

Kentucky Department of Fish & Wildlife Resources



Special Called Commission Meeting

May 18, 2026 | 1:30 PM (ET)

In-person: Salato Wildlife Education Center – Schaaf Room

#1 Sportsman's Lane, Frankfort, KY 40601

[Live Video Teleconference¹](#)

Minutes

Call to Order and Welcome (Video 7:41)

Invocation (Video 7:51) Josh Cummins, 5th District Commission Member

Pledge of Allegiance (Video 8:33) Kenton Bottoms, 6th District Commission Member

Chair's Remarks (Video 9:44)

Commissioner's Remarks (Video 11:38)

Roll Call (Video 12:43) Jay Smith, Jeff Raymer, Matt Rhodes, Greg Cecil, Josh Cummins, Kenton Bottoms, Chuck Meade, Fred Shortridge, and Walter Robertson

Information Items

- 2026 Legislative Session Highlights (Video 13:33)
 - Jenny Gilbert, Legislative Liaison, provided an overview of legislation passed during the 2026 General Assembly affecting the department and Commission authority. She explained the distinction between statutory changes that automatically became law and regulatory changes requiring Commission action through the administrative regulation process.
 - Gilbert reported tracking more than 100 bills and resolutions affecting fish and wildlife operations, state employees, law enforcement, retirement systems, and administrative matters.
 - Upon her review, House Bill 10, House Bill 142, and Senate Bill 39 all included emergency clauses making portions effective upon enactment. Gilbert explained the necessity of holding a special-called meeting due to a statutory deadline requiring regulations to be amended within 90-120 days.
- Purpose of the Meeting (Video 18:30)
 - Gabe Jenkins, Deputy Commissioner, explained that the special-called meeting agenda was structured differently from a traditional commission

meeting agenda due to the urgency of recently enacted legislation. He noted the agenda emphasized informational items first, followed by discussion and action items, in order to provide the Commission and public with background and context regarding the legislative changes. Jenkins stated that several bills passed during the 2026 legislative session superseded existing Kentucky administrative regulations, requiring the department to amend regulations to conform with newly enacted statutes. He emphasized that the informational items were intended to inform the Commission and public of required regulatory changes mandated by the legislature, while discussion items would allow for additional consideration and public input regarding areas where the Commission still retained regulatory flexibility.

- Commission Nomination Meetings (Video 19:56)
 - Gabe Jenkins, Deputy Commissioner, reviewed proposed amendments necessary to comply with [2026-HB10E](#), and amend [301 KAR 4:001](#) Selection of fish and wildlife resources commission nominees to comply with amendments made to KRS 150.022 and KRS 150.061 as follows:
 - Revise provisions regarding public notification for and scheduling of nomination
 - Update requirements for nominees to serve including affidavit from nominees prior to nomination meeting
 - Volunteers serving amended to “commission members” in KRS
 - Recodify the regulation to [Chapter 11](#)
 - Clean up any other regulations as necessary for conformity
 - Discussion occurred regarding timing requirements for nomination process and officer elections under Senate Bill 39.
- Chapter 6 Regulations (Video 22:59)
 - Gabe Jenkins, Deputy Commissioner, reviewed proposed amendments to comply with [2026-SB 39E](#), and amend [301 KAR 6:001](#) Definitions as follows:
 - Amend definitions related to wakeboat, wakesports and hydrofoil
 - Conform to amendments made to KRS 235.280
 - Clean up any other regulations as necessary for conformity
 - Discussion centered on the Commission’s reduced authority to regulate wakeboats following enactment of SB39. Staff and legal counsel explained that the department no longer has the authority to promulgate regulations specifically restricting wakboats beyond restrictions in place as of December 1, 2025.
 - Commission members discussed emergency authority and questions, applicability of general boating regulations, wakeboat zones, and statutory interpretation concerns.
- Fishing on Private Waters (Video 28:31)
 - Gabe Jenkins, Deputy Commissioner, proposed amendments to comply with [2026-SB39E](#), and amend [301 KAR 1:001](#) Definitions-

comply with amendments to KRS 150.170 and KRS 150.180 as follows:

- Define “private waters” as any water body that is not a public water or a “private lake or pond”
- Define “private lake or pond” as any waterbody that is:
 - On private land;
 - Not connected by surface water to any public waters;
 - Not accessible to fish from other public bodies of water; and
 - Not located within the one hundred (100) year floodplain.
- Amend [301 KAR 1:201](#) Taking of fish by traditional fishing methods and [301 KAR 1:410](#) Taking of fish by nontraditional fishing methods as follows:
 - Create a section that exempts the following individuals from statewide daily limits, size limits, or method of take on “private lakes or ponds”
 - A bona fide owner of private land who is also a Kentucky resident on their “private lakes or ponds”
 - An individual extended the same privileges in written or electronic form
 - Amend [301 KAR 1:125](#) Transportation of fish as follows:
 - Create a provision to clarify that a license holder who transports fish from a “private lake or pond” requires written or electronic permission from the resident bonafide landowner
- Clean up any other regulations as necessary for conformity
- Commission member discussion included fishing license requirements, tenant farmer exemptions, written permission standards, floodplain definitions, and enforcement concerns.
- Staff clarified that individuals fishing private water under written permission must still possess a valid fishing license unless otherwise exempt under existing law.
- Modify Special Agency Fundraising Permit Application Instructions (Video 36:20)
 - Gabe Jenkins, Deputy Commissioner, reviewed proposed amendments to conform with [2026-HB142E](#), amend [301 KAR 5:210](#) Special agency fundraising permits as follows:
 - An individual may request to be entered into for the standard big game combination permit (exempts elk drawing) if they:
 - Successfully harvest 4 or more female antlerless deer in an overpopulated area
 - Submit a time stamped photo of each to the department via the telecheck process
 - Submits a request to the department to be entered into the standard big game combination permit drawing
 - Clean up any other regulations as necessary for conformity
- Wildlife Causing Damage (Video 38:24)

- Gabe Jenkins, Deputy Commissioner, reviewed proposed amendments to conform with [2026-HB142E](#), amend [301 KAR 2:176](#) Wildlife causing damage and landowner designee process as follows:
 - Allow an individual who takes wildlife using KRS 150.170 to contact the department to report the take
 - Allow an individual who takes wildlife using KRS150.170 to contact the department for a carcass tag to remove the carcass from the property and utilize the same
 - Issue 5 destruction tags per year to a landowner or approved designee to take antlerless deer, valid for 2 years each
 - Clarify that wildlife taken with control tags are to be telechecked
 - Allow electronic processing of Wildlife Damage Designee Form and Out-of-Season Wildlife Destruction Reporting Form
 - Amend the following forms:
 - Wildlife Damage Designee Form
 - Out-of-Season Wildlife Destruction Reporting Form
 - Conform to amendments made to KRS 150.170 and KRS 150.390
- Clean up any other regulations as necessary for conformity

Discussion Items

(Video 45:52) Deputy Commissioner Jenkins explained that the upcoming discussion items were mandated by recent legislative action requiring the Commission and department to promulgate regulations within specified statutory timeframes, some requiring action within 90 to 120 days following the legislative session. He stated that the department developed preliminary recommendations to promote transparency and encourage public input while working within the deadlines established by the legislature. Jenkins noted that while the Commission is required to promulgate regulations on the identified topics, the Commission retains discretion regarding how and when new seasons and opportunities are implemented. He further explained that the discussion items presented during the meeting would return as action items at the June 12, 2026 Commission meeting. The public, including hunters and anglers, was encouraged to provide feedback on the proposed recommendations to assist the department and Commission in developing regulations consistent with the new statutory requirements. Jenkins added that division directors would present the discussion items specific to their respective program areas.

- Deer Hunting Season Expansion (Video 47:36)
 - Ben Robinson, Director of Wildlife, presented proposed amendments to comply with [2026-HB142E](#), and amend [301 KAR 2:172](#) Deer hunting seasons, zones and requirements as follows:
 - Add a 4-day antlerless-only firearms season on the last Friday in September in deer zone 1 counties
 - Add a 3-day antlerless-only firearms season on the last 3 days of Kentucky's deer season (Martin Luther King Jr. weekend) in deer zones 1 -3 (currently an action item with the Commission)

- Define “overpopulated areas” as any county that has a Deer Zone 1 designation
 - Clean up any other regulations as necessary for conformity
- Modify Public Lands Deer Hunting Seasons on Zone 1 WMAs (Video 49:41)
 - Ben Robinson, Director of Wildlife, proposed amending [301 KAR 2:178](#) Deer hunting on public properties as follows:
 - Open the following WMAs for the 4-day antlerless deer firearm season that starts on the last weekend of September and the 3-day MLK antlerless deer firearms season: Yatesville, Grayson, L.B. Davidson, Harris Dickerson, Clear Creek, Yellowbank, Blackford Oaks, Lee Nelson, Gabbard Branch, Rough River, Marrowbone, Green River State Forest, Nolin River, Rolling Fork, Stephens Creek, Big Rivers, Obion Creek, Kentucky Lake, Ferguson Creek, Kaler Bottoms, Beechy Creek, Jones-Keeney, Higginson-Henry, Peabody, Sloughs
 - Open the following WMAs for the 4-day antlerless deer firearm season that starts on the last weekend of September (due to waterfowl closures): Lake Barkley, Doug Travis, Ohio River Islands
 - Clean up any other regulations as necessary for conformity
- Night Hunting of Beavers (Video 56:32)
 - Ben Robinson, Director of Wildlife, presented proposed amendments to comply with [2026-SB39E](#), amend [301 KAR 2:251](#) Hunting and trapping seasons and limits for furbearers based on amendments to KRS 150.360 as follows:
 - Allow the take of beavers at night from December 1 through the last day of February
 - Prohibit in a county or area when a deer or elk firearm season is open
 - Allow the use of any artificial light or other means (night vision, thermal and infrared technologies) designed to make wildlife visible at night during this period
 - Any artificial light or other means designed to make wildlife visible at night shall not be connected to or cast from a mechanized vehicle.
 - Prohibit the use of firearms except for any rimfire caliber or shotguns using shot shells
 - Clean up any other regulations as necessary for conformity
- Night Hunting of Bobcats (Video 59:44)
 - Ben Robinson, Director of Wildlife, presented proposed amendments to comply with [2026-SB39E](#), amend [301 KAR 2:251](#) Hunting and trapping seasons and limits for furbearers based on amendments to KRS 150.360 as follows:
 - Allow the take of bobcats at night from December 1 through the last day of February

- Bag limit of 1 bobcat at night (3 are allowed to be harvested with a firearm)
 - Prohibit in a county or area when a deer or elk firearm season is open
 - Allow the use of any artificial light or other means (night vision, thermal and infrared technologies) designed to make wildlife visible at night during this period
 - Any artificial light or other means designed to make wildlife visible at night shall not be connected to or cast from a mechanized vehicle
 - On public land, a person shall not use any equipment other than a bow, crossbow, or shotgun of 12 gauge or less and shall not use a shotgun shell with a single-projectile
 - On private land, a person shall not use any equipment other than a bow, crossbow, or shotgun of 12 gauge or less, muzzleloader of .54 caliber or less, or any modern centerfire firearm
 - Harvested bobcats must still be telechecked
 - Clean up any other regulations as necessary for conformity
 - Commission discussion included mandatory biological submissions, bag limits, caliber restrictions, permit systems, safety incidents in other states, and data collection methods.
 - Further discussion addressed whether the bobcat proposal should be delayed for additional review and public feedback. Deputy Commissioner Jenkins advised that both beaver and bobcat regulations reflected legislative intent under SB39.
- All discussion items were scheduled to return as action items at the June 12, 2026 Commission meeting.

Action Item

- Approval of the Minutes of the March 20, 2026, quarterly meeting (Video 1:17:53)
 - Matt Rhodes **made a motion to approve the March 20, 2026 meeting minutes with revisions to correct grammatical errors on pages 1 and 4, including removal of the words “was made” within the motion language**, seconded by Walter Robertson. *The motion carried unanimously.*
- Election of officers to comply with [2026-SB39E](#), and maintain consistent terms for all officers (Video 1:19:29)
 - Fred Shortridge **made a motion to nominate Chuck Meade for Chair**, seconded by Walter Robertson.
 - Josh Cummins **made a motion to nominate Matt Rhodes for Chair**.
 - The votes for Chuck Meade as chair were as follows: Yes: Jay Smith, Jeff Raymer, Kenton Bottoms, Fred Shortridge, Walter Robertson. No: Matt Rhodes, Josh Cummins, Greg Cecil. *The Motion carried, and Chuck Meade assumed the Chair position.*
 - Chuck Meade **nominated Jeff Raymer for Vice Chair**, seconded by Fred Shortridge. *The motion carried unanimously.*

- Fred Shortridge **nominated Jay Smith as Secretary**, seconded by Chuck Meade. *The motion carried unanimously.*

Public Comments (Video 1:25:13)

Verbal comments were made by the following:

- Todd Blevins

Adjourn (Video 1:30:31)

- Jay Smith **made a motion to adjourn**, seconded by Matt Rhodes. *The motion carried unanimously.*