

Kentucky Department of Fish & Wildlife Resources



Commission Meeting

March 20, 2026 | 8:30 AM (ET)

In-person: Salato Wildlife Education Center – Schaaf Room
#1 Sportsman's Lane, Frankfort, KY 40601

[Live Video Teleconference](#)¹

Minutes

Call to Order and Welcome (Video 12:10)

Invocation (Video 12:24) Josh Cummins, 5th District Commission Member

Pledge of Allegiance (Video 13:17) Larry Richards, Safari Club International

Roll Call (Video 13:47) Jay Smith, Jeff Raymer, Matt Rhodes, Greg Cecil, Josh Cummins, Chuck Meade, Fred Shortridge, Walter Robertson. A quorum was present.

Chair's Remarks (Video 14:10)

Commissioner's Remarks (Video 15:20)

Informational Items:

Quarterly Financial Reports (Video 27:09)

- Melissa Trent, Director of Administrative Services, presented the quarterly financial reports through the second quarter of the fiscal year.
- Jay Smith **made a motion to accept the quarterly financial reports**, seconded by Jeff Raymer. *The motion carried unanimously.*

Action items:

Minutes from December 5, 2025, Quarterly Commission Meeting (Video 30:13)

- A clarification was requested to correct the spelling of Colonel McQueary's name on page 4 of the December minutes.
- Fred Shortridge **made a motion to accept the minutes with the correction**, seconded by Josh Cummins. *The motion carried unanimously.*

Promulgation of a new regulation regarding procurement (Video 31:26)

- Jenny Gilbert, Legislative Liaison, with Melissa Trent, Director of Administrative Services, proposed promulgating new regulations under 301 KAR Chapter 11 to provide transparency in purchasing policies.
- The proposal would itemize procurement procedures, contracts, and related administrative services policies, and would clean up other regulations as necessary for conformity.
- Josh Cummins **made a motion to approve the item**, seconded by Fred Shortridge. *The motion carried unanimously.*

Fall Turkey Archery and Crossbow Seasons (Video 34:39)

- Ben Robinson, Wildlife Division Director, proposed amending 301 KAR 2:144 to remove hens from legal take during fall archery season and fall crossbow season.
- The proposal would leave the shotgun portion of the fall season in place and clean up any other regulations as necessary for conformity.
- Discussion included comments from the Wild Turkey Working Group, a letter from Turkeys for Tomorrow opposing changes, concerns regarding hunter opportunity and enforcement, and comments supporting hen protection.
- Jay Smith **made a motion to accept the proposal as written in the agenda**, seconded by Fred Shortridge. The motion was later clarified (Video 54:35) and a roll call vote confirmed the motion. Votes were as follows: Yes: Jay Smith, Jeff Raymer, Fred Shortridge, Walter Robertson. No: Greg Cecil and Josh Cummins. Abstain: Matt Rhodes. *The motion carries 4-2, with one abstention.*

Spring Turkey Season (Video 47:02)

- Ben Robinson, Wildlife Division Director, proposed amending 301 KAR 2:142 to remove bearded hens from legal take during spring turkey season and clean up any other regulations as necessary for conformity.
- Commission members discussed whether youth hunters should remain eligible to harvest a bearded hen and whether the proposed change was supported by available biological data.
- Jeff Raymer **made a motion to accept the proposal with an amendment allowing youth hunters to take a bearded hen in the spring**, seconded by Jay Smith. Votes were as follows: Yes: Jay Smith, Jeff Raymer, Fred Shortridge, Walter Robertson. No: Matt Rhodes, Greg Cecil and Josh Cummins. *The motion carries 4-3.*

Modify bear season (Video 55:40)

- Ben Robinson, Wildlife Division Director, proposed amending 301 KAR 2:300, Black bear seasons and requirements, as follows:
 - Remove the physical check requirement for harvested bears and require hunters to submit a tooth of any harvested bear to the department.
 - Expand the chase-only season beginning the day after spring turkey season through the end of September.

- Prohibit bear chase on Wildlife Management Areas within the elk hunting zone during the month of September to avoid conflict with elk archery and gun seasons.
- Expand archery and modern gun seasons in bear zone 1 to run a full five days for each season.
- Establish a youth-only bear season opening the second Saturday in October and running two days in bear zones 1, 2, and 3.
- Clean up any other regulations as necessary for conformity.
- Dr. John Hast, Elk and Program Coordinator, provided additional information regarding conflicts between bear chase activity and elk hunters on WMAs in the elk zone during September, noting that the proposal would apply to Wildlife Management Areas and not Hunter Access Areas.
- Josh Cummins **made a motion to approve the item as written**, seconded by Walter Robertson. *The motion carried unanimously.*

Break (Video 1:00:50)

Return from Break (Video 1:16:45)

Discussion Items:

Overlap of youth-only gun deer season and early muzzleloader season (Video 1:16:45)

- The CWD Working Group requested revisiting the overlap of these two deer hunting seasons in 301 KAR 2:172 and cleaning up any other regulations as necessary for conformity.
- Discussion focused on safety, hunter opportunity, whether the overlap increased youth participation, and available harvest data. Joe McDermott, Deer Program Coordinator, reported that youth hunters harvested almost 5,700 deer, approximately 2,000 more than average, while muzzleloader harvest was about half of normal, resulting in an overall harvest increase of approximately 500 to 600 deer for the period.
- Matt Rhodes **made a motion to move this item to an action item for the next quarterly meeting**, seconded by Greg Cecil. *The motion carried unanimously.*

Create a new January 3-day antlerless firearms hunt in Zone 1-3 counties (Video 1:31:15)

- Ben Robinson, Wildlife Division Director, proposed amending 301 KAR 2:172 to create an antlerless-only firearms hunt during the last three days of Kentucky's deer season, the Martin Luther King Jr. holiday weekend, in deer zones 1-3.

- The proposal would also remove references to disposal permits to conform with 301 KAR 2:176 and clean up any other regulations as necessary for conformity.
- Commission members discussed possible Christmas-season timing, small game hunter conflicts, shed buck concerns, and the need to increase antlerless harvest.
- Josh Cummins **made a motion to move this item to an action item for the next quarterly meeting**, seconded by Walter Robertson. *The motion carried unanimously.*

Non-Resident Hunting License (Video 1:41:48)

- Gabe Jenkins, Deputy Commissioner, proposed amending 301 KAR 5:022 to bundle the Non-Resident Hunting License with a Non-Resident Fishing License.
- The proposal would increase the cost of a Non-Resident Hunting License by \$35, from \$169.12 to \$204.12, and clean up any other regulations as necessary for conformity.
- Discussion included expected revenue, potential Dingell-Johnson implications, surrounding-state comparisons, and maintaining non-resident participation by hunters visiting friends and family in Kentucky.
- Chuck Meade **made a motion to move this item to an action item for the next meeting**, seconded by Josh Cummins. *The motion carried unanimously.*

Modifications of Regulations Controlling Land and Water Use at Department Lakes (Video 1:49:04)

- Dave Dreves, Fisheries Division Director, reported that four listening sessions had been held since February and that the working group needed additional time to finalize a proposal.
- Josh Cummins **made a motion to table this item**, seconded by Matt Rhodes. *The motion carried unanimously.*

New Business Items:

Modifications of Regulations to Allow Seines for the Harvest of Invasive Carp (Video 1:50:05)

- Dave Dreves, Fisheries Division Director, proposed amending 301 KAR 1:146, Commercial Fishing Gear, to add hoop net and seine, with construction and method specifications, as legal commercial fishing gear for invasive carp and clean up any other regulations as necessary for conformity.

Modifications of Regulations Pertaining to the Harvest of Invasive Carp (Video 1:51:07)

- Dave Dreves, Fisheries Division Director, proposed amending 301 KAR 1:152, Harvest and sale of invasive carp, as follows:
 - Add reporting of the timeframe when fishing activities will occur and the commercial fishing gear to be deployed to the required call-in information.

- Increase the harvest ratio of invasive carp to scaled rough fish from 65/35 to 75/25.
- Eliminate the waiver of commercial fishing license fees for invasive carp-only harvest.
- Include hoop net and seine as allowable commercial fishing gear in the Invasive Carp Harvest Program.
- Remove the daily harvest summary card requirement and require additional data on the monthly commercial fishing report.
- Update the participant list monthly instead of weekly.
- Remove the waterbody list for experimental commercial fishing methods to allow more areas to be commercially fished.
- Require the Experimental Commercial Fishing Methods License to be purchased within 30 days of selection for the program.
- Require minimum participation to remain in the Experimental Commercial Fishing Methods Program, broaden program suspension language, and clean up other regulations as necessary for conformity.

Modifications of Regulations Pertaining to Commercial Fishing Harvest Reporting and Overharvest Protections (Video 1:54:15)

- Dave Dreves, Fisheries Division Director, proposed amending 301 KAR 1:155, Commercial Fishing Requirements, as follows:
 - Transition to online applications and reporting of commercial fishing harvest.
 - Clarify language regarding commercial fishing license suspensions.
 - Add violations of size or daily limits, harvesting fish out of season, and fishing in closed waters to the list of convictions requiring suspension of a commercial fishing license.
 - Except for invasive carp, require fish harvested by commercial fishing license holders to stay in the vessel or attached to the vessel until offloaded at the boat ramp.
 - Clarify Lower Ohio River Trophy Catfish harvest permit program suspension language and require 10,000 pounds of catfish to be harvested from the mainstem of the Ohio River.
 - Clean up any other regulations as necessary for conformity.
- Chuck Meade **made a motion to move the commercial fishing and invasive carp regulation items to discussion**, seconded by Josh Cummins. *The motion carried unanimously.*

Committee Meeting Structure (Video 2:00:39)

- Gabe Jenkins, Deputy Commissioner, presented a draft committee meeting structure developed with three commission members.
- Establish three standing committees: Lands and Wildlife; Licensing, Operations, and Public Outreach; and Enforcement, Boating, and Fisheries.
- The draft structure described committee public notice and open meeting requirements, committee size and quorum limitations, agenda limitations,

appointment terms, committee chairs, public comment procedures, and publication of committee names, agendas, and minutes on the department website.

- Commission members discussed whether committee structure changes should be reflected in bylaws and how agenda items would be referred to committees.

Creation of a habitat stamp (Video 2:08:50)

- Gabe Jenkins, Deputy Commissioner, presented a concept to amend 301 KAR 3:010 to require a habitat stamp for WMA users and amend 301 KAR 5:022 to create fee amounts for residents and non-residents.
- Discussion included possible price points, who would be required to purchase the stamp, how funds would be used on Wildlife Management Areas, resident and non-resident approaches in other states, and whether a working group should develop the concept further.
- Josh Cummins **made a motion to move the committee meeting structure and habitat stamp items to discussion**, seconded by Matt Rhodes. *The motion carried unanimously.*

Commercial activity on WMAs related to wildlife recovery (Video 2:18:07)

- Gabe Jenkins, Deputy Commissioner, presented a proposal to amend 301 KAR 3:010 and 301 KAR 5:022 to allow commercial activity for wildlife carcass recovery on WMAs and require an individual to obtain a commercial activity permit for recovery services.
- Commission members discussed combining this issue with the habitat stamp effort in a public lands working group and noted the goal of preventing harvested animals from remaining unrecovered on the landscape.
- Walter Robertson **made a motion to move this item to discussion**, seconded by Josh Cummins. *The motion carried unanimously.*

Establish an annual, weekly, and one-day dog training permit issued by the department and evaluate and designate tract(s) as Dog Training Area(s) at West Kentucky WMA (Video 2:21:13)

- Ben Robinson, Wildlife Division Director, proposed amending 301 KAR 3:010, 301 KAR 5:022, and 301 KAR 2:049 to establish dog training permits and designated dog training areas at West Kentucky WMA.
- The proposal would require annual, weekly, or one-day dog training permits for trainers at West Kentucky WMA; require a per-day fee for groups with a WMA Use Permit for sporting dog or associated events; exempt participants in department-authorized events approved through a WMA Use Permit; and establish times and areas where unleashed dogs may be allowed.

Special Youth and Veterans Waterfowl Seasons Date Change (Video 2:23:24)

- Ben Robinson, Wildlife Division Director, proposed amending 301 KAR 2:221 to change the Special Youth Waterfowl Season from the Saturday before Thanksgiving and the second Saturday in February to the first consecutive Saturday and Sunday in February.
- The proposal would also change the Special Veterans and Active Military Personnel Waterfowl Season from the Sunday before Thanksgiving and the second Sunday in February to the first consecutive Saturday and Sunday in February and clean up any other regulations as necessary for conformity.
- Jay Smith **made a motion to move the dog training permit and waterfowl date change items to discussion**, seconded by Jeff Raymer. *The motion carried unanimously.*

Public Comments (Video 2:24:26)

Lisa Jackson, Public Information Office Supervisor, read the following statement regarding public comments:

- “Public comments regarding new business items or discussion items on the agenda may be submitted by email to FW.PublicAffairs@ky.gov. Email comments received by 5:00 p.m. Eastern Time two days prior to the meeting date will be distributed to all Commission members on the day prior to the meeting and read by agency staff during the Commission meeting for up to three minutes total per commenter, time permitting and at the discretion of the Commission Chair. In-person attendees of meetings may also request to speak for up to three minutes total per commenter on new business items or discussion items on the agenda, but will be required to sign in on the public comment request form on the table at the meeting room entrance by 9:00 a.m. Eastern Time on the day of the meeting and provide name, county of residence, organization represented, official position (if applicable), and the agenda items being addressed. Commenters who speak in person will not have their emailed comments read publicly at the meeting and are asked to avoid voicing comments that are redundant with others speaking prior to them during the allotted public comments timeframe.”

Lisa Jackson, Public Information Office Supervisor, read public comments from the following individuals (Video 2:26:37):

- Stephen Stempky
- Trey Webb

Verbal comments were made by the following people (Video 2:29:49):

- Donald Thomas
- Loman Scarbrough
- Larry Richards
- Doug Ramey
- Anthony Brown

Additional Discussion (Video 2:47:17)

- Matt Rhodes raised concerns regarding compliance with open meetings law and requested that commission-related communications be reviewed and discussed publicly when appropriate.
- Commission members discussed how communications among commission members and committee-related discussions should occur. Ben Monarch, General Counsel, stated that he would provide the commission with an advisory opinion and email additional guidance after the meeting.

Break (Video 2:52:34)

Return from Break (Video 3:17:26)

Set a date for the next Quarterly Commission Meeting (Video 3:17:26)

- June 12, 2026.

Closed Session (Video 3:19:29)

- Ben Monarch, General Counsel, read the following statement:
 - “All meetings of a quorum of the members of any public agency at which any public business is discussed or at which any action is taken by the agency, shall be public meetings, open to the public at all times except for specific exceptions listed in KRS 61.810 or otherwise provided for by law. The Commission has business today that will require entering into a closed session. KRS 61.815 requires notice of the general nature of the business to be discussed in the closed session, the reason for the closed session, and the provision of KRS 61.810 that authorizes it be publicly announced prior to entering closed session for most open meetings exceptions. In today’s closed session, the Commission shall conduct the annual review of the Fish and Wildlife Resources Commissioner’s performance. KRS 61.810(1)(f) authorizes closed sessions for discussions which might lead to the appointment, discipline, or dismissal of an individual employee. As confirmed by opinion of the Attorney General’s Office in 21-OMD-091, the annual review is required to be occur closed, executive session pursuant to KRS 150.061(1)(a). This portion of the closed session is authorized by KRS 150.061(1)(a), 61.810(1)(k), and 61.810(1)(f). Upon an approved motion, the Commission will enter into closed session. The Commission shall not discuss any other matters and no action shall be taken occur during the closed session. During the

closed session, counsel and necessary members of staff will be present to advise the Commission.”

- Jeff Raymer **made a motion to enter into executive session**, seconded by Walter Robertson. *The motion carried unanimously.*

Return from Closed Session (Video 4:26:15)

Break (Video 4:26:21)

Return from Break (Video 4:30:47)

Adjourn (Video 4:30:56)

- Fred Shortridge **made a motion to adjourn**, seconded by Jeff Raymer. *The motion carried unanimously.*

DRAFT