

LOUISIANA WILDLIFE AND FISHERIES COMMISSION

MINUTES

June 4, 2009

**ROBERT J. SAMANIE, III
CHAIRMAN**

BATON ROUGE, LOUISIANA

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Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries
2000 Quail Drive

Baton Rouge, Louisiana 70808.

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AGENDA
LOUISIANA WILDLIFE AND FISHERIES COMMISSION
BATON ROUGE, LOUISIANA
JUNE 4, 2009

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MINUTES OF THE MEETING
OF
LOUISIANA WILDLIFE AND FISHERIES COMMISSION

Thursday, June 4, 2009

Chairman Robert J. Samanie, III presiding.

Earl King, Jr.
Patrick Morrow
Stephen Oats
Ann Taylor

Secretary Robert Barham was also present.

Commissioner Stephen Sagrera was absent from the meeting.

Chairman Samanie called for a motion for approval of the **May 7, 2009 Commission Minutes**. A motion for approval was made by Commissioner Oats and seconded by Commissioner King. The motion passed with no opposition.

Under **Commission Special Announcements/Personal Privilege** for this month, Commissioner Morrow stated that Commissioner Fred Miller passed away recently and he wanted to recognize his accomplishments and contributions. Commissioner Miller was a mentor to Commissioner Morrow in terms of conservation issues and the workings of the Commission. Commissioner Miller was actively involved in conservation for many years having served as President of various organizations. Commissioner Morrow added that Commissioner Miller always let you know how he felt and why he felt that way on an issue. His position was always backed up with either statistics or logical reasoning. Commissioner Morrow then asked for a moment of silence in Commissioner Miller's honor.

To receive and hear Enforcement & Aviation Reports/May began with Lt. Col. Keith LaCaze stating a total of 1,669 cases and 561 written warnings were issued and agents helped with 61 public assists. The general focus this month was on boating activities. The Aviation Report showed the Departments three planes flew a total of 94 hours during May. News Releases discussed included an oyster related violation of not abiding by VMS program, shrimping violations in Plaquemines Parish, and the rescue of a boater on Lake Maurepas. There were 27 boating accidents reported resulting in 34 injuries and 11 fatalities. Of the 11 fatalities, 3 occurred in one boating accident on False River and another 5 were killed in an accident in Terrebonne Parish. The other fatalities occurred in Concordia, Sabine and Richland Parishes. One other accident which occurred on Cane

River in Natchitoches Parish resulted in the critical injuring of 2 boaters. Lt. Col. LaCaze stated this was a tough month for boating accidents and they were continuing to get safety information out to the public. A high percentage of boating accidents involved alcohol or substance abuse. The Department teamed up with the Alcohol and Tobacco Control agency to go on patrols and check for underage drinking. Boating safety violations totaled 518 for the month (pfd violations or other safety type violations), 4 citations for careless operation, 2 reckless operation citations, 32 boating under the influence, 34 cases of under 21 in possession of alcohol and 1 case of unlawful purchase of alcohol for a minor. Lt. Col. LaCaze then gave each Commissioner one of the t-shirts from the "I Got Caught Wearing My Life Jacket" program which was extremely popular. Chairman Samanie also agreed May was a real tragic month for boaters. Commissioner Morrow knew that agents were doing a good job with the limited resources, but it was disheartening to see the number of injuries and fatalities with summer just beginning. He felt the public needed to be educated as well as getting the word out on the severe problem and dangers of boating activities. Commissioner Morrow commended the Department for all of its efforts based on the resources available.

To receive and hear Presentation by Ducks Unlimited on Breeding Ground Projects in Canada was given by Mr. Dave Kostersky, DU Canada. He began by thanking the Commission and Secretary for providing funds for the breeding ground projects and the opportunity to update them on these projects. The presentation would include an overview of the program, the landscape proposed for the funding, conservation strategy, funding and accomplishments and outlook for the upcoming year. The first map showed that the waterfowl harvested in Louisiana were raised in the Prairie Pothole region of North America. The Prairie Pothole region is in both Canada and the United States with probably 2/3 of the ducks being raised in Canada. The State of Louisiana has partnered with Ducks Unlimited for 45 years and those dollars have amounted to about \$9 million for that time period. Also Ducks Unlimited has partnered with the Prairie Habitat Joint Venture and the North American Waterfowl Management Plan in order to be successful on the breeding grounds. Mr. Kostersky felt Ducks Unlimited was unique in their delivery of programs by using the best science to do conservation work on the landscape. The Missouri Coteau, which is the band of habitat that begins in Saskatchewan and ends in South Dakota, produces more birds when its wet than any other landscape in the world, commented Mr. Kostersky. Besides the Coteau, there are 28 different target areas in Saskatchewan that have been identified as priorities for waterfowl recovery. The current priority areas for the next several years include the Allan-Dana Hills, Thickwood Hills, Touchwood Hills, Upper Assinboin and Lightning Creek. The reason for not working in all 28 areas was lack of funding. These chosen areas were based on over 50 years of waterfowl surveys which showed where the birds go and how they settle on the landscape. The waterfowl productivity model has been developed to measure the current ability to produce waterfowl and how can change be prescribed on the landscape to measure what has been gained. Ducks Unlimited issue for conservation strategy was habitat, the lose of habitat and the continuance of losing habitat on the landscape. To protect what was left and restore the habitat was what they needed to do. Other jobs for Ducks Unlimited was to set objectives that were measurable and use adaptive management. The current programs included

conservation easements (perpetual) and agreements (10 years or longer), land purchases, rangeland stewardship and habitat restoration. Over 400 wetlands were restored last year in Saskatchewan. Other programs Mr. Kostersky spoke on was forage programs, winter wheat program and converting lands to nesting cover. Last year the Commission decided to provide Ducks Unlimited with \$169,101 for fiscal year 2009. This money was matched by DU, Inc., NAWCA and other funds totaling \$1,014,606 for a 6:1 leverage. The summary table of accomplishments showed over 9100 acres of conservation easements and rangeland were protected, restoration of 4700 acres and management of 43,000 acres. Two primary reasons restoration acreage was down was due to cost of protection continues to increase and the cattle industry was not doing well in Canada. There was also a reduction in winter wheat acres primarily due to a narrow seeding window even though there was a lot of interest and continues to be in the program. The waterfowl benefits from the programs protected enough habitat and enhancement of habitat to impact about 3,000 breeding pairs, provided good habitat for another 2,000 breeding pairs, as well as helped all waterfowl. Mr. Kostersky stated there was a strong interest in conservation easements and winter wheat and the rangeland stewardship was also very strong. An update on habitat and waterfowl showed that the prairie pothole conditions were variable, wet in some areas and dry in others. Overall, the southern portion of the Missouri Coteau was in great shape for this year and the numbers were looking good also for waterfowl. He then encouraged the Commission and Department to come to Canada to see the work being done on the landscape. Mr. Kostersky thanked the Department for the generous support and looked forward to many years of continued partnership.

Following the presentation, Commissioner Oats asked Mr. Kostersky what was his background and he was told he was a wildlife biologist. Chairman Samanie asked if this year would be a good hunting season. Mr. Kostersky felt the waterfowl recruitment would be down again from last year, but that it should be a decent production year.

To receive and hear General Information on Proposed Changes to 2010 Turkey Season was handled by Mr. Fred Kimmel. One of the major changes recommended by the Department for 2010 came as a request for an earlier season. To address this, it was recommended to change the opening date of the framework statewide to the Saturday closest to March 22, which would range from March 19 to March 25. For 2010, the statewide opening will be on March 20 and the youth weekend would open on March 13. Another change was to open all of Ouachita Parish west of the Ouachita River. Mr. Kimmel thought there may be one or two other small areas that could open. Hearing no questions from the Commission, public comments were accepted.

Mr. Dave Moreland stated this change in the turkey program was a compromise so the season would open like Mississippi does on March 15. A comment made during a Legislative Natural Resources Committee about the turkey biologists not knowing what they were doing since Louisiana could not have a March 15 opening embarrassed Mr. Moreland. He felt Mr. Kimmel and Mr. Larry Savage were 2 of the most knowledgeable people as far as management of the wild turkey. Their work involved designing a program that was keeping a sustainable harvest of adult gobblers and seeing an increase in the quality of

harvested gobblers. Mr. Moreland knew that there was a difference in lands in Mississippi and Louisiana and they could not be managed the same way. Another statement made at the Committee Meeting was that the WMA's were the most mismanaged lands in the state.

Bens Creek WMA had one of the best youth hunts this year as a result of staff working to get it back in shape following the hurricane. Other turkey hunts were discussed by Mr. Moreland. He added that the season was probably a good season from stories he was told. Mr. Moreland hoped the progress made in Louisiana would continue to work and maintain a good turkey population.

The Commissioners agreed to hold the **October 2009 Meeting** on Thursday, October 1, 2009, beginning at 9:30 a.m. at the Baton Rouge Headquarters.

Next agenda item was to receive **Public Comments** and none were heard.

There being no further business, Commissioner King made a motion to **Adjourn** the meeting and it was seconded by Commissioner Oats.

Robert J. Barham
Secretary

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