into the official record of this meeting.

Permanent Rulemaking Adoption – 10D .0252 Needmore Game Land Rules – The Commission reviewed public comments presented in **(EXHIBIT M-1)** and adopted proposed changes to the 2024-2025 Annual Cycle deer season companion rule presented in **(EXHIBIT M-2)** by *Carrie Ruhlman*

EXHIBITS M-1, M-2 are incorporated into the official record of this meeting.

On a motion by David Hoyle and second by Wes Seegars, the Commission approved the following Rulemaking Notice of Text presented in **EXHIBITS N and O** by *Carrie Ruhlman*

Permanent Rulemaking Notice of Text – Youth Definitions – 10B, 10C and 10D Rules – 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 the 10B, 10C and 10D rules presented in **(EXHIBIT N)** by *Carrie Ruhlman*

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

Temporary Rulemaking Notice of Text – Vessel Liveries – The Commission approved publishing the Notice of Text in the *NC Register* with an open comment period and a public hearing for proposed vessel livery restrictions and regulations on Lake Norman presented in **(EXHIBIT O)** by *Carrie Ruhlman*

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

COMMENTS FROM THE CHAIRMAN – The Chairman recognized Executive Director Cameron Ingram on his retirement, expressing heartfelt appreciation for his exemplary leadership and significant contributions to the agency. He praised Cam's unwavering dedication to conservation, habitat stewardship, and enhancing opportunities for outdoor recreation.

COMMENTS FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR – Executive Director Ingram expressed his gratitude for the opportunity to serve in this role, describing it as an honor and privilege. He highlighted his pride in working with the agency staff and the Commission, commending their dedication to the mission. He acknowledged the collaborative efforts between the agency and the Commission, emphasizing the exceptional work being accomplished across the state.

Ingram thanked the Commission for their support and voiced his confidence in the selection of Kyle Briggs as the next Executive Director. He praised Briggs' institutional knowledge and unparalleled work ethic, noting their shared experiences in various roles within the agency.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, the WRC webinar meeting was adjourned at **10:13 a.m.** All exhibits are incorporated into the official record of this meeting by reference and are filed with the minutes.

	02/06/2025
Monty Crump, Chairman	Date

	02/06/2025
Kyle Briggs, Executive Director	Date