

GA Natural Resources Foundation Board Meeting Minutes

Meeting of Friday, August 26, 2016, 10:30 a.m.

DNR Board Room, East Tower, Atlanta, GA

The meeting was called to order by Georgia Natural Resources Foundation Board Chair, Amy Hillman. Board members in attendance were Sara Clark, Glen Wilkins, Rob Leebern, Ross King, Steve Levetan, Kali Wilson-Beyah, Philip Wilheit, Jr., Robert Brown, Jr., Mike Clanton, Commissioner Mark Williams and Executive Director Mark Walker. Also attending were Deputy Commissioner Walter Rabon, Wes Robinson and Amber Carter.

The minutes from the April 29, 2016, meeting held at Sweetwater Creek State Park were approved following a motion by Steve Levetan and a second by Glen Wilkins.

The financial report was given by GNRF Board Member, Mike Clanton, in the absence of Secretary/Treasurer, Paul Babaz, for the Fiscal Year 2016, for the period from July 1, 2015 to June 30, 2016. The Financials presented were approved following a motion by Rob Leebern and a second by Sara Clark.

Chair Hillman then called on Commissioner Mark Williams to present his report. He recognized a local artist out of Carrollton who has painted a picture of each one of our state parks. The Commissioner encouraged everyone to browse the pictures displayed in the DNR Lobby and stated that they will be rotated through different paintings throughout the year, and the artist will be recognized at the August DNR board meeting.

Commissioner Williams next announced that the new WRD Director, Rusty Garrison, began his new position as of August 1st. Rusty has been with the Department for 18 years and brings a wealth of knowledge both from his educational background as well as his professional experience.

Several members also of the WRD Communications staff recently won national awards at the Association for Conservation Information conference. Ryan Holt won 1st place in graphic design for the Weekend for Wildlife logo (the turtle). Rick Lavender won 1st place for newsletters. Robin Hill won 1st place for a promotional campaign with the Wildlife license plate campaign. And Jenifer Wisniewski, who leads that team, won 3rd place for online community engagement with their retention email campaign. Jenifer was also elected vice president of the national organization. There were 368 total entries from 46 states for those awards. What a fantastic job!

The Commissioner also commended DNR's Law Enforcement Division. This year they have won every national and international award that a game warden can win. Those awards include: The Boating Officer of the Year (Jason Roberson), The Conservation Officer of the Year (Greg Wade), and the Officer

of the Year (Casey Jones). Next week, Colonel Eddie Henderson will be recognized for 35 years of service with DNR and the agency is very grateful for his commitment.

GNRF Executive Director, Mark Walker, was then called on to give an update on Weekend for Wildlife. The 29th WFW Fundraising Committee has held several meetings and will meet again after the next DNR Board Meeting. Discussion was held about how the Foundation is taking more of a role in helping with the meetings, fundraising and any other ideas or suggestions in preparation of the 2017 Weekend for Wildlife.

Walker gave the Executive Director's Report next. He stated that GNRF's Constituency Relationship Management (CRM) CiviCRM is up & running. We have more names, donation entries and imports to load-in, but it's already more dynamic and fluid in being able to send acknowledgement letters and pull specific donor recognition.

He mentioned several visits and meetings he recently had with both new WRD Director, Rusty Garrison and Mike Worley, CEO of the Georgia Wildlife Federation. Walker also attended GWF's annual dinner and fundraiser in a tent at their HQ in Covington with about 400 attending. He also reported about participating in the Smithgall Woods State Park Ribbon Cutting for the opening of their new Universal Trail for all-access.

Walker stated that the Foundation received a \$25,000 contribution that past week to help provide the educational programming for the Grand Bay Wetland Education Center. In talking and working with the donors, this is an initial gift to be recognized in early Oct. as announcing their ongoing support for students, teachers and the community with perpetual giving. The donor actually would like for it to possibly resemble Charlie Elliott Wildlife Center and the support received there in the past.

Other gifts the Foundation is working on include Walmart Foundation/Georgia Advisory Council in their current giving cycle in Georgia, Georgia Power Foundation, and Coral Management charitable giving which has committed to GNRF based on their per room contributions. All of these contributions total close to \$100,000 and should be received in the next few weeks.

Walker also reported that he has been able to work with Accounting Director and Deputy Accounting Director to help set up a new "business unit" through the State Accounting Office (SAO). The Commissioner may also be able to help streamline the process to start with SAO a little faster. Walker stated that the Georgia Department of Education already does this for their Georgia Education Foundation, so several staff plan to meet and discuss how they did it exactly.

Lastly, Director Walker thanked both Chair Hillman and Commissioner Williams for all of their time, help and work in the efforts on behalf of the Foundation. He especially thanked Chair Hillman for all of her work with the new negotiations and contracts for the 2017 Weekend for Wildlife.

Amber Carter showed the new Weekend for Wildlife video and a link was shared for members to be able to distribute as they wish to help promote 2017 Weekend for Wildlife.

There was a review of the schedule of meetings for the balance of 2016 which were approved by the Board.

There being no other business, the meeting was adjourned.

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