

THE MARYLAND WILDLIFE ADVISORY COMMISSION
MINUTES – APRIL 17, 2019

Chairman Compton called the meeting to order at 10:30 a.m.

Approval for the April 17, 2019 Meeting Agenda

- Motion:
 1. Commissioner Weinberg moved to accept the April 17, 2019 Wildlife Advisory Commission Meeting Agenda.
 2. Commissioner Gulbrandsen seconded.
 3. All in favor. Motion passed.

Approval for Minutes from January 16, 2019 Meeting

- Chairman Compton requested to have the word “Sportsmen’s” added to page one under Natural Resource Police Recognition of Donation. It should read the “Western Maryland Sportsmen’s Coalition.
- Motion:
 1. Commissioner Schroyer moved to approve the March 20, 2019 meeting minutes with one correction.
 2. Commissioner Gulbrandsen seconded.
 3. All in favor. Motion passed.

2019 Legislative Session Outcome – Presentation given by Associate Director Glenn Therres.

- Associate Director Therres handed out the “Summary of 2019 Proposed Legislation – Wildlife and Heritage Service (as of April 10, 2019)”. **[ATTACHMENT A]**
- Associate Director Therres provided a summary of the bills that passed during session, including the following:
 1. HB0199 Wicomico County – Deer Hunting Sundays
 2. HB0242 Cecil County Natural Resources – Hunting
 3. HB0401 Harford County- Hunting Deer Management Permits
 4. HB0618/SB0890 Dorchester County – Sunday Hunting – Deer Bow Hunting Season
 5. HB0619/SB0890 Dorchester County – Sunday Hunting – Muzzleloader Season
 6. HB0620/SB0888 Dorchester County – Sunday Hunting – Deer Firearms Season
 7. SB0095 Natural Resources – Recreational License Donation Program and Fund – Program Extension and Fund Name Change
 8. SB0140/HB1110 Washington County – Archery Hunting – Safety Zone, and SB0390 Natural Resources- Sunday Hunting – St. Mary’s County.
- The Commission can review natural resources related bills by going to <http://mgaleg.maryland.gov/webmga/frm1st.aspx?tab=home>, then click on By Broad Subject, where you can select Natural Resources (M1) or Hunting and Fishing (M2); this will provide the list of all bills under the Department’s jurisdiction or hunting and fishing section.
- Historically, WHS has always implemented the hunting bills that passed in a current year session for the upcoming hunting seasons. Staff recognized that there were discussions at past WAC meetings to hold those laws until the two-year hunting season cycle. However, staff know that lawmakers do not pass bills to have the agency wait several years to implement them.

Eastern Hellbender Status Update – Presentation given by Associate Director Jonathan McKnight.

- Mr. McKnight gave a presentation on the status of the Eastern Hellbender in Maryland. **[ATTACHMENT B]**

- The Eastern Hellbender's historical distribution is in the Ohio River drainage in Western Maryland and the Susquehanna River drainage in Eastern Maryland. The Eastern Hellbender is no longer in the Susquehanna River in Maryland.
- The Eastern Hellbender is now restricted to the Ohio River drainage, which are the Casselman River and the Youghiogheny River. Staff are doubtful that the species is still in the Maryland's part of the Youghiogheny River. There were Eastern Hellbenders' DNA found in Youghiogheny River.
- The Eastern Hellbender requires a healthy and complex water stream on a vertical basis -- and a lot of deep nooks and crannies.
- The Eastern Hellbender feeds almost entirely on crayfish; especially the native alligator crayfish.
- The other rivers are very polluted by exotic crayfish such as the rusty crayfish and others that have been sold as bait. The exotic crayfish have pushed down populations of native crayfish. It is amazing how fast these exotic crayfishes have impacted the native crayfish.
- The Eastern Hellbender can survive in a heavy flow stream system during the winter and spring and is able to survive during the low steamy system too.
- The young are born with external gills but as the hellbenders develop; the gills are protected in the head area. Hellbenders are able to retain the ability to use its gills during life.
- The Hellbender is able to detect what is going on around it through the lateral line. The Hellbender's skin is highly sensitive. Hellbender is a nocturnal species.
- Brown Trout is a predator to the Eastern Hellbender. DNR no longer stocks Brown Trout in waters where Hellbenders are historically located.
- Hellbenders are very vulnerable during the larva stage. The larva are protected by the adult hellbenders from crayfish and other fish. The hellbenders are outnumbered by the crayfish and other fish; therefore, there are no larva stage hellbenders that are surviving in Maryland. When the hellbenders are in balance, it is good; however when the hellbenders population is low, there is an increase in crayfish and other fish that prey on the larva and smaller hellbenders, which causes an imbalance. Hellbenders have to live four to five years to avoid predation.
- The Hellbender Head-Start Program is being used to help raise hellbenders for three to four years in a laboratory system. There is a facility in West Virginia that is managed by US Fish and Wildlife Service. This program releases the hellbenders after they reached three to four years into the streams that have better survival opportunities for the hellbenders.
- Mr. Ed Thompson is one of our herpetologists, and Mr. Thompson worked on salamanders for over 33 years. Last year Ed Thompson retired from the Department.
- Staff's primary goal is to maintain the habitat that supports hellbenders so that they can survive in Maryland's streams. If staff decides to stock hellbenders, staff would stock in the current habitat where hellbenders are detected.
- Staff would like to locate hellbenders in Maryland's streams and take some of larva from a hellbender's nest and have the laboratory rear them. Staff have received offers to receive hellbenders from other states but staff have declined because the goal is to use the hellbenders that we have in Maryland and have them raised. The genetics from the hellbenders in Pennsylvania are very close to the genetics of the hellbenders in Maryland.
- Hellbenders are territorial but the hellbenders do move around. At times, hellbenders will share territory, but the hellbenders will not get close to each other except during mating season.
- Virginia has released captive raised hellbenders along with a few other states. Staff cannot provide results as to how the hellbenders are doing because it a fairly new technology.
- Hellbender is an endangered species in Maryland. Staff are not familiar with any commercial market for the hellbender.

Break Time 11:10 AM to 11:25 AM

Annual Maryland Predator Hunting Competition – Presentation given by Commissioner Stephanie Boyles Griffin.

- Commissioner Boyles Griffin introduced two of her colleagues, Kathryn Kulberg and Jill Fritz from the Humane Society of the United States. Ms. Kulberg and Ms. Fritz informed Commissioner Boyles Griffin of several predator hunting competitions occurring in Maryland.
- Commissioner Boyles Griffin sent an email to the Commission about this topic. **[ATTACHMENT C]**.
- Commissioner Boyles Griffin explained that the HSUS is requesting that WAC discuss contests that target furbearer and predator species. HSUS is not asking WAC to discuss fishing tournaments, “big buck” or deer hunting contests, bird dog trials, or other lawful hunting or trapping practices as regulated by the Maryland DNR.
- Commissioner Boyles Griffin provided copies of Wildlife Killing Contests: Contrary to 21st Century, Science-Based Wildlife Management. **[ATTACHMENT D]**
- Commissioner Boyles Griffin gave a presentation entitled Wildlife Killing Contests in Maryland. **[ATTACHMENT E]**
- Commissioner Boyles Griffin had conversations with Chairman Compton about the results of taking a massive amount of these predator species from the population in a short period time, which impacts the ecosystems that these animals are providing - including controlling disease transmission, keeping the rodent population in check, and providing diversity.
- Question and Answer Section
 1. Commissioner Weinberg asked if HSUS distinguished between non-native and native predators.
 - a. Commissioner Boyles Griffin responded that HSUS will not make a distinction between the two (native and non-native) contests.
 - b. Commissioner Boyles Griffin pointed out that in her years of experience as a wildlife biologist, who handles primary human/wildlife conflict resolution along with non-native species, animals that are overly abundant in some places and the use of the killing contests may remove a few animals. However, the reason that animal prolific in that area is because that animal has a tremendous potential for compensatory reproduction, which is not strategically addressing the population problem.
 2. Commissioner Gulbrandsen asked who made the arrangements for the contests in Maryland.
 - a. Commissioner Boyles Griffin admitted at the beginning of the presentation that she is not the subject matter expert. Commissioner Boyles Griffin deferred the question to her colleague Jill Fritz.
 - b. Ms. Fritz answered that the Annual Maryland Predator Hunting Competition that was held at the Izaak Walton League of America was arranged by the Pennsylvania Predator Hunter Association. The Izaak Walton League of America was not the organizer of the event.
 3. Commissioner Keithley asked what the political climate on predator contests in Pennsylvania is because Pennsylvania, is a heavily hunted state. Pennsylvania had 30 predator contests from January to March.
 - a. Ms. Fritz mentioned that Pennsylvania had the highest number of predator contests with New York State a close second. In regards to the political climate, there are no known current efforts to introduce legislation or regulations to limit predator contests in those states..
 - b. Ms. Fritz pointed out details from the presentations from the Pennsylvania Game Commission on opposing predator control as being ineffective.

4. Commissioner Keithley commented that the number of trappers have reduced because the younger generations are not trapping. Commissioner Keithley expressed that he has seen these species population increase.
5. Commissioner Gulbrandsen asked how these events are being advertised.
 - a. Ms. Fritz indicated that these events are advertised on Facebook and the use of flyers. These events are advertised to the public along with the necessary licenses and permits, etc.
6. Commissioner Weinberg asked if HSUS would be opposed to a hunting club holding these events without any prize money.
 - a. Ms. Fritz indicated that she does not know if HSUS would object to such events. HSUS objects to killing animals for fun.
 - b. Commissioner Boyles Griffin reiterated the ecology impact. The fact of killing as many animals as possible using whatever legal means a person may have just to be able to say how many he or she was able to kill, has a negative view to the non-hunting communities.
 - c. Commissioner Weinberg responded that it appears HSUS has an issue related to the legal limit of these species. So if you're going to change anything change bag limits.
7. Commissioner Boyles Griffin mentioned that after reading what other commissions were saying about these events and why these commissions were taking certain steps related to these events prompted Commissioner Boyles Griffin to bring this topic to the WAC for a discussion. Director Peditto thanked Commissioner Boyles Griffin for the presentation and he thanked Ms. Kulberg and Ms. Fritz for attending the meeting.
8. Director Peditto informed the Commission that the Department does not oversee or otherwise play a role in these events, and arguably does not have any regulatory authority over these events beyond seasons, bag limits and other existing hunting requirements.
9. Director Peditto also pointed out that if the issue is people 'having fun' – it is very difficult to enforce a determination if someone is having fun while participating in an event. Likewise, if you ban the prize aspect of the predator killing events, people may still legally participate in taking these species under existing seasons, bag limits and other regulations or law allowing owners of land and/or livestock to protect their personal and real property.
10. Commissioner Boyles Griffin informed that no one has requested the Department to develop regulations about predator killing contests. The states that have done so have decided to do something on their own. It has nothing to do with a HSUS campaign, HSUS would like to think that HSUS had some small part of it because HSUS has made the public aware of these events. Many of these commissions in other states are being proactive because they don't think it is worth the risk to the hunting community within their states and the perceptions of hunting in their states.
11. Commissioner Gulbrandsen asked about the money amount or prizes that were offered at the Izaak Walton League of America.
 - a. Ms. Fritz responded that most of the events have a pot from the registration fees and the winner obtains a percentage of the fees.
12. Chairman Compton asked difference between a predator killing contest and a bass fishing tournament. Obviously, HSUS has set precedent with aquatic species by means of the cownose ray. Chairman Compton continued adding that the Maryland Farm Bureau is always trying increase crop damage permits, is trying to eradicate agricultural losses, is advocating for the Doe Harvest Challenge. Chairman Compton pointed out that now there is a tax credit for donating deer to the hungry. Chairman Compton asked what makes predator killing contests different from the items that he listed.
 - a. Ms. Kathryn Kulberg answered that the cownose ray was a unique example in terms of other fish derbies that Chairman Compton mentioned. There is no bag limit on the cownose ray and no one knows how many there are in the Chesapeake Bay. They are a

- native species. HSUS was asking DNR to do more studies and for DNR to figure out what the impacts on the population are since it is unclear. It was critical to take a precautionary approach to the cownose ray. HSUS was not trying to ban the recreational fishing of cownose ray but the spectacular events.
- b. Commissioner Boyles Griffin responded that the difference between the predator killing contests and the Doe Harvest Challenge, etc. is the scale and the intensity. A person cannot kill an unlimited amount of bucks and in hope to take that one buck that is going to win the prize. Again, it is the public perceptions of the predator killing contests, and the Commission along with DNR should be concerned about that.
 - c. Chairman Compton explained that Commissioner Boyles Griffin raised some good points. Chairman Compton added that all those contests/events had a form of limit except for the cownose rays. Chairman Compton understood that the predator killing contests have no limits. Chairman Compton outlined that the public would support predator killing once they are made aware of how these predators species are impacting chicken farms or whatever damage that these predator species could be damaging. There is a legitimacy to hunting predators.
 - d. Commissioner Boyles Griffin replied that HSUS is not suggesting there is no legitimacy to targeting an animal that is actually causing a problem. The science suggests that using a sledge hammer approach does not work to resolving conflicts between predators and humans.
 - e. Chairman Compton asked if HSUS thinks that this sledge hammer effect on these unlimited deer with the use of deer cooperators permits and deer management permits does not work. Chairman Compton mentioned that it has impacted the deer population in the past and is doing so in some areas today. At one point the sledge hammer effect had impacted the predator populations because, unfortunately, at one time, some of predator species were nearly extirpated – none of us want to see that occur again. These contests are legal and held during the season. The species is not to be wasted; the fur is being sold.
13. Chairman Compton asked how HSUS gets access to get photographs and video evidences.
- a. Ms. Fritz responded that HSUS does not discuss their investigation techniques.
 - b. Chairman Compton expressed concern as to how HSUS is getting investigating materials from these events and the impacts it has on the public when the evidence is released to the media.
 - c. Chairman Compton would like to come to a compromise that HSUS and hunters can live with.
14. Chairman Compton offered WHS wildlife managers to present information on predator species in Maryland along with any impacts or potential impacts these events may have on the population. Also, he would like to extend an invitation to the organizers of these events along with the hunters that participate at the events to provide information. The Commission needs to hear from all sides of situation before moving forward.
- a. Director Peditto reminded the Commission that the Department does not participate in these events. These events are an issue now because of social media
 - b. Director Peditto also reminded the Commission and HSUS that people have been participating in these type of events for decades. There are bag limits depending on the species and method restrictions. There is no evidence that demonstrates a decline on these species.
 - c. Director Peditto highlighted that WHS does not have the complexity to create a management plan for each individual mammal that WHS manages in the State of Maryland.
 - d. Commissioner Weinberg pointed out that it is appropriate to ask WHS staff to present

another side of the discussion not necessary counter argument. If the Commission deemed it necessary to pursue a rule change, we need to hear from everybody. There were a lot quotations from wildlife managers from other states. If people looked hard enough, we would locate wildlife managers from different states that would say there is no need to do anything. These ladies are very skilled with what they do; they are advocates, and these ladies presented their side of things very well. Before we ask Director Peditto and his WHS staff to dial into this topic, do research, and report back to the Commission, the Commission should decide by vote if this topic is something that we should look into.

15. Commissioner Gulbrandsen would like to know how these numbers fit into the management plan; certainly if the Department has an opinion on the number of foxes in different places, whether there are too many or not a enough, whether the science goes with the taking of the number of foxes out of a certain number of acreage is going to graphically increase the number of foxes elsewhere or graphically reduce the fox population. Commissioner Gulbrandsen would be interested knowing where it does fit in larger plan or whether it does have an effect or whether it is isolated enough that it is a matter of public campaign.
 - a. Director Peditto responded that there are so few people who participate in the removal of furbearers that it is a small impact even with these isolated high volume events.
16. Director Peditto informed the Commission that staff just completed the first bobcat study in Maryland. The study will provide staff some good data, such as, population density.
17. Chairman Compton commented that Director Peditto just answered his question that the fox and coyote populations are expanding and are doing well. Chairman Compton concluded that, at this point, there is no danger of their populations collapsing.

- Motion:
 1. Commissioner Gulbrandsen moved to continue the dialogue about predator killing for further information whether in a meeting or materials distributed via email pending some presumed legislation action.
 2. Commissioner Boyles Griffin seconded.
 3. Motion failed. There is no further decision or action planned or necessary by the Commission or WHS staff.
- Commissioner Boyles Griffin thanked the Commission for their input. Commissioner Boyles Griffin stressed the idea of perhaps putting a bag limit on the coyote.
- Director Peditto added that WHS will be looking at game species bag limits this fall. Director Peditto asked if WHS adds a bag limit to the coyote season would that make a difference during these events with HSUS.
 1. Commissioner Boyles Griffin responded that she would have to think about it and discuss it with her colleagues before providing an answer because it does not address the ecological impacts that these events cause.
 2. Director Peditto reiterated that staff pays close attention to these events and most of these animals are not taken from one location but multiple locations.

Maryland Farm Bureau Update – No representative from the Maryland Farm Bureau in attendance.

Natural Resources Police Update – NRP Whistleblower Program Presentation given by Major Lloyd Ingerson.

- Major Ingerson talked to the Commission about the Maryland Crime Stoppers. It is a new program that replaced the Catch-A-Poacher Program. No one knows when Catch-A-Poacher Program started, but it was fairly new in the mid-80s when Major Ingerson started with DNR.
- The Catch-A-Poacher Program was receiving few calls maybe around two to three calls a year. With that in mind, in 2016, Major Ingerson and Jerry Kirkwood (retired NRP officer) decided to

take a fresh approach to the stopping poaching effort. The two of them started looking at what other states were doing.

- The Commission received a copy of the Maryland Wildlife Crime Stoppers. [ATTACHMENT F]
- NRP reached out to some individuals who would be interested in starting a non-profit board to the Maryland Wildlife Crime Stoppers.
- Retired NRP Sergeant Jack Bailey is the chair, along with some of reserve officers who are board members. NRP started soliciting members to the board in 2017.
- There are some benefits for the board being non-profit. The Maryland Wildlife Crime Stoppers can raise funds. It gives NRP an independent body to make decisions on rewards for individuals that do call in. They are open to donations. There were a few funds left from Catch-A-Poacher that were transferred over.
- The NRP liaisons are Major Ingerson and Captain Brian Albert for the time being.
- The kick-off to the Maryland Wildlife Crime Stoppers was in the 2018 Maryland Guide to Hunting and Trapping. It was the first time information was published.
- The Catch-A-Poacher was just a telephone number. With the technology today, individuals prefer text, email, etc. The Maryland Wildlife Crime Stoppers are using these tools.
- The number of calls in 2018 were 72 from June 1 to July. The number of calls so far in 2019 that NRP has received is 51.
- The number of convictions and arrests are no more than or less than our standard calls for services through our Communication Center. Major Ingerson explained the process on how it would work from the Communication Center to Major Ingerson to the board.
- The Maryland Wildlife Crime Stoppers is in the fishing guide too.
- The information that would be helpful to the Maryland Wildlife Crime Stoppers is location, time of day, vehicle description, and person description.
- There is minimal cost to run the program. The board members are volunteers. There is minimal cost to provide materials about the program and staff time. There is discussion about acquiring a trailer to create a wall of shame with illegally taken animals - some of the states have that established. The International Crime Stoppers have grants to help out in purchasing the trailer.
- Major Ingerson will suggest to the board members to publicize their priorities per a discussion with the Wildlife Advisory Commission.
- Major Ingerson informed the Commission if a member of the WAC wants to communicate with the members of the Maryland Wildlife Crime Stoppers Board to let Major Ingerson know.
- Natural Resources Police Update – Lieutenant Fawley mentioned that officers are transitioning to the spring season and spring activities.
 1. LT. Fawley briefed the Commission on one turkey baiting violation in Frederick County during the youth turkey hunt days.

Old Business – No Old Business.

New Business – No New Business.

Adjournment

- The meeting was adjourned at 1:05 P.M.
The next meeting will be held at 10:30 A.M. on Wednesday, June 19, 2019 in the Tawes State Office Building, C-1 Conference Room; Annapolis, Maryland.

Attendance

Members:	L. Compton, T. Gregor, S. Boyles Griffin, E. Gulbrandsen, , S. Keithley, J. Schroyer, and R. Weinberg
Absent:	J. Griffin
Guest:	Kathryn Kulberg and Jill Fritz
Staff:	C. Fawley, L. Ingerson, T. Larney, P. Peditto, T. Spencer, K. Stonesifer, and G. Therres