

LOUISIANA WILDLIFE AND FISHERIES COMMISSION

MINUTES

July 6, 2006

**TERRY D. DENMON
CHAIRMAN**

BATON ROUGE, LOUISIANA

The following constitute minutes of the Commission Meeting and are not a verbatim transcript of the proceedings.
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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
JULY 6, 2006**

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1. Roll Call
2. Approval of Minutes of June 1, 2006
3. Commission Special Announcements/Personal Privilege
4. To consider Resolution on Tentative Dates for Early Migratory Birds (Dove, Rail, Snipe, Woodcock and Teal) and further providing with respect thereto
5. To consider Waterfowl Season Framework for 2006-2010 Seasons and further providing with respect thereto
6. To receive an Announcement on the Selection of a New Point of Sale License System Vendor

7. To receive and hear Enforcement & Aviation Reports/June
8. To receive BASS Donation for Hurricane Restocking Efforts
9. To consider Resolution for the 2006 Fall Inshore Shrimp Season and further providing with respect thereto
10. Set November 2006 Meeting Date
11. Receive Public Comments
12. Adjournment

MINUTES OF THE MEETING

OF

LOUISIANA WILDLIFE AND FISHERIES COMMISSION

Thursday, July 6, 2006

Chairman Terry Denmon presiding.

Earl King
Frederic Miller
Patrick Morrow
Henry Mouton
Robert Samanie, III

Secretary Dwight Landreneau was also present.

Commissioner Wayne Sagrera was absent from the meeting.

Chairman Denmon called for a motion for approval of the **June 1, 2006 Commission Minutes**. A motion for approval was made by Commissioner Miller and seconded by Commissioner Samanie. The motion passed with no opposition.

Under **Commission Special Announcements/Personal Privilege** for this month, Commissioner Mouton stated he provided a copy of House Bill 795 which gave the Commission the ability to regulate lions and tigers in Louisiana. He felt the Department and/or the Commission would have to develop regulations on these animals.

Commissioner Miller asked if there was any objection to hearing a brief report on the condition of an oil spill in the Big Lake area. Hearing no objections, Chairman Denmon asked Mr. Harry Blanchet to proceed. Mr. Blanchet stated the oil spill initially came from the Citgo Refinery off of Calcasieu Lake around mid to late June. The oil spilled into the Ship Channel and into some of the adjacent waterbodies. About 17,000 barrels were collected from the Ship Channel and another 17,000 from wetlands and other areas of water immediately adjacent to the initial release site. The total spill was about 70,000 barrels and the remaining barrels were contained on the Citgo refinery area. Approximately 1,700 people were involved in the clean up operation with some limitations on vessel traffic. The U.S. Coast Guard was in charge of claims for vessel cleaning and affected individuals. The Department of Health and Hospitals issued public health recommendations for recreational activities in the Calcasieu Estuary. There were 2 fish kills, 2 cormorants, 1 white pelican, 1 brown pelican, mud turtle, 3 laughing gulls, 1 marine mammal and 80 miles of oiled shoreline with marsh impact affected by the spill. Mr. Blanchet commented it would be a long time before there would be a final report. Commissioner Miller thanked Mr. Blanchet for the report.

To consider Resolution on Tentative Dates for Early Migratory Birds (Dove, Rail, Snipe, Woodcock and Teal) and further providing with respect thereto began with Mr. Dave Moreland introducing Mr. Larry Reynolds who was the North American Waterfowl Biologist. He also noted Mr. Reynolds had an excellent understanding of coastal issues. When Mr. Olinde returns from vacation, Mr. Moreland stated he would work with the Dove Focus Group in developing recommendations for the 2007 dove season possibly on zones and other changes. Mr. Reynolds noted there would be no substantial changes in the dove season for this year. The dove season recommendation would be for a 70 day season with 12 bird aggregate daily bag limit which would include white-winged doves. The proposed dates would be September 2 through September 10, October 14 through November 19 and December 16 through January 8. Eurasian collared doves would not be included in the bag limit unless they were dressed in the field. Mr. Reynolds noted there was a request from Commissioners Sagraera and Mouton to include Thanksgiving Day in the dove season. Commissioner Mouton asked to hear those dates. Mr. Reynolds announced the first split would remain the same, October 14 through November 28 and December 23 through January 8, but this

would not be the Department's recommendation. Commissioner Morrow asked if the Department's proposed dates followed the same pattern as previous years. Mr. Reynolds answered yes, for about the past 20 years. Commissioner Mouton commented the second proposal would allow youth the opportunity to hunt during those holidays. He then made a motion to amend the dove seasons to change the second and third split to the following: October 14 through November 26 and December 23 through January 8. Commissioner King asked if there would be an issue with extending the dove season into Thanksgiving when deer season would open. Mr. Moreland stated that was one reason they did not recommend running it through those holidays. But this option would give those that hunt only doves the opportunity to do their hunting. Chairman Denmon suggested waiting with the motion until all seasons were discussed.

Continuing on, Mr. Reynolds commented teal conditions have been good on the breeding grounds, counts have been completed and breeding populations were up 28 percent from 4.6 million last year to 5.9 million this year. The figure 4.7 million was the point to go from a 9 day season to a 16 day teal season, so the recommendation was for a statewide season with 4 bird daily bag and 8 bird possession limit beginning on September 15 and running through September 30. The reason for the Friday opening and Saturday closure was that the teal season cannot run into the month of October. This season structure was the same as in 2000, added Mr. Reynolds. Chairman Denmon asked when was the last time Louisiana had a 16 day teal season and what date did those seasons begin. Mr. Robert Helm stated the last two years were 9 day seasons and the timeframe for those 16 day seasons went as close to the end of the September as possible. The last year the closing date was September 30 for teal season was in 2000. Mr. Helm also noted that they received some positive comments on the 3 day opening weekend. If you would open the season a week earlier, Mr. Helm felt would be a bit early. The longer you wait, the better likelihood that cool fronts would move into the state and result in more migration. Mr. Moreland reminded the Commission that September 9 would be the second weekend of the dove season. Mr. Reynolds stated that the seasons for rails and gallinules would be the same as past years, opening to correspond with the teal season and the dates for the remainder of the season would be set at the August meeting. The limits would be 15 for king and clapper rails, 25 for Sora and Virginia rails and 15 per day for gallinules. The woodcock season would also be the same as past years with a straight 45 day season utilizing the latest dates that can be hunted. The extended falconry season for mourning doves would have a total of 107 days which would include the 70 day regular season, those days between the first and second split and 4 days between the Department's proposed second

and third split. For woodcock, the extended season would include the 45 day regular season, 51 days before beginning on October 28 and then 11 days after the regular season. Chairman Denmon asked Mr. Reynolds to read the Therefore Be It Resolved portion of the Resolution.

Commissioner Mouton made a motion to adopt the Resolution changing the second and third split of the dove season to run October 14 through November 26 and December 23 through January 8 and to modify the falconry dates correspondingly. No second was heard on Commissioner Mouton's motion. Then Commissioner Miller made a motion to adopt the Resolution as submitted by the Department with the dates for dove, teal, rail, gallinule and woodcock and extended falconry season as presented. Commissioner King seconded the motion. The motion passed with no opposition.

(The full text of the Resolution is made a part of the record.)

RESOLUTION

LOUISIANA WILDLIFE AND FISHERIES COMMISSION
LOUISIANA DEPARTMENT OF WILDLIFE AND FISHERIES
July 6, 2006

The following was adopted by the Louisiana Wildlife and Fisheries Commission at its regular Commission Meeting in Baton Rouge, LA, July 6, 2006.

WHEREAS, public hearings in Washington, DC have been held on early migratory bird season regulations that include dove, snipe, rail, gallinule, woodcock and teal, and

WHEREAS, the results of this meeting have been discussed with the Louisiana Wildlife and Fisheries Commission, and

WHEREAS, rules and regulations governing early migratory bird season frameworks have been developed by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and

WHEREAS, the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries staff has presented recommendations for migratory species that include season dates, bag limits, and shooting hours, and

WHEREAS, it is the statutory responsibility of the Louisiana Wildlife and Fisheries Commission to establish hunting seasons for these migratory species within constraints established by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service framework, now

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, that this Commission does hereby adopt the presented tentative season dates for migratory birds which are made part of this resolution, subject to the following stipulations:

(1) The Secretary is hereby authorized and delegated the authority to take any and all steps necessary on behalf of the Commission to promulgate and effectuate these seasons as a Declaration of Emergency and preparation of reports and correspondence to other agencies of government; and

(2) If significant changes occur as a result of changes in the framework established by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service or for other reasons, the Secretary is hereby authorized and delegated the authority to alter the attached seasons based upon the recommendations of Department staff, supported by biological and technical data.

Terry D. Denmon, Chairman
Wildlife and Fisheries Commission

To consider Waterfowl Season Framework for 2006–2010 Seasons and further providing with respect thereto began with Mr. Robert Helm recapping the primary points. Zones, as they currently are, have existed for 30 years and have served well, stated Mr. Helm. The boundary consists of a series of highways and the western line was changed in 2001 to include the coastal area. Generally the West Zone opens a week earlier than the East, which was primarily directed at early migrants that show up along the coast. The East Zone contains most of the major river systems and depended on late rains to flood agricultural lands to provide additional habitat. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service established guidelines which dictate when the states can make changes. Zones and splits can be changed at 5 year intervals and a change this year would govern the timeframe through the 2010–2011 season. Mr. Helm mentioned that during this 5 year period, duck season length could range between 30, 45 or 60 days. The three options to be considered included 2 zones with 2 split seasons, 3 zones with no splits or no zone with 3 splits. A hunter opinion survey was conducted after the 2004–05 duck season asking the question which of the 3 options they would prefer. The survey was mailed to over 6,000 randomly selected hunters and ended with an approximate 50 percent response rate. The results showed 53 percent preferred the current system, 6 percent wanted the 3 zones with no splits and 41 percent chose the statewide season with 3 splits. Over the last two months, a survey was conducted on the Department’s website asking the same question. Of the 700 responses,

43 percent preferred the current system, only 6 percent favored the second option and 51 percent wanted the statewide season. Also, Mr. Helm noted he heard from 30 individuals by e-mail or telephone calls and they were evenly divided between the current system and the statewide season. Two letters were received with multiple signatures supporting the statewide season. Commissioner Miller asked if anyone was at the meeting from the Waterfowl Committee to give their recommendation. Mr. Helm was not aware of anyone. He added that the Waterfowl Study Commission met and a recommendation was developed favoring the statewide season but this failed by a 5 to 4 margin. However, a consensus was reached and this was read to the Commission by Mr. Helm. Chairman Denmon asked if a Resolution was prepared on this issue. Mr. Helm stated an existing rule was developed in 2001 and if a change was implemented, a Resolution would be required. Commissioner Miller made a motion to change the existing rule that provides for the current system of 2 zones to a statewide season with 3 splits. There was no second heard to Commissioner Miller's motion. The Chairman then asked for public comments.

Representative Sydnie Durand, a legislator representing St. Martin Parish and an avid hunter, asked that the current 2 zone, 2 split season be kept. One reason for the 2 split was due to the fact that most hunters work during the week and only have weekends to hunt. After investigating the matter, Representative Durand stated there would be no biological harm to continue through 2010 with the current system.

Mr. Warren Coco highly recommended leaving the 2 splits as established. He felt this would give hunters more opportunity to hunt both areas. Mr. Coco added that he bought land in both zones exclusively for duck hunting and knew that the West Zone was better early in the season and the East Zone was good later. Again, he stated that the current system would provide the maximum opportunity to hunt ducks.

Mr. Jimmy Bulliard stated he had the same comments as expressed by Mr. Coco and Representative Durand. He then talked about the possibility of having a 30 day season and 3 splits. Again he stated he firmly supports the 2 split system and asked the Commission to stay with the current system.

Mr. David Broussard did not wish to speak but was in favor of the 3 splits. Mr. Carl Brown did not wish to speak but was in favor of the 2 split with the East and West Zones.

Chairman Denmon stated he had a great interest in having the 3 splits, but with the data he has seen, the probability of having less than a 60

day season was reduced. When Louisiana has a 60 day season, the Chairman thought it would be difficult to fit in a third season, but would not be so troublesome with a 45 day season. In order to know which way to go, Chairman Denmon stated he needed to predict what would happen in the future and was not able to do that. Commissioner Miller stated he has studied this issue also and has had a lot of contact with hunters. Two years ago when public meetings were held on where are the ducks, an overwhelming comment made dealt with hunting pressure. Commissioner Miller added he has played with the calendar and believed the statewide season with 3 splits would produce a short split of 5 to 7 days and a longer split of 12 to 15 days. Even with the duck hunters split on the 2 zones and 2 splits or no zone with 3 splits, they were still concerned with pressure on the birds. Commissioner Miller felt the no zone, 3 split option was a way to possibly change the hunting pressure. He knew that the West Zone was created based on biology, but now this area includes the southeast marshes for no apparent reason. Commissioner Miller commented science has been left behind on zone structures and gone to politics. He then noted he was in favor of the no zone statewide season with 3 splits. Commissioner Morrow stated that based on last year's dates, the season was closed for almost 2 weeks statewide and there was no pressure on the ducks at that time. One comment he received was "if it ain't broke, don't fix it". Commissioner Morrow then stated he strongly supports the present system. Commissioner King made a motion to continue with the current system of 2 zones with 2 split seasons. Chairman Denmon asked if a motion was required. Mr. Don Puckett stated that if the Commission wanted to stay with the current season, no motion was necessary. Commissioner King withdrew his motion.

Before moving to the next agenda item, Mr. Helm stated he received information from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service on breeding grounds. From the May breeding pair survey done in Canada and North Central United States, the total estimate from the 10 duck species was up 14 percent from last year to 36 million breeding birds. For the individual species, mallards were up 500,000, blue-winged teal was up almost 30 percent, green-winged teal were up 20 percent, gadwall almost 30 percent. Habitat conditions were excellent, so Mr. Helm expected good production. The only species not showing an increase were widgeon and scaup, with scaup breeding populations at a record low. Pintails were 32 percent greater than last year, but still below the long term average. Estimates of ponds in prairie Canada were about 13 percent above last year's estimate and 32 percent above the long term average.

Chairman Denmon asked that the Commission be notified if the federal framework changed on the early migratory bird seasons before it was finalized. Secretary Landreneau stated he would be glad to notify them.

To receive an Announcement on the Selection of a New Point of Sale License System Vendor began with Secretary Landreneau stating he had some good news on this issue. With the present POS contract expiring in January 2007, a Request for Proposal (RFP) was put out earlier this year. Two vendors submitted a proposal and were reviewed by a committee of staff. The selected vendor would develop a new system for the Department which would blend the current system with a PC system and form a hybrid system that would be capable of being used in rural areas. The contract was awarded to Automated License Systems and they will come on board February 1, 2007 with a new and improved system. This system will be customer friendly and cost efficient for the Department. Telephone calls and conference calls have begun with the new vendor to develop the system. Secretary Landreneau noted the system would be tested before it was presented to the public and any “kinks” should be resolved. Chairman Denmon asked if there would be a provision for the deer tags. Secretary Landreneau answered yes, it has all been included in the negotiations. He added the new system would allow more flexibility in the way the Department can manage it. Chairman Denmon asked if the deer tags would be printed out and then sent to a hunter. Mr. Moreland stated they would print the tags when you buy your license. Then Chairman Denmon asked what if a person buys a license online. Mr. Moreland assumed the tags would be mailed. Commissioner Mouton was glad the Department worked on the rural area issue with Bell South still working on rebuilding in the Venice area. Secretary Landreneau added that the new hybrid system would give vendors a choice and that should alleviate any problems in the rural areas.

The agenda item, **To receive and hear Enforcement & Aviation Reports/June** was handled by Lt. Col. Keith LaCaze. A total of 1,803 citations, 356 written warnings were issued during June and agents helped in 79 instances of public assists. The primary cases were in the area of recreational boating and fishing. There were 36 DWI vessel related cases and Region 7 accounted for 31 of those cases. There were 17 reported boating accidents with 12 injuries and 2 fatalities for the month. Year to date totals included 60 reported boating accidents, 38 injuries and 12 fatalities. Those totals were down compared with last year’s numbers of 82 reported accidents, 44 injuries and 22 fatalities. Lt. Col. LaCaze felt the boating education as well as patrols and safety efforts were paying off and reflected in the totals. The Aviation Report showed the three Department airplanes flew a total of 49.3 hours for the month. News Releases centered on a sentencing received in Federal court

on a waterfowl violation and trash removal and stepped up enforcement on Rockefeller Refuge. Lt. Col. LaCaze commented that a new training academy began the week before the meeting with 15 candidates hoping to graduate in December. Chairman Denmon noticed that each region wrote littering citations and noted that was a good thing. Lt. Col. LaCaze stated the agents were very enthusiastic about littering and explained how they compete for an annual littering award.

Mr. Tim Morrison explained that the next item, **To receive BASS Donation for Hurricane Restocking Efforts** would help the Department with restocking efforts following Hurricanes Katrina and Rita. The freshwater fisheries populations were devastated by these storms and as a result the Inland Fisheries Division launched Operation Jump Start to help restore the resources of the State as fast as possible. Staff knew they would need partners to accomplish this task and one such partner was the Bass Anglers Sportsmen's Society. Mr. Morrison then introduced Ms. Noreen Clough, BASS National Conservation Director and Mr. Will Courtney, State Representative. Ms. Clough stated that on behalf of ESPN Outdoors/BASS and Louisiana BASS Federation Nation a check for \$3,500 would be donated to further the Inland Fisheries Division's jump start program for stocking post-Katrina. Mr. Kell McInnis stated that on behalf of the Wildlife and Fisheries Foundation, the donation was certainly appreciated. He added that the funds would be included in the purchase of fingerlings for the Red River Waterway. Chairman Denmon thanked BASS for their donation on behalf of the Commission.

To consider Resolution for the 2006 Fall Inshore Shrimp Season and further providing with respect thereto was handled by Mr. Marty Bourgeois. He stated the Resolution would give authority to the Secretary to open and close the 2006 fall shrimp season provided data indicates marketable shrimp were available for harvest if this happened before the August Commission Meeting. A similar Resolution was adopted at last year's July Commission Meeting. The Secretary acted on that Resolution by opening a portion of Shrimp Management Zone 2 August 1, 2005. Commissioner Samanie asked if the samples look like they were ahead again this year. Mr. Bourgeois stated mean size was slightly behind last year, but a number of individuals were well ahead of last year. He felt it was a bit premature to say, but thought there may be a chance of an early opening. Chairman Denmon asked if there may be a need to open the season before the next Commission Meeting? Mr. Bourgeois added there was a 72 hour required public notice before opening the shrimp season. Chairman Denmon asked if the biology does not justify an early opening, would this be an item at the August Meeting. Mr. Bourgeois answered yes. Commissioner Samanie made a motion to accept the Resolution and it was seconded by Commissioner Morrow.

Mr. Pete Gerica, Lake Pontchartrain Fisherman's Association, stated they support the concept since there was marketable shrimp.

Commissioner King asked that the Commission be informed if a Declaration of Emergency was issued. Mr. Bourgeois assured they would be notified. Hearing no further discussion, the motion passed with no opposition.

(The full text of the Resolution is made a part of the record.)

RESOLUTION

2006 Fall Inshore Shrimp Season
adopted by the
Louisiana Wildlife and Fisheries Commission

July 6, 2006

WHEREAS, R.S. 56:497 authorizes the Wildlife and Fisheries Commission to fix no less than two open shrimp seasons each calendar year for all inside waters by zone, and

WHEREAS, R.S. 56:497 provides that shrimp season openings shall be based on biological and technical data which indicate that marketable shrimp, in sufficient quantities, are available for harvest, and

WHEREAS, R.S. 56:497 provides that the Wildlife and Fisheries Commission may delegate to the Secretary the powers, duties and authorities to fix open seasons for all or part of the state waters, and

WHEREAS, significant numbers of juvenile white shrimp have recruited into inside waters much earlier this spring when compared with historic data and rapid growth may occur provided favorable environmental conditions exist, and

WHEREAS, current biological sampling conducted by the Department of Wildlife and Fisheries has indicated that white shrimp in inside waters may potentially reach marketable sizes and average 100 count per pound minimum possession size or larger on or before the August 3rd monthly Wildlife and Fisheries Commission meeting, now

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, that in accordance with public notification provisions specified in R.S. 56:497, that the Commission authorizes the Secretary, through Declaration of Emergency, to open and close the 2006

fall shrimp season in inside waters provided technical and biological data indicate that marketable shrimp, in sufficient quantities are available for harvest, and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Secretary of the Department is authorized to take any and all necessary steps on behalf of the Commission to promulgate and effectuate a Declaration of Emergency, and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, the Commission also grants authority to the Secretary of the Department of Wildlife and Fisheries to change the closing dates if biological or technical data indicate the need to do so or if enforcement problems develop and to close and reopen all or parts of state outside waters if significant numbers of small white shrimp are found in these waters.

Terry D. Denmon, Chairman
Wildlife and Fisheries Commission

The Commissioners agreed to hold the **November 2006 Meeting** on Thursday, November 2, 2006, beginning at 9:30 a.m. at the Baton Rouge Headquarters.

Next item was to receive **Public Comments**, but none were heard.

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

Dwight Landreneau
Secretary

DL:scf