



LOUISIANA WILDLIFE FEDERATION

"... conserving our natural resources and your right to enjoy them."

affiliated with



Res. No. 14D, 2010

SUBJECT: THE LOUISIANA WILDLIFE & FISHERIES COMMISSION

WHEREAS, the seven-member Louisiana Wildlife & Fisheries Commission (LWFC) was established by an amendment to the Louisiana Constitution in 1952 to oversee the state administrative agency, also known at the time as the Louisiana Wildlife & Fisheries Commission (formerly and presently called the Louisiana Department of Wildlife & Fisheries), and

WHEREAS, the establishment of the LWFC in 1952 was consistent with the prevailing national conservation movement to create in each state a group of peers of stakeholders in the conservation and use of natural resources that would have the authority to regulate the use of the state's fish & wildlife resources, and

WHEREAS, a fundamental reason for establishing such a commission form of governance was to reduce to a minimum the amount of political interference in the management of fish and wildlife resources, and

WHEREAS, establishing a commission form of governance for regulating the take of fish, fur and game was a chief goal of the Wildlife Management Institute (WMI), an organization established by a national association of leaders in the manufacture of sporting arms and ammunition and other outdoor gear, with the intent of promoting the management of fish and wildlife resources based on sound science, and this concept was/is strongly supported and advocated by the Louisiana Wildlife Federation, and

WHEREAS, as the LWFC matured and new processes for rulemaking were established to maximize the opportunity for public participation while allowing the full consideration of the data and advice provided by the professional fish & wildlife managers and enforcement experts of the Louisiana Department of Wildlife & Fisheries (LDWF), the Legislature ceded more authority to the LWFC so that it now has complete jurisdiction over the setting of seasons, size limits, creel and bag limits and harvest quotas, without the requirement for legislative oversight in the process of making these rules, and

WHEREAS, most conservation advocates and members of the Legislature understand and appreciate the wisdom of the separation of responsibilities between the Legislature and the LWFC, and

WHEREAS, the concept of the commission is that of a board of peers to the users it regulates and it is not intended to be a board of technical experts; that expertise is available through the LDWF staff, and

WHEREAS, the LWFC is a necessary complement to the work of the LDWF and vice versa, and its role is essential to the stakeholders' need and right to participate in the decision-making process, and

(More)

WHEREAS, with the exception of the requirement that 3 members of the 7-member LWFC be representatives of the commercial fur and/or fishing industry, the idea of the LWFC is to represent all citizens of the state and all the natural resources within its authority, not just citizens and resources within a certain region, and

WHEREAS, although the idea of requiring at least one LWFC member to reside in each geographic region of the state (to both avoid the perception of regional bias in decision-making, but more importantly, to inform the decision-making process with knowledge of and familiarity with each geographic area) may be appealing, it is a mistake to mandate it in statutory or constitutional law because it would imply that the commissioner from each specified region should represent the interests of that region rather than those of the state as a whole, therefore making the LWFC more “political,” and

WHEREAS, the Governor should have the sound practical and political acumen to appoint LWFC members from each part of the state to avoid the perception of regional bias in decision-making, and

WHEREAS, although some states have fewer members on their “wildlife commissions” and the WMI recommends five members, seven is a sufficient number of LWFC members to efficiently and effectively conduct its business and fulfill its responsibilities to the people of Louisiana, and

WHEREAS, from time to time the validity and effectiveness of the LWFC is challenged by proposals to abolish it or to modify and manipulate its structure and function, including recent legislation to abolish the LWFC which evolved into a proposal to increase its membership and establish gerrymandered commission districts, and

WHEREAS, the LWF believes that the LWFC performs a difficult task well.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Louisiana Wildlife Federation (LWF) urges that the Louisiana Wildlife & Fisheries Commission (LWFC) be sustained in its present form with no more than seven members and opposes efforts to abolish it as is proposed from time to time.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the LWF supports the uniform representation of all the citizens and the fish and wildlife resources of Louisiana by each member of the LWFC, not just the people and resources from designated regions of the state.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the LWF urges Governor Jindal and future Louisiana Governors to exercise good practical and political sense when making appointments to the LWFC to assure that appointments are reasonably distributed geographically to avoid the perception of regional bias in LWFC decision-making.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the LWF hereby restates its support for LWFC and its structure and function as presently constituted.

Adopted by the Louisiana Wildlife Federation in convention assembled, February 28, 2010 at Cypress Bend Resort, Many, Louisiana.