

The N.C. Wildlife Resources Commission has voted on proposed rule changes to the state's game land, wildlife management and inland fishing regulations. Of the 37 proposed rule changes, 34 were approved as taken to public hearings; one game land regulation was amended and approved; one wildlife management regulation was removed from consideration and one wildlife management regulation was disapproved.

The effective date for the approved regulations, which are for the 2016-17 seasons, is August 1, 2016.

The wildlife commissioners approved eight wildlife management proposals, including one that would establish the framework to open an elk hunting season in western North Carolina. Along with this proposal, they adopted a complementary resolution delaying the issuance of any elk hunting permits until state, federal and tribal land organizations have determined appropriate allocation of permits based on annual sustainable harvest goals and population viability.

"Our next step will be to work closely with our partners, including the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians, to establish clear metrics to guide a permit-only hunt sometime in the future," said Gordon Myers, the Commission's executive director. "Together we will work to determine sustainable harvest goals and how to allocate harvest across the population range."

As defined, the elk hunting season will be from October 1 through November 1 with a bag limit of one per permit. The manner of take would be any legal firearm or archery equipment.

**Disapproved Proposed Regulation** Out of an abundance of caution and desire for additional biological information, commissioners disapproved a proposed alligator hunting season. Because the take of alligators in some situations is reasonable and appropriate, the commissioners directed Myers, through a resolution, to examine options that would utilize the skills and expertise of North Carolina sportsmen and women to provide assistance in removal of alligators under nuisance or depredation circumstances.

The resolution further directed Myers to create an Alligator Task Force that would develop a North Carolina Alligator Management Plan, which would include an evaluation of biological information and knowledge gaps on alligators in the state and recommendation for a framework for gathering public input on the plan.

**Amended and Approved Regulation** They also amended a proposed regulation to designate Holly Shelter Game Land as a 6-day-per-week game land and restrict dog hunting for deer and bear to Mondays, Wednesday and Saturdays, by adding the following three days: Thanksgiving, Christmas and New Year's Day.

**Proposed Regulation Removed from Consideration** Wildlife Commissioners did not vote on a proposed regulation to remove the Eastern cougar as a federally listed species in North Carolina. Pursuant to state law, federally listed animals must have the same designation in the state as their federal status. The Commission expected the U.S Fish and Wildlife Service to remove the Eastern cougar from the federal list, but this action has been delayed.

**Other Actions** In addition to voting on the proposed regulations, wildlife commissioners approved a no-wake zone on Palmetto Drive Canal in Cedar Point, as well as a request by Duke Energy Carolinas, LLC to establish a no-vessel entry swimming area at the Pines Recreation Area Swim Beach on Lake Glenview in Jackson County to ensure the safety of swimmers and boaters at the new swim beach.

They also voted to start the temporary rulemaking process for black bear hunting, which will include public hearings. The temporary rules are:

- Move the black bear hunting season in Brunswick and Columbus counties to the second Monday in November to January 1.
- Extend the time that bears can be taken with the aid of unprocessed food as bait to the entire open season.

Each year, wildlife commissioners vote on proposed regulations changes after hearing staff recommendations and reviewing comments received by the public.

To view the full text of all 37 proposed regulations visit the Commission's website, [www.ncwildlife.org](http://www.ncwildlife.org) and download the public hearings booklet.

About the N.C. Wildlife Resources Commission - Since 1947, the N.C. Wildlife Resources Commission has been dedicated to the conservation and sustainability of the state's fish and wildlife resources through research, scientific management, wise use, and public input. The Commission is the state regulatory agency responsible for the enforcement of fishing, hunting, trapping and boating laws and provides programs and opportunities for wildlife-related educational, recreational and sporting activities. To learn more, visit [www.ncwildlife.org](http://www.ncwildlife.org).

### Arthritis Foundation Exercise Program - Get Back Into Motion

Are you an adult age 55 or older with any type of diagnosed arthritis? The Arthritis Foundation Exercise Program will help you who have joint and /or muscle problems. Achieve improved joint mobility, muscle strength and endurance in order to improve the performance of your daily activities.

- Join Grace Senior Center's free 1 hour Arthritis Foundation Exercise Program, held twice a week for eight weeks.
- Learn basic arthritis self-management from a certified instructor.
- Learn basic principles of exercise and of joint protection.
- Learn tips for managing stress and pain, and how to make exercise a daily routine.
- Exercise and strengthen your body, educate yourself and become more active and stress free.

Classes will begin March 1 and run through April 19, held from 10 to 11 a.m. on Tuesdays and Thursdays at Grace Senior Center. Please call Wanda Talbert 704-694-6616 or 704-994-3495 to register or for more information.

### 5 Tips for Hiring a Heating Service for Inspections and Repairs

With colder weather in the forecast, it is the perfect time to have your furnace or heating units inspected, tuned up and repaired. "Heating units can be the most expensive equipment in your home," said Better Business Bureau (BBB) President Tom Bartholomy. "Given the large number of contractors and companies that provide heating and air conditioning services, it is important to distinguish between the good and the bad. In the past 12 months, consumers have checked out local heating and air conditioning services with BBB more than 161,000 times. During this same time, consumers have filed 191 complaints against heating and air conditioning contractors."

If you need to hire a heating service for inspections or repairs, the BBB has these five tips:

- Check out heating contractors with BBB. It only takes a few minutes to find a company with a good track record for service.
- Get an estimate in writing before work begins.
- Make sure that the contract includes warranty information.
- Find out if the contractor is licensed, bonded and insured.
- Be wary of unsolicited offers and high pressure sales pitches for heating systems, windows and roofing.

For more information, please visit [BBB.org](http://BBB.org) or call BBB toll-free at 1-877-317-7236.

### Do You Need a Coat or Blanket? Would You Like to Donate?

The Faith-Based Center of Hope continues their "Warm Coats, Warm Hearts" program. They have distributed coats to several of the churches and schools in Anson County. Blankets for the elderly are also available.

Ebenezer Missionary Baptist Church is the pick up site, or you can deliver donated items there too. Just call to schedule it.

To donate coats and blankets or to request help, please contact Vancine Sturdivant at 704-848-4412 or Ester Lindsey at 704-848-8452.



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