

NATURAL RESOURCES COMMISSION
 Meeting Minutes, October 7, 2025

MEMBERS PRESENT

Bryan Poynter, Chair
 Jane Ann Stautz, Vice Chair
 Alan Morrison, Secretary
 Carl Wodrich
 Deborah Law
 Noelle Szydlyk
 Jeff Stallman
 Phil French
 Patrick J. Early
 Tom Kelley
 John Wright

DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES STAFF PRESENT

Chris Smith	Executive Office	Whitney Wampler	Legal
Ryan Mueller	Executive Office	Precious Johnson	Legal
Greg Sorrels	Executive Office	Lisa Anderson	Legal
Madalynn Conner	Executive Office	Brandt Baughman	State Parks
Gerriann Albers	Fish and Wildlife/Nature Preserves	Anthony Sipes	State Parks
Stephanie Flittner	Legal		

GUESTS PRESENT

Samantha Chapman
 Dan Boritt
 Nancy Tatum

Bryan Poynter, Chair, called to order the regular meeting of the Natural Resources Commission (Commission) at 10:02 a.m., ET, on October 7, 2025, at Fort Benjamin Harrison State Park, The Garrison, 6002 N. Post Road, Indianapolis. With the presence of eleven members, the Chair observed a quorum. Three members were attending remotely: Jane Ann Stautz, Noelle Szydlyk, and Jeff Stallman. The Chair explains that the meeting is live streamed and that questions may be submitted electronically.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

The Chair asked for a motion to approve the Commission's July 15, 2025, meeting minutes.

Tom Kelley moved to approve the minutes as submitted, John Wright seconded the motion. Upon a voice vote, the motion was carried.

REPORTS OF THE DNR DIRECTOR, DEPUTY DIRECTORS, AND THE CHAIR OF THE ADVISORY COUNCIL

Alan Morrison, Director of the Department of Natural Resources (Department), provided his report, which is summarized as follows:

Director Morrison introduces the new director of the Division of State Parks, Brandt Baughman. Baughman was selected after a national search about two months ago, in August. There was a wide group of capable people who applied for the position. The thing that impressed me the most was Baughman's messages of forward thinking and new and creative ways to help make parks a better and more inviting place to visit, and how to improve services. I was impressed by forward thinking, knowledge, and leadership.

Brandt Baughman introduced himself and stated he is absolutely honored to serve as the director and work alongside the Commission. Baughman thanks Director Morrison, Chris Smith, and Maddy Conner for giving him the opportunity. He states he is grateful to the directors and team that came before him. Baughman says he has spent the bulk of his career with the Department, and the opportunity is a dream come true and something he never imagined would happen. The Division of State Parks has built a legacy of conservation and public service that Baughman is looking forward to continuing. He explains there are a lot of new companies and technologies that can help the Department moving forward and he looks forward to working with the Department and the Commission.

Director Morrison continued with his report by explaining that he just finished visiting the Department's parks and recreation areas. He praises the park system and the wide range of resources offered at the different properties, and the staff. Morrison recommends that anyone take some time to get out there and visit the parks. He states he is proud to be a Hoosier and for the state to have the natural resources we do. He states that everyone in the room is a part of that.

Director Morrison applauds the great executive team and says that everyone deserves recognition. He gives special recognition to Greg Sorrels. Morrison applauds the work Sorrels is doing for the Department and the Commission, and the work he has put into helping the Department toward a better financial situation. Morrison applauded Sorrels' daily work, thoughtfulness, and compassion which knows no bounds. Morrison also provided recognition for the Communications team and Holly Lawson for all the amazing work they do for the Department and Commission. He explains that the forward-facing part is so important. Everything from websites and social media, communication with the media, and anything else the Department puts out to the public. Morrison thanked the Communications team for all the work they do, which is so important for the Department and the Commission.

Morrison states that the Department is busy. He acknowledges that there isn't really a slow season at the department, and the Department has a few busy years ahead of us with improvement projects to several properties thanks to the Budget Committee, federal funds, and a grant from the Lily Foundation.

Chairman Poynter asks about the size of the campgrounds after the improvements.

Director Morrison responded that the campsite will be larger.

Chris Smith, Deputy Director of the Lands and Cultural Resources Bureau, explains the size changes for the campground improvement.

Director Morrison concluded by saying that the Department will be busy over the next four to five years with improvements to properties, but that the Department needs to also maintain facilities. The Department has a lot of properties and facilities that are in major need of maintenance. The Department will begin addressing issues and preventive maintenance with each budget cycle.

Chairman Poynter says that Director Morrison, Maddy Conner, Stephanie Flittner, and Whitney Wampler have done a good job merging the Department and the Commission as needed following the repeal and removal of the division of hearings.

Chris Smith, Deputy Director of the Lands and Cultural Resources Bureau, provided his report, which is summarized as follows:

Smith explains that each division has a busy season, but that means the whole year is busy. Hunting seasons have begun. Smith reminds the Commission about new license platform and using it early so customers can figure it out before the deadlines. Smith explains the changes to hunting quotas in certain counties Due to the severe impact of Epizootic Hemorrhagic Disease (EHD) on the deer population. Maps are on the Department website.

Forestry opened for nursery sales. The Division of Forestry will work to fill orders over the next few months. The open house series at forest properties has begun. Additionally, parks are seeing traffic pick up for special events.

Phil French asks about the new licensing system and using Access Indiana and whether the Department should look into using another platform that is more manageable.

Smith answers that the licensing platform is used across several states. Additionally, Access Indiana is the platform for Indiana's infrastructure.

French says that he believes the system currently in place is a revenue issue. If the system was easier to use, customers would likely purchase more licenses. Licenses are difficult to get on the Department's platform. He would like a study done to determine if another platform is a better option.

Smith explains that French is not the only person to voice frustration with the licensing system.

Ryan Mueller, Deputy Director of the Resource Management Bureau, provided his report, which is summarized as follows:

Mueller explains that September was Indiana Archeology Month. Executive Order 25-63 directs completion of statewide water inventory and management plan. Statewide water planning framework.

Reclamation. NRC member to serve on surface coal mine reclamation bond pool committee. Meets annually re bond pool and mine reclamation projects.

Greg Sorrels, Deputy Director of the Administration Bureau, provided his report, which is summarized as follows:

Sorrels stated that the Department received approval for the submitted five percent (5%) reduction plan, and the Department is currently working to implement that plan. The plan reduces staffing by one hundred employees and manages an additional fifty. Sorrels thanks staff for stepping up and filling gaps whenever needed. He says that the Department is in the final phase of the Administration Bureau reorganization. The Department is expecting a delivery of law enforcement vehicles. Director Morrison talked about capital projects; the Department has several that have begun and others beginning soon.

CHAIR AND VICE CHAIR

Chairman Poynter asks Patrick Early if the Advisory Council has met yet this year?

Patrick Early says that the Advisory Council has not been able to get a meeting on the books, and that this meeting of the commission is his last. Early addresses his time on the Commission and explains that he is traveling much more now and doesn't want to be in a situation where he cannot make meetings. Doesn't think it's right to fill a seat when he cannot be here all the time.

Chairman Poynter says that we have three members participating remotely. Noelle Szydlyk, Jane Ann Stautz, and Jeff Stallman. The Commission is required to follow proper protocol and perform rollcall of all votes. He explains the Commission is going to go back to the minutes from the last meeting to perform a roll call vote. Poynter asks if there is a motion. Tom Kelley moves to accept minutes and asks for a roll call vote. Director Morrison seconds the motion. Upon a roll call vote, the minutes pass with a vote of 11/0.

Information: Consideration of the remaining 2025 meeting dates:

Chairman Poynter states that the remaining 2025 Commission meeting date is November 16. All meetings, except the July 2025 meeting, were scheduled to be held at Fort Harrison State Park, The Garrison. The July 15 meeting was held at Spring Mill State Park, Spring Mill Inn. The November meeting may not occur if there are not any agenda items. Poynter recognizes Deborah Law with the Indiana Department of Transportation (INDOT) as this will be her last meeting.

Updates on Commission and AOPA Committee:

Jane Ann Stautz explained that there have not been any meetings of the AOPA Committee. She thanks Whitney Wampler for her work as we move through the transition after the removal of the division of hearings.

Chairman Poynter corrects the meeting date. The correct date for the last Commission meeting is November 18th.

Poynter asks Lisa Anderson to introduce herself as a new department staffer who will be helping with the Commission.

Lisa Anderson introduces herself.

Poynter asks a member of the public present to testify on multiple agenda items how he wants to provide testimony.

DNR, DIVISION OF FISH AND WILDLIFE AND NATURE PRESERVES

Report to the Commission regarding the summary results of the public survey regarding furbearer hunting contest activities. (Geriann Albers, Division of Fish and Wildlife).

Geriann Albers, a furbearer biologist for the Division of Fish and Wildlife and Nature Preserves, presented. Albers explains that in 2022 the Department received a citizen petition regarding banning coyote hunting contests. Based on the data, most public were neutral, a small number of hunters participated, a small amount of the harvest was for the contests. Albers recommended no changes to the rules at that time. The Commission requested the Department look at the minimum number of contests in the state. Over two years the Department worked to obtain data for the report. The minimum number of contests annually is ten. There were twenty-four contests in the first year and eleven in the second year. The data was focused on coyotes, and the data was taken in January and February when the season is open. The Department focused on contests that involved harvest.

Chairman Poynter acknowledges that there are two people here to speak on this agenda item. He calls Samantha Chapman.

Samantha Chapman, with the Humane World for Animals, says she understand this is an informational update, but encourages banning wildlife killing contests. Members of Humane World for Animals find this incredibly egregious and barbaric. This is often killing for cash and prizes and doesn't follow ethical hunting.

Poynter calls Nancy Tatum.

Nancy Tatum, citizen representing herself. Tatum wrote the original petition in 2022. She states she was unaware of the meeting today and was glad she could be here to speak on the matter. Tatum asked what needs to happen for the Commission to ban the contests. She asks about the survey done by Purdue and the data collected.

Poynter directs Tatum to Albers for her questions.

Albers agrees to give her what information she requests.

Tatum concludes that the goal of killing contests is to kill as many animals as possible, which is not ethical. She says it is the responsibility of the state, the Department, and the Commission to hold resources in trust for the public. Requests that these contests be banned.

Consideration of Hearing Officer report on rule processing, public hearing, and hearing officer analysis with recommendation regarding final action to add rules at 312 IAC 9-10-28 to establish the invasive carp harvest permit to allow a person to harvest invasive carp on waters of the state using gear not currently allowed in waters of the state for commercial fishing. (Whitney Wampler, Legal Division).

Whitney Wampler, Assistant General Counsel for the Administration Bureau, presented. Preliminary adoption occurred May 20, 2025. The first public comment period ran beginning June 11 through July 14. The first public hearing occurred on July 14 at the Sugar Ridge Fish and Wildlife Area. Substantive comments were not made. The only comments received stated that rules were needed. After checking with the Attorney General's Office, these comments were found to not be substantive. A second public comment period and public hearing were not required. There were no changes to the rules. The rules comply with IC 4-22-2. Wampler recommended the rules for final adoption.

Dan Boritt, with the Indiana Wildlife Federation, states this is a great step forward. Anything the organization can do to get more people out there to get more fishers to get these fish into the market and out of the ecosystems. Boritt applauds the Department's efforts to get people out there fishing, he wants to ensure that bycatch will continue to be enforced.

Chairman Poynter asks if there is a motion. Tom Kelley moves to accept minutes and asks for a roll call vote. Director Morrison seconds the motion. Upon a roll call vote, the minutes pass with a vote of 11/0.

DNR, DIVISION OF STATE PARKS

Consideration of Hearing Officer report on rule processing, public hearing, and hearing officer analysis with recommendation regarding final action to add 312 IAC 9-1-8.5 defining the term "harvest per effort" and to add rules at 312 IAC 9-2-18 regarding scheduled deer hunting in designated areas for population management. (Whitney Wampler, Legal Division).

Whitney Wampler, Assistant General Counsel for the Administration Bureau, presented. Preliminary adoption occurred May 20, 2025. The first public comment period ran beginning June 11 through July 11. The first public hearing occurred on July 11 at the Fort Harrison Inn. Comments were not made. A second public comment period and public hearing were not required. There were no changes to the rules. The rules comply with IC 4-22-2. Wampler recommended the rules for final adoption.

Chairman Poynter asks if there is a motion. Phil French moves to accept minutes and asks for a roll call vote. Director Morrison seconds the motion. Upon a roll call vote, the minutes pass with a vote of 11/0.

DNR, LEGAL DIVISION

Consideration of Hearing Officer report on rule processing, public hearing, and hearing officer analysis with recommendation regarding final action to amend 312 IAC 1.5-2 regarding increases to the fees for: (1) an annual pass for nonresidents; (2) nonresidents entering Prophetstown State Park; (3) nonresidents entering Indiana Dunes State Park; and (4) nonresidents entering any other property owned or managed by the department of natural resources. (Whitney Wampler, Legal Division).

Whitney Wampler, Assistant General Counsel for the Administration Bureau, presented. The Secretary of the Commission signed off on preliminary adoption on August 11 under 312 IAC 2-2-4(a). The first public comment period ran beginning August 27 through October. The first public hearing occurred on September 26 at the Fort Harrison Inn. Comments were not made. A second public comment period and public hearing were not required. There were no changes to the rules. The rules comply with IC 4-22-2. Wampler recommended the rules for final adoption.

Chairman Poynter asks if the rules increase fees for annual passes for entrance fees and passes?

Wampler answers that the rules increase fees for nonresidents both entrance fees and annual passes.

Director Morrison explains that significant revenue comes from fees. The ability to collect fees to cover the Department's costs is so important. For example, utility costs in 2021 were \$4.1 million and in 2025 those fees are \$7.6 million. The Department has to be able to keep up with outside forces over which we do not have control.

Chairman Poynter asks if there are questions.

Phil French asks about the percentage of Department customers who are nonresidents.

Brandt Baughman, Director of the Division of State Parks, answers that nonresidents make up about twenty percent (20%) of the customers for the Department.

Poynter asks if there is a motion. Phil French moves to accept minutes and asks for a roll call vote. Director Morrison seconds the motion. Upon a roll call vote, the minutes pass with a vote of 11/0.

DNR, DIVISION OF WATER

Consideration of funding for planning assistance. (Ryan Mueller, Deputy Director).

Ryan Mueller, Deputy Director of the Resource Management Bureau, presents. Mueller requests that the Commission accept funding offered by nature conservancy that allows the Department to comply Executive Order 25-63.

Poynter asks if there is a motion. Phil French moves to accept minutes and asks for a roll call vote. Director Morrison seconds the motion. Upon a roll call vote, the minutes pass with a vote of 10/0 with one member abstaining (Jane Ann Stautz).

The meeting was adjourned at approximately 10:58 a.m., ET.