

REPORT OF CONFERENCE COMMITTEE

MR. SPEAKER AND MR. PRESIDENT:

We, the undersigned conferees, have had under consideration the amendments to the following entitled BILL:

H. B. No. 1791: Appropriation; Wildlife, Fisheries and Parks, Department of.

We, therefore, respectfully submit the following report and recommendation:

1. That the Senate recede from its Amendment No. 1.
2. That the House and Senate adopt the following amendment:

Amend by striking all after the enacting clause and inserting in lieu thereof the following:

5 **SECTION 1.** The following sum, or so much thereof as may be
6 necessary, is appropriated out of any money in the State General
7 Fund not otherwise appropriated, for the support and maintenance
8 of the Department of Wildlife, Fisheries and Parks for the fiscal
9 year beginning July 1, 2024, and ending June 30, 2025.....
10\$ 17,623,369.00.

11 **SECTION 2.** The following sum, or so much thereof as may be
12 necessary, is appropriated out of any money in any special fund in
13 the State Treasury to the credit of the Department of Wildlife,
14 Fisheries and Parks which is comprised of special source funds
15 collected by or otherwise available to the department for the
16 support and maintenance of the department, including the Museum of
17 Natural Science and the Bureau of Parks and Recreation, for the
18 fiscal year beginning July 1, 2024, and ending June 30, 2025.....

19\$ 83,838,244.00.

20 The following sum, which is included in the sum appropriated
21 above in this section, is appropriated out of the state excise
22 taxes upon gasoline, oil and other petroleum products to the
23 Fisheries and Wildlife Fund for the fiscal year beginning
24 July 1, 2024, and ending June 30, 2025.....\$ 5,750,000.00.

25 The Department of Revenue is directed to set aside the amount
26 of this appropriation or any part thereof at any time it sees fit,
27 out of any collections of taxes upon gasoline, oil and other
28 petroleum products, and to deduct the amounts so set aside from
29 such funds before making distribution thereof. However,
30 provisions shall first be made for the Highway Bonds Sinking Fund,
31 as required under the provisions of Chapter 130, Laws of 1938, and
32 any amendments thereto, and Section 27-5-101, Mississippi Code of
33 1972.

34 Any funds available in the Wildlife Heritage Fund may be
35 expended by the Commission on Wildlife, Fisheries and Parks as
36 authorized by law. The department shall make a detailed report to
37 the Legislature regarding the spending of the Wildlife Heritage
38 funds by September 1 for the preceding fiscal year.

39 **SECTION 3.** Of the funds appropriated under the provisions of
40 Section 2 to the Bureau of Wildlife and Fisheries, funds in the
41 amount of One Hundred Twenty-five Thousand Three Hundred
42 Thirty-five Dollars (\$125,335.00) shall be derived from the
43 Education Enhancement Fund deposited pursuant to Sections 27-65-75

44 and 27-67-31, Mississippi Code of 1972, for the purpose of
45 defraying the expenses of Project WILD for Fiscal Year 2025.

46 **SECTION 4.** Of the funds appropriated under the provisions of
47 this act, the following positions are authorized:

48 AUTHORIZED HEADCOUNT:

49 Permanent: 527

50 Time-Limited: 53

51 With the funds herein appropriated, it shall be the agency's
52 responsibility to make certain that funds required for Personal
53 Services for Fiscal Year 2026 do not exceed Fiscal Year 2025 funds
54 appropriated for that purpose unless programs or positions are
55 added to the agency's Fiscal Year 2025 budget by the Mississippi
56 Legislature. The Legislature shall determine the agency's
57 personal services appropriation, which the State Personnel Board
58 shall publish. The agency's personal services appropriation may
59 consist of restricted funds for approved vacancies for Fiscal Year
60 2025 that may be utilized to fill vacant Fiscal Year 2024
61 headcount. It shall be the agency's responsibility to ensure that
62 the funds provided for vacancies are used to increase headcount
63 and not for promotions, title changes, in-range salary adjustments
64 or any other mechanism for increasing salaries for current
65 employees. It is the Legislature's intention that no employee
66 salary falls below the minimum salary established by the
67 Mississippi State Personnel Board.

68 Additionally, the State Personnel Board shall determine and
69 publish the projected annualized payroll costs based on current
70 employees. It shall be the responsibility of the agency head to
71 ensure that actual personnel expenditures for Fiscal Year 2025 do
72 not exceed the data provided by the Legislative Budget Office. If
73 the agency's Fiscal Year 2025 projected cost exceeds the
74 annualized costs, no salary actions shall be processed by the
75 State Personnel Board except for new hires determined to be
76 essential for the agency.

77 Any transfers or escalations shall be made in accordance with
78 the terms, conditions, and procedures established by law or
79 allowable under the terms set forth within this act. The State
80 Personnel Board shall not escalate positions without written
81 approval from the Department of Finance and Administration. The
82 Department of Finance and Administration shall not provide written
83 approval to escalate any funds for salaries and/or positions
84 without proof of availability of new or additional funds above the
85 appropriated level.

86 No general funds authorized to be expended herein shall be
87 used to replace federal funds and/or other special funds used for
88 salaries authorized under the provisions of this act and which are
89 withdrawn and no longer available.

90 None of the funds herein appropriated shall be used in
91 violation of the Internal Revenue Service's Publication 15-A

92 relating to the reporting of income paid to contract employees, as
93 interpreted by the Office of the State Auditor.

94 **SECTION 5.** Each conservation officer and supervisor shall be
95 furnished an allowance for uniforms not to exceed Five Hundred
96 Fifty Dollars (\$550.00) per annum.

97 Provided further, when any personnel of the Bureau of
98 Wildlife and Fisheries are transferred from one (1) county to
99 another on a permanent assignment, the expense monies now paid on
100 out-of-county duty shall not be applicable.

101 **SECTION 6.** It is the intention of the Legislature that the
102 Department of Wildlife, Fisheries and Parks shall maintain
103 complete accounting and personnel records related to the
104 expenditure of all funds appropriated under this act and that such
105 records shall be in the same format and level of detail as
106 maintained for Fiscal Year 2024. It is further the intention of
107 the Legislature that the agency's budget request for Fiscal Year
108 2026 shall be submitted to the Joint Legislative Budget Committee
109 in a format and level of detail comparable to the format and level
110 of detail provided during the Fiscal Year 2025 budget request
111 process.

112 **SECTION 7.** In compliance with the "Mississippi Performance
113 Budget and Strategic Planning Act of 1994," it is the intent of
114 the Legislature that the funds provided herein shall be utilized
115 in the most efficient and effective manner possible to achieve the
116 intended mission of this agency. Based on the funding authorized,

117 this agency shall make every effort to attain the targeted
118 performance measures provided below:

119		FY2025
120	<u>Performance Measures</u>	<u>Target</u>
121	Support Services	
122	Number of Hunting and Fishing Licenses Sold	480,000
123	Number of Registrations of Boats	52,000
124	Percent Change in License Sales	1.00
125	Percent Change in Boat Registration	1.00
126	Fisheries	
127	Number of Fish Stocked for Public Waters	1,500,000
128	Number of Customers of DWFP Lakes	1,500,000
129	Number of Participants in Aquatic Education	1,500,000
130	Number of Access Facilities Built or	
131	Maintained (Boat Ramps)	35
132	Wildlife	
133	MDWFP Management for Hunters and	
134	Non-Consumptive Users (Man-Days)	125,000
135	Research Projects Conducted to Sustain	
136	Healthy and Abundant Wildlife	
137	Populations	6.00
138	Acres of Forest Inventory	1,000
139	Acres of Prescribed Burning, Waterfowl	
140	Management, and Timber Management on	
141	WMA's to Sustain Healthy & Abundant	

142	Wildlife	30,000
143	Percent Change in Number of Research	
144	Projects Conducted to Sustain Healthy	
145	and Abundant Wildlife Populations	0.00
146	Percent Change in Number of Private Land	
147	Acres Influenced	0.00
148	Percent Change in the Number of Forest	
149	Inventories Conducted	0.00
150	Law Enforcement	
151	Number of Hunter Education Participants	10,000
152	Number of Hours Patrolled on Land	175,000
153	Number of Hours Patrolled on Water	50,000
154	Number of Criminal Investigations Conducted	8,000
155	Number of Shooting Sport Programs	1,500
156	Number of Boating Accidents	50
157	Number of Boating Fatalities	7
158	Cost per Student for Hunter Education	50
159	Cost per Sports Program	525.00
160	Percent Change in Number of Boating	
161	Accidents	50.00
162	Percent Change in Boating Related Fatalities	50.00
163	Percent Change in Public Contacts per	
164	Officer/per Day	15.00
165	Special Projects	
166	Percent Increase in Improved Use of	

167	Special Funds	0.20
168	Parks	
169	Overnight Accommodation (Cabins/Motels)	250,000
170	Overnight Accommodations (Camping)	650,000
171	Day Use Services	400,000
172	Percent Change in Day Use Services	10.00
173	Percent Change in the Prior Year of	
174	Occupancy Rate of Cabins	25.00
175	Museum	
176	Statewide Education Programming	250,000
177	Total Public Programming	130,000
178	Number of Visitors to Exhibits	80,000
179	Number of Natural Heritage Records Entered	60,000
180	Percent Change of Students that	
181	Understand the Importance of Natural	
182	Resource Conservation	5.00
183	Percent Change of Visitors to Exhibits	3.00
184	A reporting of the degree to which the performance targets	
185	set above have been or are being achieved shall be provided in the	
186	agency's budget request submitted to the Joint Legislative Budget	
187	Committee for Fiscal Year 2026.	

188 **SECTION 8.** Of the funds appropriated in Section 2, the
189 following amount shall be derived from the Department of Wildlife,
190 Fisheries and Parks Special Pearl River Timber Fund No. 3465, for

191 the purpose of making improvements to the Pearl River Wildlife
192 Management Area.....\$ 50,000.00.

193 **SECTION 9.** Of the funds appropriated within this act, the
194 Commission on Wildlife, Fisheries and Parks may enter into
195 cooperative agreements with the board of supervisors of any county
196 or any group or combination of counties for the purpose of
197 creating, improving or restoring parks, public game and fish
198 habitat lying or to be situated wholly or partially within such
199 county or in an adjoining county; and each county is empowered and
200 authorized, in its discretion, to expend funds from the general
201 county fund for such purposes from which fund they shall reimburse
202 to the Commission on Wildlife, Fisheries and Parks the actual cost
203 of all surveying and engineering projects incurred by the
204 Department of Wildlife, Fisheries and Parks incidental thereto.
205 Such boards of supervisors are further authorized and empowered,
206 in their discretion, to enter into agreements necessary to carry
207 out the purposes of this act with any other county, the United
208 States Forest Service or any other agency if same should be
209 necessary for the acquisition of land by lease or otherwise for
210 such purposes.

211 **SECTION 10.** It shall be unlawful for any officer, employee
212 or other person whatsoever to use or permit or authorize the use
213 of any automobile or any other motor vehicle owned by the State of
214 Mississippi or any department, agency or institution thereof for

215 any purpose other than upon the official business of the State of
216 Mississippi or any agency, department or institution thereof.

217 It is the intent of the Legislature that motor vehicles
218 authorized to be owned and operated by this agency shall comply
219 with Sections 25-1-77 through 25-1-93, Mississippi Code of 1972.

220 **SECTION 11.** In order to be in compliance with Section
221 63-1-201 et seq., funds are herein provided and may be expended by
222 the Department of Wildlife, Fisheries and Parks to pay the costs
223 of commercial driver's licenses for specific employees and/or to
224 reimburse such costs for specific employees who, in the course of
225 their duties and responsibilities, are required to hold a valid
226 Mississippi Commercial Driver's License.

227 **SECTION 12.** The Mississippi Department of Wildlife,
228 Fisheries and Parks is authorized to provide financial support of
229 One Hundred Seventy-five Thousand Dollars (\$175,000.00) and to
230 enter into an agreement with the Mississippi Cooperative Extension
231 Service for a project specialist and related supportive cost.

232 **SECTION 13.** The department is authorized to spend up to
233 sixty percent (60%) of revenue in the State Park Timber Endowment
234 Fund, as needed, to operate and maintain the state parks.

235 **SECTION 14.** It is the intention of the Legislature that
236 whenever two (2) or more bids are received by this agency for the
237 purchase of commodities or equipment, and whenever all things
238 stated in such received bids are equal with respect to price,
239 quality and service, the Mississippi Industries for the Blind

240 shall be given preference. A similar preference shall be given to
241 the Mississippi Industries for the Blind whenever purchases are
242 made without competitive bids.

243 **SECTION 15.** Of the funds appropriated in Section 1, it is
244 the intention of the Legislature that Four Hundred Thousand
245 Dollars (\$400,000.00) is allocated for the detection and
246 prevention of Chronic Wasting Disease in deer populations across
247 the state.

248 **SECTION 16.** Of the funds appropriated in Section 1, it is
249 the intention of the Legislature that Seventy-five Thousand
250 Dollars (\$75,000.00) is allocated for LeFleur's Bluff State Park
251 for playground security expenses.

252 **SECTION 17.** Of the funds appropriated herein, Two Hundred
253 Thousand Dollars (\$200,000.00) may be provided to fund the Youth
254 Participation Initiative for the purpose of educating children in
255 the areas of hunting, fishing, conservation, and safety.

256 **SECTION 18.** The fund created pursuant to Section 49-5-21,
257 Mississippi Code of 1972, and known as the "Fisheries and Wildlife
258 Fund" shall be treated as a special trust fund. All funds derived
259 from the sale of licenses, fees, fines and other revenues received
260 by the department as provided by law, shall be deposited in the
261 Fisheries and Wildlife Fund. In addition, revenue derived from
262 the sale of timber on wildlife management areas, refuges and
263 preserves shall be deposited into an account established for such
264 revenues under the Fisheries and Wildlife Fund. The interest and

265 any investment income earned on the fund shall be credited by the
266 State Treasurer to the Fisheries and Wildlife Fund and shall not
267 be paid into the General Fund. Any unexpended funds remaining in
268 the fund at the end of the fiscal year shall not lapse and shall
269 remain in the fund. Nothing in this section shall prevent the use
270 of said funds from maintenance and upgrade of wildlife management
271 areas.

272 **SECTION 19.** It is the intention of the Legislature that no
273 more than One Million Three Hundred Thousand Dollars
274 (\$1,300,000.00) be expended from the Motor Vehicle Fund for the
275 purchase of any type of motor vehicle.

276 **SECTION 20.** The executive director of the Department of
277 Wildlife, Fisheries and Parks is authorized to enter into an
278 agreement with any public or private entities to manage any park
279 or parks within the state park system.

280 **SECTION 21.** It is the intent of the Legislature that no
281 state-owned wildlife management area be closed and that to the
282 greatest practicable extent, department land management decisions
283 and actions may not result in any net loss of any acreage
284 available for hunting opportunities that existed on July 1, 2006,
285 as provided in Section 49-5-99(4). It is the intention of the
286 Legislature that no state park be closed without legislative
287 approval.

288 **SECTION 22.** It is the intent of the Legislature that the
289 Mississippi Department of Wildlife, Fisheries and Parks shall have

290 the authority to enter into multi-year contracts for the purpose
291 of placing a sign on such state park property under the
292 department's domain, in accordance with any applicable rules and
293 regulations. All proceeds generated from these activities shall
294 remain with the department and shall be deposited into the proper
295 special fund.

296 **SECTION 23.** It is the intent of the Legislature that from
297 the funds available to the Department of Wildlife, Fisheries and
298 Parks, the department may purchase and pay premium(s) on property
299 damage insurance on its motor vehicles, boats, trailers, real
300 property improvements, buildings, furnishings, and such other
301 assets as may be appropriate or practical, and/or as required by a
302 granting entity.

303 **SECTION 24.** Of the funds appropriated under the provisions
304 of Section 2, One Million Seven Hundred Fifty Thousand Dollars
305 (\$1,750,000.00) shall be designated for the purpose of defraying
306 the operational expenses of Special Projects. None of these funds
307 shall be used for "Personal Services."

308 **SECTION 25.** It is the intention of the Legislature that the
309 Department of Wildlife, Fisheries and Parks shall have the
310 authority to receive, budget and expend funds from the Gulf and
311 Wildlife Protection Fund, not to exceed Fifty Thousand Dollars
312 (\$50,000.00) for the purpose of preservation, protection,
313 conservation, and acquisition of waters, land and wildlife of this
314 state.

315 **SECTION 26.** It is the intention of the Legislature that the
316 funds herein appropriated shall be expended in compliance with
317 Section 27-104-25, Mississippi Code of 1972, that no state agency
318 shall incur obligations or indebtedness in excess of their
319 appropriation and that the responsible officers, either personally
320 or upon their official bonds, shall be held responsible for
321 actions contrary to this provision.

322 **SECTION 27.** Of the funds appropriated in Section 1, it is
323 the intention of the Legislature that Fifty-eight Thousand Five
324 Hundred Ninety-three Dollars (\$58,593.00) may be allocated for the
325 Hunter Education program supported from the General Fund court
326 assessments.

327 **SECTION 28.** Of the funds appropriated under the provisions
328 of Section 2, Ten Million Dollars (\$10,000,000.00), or so much
329 thereof as may be necessary, shall be derived out of any money in
330 the State Treasury to the credit of the Capital Expense Fund, as
331 created in Section 27-103-303, Mississippi Code of 1972, and
332 allocated in a manner as determined by the Treasurer's Office as
333 follows:

334	a) Projects on the Park Improvement Plan.....\$	8,350,000.00
335	b) Museum Admissions Area Renovation	
336	Phase II.....\$	1,500,000.00
337	c) Road Improvements at J.P. Coleman	
338	State Park.....\$	75,000.00
339	d) Improvements at John Kyle State Park.....\$	75,000.00

340 Any remaining funds in this section may be used to continue
341 funding park improvements.

342 **SECTION 29.** The following sum, or so much thereof as may be
343 necessary, is reappropriated out of any money in the Capital
344 Expense Fund not otherwise appropriated for the Department of
345 Wildlife, Fisheries, and Parks the purpose of reauthorizing the
346 expenditure of Capital Expense Funds, as authorized in HB 1617,
347 2023 Regular Session. The purpose of these funds is to assist the
348 Department with improving and developing the area in the LeFleur's
349 Bluff Education and Tourism Complex and in coordination with the
350 Mississippi Children's Museum, and the Department of Finance and
351 Administration in order to promote tourism, education, and
352 recreational activity that contributes to community well-being for
353 the fiscal year beginning July 1, 2024, and ending June 30, 2025..
354\$ 13,000,000.00.

355 Notwithstanding the amount reappropriated under this section,
356 the amount that may be expended under the authority of this
357 section, shall not exceed the unexpended balance of the funds
358 remaining as of June 30, 2024, from the amount authorized for the
359 previous fiscal year. In addition, this reappropriation shall not
360 change the purpose for which the funds were originally authorized.

361 **SECTION 30.** The following sum, or so much thereof as may be
362 necessary, is reappropriated out of any money in the Capital
363 Expense Fund not otherwise appropriated for the Department of
364 Wildlife, Fisheries, and Parks for the purpose of reauthorizing

365 the expenditure of Capital Expense Funds, as authorized in HB
366 1617, 2023 Regular Session, for the purpose of providing equipment
367 for the agency for the fiscal year beginning July 1, 2024, and
368 ending June 30, 2025.....\$ 1,100,000.00.

369 Notwithstanding the amount reappropriated under this section,
370 the amount that may be expended under the authority of this
371 section, shall not exceed the unexpended balance of the funds
372 remaining as of June 30, 2024, from the amount authorized for the
373 previous fiscal year. In addition, this reappropriation shall not
374 change the purpose for which the funds were originally authorized.

375 **SECTION 31.** Of the funds appropriated in Section 2, Eight
376 Million One Hundred Thousand Dollars (\$8,100,000.00) may be
377 provided from the Mississippi Outdoor Stewardship Trust Fund.
378 These funds are available for completing projects awarded to the
379 Department by the Board of Trustees of the Mississippi Outdoor
380 Stewardship Trust Fund.

381 **SECTION 32.** The money herein appropriated shall be paid by
382 the State Treasurer out of any money in the State Treasury to the
383 credit of the proper fund or funds as set forth in this act, upon
384 warrants issued by the State Fiscal Officer; and the State Fiscal
385 Officer shall issue his warrants upon requisitions signed by the
386 proper person, officer or officers, in the manner provided by law.

387 **SECTION 33.** This act shall take effect and be in force from
388 and after July 1, 2024.

**Further, amend by striking the title in its entirety and
inserting in lieu thereof the following:**

1 AN ACT MAKING AN APPROPRIATION FOR THE SUPPORT AND
2 MAINTENANCE OF THE DEPARTMENT OF WILDLIFE, FISHERIES AND PARKS FOR
3 THE FISCAL YEAR 2025.

CONFEREES FOR THE HOUSE

CONFEREES FOR THE SENATE

X (SIGNED)
Bounds

X (SIGNED)
Hopson

X (SIGNED)
Read

X (SIGNED)
DeLano

X (SIGNED)
Oliver

X (SIGNED)
Barnett