



MINUTES
April 17, 2025

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

Chairman Monty Crump called the April 17, 2025 N.C. Wildlife Resources Commission meeting to order at 9:00 a.m. in the Commission Room at the agency's headquarters in Raleigh. Chairman Crump reminded everyone that the meeting is being audio streamed live and will be available at www.ncwildlife.gov.

Commissioner Joe Budd led the Pledge of Allegiance.

Commissioner Wes Seegars gave the invocation.

ROLL CALL

Margo Minkler, *Commission Liaison*, called the roll. John Coley, Steve Windham, John Stone, John Alexander, Tom Haislip, Mike Alford, and Reid Smith were absent.

COMMISSIONER ATTENDANCE

Monty Crump	Thomas Fonville	Ray Clifton	J.C. Cole
Mark Craig	Tom Berry	Kelly Davis	Joe Budd
David Hoyle	Brad Stanback	Landon Zimmer	
Wes Seegars	Jim Ruffin	Hayden Rogers	

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 G-1**.

MINUTES OF FEBRUARY 6, 2025 MEETING

On a motion by David Hoyle and second by Tom Berry, the Minutes of the February 6, 2025 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.

ENDOWMENT FUND EXPENDABLE INCOME ALLOCATION – On a motion by Landon Zimmer and second by Brad Stanback, the Commission approved the Calendar Year 2024 Endowment Fund Investment Income Allocation presented in **EXHIBIT C** by *Jason Cottle*

EXHIBITS B and C are incorporated into the official record of this meeting.

COMMITTEE MEETING REPORTS

Migratory Birds & Waterfowl Committee Report – April 16, 2025 – *Wes Seegars, Vice Chair*, reported the Migratory Bird and Waterfowl Committee met on Wednesday, April 16, 2025. *Brad Howard, Wildlife Management Division Chief*, presented the federal migratory bird hunting season frameworks and staff recommendations for the 2025–2026 migratory bird hunting seasons, including the special falconry season. He then presented staff recommendations regarding the take of peregrine falcons for use in falconry. Lastly, he provided a brief overview of the federal migratory bird regulations development process, highlighting the role of the Atlantic Flyway Council in shaping those regulations. Having no further business, the meeting was adjourned.

Rules Committee Report – April 16, 2025 – *Wes Seegars, Chair*, reported the Rules Committee met on April 16, 2025 to review the 2026-2027 annual cycle rule proposals for inland fish, land and water access, and wildlife management. All proposals will move forward for rulemaking in June. Next, the Committee received an update on the captivity rule amendments and stakeholder process. Additional information was also provided on Wildlife Service Agent Rule readoption and the release of four rules subject to legislative review this session. Having no further business, the meeting was adjourned.

Land Acquisition & Property Committee Report – April 16, 2025 – *Brad Stanback, Vice Chair* reported the Land Acquisition and Property Committee met on April 16, 2025. The Committee began by reviewing nine Phase I land acquisition proposals, totaling just over 3,000 acres. The Committee voted to approve and move these nine proposals forward for further consideration. The Committee also approved two Phase II land acquisition proposals, including a hatchery purchase

in Transylvania County, and a land donation from Southern Appalachian Highlands Conservancy. Lastly, four other property matters were considered and approved. Having no further business, the meeting was adjourned.

Boating Safety Committee Report – April 16, 2025 – *J.C. Cole, Chair* reported the Boating Safety Committee met on April 16, 2025. *Betsy Haywood, No Wake Zone Coordinator*, walked the committee through proposed permanent rulemaking adoptions for Craven, Person, and Caswell counties. She then presented a proposed rulemaking notice of text for Caldwell County. There being no further business the committee adjourned.

Committee of The Whole Report – April 16, 2025 – *Monty Crump, Chair* reported the Committee of the Whole met on April 16, 2025. *Jason Cottle, Chief Financial Officer*, provided an update on the Endowment Fund and presented the amount of expendable income earned in 2024. He also led a discussion regarding the Endowment Fund's investment allocation, and with sufficient expendable cash available to meet agency needs for the next 36 months, the Committee decided to maintain the current allocation. *Carrie Ruhlman, Rulemaking Coordinator*, presented proposed permanent rulemaking adoptions for rules related to youth definitions and deer season. She then presented proposed temporary rulemaking adoption for sea trout harvest closure. Following discussion, the Committee recommended extending the harvest closure until June 30. Carrie continued with proposed temporary rulemaking notices of text for sea trout size and creel limits, and activities on the Lutz Tract of Pisgah Game Land. Carrie was joined by *Kathryn Jewell, Lead Social Scientist*, to provide an update on the Conservation Access Pass. After a robust discussion, the committee asked staff to develop possible Pass options for consideration at a later meeting. *Shannon Deaton, Habitat Conservation Division Chief*, gave an overview of the process underway to revise the NC Wildlife Action Plan including to solicit public input starting in early May. *Daron Barnes, Land and Water Access Division Chief*, provided an update on the Black Cove Fire Complex. *Kyle Briggs, Executive Director*, shared that staff are collaborating with the U.S. Forest Service on a potential agreement for Hurricane Helene recovery work on Pisgah and Nantahala National Forests. Finally, *Tamara Zmuda, General Counsel*, provided an update on a recent Court of Appeals decision in the Oates case. There being no further business, the committee adjourned.

AGENCY SPOTLIGHT

AGENCY SPOTLIGHT – ENGINEERING SPOTLIGHT – Recent Capital Improvements and Construction Projects – *Jody Reavis, Capital Projects Coordinator* and *Jim Sullivan, Facility Construction Engineer*, gave a presentation highlighting recently completed Public Fishing Accesses (PFAs), Boating Access Areas (BAAs), and Capital Improvement Projects. Highlights included the new Samarcand Training Facility, Valdese Lakeside Park PFA, the recently completed Surf City BAA, and updates on the Armstrong State Fish Hatchery.

WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT DIVISION

2025-2026 Webless Migratory Birds, Resident Canada Geese, Extended Falconry, and Waterfowl Seasons – On a motion by David Hoyle and second by Wes Seegars, the Commission reviewed the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service migratory bird season frameworks (**EXHIBIT D-1**), and the public comments received on season options (**EXHIBIT D-2**) and approved staff recommendations for the 2025-2026 Webless Migratory Birds, Resident Canada Geese, Extended Falconry, and Waterfowl Seasons (**EXHIBITS D-3, D-4**) presented by *Brad Howard, Wildlife Management Division Chief*

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

2025 Migrant Peregrine Falconry – On a motion by Mark Craig and second by Landon Zimmer, the Commission approved staff recommendations to establish a season for taking up to 5 migrant peregrine falcons for use in falconry in 2025 presented in **EXHIBIT E** by *Brad Howard*

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

LAND ACQUISITIONS AND PROPERTY MATTERS

Phase II Land Acquisition – On a motion by Tom Berry and second by Jim Ruffin, the Commission approved the acquisition of the following properties presented in **EXHIBITS F-1 and F-2** by *Ben Solomon, Assistant Chief and Land Acquisition Manager*:

- Harris Cove Tract – Madison County (**F-1**)
- Gladly Fork Fish Hatchery – Transylvania County (**F-2**)

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

Other Property Matters – With Commissioner Landon Zimmer recused, and on a motion by Kelly Davis and a second by Jim Ruffin, the Commission approved a land trade request from the North Carolina Department of Transportation in Dare and Tyrrell Counties presented in **EXHIBIT G-1** by *Ben Solomon*:

- Land Trade – NCDOT requests a property trade in Dare and Tyrrell Counties (**G-1**)

On a motion by Tom Berry and a second by Joe Budd, the Commission approved the following other property matters presented in **EXHIBITS G-2, G-3, and G-4** by *Ben Solomon*:

- Lease Renewal – Duke Energy requests a lease renewal for the Foothills Trail on Toxaway Game Land (**G-2**)
- Disposition – Southern Appalachian Highlands Conservancy requests the disposition of an easement area on a property in Avery County (**G-3**)
- Easement Request – Private landowner requests an ingress and egress easement on Holly Shelter Game Land (**G-4**)

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

WATER SAFETY RULEMAKING

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

Permanent Rulemaking Adoption – 15A NCAC 10F .0347 Craven County –The Commission reviewed public comments presented in **(EXHIBIT H-1)** and adopted proposed amendments to create a no-wake zone shore to shore in Brice’s Creek from north of the Brice’s Creek Bridge, south-southwestward around the Merchant’s Grocery docking facilities, fuel dock and public boat ramp, ending at a line southeast of the peninsula and sharp curves on the east side of Brice’s Creek presented in **(EXHIBIT H-2)**

Permanent Rulemaking Adoption – 15A NCAC 10F .0368 Caswell and Person Counties – The Commission reviewed public comments presented in **(EXHIBIT I-1)** and adopted proposed amendments to designate responsibility for placement and maintenance of markers on Hyco Lake to the Person and Caswell Boards of Commissioners presented in **(EXHIBIT I-2)**

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

Permanent Rulemaking Notice of Text – 15A NCAC 10F .0338 Caldwell County – On a motion by Joe Budd and second by Ray Clifton, the Commission approved publishing the Notice of Text in the *NC Register* with an open comment period and a public hearing for a proposed amendment on Gunpowder Creek on Lake Hickory in Caldwell County, to establish a no-wake zone shore to shore within 50 yards northeast and 50 yards southwest of the Adam W. Klutz Bridge on Grace Chapel Road presented in **EXHIBIT J** by *Betsy Haywood*

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

RULEMAKING

On a motion by Mark Craig and second by Hayden Rogers, the Commission approved the following rules presented in **EXHIBITS K-2 and L-2** by *Carrie Ruhlman, Rulemaking Coordinator*:

Permanent Rulemaking Adoption – 10B, 10C, and 10D Rules – Youth Definitions & Deer Season –The Commission reviewed public comments presented in **EXHIBIT K-1** and adopted proposed amendments to the 10B, 10C, and 10D rules presented in **EXHIBIT K-2**

Temporary Rulemaking Adoption – 15A NCAC 10C .0325 Sea Trout –The Commission reviewed public comments presented in **EXHIBIT L-1** and adopted proposed temporary closure of the sea trout season in inland waters and for hook-and-line in joint fishing waters presented in **EXHIBIT L-2**

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

On a motion by Brad Stanback and second by Wes Seegars, the Commission approved the following rules presented in **EXHIBITS M and N** by *Carrie Ruhlman*:

Temporary Rulemaking Notice of Text – 15A NCAC 10C .0325 Sea Trout –The Commission approved publishing the Notice of Text in the *NC Register* with an open comment period and a public hearing for proposed temporary amendments to sea trout size and creel limits in inland waters and for hook-and-line in joint fishing waters presented in **EXHIBIT M**

Temporary Rulemaking Notice of Text – 15A NCAC 10D .0260 Pisgah Game Land in Avery, Buncombe, Burke, Caldwell, Haywood, Henderson, Madison, McDowell, Mitchell, Transylvania, Watauga, and Yancy Counties – The Commission approved publishing the Notice of Text in the *NC Register* with an open comment period and a public hearing for proposed temporary amendments to the activities allowed on the Lutz Tract in Caldwell County presented in **EXHIBIT N**

EXHIBITS M and N are incorporated into the official record of this meeting.

COMMENTS FROM THE CHAIRMAN – Chairman Crump reminded Commissioners of the requirement to complete their annual Statement of Economic Interest and encouraged them to stay current with their Ethics Education Training. He concluded his remarks by joining in the comments and prayers offered in memory of Migratory Game Bird Coordinator Doug Howell. Chairman Crump described Doug as a consummate professional whose long-standing service to the Commission was marked by sound judgment and a calm demeanor. He recalled Doug's participation in the most recent trip to Canada, highlighting his deep knowledge and the significant value he brought to the Commission. The Chairman expressed his appreciation for Doug's contributions and noted that he will be greatly missed.

COMMENTS FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR – Executive Director Briggs expressed his appreciation to the Commissioners for their continued dedication and service. He acknowledged not only their visible participation in meetings, but also the significant amount of work that occurs behind the scenes, including preparation, research, and ongoing communication. He noted that both staff and he personally are grateful for the Commissioners' efforts. He recognized the Land and Water Access staff for their work during recent wildfires. He commended these staff members for performing dangerous and demanding tasks under difficult conditions. These were responsibilities that, while outside their usual scope, were carried out with professionalism due to their training and experience. He stated that their actions directly contributed to the protection of lives and property, and he expressed pride in their service. In closing, he acknowledged the recent passing of colleague Doug Howell, describing him as a friend who will be deeply missed.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, the WRC webinar meeting was adjourned at 9:48 a.m.
All exhibits are incorporated into the official record of this meeting by reference and are filed with the minutes.

06/05/2025

Monty Crump, Chairman

Date

06/05/2025

Kyle Briggs, Executive Director

Date