

INTERIM JOINT COMMITTEE ON NATURAL RESOURCES AND ENERGY

Minutes of the 4th Meeting of the 2018 Interim

September 6, 2018

Call to Order and Roll Call

The 4th meeting of the Interim Joint Committee on Natural Resources and Energy was held on Thursday, September 6, 2018, at 1:00 PM (EST), at the Miller-Welch Wildlife Management Area in Berea, Kentucky. Senator Jared Carpenter, Chair, called the meeting to order, and the secretary called the roll.

Present were:

Members: Senator Jared Carpenter, Co-Chair; Representative Jim Gooch Jr., Co-Chair; Senators C.B. Embry Jr., John Schickel, Brandon Smith, Johnny Ray Turner, and Robin L. Webb; Representatives John Blanton, McKenzie Cantrell, Matt Castlen, Tim Couch, Jeffery Donohue, Jim DuPlessis, Daniel Elliott, Kelly Flood, Chris Fugate, Rick G. Nelson, and Jim Stewart III.

Guests: Frank Jemley, Chief of Staff, Acting Commissioner, Kentucky Department of Fish and Wildlife Resources (KDFWR); Dr. Karen Waldrop, Deputy Commissioner, KDFWR; Colonel Eric Gibson, Law Enforcement Director, KDFWR; Steve Beam, Wildlife Director, KDFWR; Ron Brooks, Fisheries Director, KDFWR; Lisa Frye, National Archery in the Schools Program, KDFWR; and Kenny Knott, District Commission Member, KDFWR.

LRC Staff: Stefan Kasacavage, Janine Coy-Geeslin, Tanya Monsanto, and Rachel Hartley.

Kentucky Department of Fish and Wildlife Resources

Frank Jemley stated Miller-Welch Wildlife Management Area (WMA) has over 1,800 acres for hunting, fishing, and trap shooting. WMA is owned and operated by the Department of Fish and Wildlife Resources (KDFWR). WMA hosted the 115th Kentucky state trap shoot in July, which attracted hundreds of competitors from 21 states.

The main purpose of WMA is hunting. In Kentucky over the past 10 years, the annual average number of fishing and hunting licenses purchased was 590,000 and 350,000 respectively. Kentucky is a leader in recruiting citizens to participate in outdoor activities. One of the programs used to recruit is Becoming an Outdoors Woman. The Hunter's

Legacy and Angler's Legacy programs pair a novice with an experienced mentor to learn the sport.

Mr. Jemley stated expanding the customer base is key to the department's success. The department's mission is to manage and conserve the state's fish and wildlife resources for all Kentuckians. There are over 100 conservation officers responsible for enforcing hunting, fishing, and boating laws.

Colonel Eric Gibson stated there are currently 99 KDFWR law enforcement officers and 11 recruits. There will be improvements to recruit a more diverse workforce. A five percent raise was implemented this year for all law enforcement officers.

In response to a question from Representative Flood, Colonel Gibson stated the starting salary is now \$35,000 for new hires, which will help to recruit military veterans and college graduates. Colonel Gibson stated there is only one woman employed as an officer, and there is an ongoing effort to recruit more women.

In response to a question from Senator Schickel, Mr. Jemley stated they prefer to promote from within the department. There have been several retirements in 2018, which will create upward mobility for employees, and there will be a separate career track for those who do not want to be in management.

In response to a question from Representative Castlen, Colonel Gibson stated 99 officers is not enough to adequately perform enforcement duties in 120 counties. He stated there should be at least one officer per county.

Dr. Karen Waldrop stated wild pigs in Kentucky contribute to agricultural damage, outcompete native wildlife, cause stream erosion and sedimentation, and consume and damage native plants. Wild pigs are known carriers of at least 45 parasites and diseases. The United States Department of Agriculture has confirmed wild pigs in Kentucky are carriers of pseudorabies and swine brucellosis. Both are major agriculture diseases within the cattle industry.

Dr. Waldrop stated rabies is the number one zoonotic disease. Kentucky currently has bat-variant rabies and skunk-variant rabies. Raccoon-variant rabies is prevalent in the eastern United States. Oral baits are being dispensed to prevent the westward movement of the disease since two raccoons with rabies were found within seven miles of the Kentucky border. There is a need for regulation changes to reduce the risk associated with the introduction of raccoon-variant rabies into Kentucky.

An enhanced rabies surveillance area was created in eastern Kentucky with regulatory changes effective in 25 counties. Some of the changes include on-site euthanasia

of infected species. Wildlife rehabbers cannot accept, obtain, or possess infected species. Finally, movement of infected species in or out of the surveillance area is prohibited.

Tick-borne disease is a pernicious problem in Kentucky due in part to warmer temperatures. Tularemia is a bacterium transmitted by touch, bites, or other exposures. Dr. Waldrop stated a rabbit in Butler County tested positive for tularemia. Tularemia has been transmitted through rabbits, ticks, and even mowing. It is a bacterial disease, and certain varieties result in 30 percent mortality if untreated.

Dr. Waldrop stated Chronic Wasting Disease (CWD) is similar to mad cow disease. It is a fatal disease of deer, elk, and moose. It is not in Kentucky, but it is in the surrounding regions. In 2000 CWD was found in five states, and now it is in 25 states. It is spread by the transport of animals and harvesting infected species. There have been recent changes to administrative regulations due to the proximity of the disease to Kentucky.

Dr. Waldrop stated Epizootic Hemorrhagic Disease (Blue Tongue) is common in deer during late summer and early fall. It is caused by biting midge flies. There is currently no treatment to control or prevent the disease. In 2017, there were approximately 5,000 cases reported.

In response to a question from Representative Cantrell, Dr. Waldrop stated the KDFWR is not responsible for spraying mosquitos. The Department of Agriculture and health department are working on the issue.

Steve Beam stated in 1927 the estimated deer population in Kentucky was less than 1,000. From 1945 to 1999, there was an active restoration and restocking program that grew the deer population to 1 million. There are currently 13,322 jobs related to deer hunting. There have been changes to the 2018-19 deer season, including modifying the deer permits from two to four deer, expanding the season in zone three and four, reducing antlerless deer hunting in zones three and four, and moving 32 counties to a less restrictive zone.

Mr. Beam stated black bears are primarily found in eastern Kentucky, but isolated sightings are possible in the remainder of the state. There are strong emotions regarding whether black bears should be hunted. The department utilizes science-based models to manage the black bear population.

In response to a question from Senator Webb, Mr. Beam stated the position of KDFWR is black bears should be hunted, and the season should be extended. Black bears are a renewable resource. The best way to gather information about black bears is to increase the harvest. There is a regional effort with a Bear Aware campaign to educate the public.

In response to a question from Senator Schickel, Mr. Beam stated the KDFWR does not want too many zone one counties because it means we have too many deer. The change to the bag limit from two to four deer is creating opportunities for hunters to harvest more deer and reducing overpopulation.

Ron Brooks stated Asian Carp were introduced in the 1970s to assist with fish farming and to reduce nutrients throughout the Mississippi River Basin. Prior to the 1970s, the use of chemicals was prevalent to reduce the amount of harmful nutrients. Asian Carp escaped shortly after being stocked in the Mississippi River Basin. Asian Carp are now found in Kentucky.

Since 2010, KDFWR has been trying to get commercial fisheries to process the Asian Carp species for Asian and European markets. The commercial harvest is 2.8 million pounds annually. The minimum harvest required to control the species is 5 million pounds.

Dr. Waldrop stated Kentucky Wild is a new program with a membership fee of \$25. The funds will be used to protect species that are not hunted.

Lisa Frye stated in 2002 KDFWR launched Kentucky Archery in the Schools Program in collaboration with the Department of Education. The program has expanded and is now called National Archery in the Schools Program.

Kenny Knott provided a brief overview of trap shooting.

The next meeting will be October 4, 2018. Documents distributed during the meeting are available in the LRC Library and at www.lrc.ky.gov.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned.