

# South Carolina Department of Natural Resources



**DNR**

Alvin A. Taylor  
Director

November 17, 2017

**VIA HAND DELIVERY**

The Honorable Edward R. Tallon Sr., Chairman  
Legislative Oversight Committee Subcommittee  
418 Blatt Building  
Post Office Box 11867  
Columbia, SC 29201

Re: Follow-up from Subcommittee's October 23, 2017, meeting with the SC Department of Natural Resources

Dear Chairman Tallon:

In response to your letter dated October 26, 2017, the SC Department of Natural Resources has compiled the additional information sought by the committee as part of the oversight process of our agency. Answers are compiled in the body of this letter. If additional information is needed, please let me know.

***Fish Kill***

**1. What are the methods for obtaining restitution? (e.g., lawsuit, etc.)**

There is a longstanding memorandum of agreement between SCDHEC and the South Carolina Wildlife and Marine Resources Commission (now SCDNR) that defines the responsibilities of SCDHEC and SCDNR in the investigation of public water fish kills. SCDNR is responsible "for investigating damages to the natural resources." SCDHEC is responsible "for determining the cause." Additionally, SCDHEC "shall initiate administrative enforcement proceedings" under their authority "to collect any penalty and/or damages which are arrive at and in accordance with the MOA."

- 2. Please provide the following information for the last five times there was a fish kill:**  
**a. date;**  
**b. number of fish killed;**  
**c. restitution sought; and**  
**d. restitution obtained.**

<b>Date</b>	<b># Killed</b>	<b>Restitution Sought</b>	<b>Restitution Obtained</b>
August 15, 2017	707	No- responsible party not identified.	No.
May 17, 2017	137	No- responsible party not identified.	No.
October 14, 2016	15,302	Yes.	Pending.
June 25-26, 2016	40,736	Yes.	Yes.
March 25, 2016	1,154	No- cause not identified.	No.

**3. When restitution is obtained, where are the funds deposited?**

Generally, funds are deposited into hatchery system accounts to offset cost or restocking or other public water stockings.

***Fish Hatcheries***

**4. How much is DNR requesting in the budget for Barnwell State Hatchery?**

There is a pending request for the fiscal year 2019 budget for one FTE and \$101,654 (includes personnel) in recurring funds to operate the Barnwell Hatchery. Additionally, there is a non-recurring budget request for \$2,000,000 for hatchery renovations. A portion of these funds would be applied to renovations of the hatchery infrastructure at Barnwell.

**5. What is the current demand for fish, DNR's current capacity, and DNR's projected capacity if Barnwell State Hatchery is re-opened?**

Generally, stocking requests from regional management staff run from 10 to 12 million fish annually for public water stocking. The hatchery system is at peak demand and at production capacity during the spring striped bass production season. At current capacity, our hatchery system is still about 1 million striped bass fingerlings short of meeting management requests. We rely on the USFWS hatchery system to provide up to a million striped bass fingerlings grown out at their facilities using striped bass fry produced by SCDNR staff. Under ideal conditions the ponds at the Barnwell Hatchery could produce between 300,000 to 350,000

striped bass fingerlings which would reduce our reliance on our federal partners but not completely eliminate it.

**6. What are the average operating costs for an individual hatchery?**

Hatchery budgets range from about \$75,000 to over \$750,000 annually depending on the size of the facility, facility mission and staffing. In fiscal year 2017 SCDNR expended approximately \$2,609,389 on the five fully operational hatcheries for an average cost of \$521,878.

**7. What is the return on investment for a fish hatchery?**

The most recent species specific economic impact information SCDNR has is from a report prepared by Southwick Associates in 2008 based on national survey data collected by the Census Bureau for the USFWS in 2006. The Southwick report estimates the economic impact of striped bass (\$276,529,856) and coldwater trout (\$14,200,151) fishing combined was \$290,730,007. The striped bass and coldwater trout fisheries in South Carolina are dependent on fish from SCDNR. The return on investment (ROI) based solely on striped bass and cold water trout is approximately \$111 for each dollar expended toward operating the hatchery system. This is a simplified estimate of ROI which does not account other fisheries and economic benefits associated with hatchery operations and as a result is considered to be an underestimate of the ROI.

***Land***

**8. Please provide the following information related to Wildlife Managed Areas (WMA):**

- a. maintenance costs for leased land v. land owned by DNR; and**
- b. total costs and total revenue generated from:**
  - i. land leased from private individuals;**
  - ii. land leased from U.S. Forest Service; and**
  - iii. land owned by DNR.**

The SCDNR strives to optimize access and opportunity for public outdoor recreation on Wildlife Management Areas across the state. The budget for wildlife management activities is not segregated between owned versus leased lands, therefore, SCDNR cannot provide the information requested in item (a) or the subparts of item (b). WMA budgets are managed at the regional level and funding is allocated based on needs and how to optimize opportunity for the public. While the agency may begin the year with a general plan for management/maintenance activities, it can very easily get shifted due to unforeseen circumstances such as repairs from a natural disaster. It is also important to note that SCDNR is often restricted by lease agreements as to what activities staff can do on each of the leased properties (each one is different based on landowner desires). SCDNR has greater flexibility for management and public opportunities on DNR-owned lands.

As to item (b), all of the sub-items generate revenue from WMA permit sales, however, SCDNR cannot allocate an amount to each subpart. When a constituent purchases a WMA permit, the permit allows that person to hunt on any WMA across the state, whether owned or leased land. The WMA permit sales generate approximately \$1.5-1.8 million per year with approximately 87% of this going directly to lease payments.

SCDNR generates timber revenue on SCDNR-owned properties from harvests associated with habitat management activities. This revenue changes from year to year based on harvest needs

and salvage operations due to natural disasters. The 5-year average for timber revenue is approximately \$1.2 million per year.

**9. Please provide the total amount spent per year on road maintenance in WMAs (mowing, re-topping with gravel, etc.).**

Road maintenance is but one, albeit important, task associated with WMA stewardship and management. Road maintenance is not budgeted or tracked as a line item in Wildlife Section grant or project budgets. During fiscal year 2017, \$282,076 was expended solely for materials (gravel and sand) related to road maintenance and improvement. This may change from year to year based on needs and available funding. All personnel and equipment costs incurred for road and trail maintenance and repair are in addition to the amount listed above. In fiscal year 2017, staff mowed 768 miles of roads, graded 627 miles, re-topped 54 miles with gravel and maintained 513 miles of trails.

***Call-In Programs***

**10. Please outline the agency's timeline for the call-in program staggered implementation, review/revisions to the program, and agency request for authority, via regulation and/or statute.**

SCDNR utilized the recent 2017 bear season as a pilot program for electronic reporting of harvested game. State law already requires all harvested bears to be reported to the agency. The agency provided an opportunity for hunters to report harvested bears via phone or a web-based application. Based on our initial evaluations, this was successful and could easily be expanded to other species.

We also developed a web-based reporting system for deer hunters who utilized the temporary (printable) deer tags until their permanent tags were received. Again, this was deemed successful and could be expanded.

At this time, SCDNR has identified a feasible method for requiring electronic check-in of big game species. SCDNR however does not have the authority to require check-in for deer and turkey. Legislative approval would be required to fully implement this change.

The potential fix would be for the Legislature to provide authority to the Department to prescribe requirements for the tagging and reporting of all big game species.

***Dike Repair and Maintenance***

**11. Please provide examples, if any, of additional damage and repair costs incurred as a result of the classification of dike repairs as capital improvement projects.**



The best example of this was Springfield Cut at Bear Island WMA. Damage occurred during Hurricane Matthew in October 2016. Obtaining necessary approvals delayed the project by 4 months. During this time, the breach increased by 30 feet thereby costing the agency an additional \$55,500.

**12. Please provide examples of work that occurs at other agencies, and is exempt from the capital improvement project classification, which the agency believes is comparable to dike repairs.**

Section 11-35-710 specifically provides exemptions for SCDOT and SCDPS from certain purchasing procedures for “the construction, maintenance, and repair of bridges, highways, and roads; vehicle and road equipment maintenance and repair; and other emergency-type parts or equipment utilized by the Department of Transportation or the Department of Public Safety...” SCDNR believes that dike repair projects are substantially similar in scope to road repair projects and typically involve less public funds than road repair projects.

DHEC recently received a similar exemption from the State Fiscal Accountability Authority (SFAA) for dam safety issues for a five-year period, at the meeting held on May 2, 2017.

***Permits***

**13. Please provide a list of permits that are issued through the Wildlife and Freshwater Fisheries Division.**

- Scientific Permits (bird banding, migratory bird, nongame, game)
- Migratory bird depredation
- Live hog removal
- Hog hunting enclosure
- Canada goose depredation
- Falconry
- Hunt permits for party bear hunts
- Commercial use of SCDNR properties
- Antlerless deer quota program permit
- Deer depredation
- Urban deer control (sharpshooting)
- Wild turkey control (airports)
- Bird dog training area license
- Fox, bird dog, rabbit, retriever and squirrel field trial
- Raccoon field trial permit
- Pet/backyard deer
- Captive black bear
- Special use
- Lottery hunts

- Fox/coyote enclosure permit
- Shooting preserve license
- Rabbit enclosure
- Furbearer depredation permits
- Predator management permits
- Alligator depredation permits
- Temporary exhibition and transportation
- Importation/possession
- Private land alligator permits
- Aquaculture permits
- Non-indigenous species permits (fisheries)
- Scientific collection permits (fisheries)
- Grass carp transport permits
- Public water stocking permits
- Freshwater mussel collection/possession permits.

### ***Information Technology***

#### **14. Why do all information technology personnel not report to the agency's information technology director?**

As a distinctly large and unique SCDNR hub tasked with Marine research and monitoring work, Marine Resources Center staff have dealt with scientific data and the need to capture, store, analyze, and archive data on a daily basis since the establishment of the Marine Resources Center in the early 1970s. Information Technology staff located at and reporting to personnel at the Marine Resources Center pre-date the establishment of the position of Information Technology (IT) Director. Marine Resources Center IT staff have successfully supported the Division's specialized scientific computing, equipment, data acquisition, and data management needs on a daily basis for decades.

Information Technology personnel in Charleston continue to report to the Director of Marine Operations as they serve as a primary support function for agency personnel located in Charleston as well as in outlying facilities in the coastal region. However, Charleston-based IT staff do not function independently of the agency Information Technology Director as requests for access, purchases, hardware and software installations, and network modifications are only done in coordination with and under the direct approval of the Information Technology Director housed in our Columbia office. Despite local supervision, Charleston IT staff must follow all IT policy and procedures as set forth by the agency IT Director and CISO. Marine Resources Division IT staff are assigned access to agency IT resources based on their job roles. The agency IT Director has the discretion to assign such roles as necessary to ensure security of IT resources while allowing Charleston staff to provide necessary and valuable local IT support in Charleston. IT staff in Charleston are not assigned specific access roles to administer agency client-server

databases or SCEIS and their ability to indirectly access such resources through the domain administrator role can be eliminated through future refining of access groups within the agency.

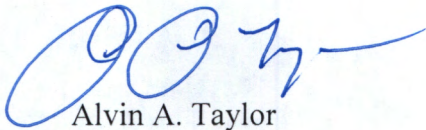
***Agency Law Recommendation***

**15. Please provide additional explanation and support for why the agency requests Lake Jocassee (Oconee and Pickens Counties) be added to SC Code of Laws Section 50-13-675.**

Lake Jocassee is a clear, low productivity lake with a very limited prey base. Jocassee has the lowest standing stock, ~50 pounds per acre, of all larger reservoirs in SC. Prior to 2013 non-game fish devices were not allowed on Lake Jocassee. SCDNR studies have indicated that the prey base is too limited to support an historic trout fishery there. The limited prey base has been stressed further by the establishment and expansion of spotted bass in the lake. The SCDNR staff believe the prey base at Jocassee is not abundant enough to support the predators in the system and be additionally exploited by non-game fish devices. SCDNR recommends prohibiting the use of non-game fish devices in Lake Jocassee in order to insure the health of the lake's recreational fishery.

We greatly appreciate your guidance and direction during our oversight process. Thank you for your comments and suggestions in helping our agency improve to provide exceptional outdoor experiences for the citizens of South Carolina.

Sincerely,



Alvin A. Taylor  
Director

cc: The Honorable Wm. Weston J. Newton  
The Honorable Katherine E. "Katie" Arrington  
The Honorable William M. "Bill" Hixon  
The Honorable J. Todd Rutherford