



## **Resolution Regarding Proposed Establishment of an Alligator Hunting Season in North Carolina**

*Whereas*, the American alligator (*Alligator mississippiensis*) occurs along the southeast Coastal Plain, into coastal North Carolina, where it reaches the current northern limit of its geographic range, and

*Whereas*, cooler environmental conditions in North Carolina result in differences in some life history traits from alligators in more southern states, and

*Whereas*, alligators in North Carolina have slower rates of growth and achieve sexual maturity later than alligators in more southern states, and

*Whereas*, these variable life history traits make alligators in North Carolina more vulnerable to over-harvest, and

*Whereas*, alligators have a patchy and variable distribution in coastal North Carolina, and

*Whereas*, there are indications that the distribution and relative abundance of alligators in some locales has increased over the last thirty years, and

*Whereas*, there is public interest in allowing take of alligators through hunting in areas and situations where harvest and the alligator populations are sustainable, and

*Whereas*, sustaining the alligator population in North Carolina requires unique conditions for allowing take through hunting or other means, and

*Whereas*, in response to public interest and some situations of over-abundance, the Commission took a proposal (H4) to public hearings in January 2016 to conditionally establish an alligator hunting season in which take would only be allowed by Commission issued permits, and

*Whereas*, 328 comments were received from these public hearings and through an on-line portal on Proposal H4, 133 (41%) of which were in opposition, and

*Whereas*, eight organizations including the Society for the Study of Amphibians and Reptiles, the North Carolina Partners in Amphibian and Reptile Conservation, the Carteret County Wildlife Club, the Coastal Plain Conservation Group, the North Carolina Wildlife Federation, the North Carolina Chapter of the Nature Conservancy, The Alligator Alliance, and the North Carolina Nongame Wildlife Advisory Committee have all submitted letters or resolutions in opposition to opening an alligator hunting season at this time, and

*Whereas*, Commission staff received 648 standardized emails in opposition to alligator hunting.


*Now, therefore be it resolved*, that while the Commission believes the take of alligators in some situations is reasonable and appropriate, based on public comments and the need to further refine conditions under which alligator hunting should be allowed, the Commission does not approve proposal H4 taken to public hearings in January 2016, and

*Now, therefore be it further resolved* that the Commission directs the Executive Director to:

Examine options under existing statutory authorities to utilize the skills and expertise of North Carolina sportsmen and women to provide assistance in removal of alligators under nuisance or depredation circumstances,, and to establish a North Carolina Alligator Task Force to develop a North Carolina Alligator Management Plan that includes:

- Evaluation of all available biological information on alligators in North Carolina,
- Identification of knowledge gaps and additional research needed on alligator population demography, historical changes in alligator habitats, and public attitudes and opinions on alligator conservation,
- Identification of areas where alligators may be over-populated and recommend biological and social strategies to address alligator management issues in these areas,
- Recommendations of geographical management zones,
- Recommendations for metrics to establish the number of permits per year that could be issued for opportunities to harvest alligators by hunting where sustainable and consistent with local alligator population, habitat, and social conditions, and
- Recommendations on a framework for gathering public input on the North Carolina Alligator Management Plan.

Approved this the 11<sup>th</sup> day of February, 2016, in an official meeting by the North Carolina Wildlife Resources Commission.



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John Litton Clark, Chairman



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Gordon Myers, Executive Director