MISSISSIPPI LEGISLATURE REGULAR SESSION 1999

By: Representative Livingston To: Game and Fish

HOUSE BILL NO. 900
(As Passed the House)

AN ACT TO AMEND SECTION 49-7-31, MISSISSIPPI CODE OF 1972, TO REVISE SPECIAL YOUTH HUNTS OUTSIDE OF OPEN SEASON; AND FOR RELATED PURPOSES. BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF MISSISSIPPI:

SECTION 1. Section 49-7-31, Mississippi Code of 1972, is amended as follows:

49-7-31. (1) The open season for game birds and game animals shall be as follows:

(a) On bobwhite quail: The season shall open on Thanksgiving day and run through the first Saturday in March next following.

(b) On pheasant: There shall be no open season on pheasant.

(c) On wild turkey: The commission shall fix the spring season between the Saturday nearest March 20 and May 1 in designated areas. In addition, the commission may fix special fall either-sex seasons.

(d) On squirrel:

(i) Zone 1: For areas north of Highway 82 plus those portions of Sunflower County and Washington County south of Highway 82 the season shall open on the Saturday nearest October 1 and run through February 28.

(ii) Zone 2: For areas between Highway 82 and Highway 84, plus such portions of the state south of Highway 84 and west of Interstate 55, the season shall open on the Saturday nearest October 15 and run through February 28.

(iii) Zone 3: For areas south of Highway 84 and east of Interstate 55 the season shall open on the last Saturday in October and run through February 28.

(e) On deer:

(i) With bow and arrow: October 1 through the Friday prior to Thanksgiving.

(ii) With guns and with dog: From the Saturday prior to Thanksgiving through December 1.

(iii) With primitive weapons and without dogs: December 2 through December 15.

(iv) With guns and without dogs: December 16 through December 23. However, the commission may allow hunting statewide or in specific areas with any legal weapon which it may designate without dogs after the end of the last season for hunting deer with guns and with dogs, but the season with legal designated weapons and without dogs shall not extend beyond January 31.

(v) With guns and with dogs: December 24 through a date fixed by the commission that will provide a total of thirty-nine (39) days of hunting deer with guns and with dogs when added to the number of days provided for hunting deer with guns and with dogs in paragraph (e)(ii).

(vi) When hunting deer during any gun season on deer, a hunter must wear in full view five hundred (500) square inches of solid unbroken fluorescent orange.

(vii) In order to set and regulate the deer seasons, the commission may:

A. Set and regulate the deer seasons on wildlife management areas which it administers;

B. Allow the harvesting of antlerless deer in the districts or zones upon the recommendation of the executive director based upon good and substantial quantitative data and research evaluations that demonstrate that the harvesting is

necessary to properly manage the herd. The commission, only upon the recommendation of the executive director, may allow the harvesting of antlerless deer during the deer season with guns and with dogs by a majority vote of the commission. Nothing in this section prohibits the harvesting of either sex deer by landowners or leaseholders on private lands under a deer management program prescribed or approved by the executive director.

C. Provide a special permit for the harvesting of deer when they are depredating and destroying crops. The department shall supervise the harvesting and provide for the salvaging of the meat of the animals. The commission may authorize the department to assist any farmer in this state, who sustains crop damage by wildlife, in eradication of the problem wildlife.

(viii) The commission shall establish a special hunting season for youth under the age of sixteen (16) and for handicapped persons in the Natchez State Park. The commission shall also establish a primitive weapon season in the Natchez State Park. The selection of participants in the primitive weapon season shall be by public drawing from all qualified applications. The commission shall set the number of permits to be issued and the length of the special seasons. The commission may also establish a special hunting season for youth and handicapped persons or a primitive weapon season as provided in this subparagraph in any other state park under the jurisdiction of the department but shall only do so upon the recommendation of the staff of the department as approved by the commission. The commission shall select participants and set the number of permits to be issued and the length of the special seasons in the manner provided in this subparagraph.

(ix) The commission may establish and regulate special youth hunts for all nonmigratory game birds and animals outside of the open season on wildlife management areas * * * <u>and</u>

on private lands.

(f) On fur-bearing animals: The commission may fix the open season on fur-bearing animals between November 1 and March 1 next following and fix the open season for hunting opossums, raccoons and bobcats with dogs and guns by licensed hunters from October 1 to February 28 next following; but raccoons and bobcats may be run, hunted, chased or pursued throughout the year with dogs by licensed hunters. The commission may establish an additional open season on raccoon from July 1 through October 1, and the bag limit on raccoon during the additional open season shall be one (1) per party, per night.

(g) On rabbits: The season shall open on the Saturday nearest October 15 and run through February 28 next following, and when rabbits are depredating or destroying crops, the owner of the crops or his tenants may shoot the rabbits with guns.

(h) On predatory animals: The hunting of predatory animals shall be restricted to the open seasons for hunting any game animal or game bird, using only the firearms, ammunition, primitive weapons or archery equipment legal for use during that open season. Landowners, agricultural leaseholders or their designated agents may take predatory animals year-round on lands owned or leased by them. The taking of any animal or animals other than beavers or coyote by the use of a trap or traps is unlawful except during the time the season is open for the taking of fur-bearing animals. Fox and coyote may be run, chased or pursued with dogs except as provided in Section 49-7-32 year-round by licensed hunters.

(i) On migratory birds: The open season for migratory birds shall be the season prescribed by the Federal Migratory Bird Treaty regulations.

(j) On nongame gross fish: The season for taking nongame gross fish by hand or with grappling tongs shall be from May 1 to July 15.

(k) It is unlawful to trap fox after the closed season for trapping of other fur-bearing animals, except on property owned or leased by the person trapping.

(2) It is the intent of the Legislature that the open season for game birds and game animals shall be stabilized unless some unforeseen calamity affecting the resource necessitates earlier change.

SECTION 2. This act shall take effect and be in force from and after July 1, 1999.