

LOUISIANA WILDLIFE AND FISHERIES COMMISSION

MINUTES

March 1, 2012

ANN L. TAYLOR
CHAIRMAN

BATON ROUGE, LOUISIANA

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AGENDA
LOUISIANA WILDLIFE AND FISHERIES COMMISSION
BATON ROUGE, LA
March 1, 2012
9:30 AM

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MINUTES OF THE MEETING
OF
LOUISIANA WILDLIFE AND FISHERIES COMMISSION

Thursday, March 1, 2012

Chairman Ann Taylor presiding.

Ronny Graham
Stephen Oats
Pat Manuel
Ann Taylor
Mike Voisin
Billy Broussard

Secretary Robert Barham was also present.

Chairman Taylor called for a motion for approval of the **February 2, 2012 Commission Minutes**. A motion for approval was made by Commissioner Oats and seconded by Commissioner Graham. The motion passed with no opposition.

There was nothing for the agenda item, **Commission Special Announcements/Personal Privilege**.

Lt. Col. Joey Broussard stated, for the agenda item, **To hear Enforcement & Aviation Reports/February**, there were a total of 813 cases and 220 written warnings were issued during February and agents helped with 57 public assists. The Department's planes flew a total of 52 aviation hours for the month. There were 7 boating accidents reported with 2 injuries and 1 fatality in Bossier Parish on the Red River. Three news releases were discussed. The first was on three subjects cited for night hunting violations on Three Rivers WMA. The second was on three Louisianans cited for possessing 61 sharks when Louisiana law only allows 33. The last was on ten individuals who were cited for deer hunting violations in Webster and Bienville Parishes. Commissioner Voisin asked how many Enforcement Agents the Department has. Lt. Col. Broussard answered that there are 230 agents. Commissioner Voisin asked if that is the maximum amount, and Lt. Col. Broussard answered that the maximum is 235 or 236. There were no further comments or questions.

Mr. Randy Myers handled the next two agenda items, **To receive Public Comment on Notice of Intent on 2013 – 14 Hunting Season Dates and on Notice of Intent on General/WMA Hunting Regulations**. Mr. Myers stated that the Department has been receiving public comment on both Notices of Intent (NOI) that were presented at the last meeting, and that a summary of the comments received has been provided, as well as the comments. Mr. Myers went on to review the comments. One comment has been received that supports more restrictions on dog hunting for deer, one comment supports removing the pre-1900 designation

for firearms as was presented in the NOI, three comments would like to allow .35 caliber or larger for primitive firearms, one comment supports more restrictive firearm regulations, one comment supports allowing handguns during the primitive firearm season, one comment supporting the use of .22 caliber or smaller for the take of raccoons, two comments supporting allowing larger ATV tire sizes on the Wildlife Management Areas (WMAs), one supporting archery only areas on Beouf WMA, six total comments concerning the additional antlerless deer tag proposal – two in support of and four against, and two comments in support of an extended deer season in Area 1.

Mr. Myers introduced a proposed amendment to the General and WMA Rules and Regulations NOI that would allow for the use of .22 caliber firearms or smaller for the take of raccoon or possum. The current regulation only specifies .22 caliber, not .22 caliber or smaller. The amended language would read “Raccoon and opossum can be taken at night by one or more licensed hunters with one or more dogs and one .22 caliber **or smaller** rimfire firearm. A licensed hunter may take raccoon or opossum with .22 caliber **or smaller** rimfire rifle...”. Commissioner Voisin made a motion to adopt the amendment, and Commissioner Oats seconded the motion. There being no further discussion or public comments the motion passed with no opposition.

Mr. Myers reminded the Commission that last month changes were proposed to primitive firearms, specifically the removal of the pre-1900 designation from the definition, as well as adding a Commission approved list that may be smaller than .38 caliber or larger. Mr. Jimmy Anthony addressed the Commission regarding the firearms that the Department is proposing. Mr. Anthony stated the Department is not going to change the firearms, as that was done last time, taking the pre-1900 designation off. The other part of the regulation change is looking at different calibers and cartridges that the public wants. There is speculation that because Mississippi changed theirs to .35 caliber that we should too. Mr. Anthony stated that this basically opened the door to some long-range ballistic missiles. The .35 Whelan is capable of taking all North American game at extreme ranges. It is comparable to a 350 Magnum, and the Department does not believe that is appropriate for our primitive season. With that being said, Mr. Anthony stated that there are some weapons that fit the .35 caliber mold that probably would be allowed, which is what will be presented. Mr. Anthony noted the difference between caliber and cartridge. When a manufacturer makes a cartridge he has the naming rights to it. Normally it is called something similar to what it actually measures, which is the caliber, measured across the diameter of the bullet. Mr. Anthony stated that it doesn't always fit. Some .38 calibers actually measure .35, which causes confusion. This is why Mississippi changed to allow all .35 caliber weapons. As an example Mr. Anthony used the 38-40 Winchester, developed in 1874. It is called a 38 and was originally loaded with 40 grains of black powder. The bullet caliber is actually .401, which makes it a .40 caliber. Mr. Anthony stated that the 38 Smith & Wesson Special actually shoots a .357 diameter bullet. Tickets will not be written for this because on the head stamp of the ammunition it says .38, even though it shoots a .357 bullet, which is actually a .35. Mr. Anthony stated that currently there is nothing out there marketed for the .38 so it may be a mute issue; however, there are 357 Magnum rifles available, and even though they are correctly named as a .35 caliber it will shoot .38 special ammo, so someone can have a 357 Magnum rifle and use correct ammunition. The Department is suggesting legalizing these. Mr. Anthony also introduced the 38-55 Winchester actually shoots a .3775 bullet, which is actually a

.37 caliber. The Department is asking to legalize this one as well, and stated that it is a short to medium range caliber. The 375 Winchester is just a modernized version of the 38-55. Mr. Anthony stated that it is a little more powerful, but lengthened so that people would not insert that cartridge into the 38-55 because the chamber pressures were too great. Both of these are medium-range type deer calibers. Mr. Anthony moved to the 35 Winchester Self-Loading, developed in 1905 as a short-range deer and bear gun. There are some original weapons out there that could be used, but they are not currently produced. There are some pistols that will shoot this as well. Mr. Anthony stated that back in the day cowboys liked to use the same ammunition in their pistols as they did in their rifles, so there may be some chambered for .35 Winchester, and the Department thinks that should be legal. The 351 Winchester was developed to replace the 35 because the 35 was considered a bit light, with a little more powerful round along the same premise. With that, Mr. Anthony presented the list that the Department is asking the Commission to approve. Commissioner Oats asked for Mr. Anthony's comments and recommendations on the .35 Whelan. Mr. Anthony stated that the .35 Whelan is not recommended because it is capable of 400-500 yard ranges, and the Department does not believe that is appropriate to call a primitive firearm. Commissioner Voisin moved adoption of the recommended list and Commission Graham seconded the motion. Public Comments were received from Ben Naquin from St. Amant. Mr. Naquin stated that he has a 357 H&R rifle that he uses to hunt deer during primitive firearm season, but realized that the 357 diameter was actually smaller than the .38. Because that 357 rifle can shoot a .357 caliber or a .38 caliber round Mr. Naquin had a conversation with an Enforcement Agent to ask if he could use that rifle to shoot .38 caliber bullets. He was told "no", because the Enforcement agents had to go by what was stamped on the barrel of the rifle, which stated 357. Mr. Naquin asked if the recommended 357 S&W would include the 357 H&R Rifle. Mr. Anthony answered that it does not matter about the rifle, it matters what kind of ammunition you put in it. Mr. Anthony said that a 357 H&R is a brand of rifle; as long as you use .357 S&W ammunition or .38 Special you can use it. Commissioner Oats commented that he wanted to make sure that the comments from Dutch Bowers are made part of the public record. Commissioner Manuel asked about the Enforcement agent that told Mr. Naquin not to use the rifle, will that be clarified now. Mr. Anthony stated that is the purpose of creating a Commission approved list, because the Department wanted to allow those weapons that may be questionable. There being no further discussion or comment that motion was approved.

Next Mr. Myers introduced Mr. Mike Balboni of the U.S. Forest Service who stated that the decision of the Forest Service is to prohibit dog-deer hunting in Kisatchie National Forest, and asked the Commission to amend the NOI. Mr. Balboni stated that this decision will go through an appeal Commissioner Sagrera asked Mr. Balboni how long the appeal period is, and Mr. Balboni answered 45 days. Commissioner Oats asked if appeals are expected. Mr. Balboni answered yes. Commissioner Oats then asked how many appeals there were last time. Mr. Balboni answered that it was close to 1000. Commissioner Oats asked how many made it through. Mr. Balboni answered that there most were form letters, and that there were six or eight that had a lot of narrative, one in particular. Commissioner Oats asked how many of those were actually considered, to which Mr. Balboni responded that they were all considered. Commissioner Oats asked how many were successful. Mr. Balboni answered that the decision was reversed. Commissioner Oats recommended that the Commission not amend the NOI at this point, but to wait until the Forest Service is finished with their process. He asked when the last

time would be to make this amendment. Mr. Don Puckett answered that it would be April, and then in May the Commission would have to vote on all amendments that have been approved up to that time. Commissioner Oats recommended that the Commission wait to take action until they see final action from the Forest Service. Commissioner Graham asked Mr. Balboni when the 45 days of the appeal process started, and if it will be over by April. Mr. Balboni answered that the appeal process will be over from the standpoint of someone appealing it. The decision on the appeal itself will not be over. Commissioner Graham asked when that can be expected. Mr. Balboni answered that last time it was several months. Mr. Graham commented that he remembers that last time the regulations had already been printed, which was the problem Mr. Balboni answered that is correct. Commissioner Graham stated the he would suggest they speed up the process. Mr. Balboni answered “we will do everything we can.

For public comment Mr. David Moreland, with the South Louisiana Branch of the Quality Deer Management Association (QDMA). Mr. Moreland stated that the proposals were discussed at their last meeting and have provided a letter of support for the proposal regarding the deer hunting seasons and the changes in the regulations. He also thanked the Commission for the ability to do some gun hunting in February through the new DMAP program, and would hope that the Department would continue to look at the program and do something for those landowners and clubs who cannot get enrolled in DMAP, even though the deer activity is still going strong in February in those areas. Mr. Moreland provided some information on the South Louisiana Branch. He stated that QDMA is not just about producing trophy deer, in fact is far from it. It’s about managing the habitat to keep it productive, managing the herd to keep the deer herd healthy, trying to develop that older age class structure, and about quality deer hunting. QDMA does a lot of work geared toward education, and appreciates the effort and hard work of the Commission. Mr. Moreland told the Commission to please feel free to call upon QDMA if ever needed.

Mr. Randy Myers reminded the Commission and the public that the Department will be holding the public meetings statewide as follows: March 13 beginning at 6:00 p.m., at Alexandria Convention Hall, 915 Third Street, Alexandria; March 13 beginning at 6:30 p.m., at the LDWF Office, 9961 Highway 80, Minden; March 14 beginning at 6:30 p.m., Yambilee Festival Building, 1939 W. Landry, Opelousas; March 15 beginning at 6:00 p.m., Bastrop Visitor Center, 124 North Washington Street, Bastrop; and March 15 beginning at 6:30 p.m., LSU Ag Center (next to Burton Coliseum), 7101 Gulf Highway, Lake Charles; and finally March 21 beginning at 6:00 p.m., St. John Parish Council Chambers, 1801 W. Airline Highway, Laplace. In addition the Department will continue to receive public comment, which can be emailed directly to Randy Myers or mailed to the Department at 2000 Quail Dr., Baton Rouge, LA 70808.

Mr. Larry Robichaux brought an item to the Commission on behalf of his next door neighbor who is a small landowner. Mr. Robichaux stated that several of his neighbors were enrolled in the extended February hunting, which he knew nothing about. When he found out about it he was kind of upset and would like to ask that the opportunity be made more accessible to others. Mr. Robichaux also commented that he is against the additional doe tag, that he hunts a lot of land and thinks that too many doe are being killed. Mr. Robichaux stated that he thinks that the everyday doe day has stressed some of the land. Mr. Robichaux also stated that in general he is

opposed to dog hunting on WMA's as a general rule, and he does support the National Forest banning their dogs finally.

Mr. Fred Kimmel handled the next agenda item, **To receive and consider a Notice of Intent on Snare Regulations in Trapping**. Mr. Kimmel stated that the proposed NOI deals with regulation of the use of snares in some portions of the state. The NOI address the capture of non-targeted species, specifically the Louisiana Black Bear. Mr. Kimmel stated that in the past two years there have been five bears that the Department is aware of that have been captured in snares, which resulted in three mortalities, one was released by biologists, and one escaped with the snare still attached to his leg. The Department has been working diligently to recover the Louisiana Black Bear that was listed in 1992, and also to de-list the species. Unregulated human induced mortality is one of the threats that were covered in the Black Bear Recovery Plan that was developed by the Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) and other partners. Mr. Kimmel stated that the Department is trying to work proactively to address some of those sources of preventable human induced mortality so that when the Department goes through the de-listing process, all issues have been addressed. Failure to do so could jeopardize the Department's ability to de-list the Black Bear. Mr. Kimmel stated that the Department has taken a number of different actions to address human-induced mortality, such as offering a hunter education course on Louisiana Black Bears, creating signs helping people to identify bears and addressing the similarities with other species, developing brochures targeted to hunters and homeowners so they would know how to deal with bears, put up bear crossing signs in places where mortality has been an issue on highways, and finally the Department has been working with local communities, particularly in St. Mary Parish to educate people and try to reduce some of the conflicts that sometimes result in mortality. Mr. Kimmel stated that this NOI is trying to reduce or prevent human-induced mortality. Mr. Kimmel stated that the proposed rule would govern the use of snares to capture outlaw quadrupeds, non-game quadrupeds, nuisance animals, and any other animals. It affects snaring in 15 parishes of the state, Avoyelles, Catahoula, Concordia, East Carroll, Franklin, Iberia, Madison, Pointe Coupee, Richland, St. Landry, St. Martin, St. Mary, Tensas, Vermillion, and West Carroll. Mr. Kimmel stated that in those parishes, a person who uses snares would have to comply with the following conditions: 1) the snare has to be fitted with a relaxing lock, meaning one that stops tightening when the animal stops pulling; 2) the snare be fitted with a single breakaway device that releases when 350 pounds or less of force is applied. Commissioner Voisin asked why the NOI states "or less". Mr. Kimmel answered that the legal requirement would be that a snare could withstand 350 pounds or less, or in other words, a snare that could withstand more than 350 pounds would be illegal. Commissioner Voisin clarified, so you could have a 100 pound breakaway, but not a 351. A 330 would be legal. Mr. Kimmel answered "correct". Mr. Kimmel stated that it is the amount of force it takes to open it up, anything less would be illegal. Mr. Kimmel also stated that some staff members had the same question, and that it can be a little difficult if you don't understand it. Mr. Kimmel stated that a common breakaway is rated at 285. Breakaway is not a precision science, it can vary according to the size of the loop, and the length of the snare, but 350 would allow the release of adult bears. Commissioner Voisin asked who certifies breakaway strength. Mr. Kimmel answered that the approach the Department is taking is as determined by static load test, which is outlined in the Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies, if it is a breakaway that is commercially available and the manufacturer specifies that it is 350 pounds or less. Mr. Kimmel stated that the Department would recommend that the trapper keep a copy of the receipt and

specifications to demonstrate that the snare complies with the breakaway requirement. Commissioner Voisin stated that the NOI does state “a department approved commercially available breakaway device”, and asked if the Department will have an approved list. Mr. Kimmel replied that the Department has discussed creating a list, but decided it might be easier for trappers to demonstrate that the snare meets specifications. Mr. Kimmel went on to discuss the next requirement of having a metal tag attached to each snare that would identify the owners/trappers who own the snare. Mr. Kimmel stated that the next requirement is that the snare be securely anchored to the ground or an immovable object in a manner that would allow the breakaway to work. The last requirement is that the snare should not be in such proximity to another snare that an animal could be caught in two snares. Mr. Kimmel stated that there are some exceptions being proposed, one is employees of state or federal agencies acting in their official capacity, and also nuisance wildlife controls operators (WCO) could be exempted with department approval, provided that they submit a written plan to the Department with a number of things such as when they are going to trap, the location, how they plan to avoid catching non-target species, specifically bears. Things that will be considered are if they will use bait, the local bear population, what other practices they have utilized to try to reduce hogs, etc. The Department anticipates that the exemptions would be person who would like to snare hogs. Commissioner Manuel asked if a Commercial trapper gave notice within two weeks, would that be ok? Mr. Kimmel answered if he was a WCO, who are people the Department permits to trap year-round to control nuisance wildlife. Commissioner Manuel answered that he understands that, but asked if he wanted to get an exemption and were to notify the Department within the required timeframe, could he get an exemption also? Mr. Kimmel answered not unless you are a WCO. Commissioner Manuel asked “why not?” Mr. Kimmel answered that the idea is to limit this to trappers who the Department knows have experience, and that NCO’s have to go through a class to be permitted, and they have to demonstrate knowledge, skills, and abilities. Commissioner Manuel asked how many bear were killed by automobile over the same period of time, and commented that people are not going to stop driving on the highways, but we are trying to stop the snaring of them? Commissioner Manuel commented that he thinks this is counterproductive, if only three have been killed with snares. Mr. Kimmel stated that there are three bears killed by snares that the Department knows of in the last two years. Commissioner Voisin asked how many WCO’s there are in the state, or in the 17 parish area. Mr. Kimmel answered that there are about 29 WCO’s in the 17 parish area and about 65 in the state. Mr. Kimmel stated that another exemption would be for persons trapping beavers, minks, otters, etc. within 15 feet of water, as those areas have a low probability of encountering a bear. Mr. Kimmel stated that any incident of a Black Bear captured in a snare needs to be reported to the Department. Mr. Kimmel noted that several sections of Title 76 are affected by this NOI, such as the coyote trapping section, which states that anyone using snares would have to comply with this rule, if adopted, in the 15 parish area. The same thing applies to the nuisance wild quadruped section and the WCO section. Mr. Kimmel stated that the main impact of this proposed rule will have to do with the snaring of wild hogs. The problem with hog snaring is that it is done pretty much the way you would if you were going to catch a bear, and they are about the same size. He noted that a breakaway that will release a bear will also release a hog. Mr. Kimmel stated that the Department realizes that hogs are a problem, and has made other tools available through Commission action and state law, such as hogs can be trapped year round in cage or corral traps, they can be shot during daylight hours year-round, regulations now allow for taking of hogs at night for about six months out of the year using night vision equipment, etc.

Mr. Kimmel stated that the cost of this to a trapper will be less than \$1 per snare: around \$.40 for the breakaway device and around \$.25 for the lock. Commissioner Voisin asked how many snares are set in the state or in the 17 parish area. Mr. Kimmel introduced Ed Mouton, who is the furbearer biologist. Mr. Mouton answered that he does not know how many are in the 17 parish area, but about 10,000 snares are sold annually in the state for feral hog snaring. Mr. Mouton stated that snares are a one-time use tool. Commissioner Voisin asked how many snares are set at any given time. Mr. Mouton said that he could not answer that. Commissioner Segrera asked Mr. Kimmel if the Department has figures on how many bear were injured or killed due to methods other than snares, such as automobiles or hunters. Fred Kimmel introduced Maria Davidson, the Department's large carnivore biologist, to answer that question. Ms. Davidson answered that there were 20 bears killed in that same timeframe, about 70-75% were hit by car fatalities, and the rest were illegal take. Commissioner Segrera referred to Mr. Kimmel's comment that brochures have been provided for hunters, homeowners, and different groups, to try to avoid conflict, and asked if the Department has put out anything to educate trappers on what they can do to avoid incidental catch. Maria answered no, that the Department has had one coyote trapper catch a bear twice. Commissioner Segrera referred to page 16 of the Recovery Plan from the US Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), and noted that in Louisiana and Mississippi it appears that poaching and road kill are the most significant mortality for bear. Commissioner Segrera also noted that the Recovery Plan states that one goal would be to reduce killing through education, and on page 15, develop and implement information and education program. He noted that education is mentioned a couple of places, and is wondering if that is not an option that we can try to educate trappers to avoid this potential conflict. Commissioner Segrera also stated that he did not read anywhere in the Recovery Plan where the Feds say we need to restrict snares, and asked if it is a state idea, or where the idea is coming from. Ms. Davidson answered that this was a stated idea, that the Department talked to the USFWS, and they are concerned with the state addressing sources of mortality as they are identified. She stated that when we fail to do so we are failing to address those threats. Ms. Davidson stated that when the Department found out that there are bears being killed in snares, it was viewed as a source of mortality, and it represents greater than 10% of the yearly mortality in the past year. The Department felt like it was something that should be addressed, and could be done without affecting the coyote snaring in that area, because the breakaways that are recommended are such that the coyote trappers can still catch coyotes. The Department does recognize that it will limit hog snaring in the area, but we feel that it is a trade-off situation. Given the tools that are provided to landowners, hunting camps and such for hog control, the Department felt that it was a trade-off. Ms. Davidson stated that we have a serious battle ahead of us for delisting, and she believes that we need to address all of those different areas ahead of time in order to accomplish that goal. Commissioner Segrera asked if she is saying that this would be a major step toward delisting. Ms. Davidson answered that it is addressing a source of mortality, there is no doubt about that. Commissioner Segrera asked if that is something that has been indicated from our federal partners, or if there were any representatives from USFWS who could comment at this time. Ms. Davidson stated that this will address a source of 10% of bear mortalities in the state, which is significant, and because this has not been recognized in the past it has not been an issue for the, but now the spotlight is on this issue and it will become an issue for them. Commissioner Broussard stated that there must be somewhere else within the continental US where snaring is legal where black bears live, so is this law in any way reflective of what other states are doing? Ms. Davidson stated that it is, and that the Department sent out a pretty serious

survey of other states and breakaways are common in most of them. Ms. Davidson stated that it is not just bears, but other trophy game species, such as deer, that are of equal size that could escape from a furbearer snare. When these regulations were written the Department went to the Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies (AFWA) and found the whitepaper written by the USDA for AFWA specifically for this reason, so that when state agencies were trying to write new regulations they basically had BMP's written by the professionals. Commissioner Voisin moved that the Commission delay any action on this until hearing from the USFWS or a representative of that group, and also request that the education information that has been made available be forwarded to Commissioners so that they can understand it. Commissioner Sagrera seconded the motion. Commissioner Graham commented that he agrees with what Commissioner Voisin said, but that personally he needs education on the topic. He knows that we do have a black bear problem in the state that has created lots of problems over the years and the Secretary and staff is working very diligently to get the black bear delisted from the endangered species list. Commissioner Graham stated that he would also like to hear from the USFWS whether this will have any effect on getting the black bear delisted. He stated that if we were to do anything it should be a temporary thing and that we should not be milling around with trapper people unless we have to. He asked if we could go back to doing what is being done today when the black bear is delisted. Commissioner Graham stated that there are a lot of things that we need to understand about this, that they need to work with the trapper people and the Department to take care of a serious problem in the state. He stated that once the black bear is delisted lots of good things will come out of that for landowners and the state, but that in the process he thinks that everyone should educate themselves so they can make the right decision for the resource, as well as the people who are trying to make a living in the state trapping industry. Chairman Taylor stated that she does have several comment cards. Commissioner Oats stated that, since we have a motion on the table to put this off, and since most of the comments are against the Commission moving forward on the regulation, he is in support of Commissioner Voisin's motion, and that we might not need all of the comments. Commissioner Sagrera stated that it might be good to have them comment now to have it in the public record, and that it may be inconvenient for some people to travel back next month. It will take a little bit of time, but we should consider it. Commissioner Voisin stated that he would like to hear some of the key points, because he would like to be educated by them.

The first public comment was from Mr. James "Jim" Funderburg, who stated that he lives in Tensas and manages about 1400 acres of hunting land. Mr. Funderburg stated that he is not a trapper, but he does have ponds that are full of beavers. When he first heard about this he talked to other who duck hunt and use the same kind of terrain that he does, and all of them are forced to, at times, use a snare to get beavers. He stated that he did not realize that there is an exemption, as Fred Kimmel stated, but he has a huge problem for coyotes as well. Mr. Funderburg stated that, for someone who is not a trapper by avocation, a lot of this is very confusing. He stated that when many people use a snare they make their own, so buying a breakaway, or finding a supplier for that is, to say the least, confusing. The history of wildlife management is littered with unintended consequences, and his greatest fear is that, if this is passed there will be an explosion of beaver. Mr. Funderburg stated that most people around him do not hire professional trappers to take care of their beaver problem.

The next public comment was from Michael Beran, and WCO from Bossier Parish. Mr. Beran stated this his comments are of philosophy versus actual facts. The problem with starting to tinker with the way snares are set or made is that it opens up a small leghold for the animal rights groups. Mr. Beran stated that he owns a franchise with 35 offices across the nation, and he sees this type of thing happen all the time, one small regulation put in place for one small issue, although he does not see this as an issue, opens up the door for many more regulations. Mr. Beran asked that the Commission consider this and educate themselves as much as possible. He also commented that the black bear will delist itself. Mr. Beran stated that as a WCO he is already getting calls about black bears, especially around Mound, LA. He stated that it is a large predator, likes the same stuff we like, and will be an issue all the way around. Mr. Beran asked the Commission to consider closely these regulations and to this issue.

The next public comment was from Sam Smith who stated that he is not sure if he would be classified as a professional trapper, but that he has been doing it for 35 years. Mr. Smith stated the there have been problems all over the country with regulating and deregulating things, and asked “why change, what’s the problem?” Mr. Smith compared three bears killed in snares to 17 killed on the highway. He stated that the biggest problem that we have right now is not the black bear, it is the hogs. Mr. Smith stated that we now have a program in place to control the nutria, and that it has done a pretty good job, that he catches about 3-4 nutria a year where he traps, compared to 30-40 in the past. He stated that nutria reproduce about three times a year with about four young in a litter, compared to hogs who may have 4 or 14 in a litter. Mr. Smith stated that he believes the concentration should be on controlling hogs.

The next public comment was from Mr. James Gallaspy, owner of RP Outdoors, who ships traps and snares all over the United States. Mr. Gallaspy stated that the request from the bear people and the Department will defeat the purpose of the hog control bill. He stated that the intent of the bill was to eliminate feral hogs, not to eliminate hog snares. He stated that in the last several years RP Outdoors has sold several hundred thousand snares across the United States. Mr. Gallaspy stated that in Louisiana there are 425 people as of January 1 for the last year and a half who ordered snares in Louisiana, most being hog snares. He stated that we did not have a hog issue six years ago like we do now. Mr. Gallaspy stated that in the Fur Council meeting they asked the bear people which parishes do they expect to be bear habitat in the future, and they answered all of them, so this rule would eventually cover the whole state. Mr. Gallaspy stated that all hogs do not go into corral traps; there are always some that have to be caught with snares or shot. He stated that nametags and breakaways will double the cost of snares or more and make them less efficient. He stated that he has been manufacturing them for years, and anything that is put on a snare is a deterrent from that animal going to that snare. Mr. Gallaspy stated that it was rare to sell hog snares in Louisiana until a few years ago. He stated that his company offered a breakaway on snares a few years ago, that they print out 30,000 cataloges nationwide and they also have a website. He stated that they did not sell a dozen breakaways and discontinued them the next year. Mr. Gallaspy stated that breakaway devices are not uniform and will not hold a large hog. He asked how breakaway devices will be tested in the field? Who will get to test them – the manufacturer of the breakaway or the trapper? Who will carry the equipment around to test them? Mr. Gallaspy stated that he is sure everyone has heard that other states have adopted these snare rules, and they have, but people do not use snares there anymore. He stated that snares proven to be the most effective way to go with hogs, and they are very

mobile. Mr. Gallaspy stated that he believes education is key. He stated why not make the hog people a bulletin to go on snares when they go out to provide education. Commissioner Voisin asked Mr. Gallaspy how many snares are set in that 17 parish area or statewide. Mr. Gallaspy stated that he does not know how many are set in the 17 parish area, but statewide he would think over 10,000 hog snares in 18 months. Commissioner Voisin thanked him.

The next public comment was from Tony Howard, President of the Louisiana Trappers and Alligators Association. Mr. Howard stated that the fur trade in Louisiana goes back before the Louisiana Purchase, that it is our heritage and our history. He stated that as recent as 1981 Louisiana was the number one fur producing state in the union, and that current market trends are propelling Louisiana back into the forefront. Mr. Howard stated that trapping in Louisiana is not just a hobby, it is an industry. He stated that the proposed regulations presented today are an attempt to appease USFWS into delisting the black bear. He stated that the central point he derives from the black bear recovery plan is education, yet the first the trapping industry heard about black bears being snared was when regulations were being proposed, and no attempt has ever been made to educate the trapping industry. He referenced the recovery plan as stating that poaching and roadkill are the most significant factors of black bear mortality. Mr. Howard stated that nowhere in the recovery plan does it say to create new laws, but to enforce current laws. He stated that it has been reported through the large carnivore program that three black bears have been snared, and one of these was suspected as a poaching, and the same records show that between 20 and 30 bears are killed each year on the highways and by other means such as farm equipment, trains, and hunters. Mr. Howard does not believe these numbers justify setting new regulations for the trapping industry. He stated that on November 28 representatives from the Louisiana Fur Advisory Council, Landowners Association and Louisiana Trappers Association met with Wildlife Division to discuss proposed regulations. Mr. Howard stated that during this meeting it was stated that someone would be made an example out of with these regulations and everyone else would get the message. Mr. Howard suggested to implement the bear recovery plans own words, "education". Mr. Howard stated that these regulations come from other states in which the use of snares has been regulated into non-existence, and almost every case started with the endangered species act. He stated that Louisiana goes by Parishes, not Counties, and that we do not go to the beat of someone else's drums, and do not play follow the leader with other states. Mr. Howard stated that the trapping industries techniques are the same as our grandfathers used, but the tools have changed drastically to stay on the cutting edge of technology for more efficient and effective tools that are designed to be more humane. Mr. Howard stated that the fur industry is no different from the oil or timber industries. He stated that the fur industry is trying to clean itself up through tools and technology, but that every time they seem to be regulated into non-existence. Mr. Howard stated that the snare has been around for hundreds, if not thousands of years, yet now, when they have been developed to become one of the most efficient and mobile tools regulations are being proposed to eliminate their use. He stated that the mere fact that the black bear has been snared shows that the black bear recovery has been a success and the large carnivore program should be commended on a job well done, but their attempt to regulate the use of snares is not well thought out. Who is going to be made an example out of when a relaxing lock fails and a black bear dies? Mr. Howard stated that the relaxing lock is not 100% effective in keeping all restrained animals alive. He stated that the breakaway device is not 100% guaranteed either. Mr. Howard said that on November 28th Maria Davidson stated that the only time snares would be tested is after the bear has been caught. Mr.

Howard asked who will be held liable if the device fails and was manufactured out of state. Mr. Howard stated that there are several questions that are not answered in the proposed regulations, such as who will test the snares and what equipment will be used which means that either we make it up as we go or we make new regulations. Mr. Howard stated that tagging of snares is not only an added cost to an already expensive tool, but what happens when a tagged snare shows up on someone else's property where the trapper does not have permission? He asked whether the tag is to make a snare legal or to make it easier to find the owner if a bear is snared. Mr. Howard stated that anchoring a snare, trap, or any other device to capture animals is a given, and to add it to a regulation is to make sure someone can be cited for an anchor failure. He stated that failures are going to happen, even with the best design and well thought out anchor point. A regulation to address failure worries him, and seems aimed at citations being handed out. Mr. Howard stated that he does not feel that the proposed exemption will ever happen for a WCO, that the permit will never be granted, and that it just looks good on paper. He stated that having to apply 21 days in advance would mean telling customers that their problem could not be addressed for 22 days, and feels this will ensure that all feral hog jobs will be relinquished to the USDA Wildlife services. Mr. Howard stated that the requirement that anyone using snares should possess a valid trapping license is a good idea, as it would give the Department an avenue in which to offer educational material to all person snaring or trapping in the state, and use education as a vehicle to protect the bear. Mr. Howard stated that on November 28th Maria Davidson acknowledged that they knew there would still be mortalities with these regulations due to the size of bears captured or terrain where captured. Mr. Howard stated that these regulations are set up for failure and someone will be made an example out of, losing their lifetime hunting privileges, paying restitution, fines, and possible jail time. This will ensure that snare use will come to a halt in the state, losing one of the most effective tools in the toolbox as shown by USDA Wildlife Services in the state of Texas and Hawaii. Commissioner Oats thanked Mr. Howard for providing the letter and made sure that it gets into the record. Commissioner Voisin asked if the customer base is saying that if breakaway snares are not used they will not buy. Mr. Howard responded that he works as a WCO where he is paid to remove animals, and also as a fur trapper. He stated that he works a lot of deer leases, approximately 27,000 acres, and the customers simply want the nuisance animals dead. Coyote predation is so horrible where he works. Commissioner Broussard stated that he thinks what Commissioner Voisin was asking is do buyers want to buy an end product caught in a snare, do they question the ethics of how the animal was caught, is price affected, or does it have no effect whatsoever? Mr. Howard stated that two weeks ago was the North American Fur Auction, and the sales went through the roof. He stated that customers are not concerned with where the animals came from, they simply want the fur. He stated that there is a misconception that trapping is going away, but trapping is not going anywhere. Commissioner Voisin asked if the auction was in Louisiana. Mr. Howard answered no, that it takes place in Canada. Commissioner Voisin asked verified that the price remains the same regardless of whether it comes from a state that has snare regulations, or from Louisiana with no snare regulations. Mr. Howard confirmed that it remains the same.

The next public comment came from Steven Hughes, a professional trapper in West Carroll parish who does a lot of beaver work, as well as a lot of predator work. Mr. Hughes stated that the snare is one of the best tools he has to work with, that it is very versatile and sturdy and can be used to catch most any animal he needs to catch. He stated that they stand up to weather such

as high water, rain flooding and freezing. Mr. Hughes stated that he is the man on the ground actually doing the work, and he feels that each situation is different. He feels like he has enough experience to know what type of equipment he needs. Mr. Hughes stated that one thing about breakaways that has not been addressed is that they do have a small failure rate, particularly on coyotes and strong animals. He stated that catching the animal the first time is much easier, and it becomes difficult when you have to recapture the animal and second or third time. If you have coyotes that are causing lots of problems and you do not capture him the first time it could lead to increased loss if you have to try to recapture him. Mr. Hughes stated that he believes education is the big thing, trapper and public. Mr. Hughes re-stated that the snare is the very best tool he has to do his job and support his family and would like to keep it just the way it is.

The next public comment came from Deputy Terrell Bergeron, the Animal Control Coordinator for the St. Martin Sherriff's office. Mr. Bergeron stated that he agrees that the regulations do not need to be tampered with at this time. He stated that in St. Martin Parish the only bear mortality that he is aware of is when the Department had to shoot a bear that was capture twice, relocated to St. Mary and found his way into St. Martin Parish. Mr. Bergeron stated that from what he understands they tried to use dogs to try to treat the bear but he attacked the dogs and they had to shoot the bear. He stated that snares are a tool that is used not only for Wildlife and fur trapping, but also to trap feral dogs and hogs. He stated that the more hardware you add to a snare makes it more difficult to make a catch, and once you miss an animal it is harder to catch him again. Deputy Bergeron stated that his opinion is that we should leave things the way they are, that they do not need to be changed at this time.

The next public comment was from Allan Ensminger who said that he is the guy who got the whole mess started. Mr. Ensminger sent a crew to Minnesota to bring bears to Louisiana to try to rebuild our bear population, and apparently it has worked. He said that it is kind of like alligators, that it was wonderful to see an alligator swimming around your dock until Fifi went down to the edge of the dock and the alligator ate her. He stated that the Commission has a job here. Mr. Ensminger stated that Steven's ancestors taught him more about the marsh than Dr. Glasgow did in graduate school. He stated that those people live in the outdoors and manage their habitats. He said that when he worked in the Department as chief of the fur division they had 22,000 trapping licenses sold and harvested upwards of 2 million nutria. He stated that those skins flowed in commerce from Louisiana to markets all over the world. Mr. Ensminger stated that there has been a very marked change in population of fur bearing animals with our coastal land loss. He said that he manages two tracts of wetlands today on the fur property, 49,000 acres in Terrebonne Parish, and the St. Charles Land Syndicate in St. Charles Parish. He stated that the claim to fame with that land is that I-10 runs right through the heart of it, and there is an eagle nest with a young eagle in it within about 500 feet of the highway. He stated that a seismographic survey was recently conducted and they could not get within a quarter of a mile of the nest with an airboat; however, there are 54,000 daily driving under the tree, and an international airport with flights that come within probably 500 feet from the nest. Mr. Ensminger said that animals adjust, and that to jump off to try and protect a small number of bears is premature. He stated that there are hogs on wetland areas that are being killed by trappers daily, and his people have standing orders to kill hogs when they are seen. Mr. Ensminger stated that he would like to see the Department back off of the snare regulations for awhile and let itself work itself through a little, and possibly come up with a meaningful

regulation. He stated that getting Enforcement to go in the field and check snares is foolish, and goes back to when the leg-hold trap was almost eliminated as a tool to trap fur bearing animals, and this is doing the same thing with a proven harvesting tool. He stated that he serves on the board of directors of the Louisiana Landowners Association, and the directors of that association are wanting to encourage the Department to hold off on this regulation as long as possible and try to work through the process together.

There were also two public comment cards from Charles Parker and Jonathan Gee with Parker Wildlife Control who did not wish to speak, but were both against the snare regulations.

Commissioner Oats asked Commissioner Sagrera about the materials he cited. Commissioner Sagrera stated that he has a copy of the Recovery Plan that he would like to enter into the public record, and that he sees nowhere in the document where snares are mentioned. Commissioner Oats asked for clarification on the motion made by Commissioner Voisin. Chairman Taylor stated that the motion was to move to delay considering this NOI until hearing from the USFWS and to forward the education materials to the Commission. Commissioner Oats suggested to Chairman Taylor that one of the Commissioners request it to be on the agenda before it comes back up so that it does not just come up automatically. The motion was made by Commissioner Voisin and seconded by Commissioner Sagrera. There being no opposition and no further discussion the motion passed.

The next agenda item, **To receive and consider a Notice of Intent for Hog Trapping**, was also handled by Mr. Fred Kimmel. Mr. Kimmel stated that this will probably be a little simpler. Last year the legislature passed a bill that exempted hog trapping from the requirement that people who hog trap get a permit if they do so outside of the trapping season if they do so under rules promulgated by this Commission. Mr. Kimmel stated that this NOI is establishing some basic rules for hog trapping and to state that they can trap year-round. It states that feral hogs may be trapped in cage or corral traps year-round by holders of a valid basic hunting license. Mr. Kimmel went on to say that this NOI establishes that feral hogs may be captured by use of snares year-round by holders of a valid trapping license. Cage or corral traps must have an opening in the top of the trap that is no smaller than 22 inches x 22 inches, or 25 inches in diameter, of course most corral traps do not have tops, so that is not a problem, but cage traps must have a hole in the top to allow a bear to escape. Mr. Kimmel stated that the third part, which the Commission may want to strike, says that snaring of feral hogs must conform to the regulations in the NOI just discussed when conducted in the parishes they are in. Mr. Kimmel stated that this NOI basically allows hog trapping year-round. Commissioner Graham asked what the 22x22 inch opening in the top is for. Mr. Kimmel answered that it is to allow a bear to escape. Commissioner Graham asked if that is in the 17 parish area in the snare NOI, or everywhere. Mr. Kimmel answered that it would be everywhere. Commissioner Graham asked about areas that do not have bears, and stated that a lot of these traps are made out of heavy gauge wire mesh, and he would rather not see this requirement if it is not absolutely necessary. Commissioner Sagrera commented that he has seen whitetail deer in hog traps, and he thinks that having an opening would not only allow bear out, but also potentially deer. Mr. Kimmel stated that the opening is meant for any target such as turkeys, but the size was basically directed at bears. Commissioner Oats moved to adopt the NOI with the exception of section C, and

Commissioner Broussard seconded the motion. There being no opposition the motion passed with no opposition.

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

NOTICE OF INTENT

Department of Wildlife and Fisheries
Wildlife and Fisheries Commission

The Department of Wildlife and Fisheries and the Wildlife and Fisheries Commission do hereby advertise their intent to promulgate rules for trapping of feral hogs.

Title 76

WILDLIFE AND FISHERIES

PART V. WILD QUADRUPEDS AND WILD BIRDS

Chapter 1. Wild Quadrupeds

§130. Feral Hog Trapping

A. Feral hogs may be trapped in cage or corral traps year-round by holders of a valid basic hunting license. Feral hogs may captured by use of snares year-round by holders of a valid trapping license.

B. Cage or corral traps must have an opening in the top of the trap that is no smaller than 22 inches x 22 inches or 25 inches in diameter.

AUTHORITY NOTE: Promulgated in accordance with R.S. 56:115 and 56:116.

HISTORICAL NOTE: Promulgated by the Department of Wildlife and Fisheries, Wildlife and Fisheries Commission, LR 38:

Interested persons may submit written comments relative to the proposed rule to Mr. Kenny Ribbeck, Wildlife Division, Box 98000, Baton Rouge, LA 70898-9000, prior to Thursday, May 3, 2012

In accordance with Act No. 1183 of 1999, the Department of Wildlife and Fisheries/Wildlife and Fisheries Commission hereby issues its Family Impact Statement in connection with the preceding Notice of Intent. This Notice of Intent will have no impact on the six criteria set out at R.S. 49:972(B).

Ann L. Taylor

Chairman

Mr. Larry Reynolds handled the next agenda item, **To hear a presentation of Proposed Waterfowl Zones and Splits**. Mr. Reynolds stated that with the last waterfowl season fresh in our minds it is time to begin thinking about future seasons, and he is back to talk about zones and splits. Mr. Reynolds stated that much of his presentation is the same as in the past. He stated that most people are familiar with the zones that we use for waterfowl hunting in Louisiana, an East zone and a West Zone. Mr. Reynolds stated that typically the season in the West zone opens a little earlier to take advantage of early migratory birds, and the season in the East zone opens later and runs as late as the law allows to take advantage, primarily, of late migrating mallards. Mr. Reynolds stated that we have the opportunity to change our zones and splits every five years, and that five years was last year but there was some confusion last year because the USFWS was going to offer some additional options. Because of those confusions there were some decisions made late in the regulatory cycle so the time for which changes can be made was extended to this year. The selection made this year will be for the 2012-2015 seasons. He stated that a decision is needed by May, but at the last Flyaway Council meeting that he just returned from a recommendation was passed asking for a June 1 deadline for the states that use zones in the early season, and July 1 for states like ours that do not use zones until the later season. Mr. Reynolds stated that he does not know what the USFWS will allow, but that his intention is to bring this before the Commission no later than June. Mr. Reynolds stated that the old options included two zones with split seasons, three zones with straight seasons, or no zones with two season splits. The new options that were offered include all of the old options in addition to four zones with straight season or three zones with the option for split seasons. When talking about zones and splits there are some general issues to consider. Mr. Reynolds stated that one of the most important issues is that the season date can be 60, 45, or 30 days. We have had 60 days seasons for 15 consecutive years now, but it could be 45 or 30. Another consideration is that duck seasons must be open during the Thanksgiving, Christmas, and New Year's holidays. Mr. Reynolds stated that zones and splits are completely separate for ducks and geese, and we are talking only about ducks. Another consideration is "why would we even consider changing after using the same zones and splits for thirty years". Mr. Reynolds moved from general to specific considerations. He stated that our current system with two zones and split seasons has been used for 30 years, our law enforcement officers know it, our hunters know it, and it is what we have been comfortable with. It allows hunters to hunt both zones, increasing hunting opportunities, and it allows us flexibility in setting season dates. Mr. Reynolds stated that if we go to one of the new options, three zones with split seasons, additional opportunity would be created, and the only drawback would be that he would have to make a statement as to why, and he would have to generate a study plan and methods to monitor and evaluate that change. Mr. Reynolds moved on to discuss no zones with two splits, and noted the reason he is going through these specific options is because these are options that hunters have expressed support for. No zones and two splits would have three opening days instead of two, but it would have the same total number of weekends, and one of those opening days would have to be on either a Monday or a Friday. Commissioner Oats asked if that was Arkansas's approach. Mr. Reynolds answered that it is their approach now. He went on to say that this option would create two rest periods instead of one, which hunters like because they can get some other things done during those rest periods, and it allows the ducks to calm down for those good opening day hunts, but the opportunity to move across zones is eliminated and there is a lot less flexibility, as everyone has to have the

same season dates if we go to the two split option. Mr. Reynolds stated that if we chose a new option the USFWS requires explicit human dimensions objectives related to expanding zones and splits options, and a study plan to evaluate the effect of that proposed option. Human dimensions objectives are making people happy, and what makes us happy is more duck hunters, and what makes duck hunters happy is more dead ducks, or better hunting. If we are going to change our zones and splits options it is to increase the satisfaction of our duck hunters. Mr. Reynolds stated that if we are going to evaluate the satisfaction of our duck hunters we have to know how satisfied they have been for the last 30 years, what they prefer, and how did their satisfaction change if changes are made. In 2005 53% of people favored the current two zones with split seasons, 41% favored no zones with two splits, and 6% favored three zones with straight seasons. In 2010 we did a hunter opinion survey with two forms of sampling, a random mail-out and a web-enabled version so that anyone who wanted to could participate and this got two very different populations of hunters, the random sample that included everybody and the internet sample that includes mostly the very dedicated, active and avid hunters. Mr. Reynolds stated that what was so interesting is that they had very similar opinions on things.

Commissioner Oats asked if it was three zones with split seasons, would common sense tell you it would fall out about the same? Mr. Reynolds answered that he will discuss that exact thing as we go through the presentation. He stated that in 2011 the additional options were offered, and only 11% favored three zones with split seasons. The general conclusion of the surveys is that the majority of the support is for two zones with split season, there is strong support for no zones with two splits, very little support for three zones with split seasons, and a lot of no opinions, especially in the random sample. Mr. Reynolds posed the question, “why in the world would anyone in the state of Louisiana want no zones with two splits, and why would there be very little support for three zones with split seasons when it increases the benefits from having two zones with split seasons?” The reason is that only 13% of the random sample and 24% of the very dedicated hunters said that they hunted in more than one zone, so 80% of Louisiana’s waterfowl hunters utilize only one zone, thus, when looking at zones and splits options, the most important consideration is that we set the seasons to get the most satisfactory hunting in each and every zone. Mr. Reynolds stated that the Department is currently sending a single mail-out survey to 1600 selected hunters in each of four regions. A statewide survey does not provide good information, because the opinions will be regionally specific. Mr. Reynolds stated that the Department is actually mailing out 6,400 surveys, and the same survey will be web enabled so that everyone can participate. Questions asked are about satisfaction with zones and splits configurations, last season’s hunting, zone options, zone boundaries, season dates, youth hunting options and dates, and some follow up questions to a survey that has been conducted on Catahoula Lake. Mr. Reynolds went on to show and discuss the proposed zone boundary changes that are asked about in the survey. The anticipated timelines are that the survey will be mailed out and web enabled this week or next, data will be collected and analyzed through May, the survey will be publicized and public comment will be accepted at announced public meetings, and recommendations will be presented to the Commission in May if the USFWS forces it, or June if the USFWS accepts their request. He stated that season dates are on the same schedule as last year, so what will be discussed in May or June will just be zones and splits.

Commissioner Graham commented that most people hunt in their own little spot and do not care about what goes on in other areas, but he does think that some change needs to happen above Lake Pontchartrain since they have the early ducks. He also asked about adding youth days as was discussed previously. Mr. Reynolds stated that he asked about additional youth waterfowl

hunting days at the flyaway meeting and our colleagues to the north are not at all interested in additional youth hunting days after the season, but after a 60 day season they are frozen solid anyway, so it is not an issue for them. He stated that there is no data suggesting that youth hunting days are a good recruitment tool, and the USFWS thinks that all it does is allow hunting opportunities for kids who are already being recruited, and that there are more important things that they could be doing. The USFWS did listen to Mr. Reynolds about additional youth hunting days, but made it perfectly clear that additional youth hunting days would require a lot more organize support from all four flyaway council before they will be interested in hearing it. Commissioner Graham also stated that last year he proposed that in the East zone, his part of the world, he needs two things to have a successful youth hunt – water and ducks, and he has neither of those if the youth hunt happens prior to the duck season and would like to see the youth hunt happen at the end of the season, as the last time he had a good youth hunt was when it was at the end of the season. Commissioner Graham asked that the Commissioners keep that in mind as this process goes forward. Mr. Reynolds stated, without providing any additional support to Commissioner Graham’s proposal, that Mississippi and Arkansas have their youth hunts after the season is over, but more importantly, last year, the USFWS, based primarily on the Atlantic flyaway, where a number of states to not allow Sunday hunting, allowed all states to split the youth waterfowl weekend, so there is the potential to have a Saturday before the season opens and a Saturday after the season closes. Mr. Reynolds clarified that he is not supporting either of those ideas because he has a survey out there that will tell him what he should support, but just some points of information. Commissioner Oats stated that nobody thought that Mr. Reynolds would go to the flyaway meeting and everyone would embrace the idea, and their objections that longer youth hunts do not add to recruitment are anecdotal, but he would like us to take a long-term view of seeing if that is true, and advocating, because when kids who do not normally have the opportunity to experience duck hunting are given the opportunity to get out there and see ducks, it is a good thing, and he would like for us to keep exploring the option to determine whether it would be beneficial to Louisiana. Mr. Reynolds acknowledged the statement.

The next agenda item, **To hear an update on Land Acquisition – Maurepas Swamp**, was handled by Ms. Yolanda Martin, the land acquisition attorney for the Department. Ms. Martin announced that the Department has recently added about 30,000 acres to the Maurepas Swamp WMA for more public recreation, and also announced that the Department just closed on another 1,300 acre tract in St. John Parish that will also add to the Maurepas Swamp WMA.

After discussion the Commissioners agreed to hold the **July 2012 Meeting** on Monday, July 2, 2012, beginning at 9:30 a.m. at the Baton Rouge Headquarters due to the first Thursday of the month falling the day after the 4th of July holiday.

Chairman Taylor then asked for **Public Comments**. Mr. Joe Macaluso, of Louisiana Outdoor Writers Association, announced that there have been no entries that have been processed into the Stated Top 10 Fish Records. He stated that Channel Mullet were added to this year’s categories. Mr. Macaluso stated that they do have a request regarding Public Meetings for Hunting Seasons. He stated that the largest population base in our State is between Lafayette and the Pearl River and Baton Rouge South, and there are no Public Meetings in that area, except in LaPlace. Mr. Macaluso stated that a lot of readers have called and asked them why the Department has not scheduled public hearings on hunting matters, especially now with Larry tagging along with

duck hunting, in Baton Rouge in the evening, in New Orleans, or on the Northshore. He asked if the Department could expand upon those hearings to get them into the major population areas. Mr. Kenny Ribbeck addressed Mr. Macaluso's concern, stating that in the past the Department has tried to move the meetings across the state and out of areas where there has been a lack of participation. He also stated that the Department considers items that are on the agenda and makes sure to hold meetings in areas where those items may be hot topics. He also stated that if there is a request to have some additional meetings, such as in the New Orleans area, the Department would be glad to respond to that and work to set up something.

Commissioner Graham made a motion for the Commission to go into **Executive Session to Discuss Prospective Litigation relative to return of Artificial Reef Fund Monies** and it was seconded by Commissioner Oats. The motion was unanimously approved. Reconvening from the Executive Session, Chairman Taylor stated the Commissioners will take no action at this time.

There being no further business, Chairman Taylor **Adjourned** the meeting.

Ann Taylor
Chairman