



Kentucky Department of Fish and Wildlife Resources

Kentucky Fish and Wildlife Commission proposed regulation changes at its quarterly meeting on May 21

Three counties added to CWD Surveillance Zone for deer disease management

NOTE: The following is a summary of actions taken by the Kentucky Fish and Wildlife Commission at its quarterly meeting on May 21, 2025. Official meeting minutes will be reviewed at a future meeting. Please note that proposed regulation changes are reviewed by the legislative branch for legal conformity, which typically takes several months. Both proposed and recently enacted amendments are posted at fw.ky.gov. The Kentucky Department of Fish and Wildlife Resources provides this summary to enhance the public's awareness about potential changes to hunting, fishing, boating or other related regulations.

FRANKFORT, Ky. (June 16, 2025) — The Kentucky Fish and Wildlife Commission voted to recommend amendments to several hunting, fishing and wildlife regulations and conducted other business in a May 21, 2025, regular meeting as presented in the [detailed agenda of the meeting](#).

Prior to the formal start of the meeting, the commission voted to elect officers for the board, as follows:

- Chuck Meade, Chair (7th Commission District)
- Jeff Raymer, Vice-Chair (2nd Commission District)
- Jay Smith, Secretary (1st Commission District)

The commission next received a quarterly financial report as well as informational updates on the spring 2025 turkey season and the department's Black Bass Genetics and Thoroughbred Bass programs.

In addition to approving the Dec. 6, 2024, and March 21, 2025, meeting minutes, the commission members considered the following action items. If approved by the commission, proposed regulatory changes are filed with the Kentucky legislature to be reviewed and considered for approval. Administrative regulation changes are generally anticipated to take effect within six to nine months of their filing. The public may follow legislative developments

on these regulations at [Title 301 • Kentucky Administrative Regulations • Legislative Research Commission](#).

The commission approved the following action items requiring legislative approval before being enacted:

- Amend [301 KAR 5:030](#) to update license purchasing regulations to use current terminology in other regulations or statutes and clarify or update other unclear or outdated provisions, including replacing “combination” with “sportsman’s,” “disability” with “disabled” in license names; clarifying that an electronic harvest log on a mobile device meets the required documentation in the regulation; and adding bear, bobcat and sandhill crane to the list of species permits referenced.
- Amend [301 KAR 3:012](#) (and other applicable regulations) to transfer the department’s deed of the Otter Creek Outdoor Recreation Area (OCORA) to Meade County Fiscal Court. Deed language would solidify the department’s public access and available acreage for hunting and fishing (no net loss in public access or available acreage; [KRS 150.0241](#)) in perpetuity. The department would retain about 40 acres that encompasses the public shooting ranges, and would continue to manage the rifle, pistol and archery target shooting facilities at the site.
- Amend [301 KAR 2:176](#) and other applicable statutes to better address regulations regarding control of wildlife causing damage to property, and amend [301 KAR 3:120](#) to allow take of deer by licensed wildlife control operators.
- Amend [301 KAR 2:251](#) to allow furbearers to be trapped in March using water sets as defined in regulation.
- Amend [301 KAR 2:075](#) to make modifications to the permitting and related provisions in regulation pertaining to wildlife rehabilitators including creating a mechanism to allow volunteers to assist permitted wildlife rehabilitators via a sub-permit; removing specific county names from regulation and instead reference the current USDA Enhanced Rabies Surveillance Zone; allow the release of rabies vector species back into the county of capture OR any adjacent county (outside of the enhanced rabies surveillance zone); allow an exemption to hold wildlife for longer than 180 days; and designate bats as rabies vector species.
- The commission approved several updates or additions to deer hunting on Wildlife Management Areas (WMAs), state parks, other public lands and federally controlled areas ([301 KAR 2:178](#)), including:

- Increase hunter opportunities and simplify quota hunts on selected WMAs:
 - Barren River Lake WMA: Open the Peninsula Unit (Narrows, Goose and Grass Islands) to deer hunting under statewide regulations including modern firearms season;
 - Big Rivers WMA and Higginson-Henry WMA archery quota hunts: Revise annual hunt start date to Oct. 25 and add a one-day break on the Friday before the first Saturday of the quota gun hunt;
 - Cane Creek WMA: Remove muzzleloader hunts and establish an unstaffed archery quota hunt starting the Monday following the third Saturday in October, until Nov. 30, but closed for three days starting Friday before first Saturday of November; and an unstaffed firearms quota hunt starting the first Saturday of November for two consecutive days;
 - Curtis Gates Lloyd WMA: Establish one eight-day unstaffed quota hunt on the WMA during modern firearms season;
 - Dewey Lake WMA: Establish a two-deer limit (one antlered and one antlerless) for a drawn quota hunter per year;
 - Dewey Lake, Fishtrap Lake, Grayson Lake, Griffith Woods, John A. Kleber, Dr. James R. Rich, Knobs State Forest, Kentucky River, Mullins, Paintsville Lake, T.N. Sullivan, Taylorsville Lake, Twin Eagle, John C. Williams and Yellowbank WMAs: Open during early muzzleloader season for added hunter opportunity;
 - Green River Lake WMA: Open to deer hunting for late muzzleloader season;
 - Green River Lake and Pennyryle State Forest WMAs: Award drawn hunters one preference point per antlerless deer taken (maximum four preference points per year);
 - Miller Welch-Central Kentucky WMA: Open to archery and crossbow deer hunting under statewide regulations;
 - Mud Camp Creek and R.F. Tarter WMAs: Open to deer hunting under statewide regulations;
 - Yatesville Lake WMA: Allow deer hunting for entire modern firearms season.
- Add language to specify that hunting access on public lands may be controlled by signage as needed by adding signage language to Section 2 to become consistent with [301 KAR 3:010](#).
- Add the newly acquired Decker WMA to the public lands regulation.
- Revise language to allow Kentucky Department of Parks to administer deer hunts as desired on its properties within the statewide deer season framework.

- Add provisions to allow deer and turkey hunting on the Green River National Wildlife Refuge, as is already provided to other federal properties within the state (also amends [301 KAR 2:111](#)).
- Remove the provision of requiring a mobility impaired deer hunt for the first weekend in October on Camp Webb on Grayson Lake WMA (the provision to allow this type of hunt is already under [301 KAR 3:130](#)).
- Remove Tract 1 of West Kentucky WMA for the open shotgun/muzzleloader quota hunt as the property is no longer owned by the department.
- Amend [301 KAR 2:172](#) to update deer zones for selected counties where deer densities have increased in recent years:
 - Update from Zone 4 to 3: Clinton, Jackson, Martin, Menifee, Pike, Rockcastle and Russell counties;
 - Update from Zone 3 to 2: Cumberland, Elliot, Garrard, Johnson, Morgan and Rowan counties;
 - Update from Zone 2 to 1: Adair, Boyd, Breckenridge, Butler, Carter, Daviess, Grayson, Greenup, Hancock, Lawrence, Lewis, Logan, Marion, Meade, Metcalfe, Ohio and Taylor counties.
- Amend [301 KAR 2:083](#) to update regulatory language to remove the words “and number” on the permit when issuing captive cervid permits.
- Create a new regulation in [Chapter 3](#) concerning department owned or managed lands that are not wildlife management areas:
 - Incorporate language concerning public access to land that is owned or managed by the department, but is not a WMA (hatcheries, hunting access areas, buffers around lakes etc.);
 - Combine and simplify other regulations concerning department owned or managed lands other than WMAs;
 - Add provisions for property set aside for other uses (such as office space, equipment storage, boat ramps, etc.);
 - Add provisions that allow closure by signage as outlined in Section 1 of [301 KAR 3:005](#);
 - Recodify language in [301 KAR 3:130](#) regarding public use of conservation camp properties in this proposed regulation and repeal 301 KAR 3:130;
 - Recodify language in [301 KAR 3:012](#) regarding public use of Otter Creek Outdoor Recreation Area in this proposed regulation and repeal 301 KAR 3:012.

An action item to create definitions and regulations to define waterbodies where wake

sports will be allowed ([301 KAR 6:001](#) and [301 KAR 6:030](#)), was tabled to be brought back as a discussion item at the next quarterly meeting.

The commission approved the following action items that do not require legislative approval before being enacted:

After lengthy discussion, the commission voted to approve an action item request from 7th District representative Meade to stock 5,000 4- to 8-inch first generation hybrid bass (F1), a mix between a Florida Bass and a Largemouth Bass, in Paintsville Lake in eastern Kentucky annually for five years, to be funded by the department. The action item also included a request to conduct an annual analysis of the F1 stocking success and a study to determine growth rates after five years.

Kentucky Fish and Wildlife received approval from the commission to conduct an elk research project in partnership with the Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation (RMEF). The study will evaluate the effectiveness of habitat work for improving the nutritional value of forage within Kentucky's 16-county elk zone in southeastern Kentucky. The research would be fully funded by RMEF, except for time worked on the project by agency staff.

Finally, following an informational update regarding the agency's ongoing surveillance of Chronic Wasting Disease (CWD), an always-fatal disease that can affect deer and elk, the commission approved changes for the 2025-2026 deer season, to be implemented under the authority of Kentucky Fish and Wildlife Commissioner Rich Storm, including:

- Creation of a three-county CWD Surveillance Zone to include Henderson, Union and Webster counties;
- Allow baiting in any CWD surveillance zone county, provided it is not distributed through contact feeders (e.g., troughs, funnels, and gravity feeders without spreading capabilities);
- Creation of a two-day September firearm antlerless-only season in all 14 CWD Surveillance Zone counties with required CWD sampling (archery/crossbow equipment may still be used during this new two-day season, but archery/crossbow hunters are also restricted to antlerless-only harvest).

The commission also heard new business and discussion items that will be considered further at its next quarterly meeting.

Business items on the commission's meeting agenda that include proposed changes to regulations typically follow a three-step process at successive quarterly meetings, with items introduced first as new business, then proceeding for further discussion, and finally appearing

as action items (at the commission's discretion). This general stepwise process was adopted by the commission in 2020 to allow adequate time for public awareness and comment on proposed regulatory changes, instead of changes being acted on in a single meeting of the commission. Agendas for commission meetings are posted at fw.ky.gov in advance of the meeting dates, and details about meeting logistics and submitting public comments are included therein.

The meeting was livestreamed on the Kentucky Department of Fish and Wildlife Resources' YouTube [channel](#), where a [replay](#) of the meeting is available on demand.

Individuals or organizations may contact their district representative on the commission about any pertinent topic of concern. Contact information is available on Kentucky Fish and Wildlife's [district commission members webpage](#). Procedures for submitting public comments about current business items via email or in person are outlined in the agenda for each meeting, which is generally posted on the agency's website one to two weeks before the meeting date.

The commission, a [nine-member board](#) comprised of volunteers who serve four-year terms, recommends hunting, fishing and boating regulations on behalf of the anglers, hunters and other wildlife-related stakeholders in the commonwealth. Any recommendation by the commission to amend or create a state administrative regulation must receive legislative approval before becoming law.

The next quarterly commission meeting date is scheduled for Friday, Sept. 19, 2025, in Frankfort. An agenda will be posted at fw.ky.gov when available.

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