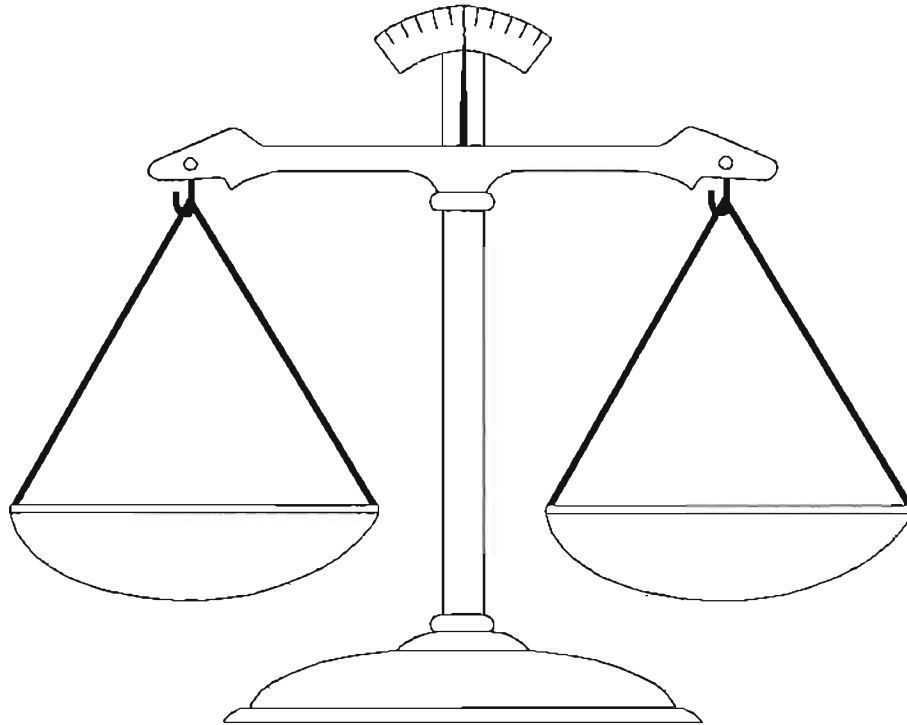


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COMMISSION ON MARINE RESOURCES

## SPECIAL COMMISSION MEETING

February 7, 2013

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(228) 467-2199**

1 COMMISSION ON MARINE RESOURCES

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3 SPECIAL MEETING OF COMMISSION ON MARINE RESOURCES

4 February 7, 2013

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7 TRANSCRIPT OF SPECIAL MEETING OF COMMISSION ON MARINE RESOURCES

8 AT BOLTON STATE BUILDING, PUBLIC MEETING ROOM, 1141 BAYVIEW

9 AVENUE, BILOXI, MISSISSIPPI, ON THE 7TH DAY OF FEBRUARY 2013

10 COMMENCING AT 6:30 P.M. AND REPORTED BY NORMA JEAN LADNER

11 SOROE, CERTIFIED SHORTHAND REPORTER.

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13  
14 COMMISSION MEMBERS PRESENT:

15 DR. VERNON ASPER, Chairman  
16 RICHARD GOLLOTT  
17 SHELBY DRUMMOND  
18 STEVE BOSARGE  
19 JIMMY TAYLOR

20  
21 ALSO PRESENT:

22 DANNY GUICE, Acting Director DMR  
23 JOSEPH R. RUNNELS, ESQ., Asst. Attorney General  
24 SANDY CHESNUT, ESQ., Asst. Attorney General

to try to move into the future.

2 So what I would like you to do, please, I know  
3 you're frustrated about the past, and I know you have  
4 criticisms about the past, and I know that you feel betrayed by  
5 what happened. We all feel the same way. But tonight, let's  
6 focus on the future. Let's be as positive as we can. Let's  
7 talk about where we want to go from here and how we want to  
8 rebuild this agency, how we want to restore confidence.

9 And I know it's going to be an uphill battle,  
10 and I know that the person that gets hired to be this executive  
11 director is going to be -- have a massive job on his or her  
12 hands.

13 I want to assure you at the outset that this is  
14 an open process. We have no names on the list at this point.  
15 We have no applications. We have no pressure from anybody  
16 anywhere saying that this name is the person you ought to  
17 choose. That has not happened. Okay?

18 So if any of you are wondering about what you  
19 read in the newspapers, certain rumors that are going around,  
20 and that's always true in a case like this, they're not true.

21 Now, the process from here on in is anybody's  
22 guess. You know how things go. But I want you because you're  
23 here tonight and because you are witnessing this process, I  
24 want you to help us all keep it on a straight level, and we're  
25 going to be as open as possible with everything.

1 A. Call to Order

2 DR. ASPER: Good evening. I'd like to welcome  
3 everybody to this special called meeting of the Mississippi  
4 Commission on Marine Resources. The purpose of this meeting is  
5 to discuss the replacement of our executive director.

6 And I want to thank you from the bottom of my  
7 heart for taking time from your busy schedules to come out here  
8 and contribute to the process. We really do cherish your  
9 input. We are going to do the very best job that we can on  
10 this. And we need all the help we can get.

11 What we're going to do tonight is, I'm going to  
12 describe the process and tell you what I know about it. And  
13 we're then going to give you a chance to come to the podium and  
14 give your input on first of all what you think the process  
15 should be like, the process of searching for this person. And  
16 then next what you think this person should be like, what sort  
17 of qualities do you think this person should have. And I'm  
18 going to actually give my opinion on this later on. So for  
19 what it's worth, I am going to give you my opinion.

20 Let me say also that this is not a forum for  
21 venting your frustrations. I realize that we're all  
22 frustrated, and that goes for us up here on the commission, as  
23 well. We feel that we were blindsided by what happened here in  
24 this agency, and we have determined that it will never happen  
25 again, and we've determined that from here on in we are going

1 The next thing I want to do is just talk a  
2 little bit about what the executive director does. And I want  
3 to start by reading a couple of sections from the state  
4 statutes. And I'm just going to read these so that we can  
5 understand sort of where things are and what the requirements  
6 are.

7 First of all, Section 49-15-11 says about the  
8 executive director: The executive director of the Department  
9 of Marine Resources shall have the authority to internally  
10 reorganize the Department of Marine Resources with persons  
11 meeting established qualifications for comparable positions of  
12 duty and responsibility, including but not limited to the  
13 executive director, division chiefs, biologists, and other  
14 personnel.

15 What that says is the executive director does  
16 the hiring and firing.

17 For a period of one year -- this is -- that was  
18 something that expired. Basically, the executive director, the  
19 person we want to hire, makes those decisions.

20 In the Section 49-15-305 under executive  
21 director nominations, powers, and duties. The commission --  
22 that's the five of us right here -- shall submit three nominees  
23 for the position of executive director to the governor. The  
24 governor shall appoint the executive director from the list of  
25 nominees with the advice and consent of the Senate. The

1 commission may remove an executive director from the office for  
2 good cause. The executive director shall be knowledgeable and  
3 experienced in marine resources management.

4 And then it goes on to talk about some of the  
5 other responsibilities of the executive director.

6 I would encourage you to look at this statute  
7 section. It's online, and it's easy to find. Just do a Google  
8 for it, and you'll find it right away.

9 The point about what it says here is -- actually  
10 it's a couple of points.

11 First of all, it says that we're to submit three  
12 names, which we will, and that the governor must choose from  
13 those three names. So he's not at liberty to pick a name from  
14 out of the blue that we didn't suggest. He is also -- now,  
15 this executive director will be answering to the governor.

16 So one of our criteria for choosing this person  
17 has to be somebody who could get along with the governor,  
18 somebody the governor can trust.

19 This person can make the governor look good or  
20 bad. And so the governor has obviously got a lot riding on  
21 this, as much as we do.

22 The next thing is that once this appointment is  
23 made, the person has to be confirmed by the Senate. This is  
24 just like Cabinet members with the President of the United  
25 States appoints Cabinet members. They have to be approved by

1 person has got to be a manager.

2 And I'm not going down on Ph.D.s. Don't get me  
3 wrong. I have a Ph.D., but because I have one, I know that it  
4 doesn't mean that you're good at doing anything except research  
5 in a laboratory.

6 So, keep that in mind. That's one of my  
7 opinions. You can, of course, express your own.

8 So what we expect to do from here on in is,  
9 we're going to accept your comments tonight, and we're going to  
10 listen very carefully. I've got a little computer here. I'm  
11 going to be typing things in. We're going to have a transcript  
12 of all the comments that were made. It's going to be recorded.  
13 And we are going to take a look at these, and we're going to  
14 sift through them, and we're going to put together an  
15 advertisement. The advertisement is going to go to as many  
16 people as we can think of, especially in this area. It's going  
17 to go to some of the publications. And we're going to look for  
18 applicants to come in and basically apply for the job.

19 The final decision will be made by the five of  
20 us here, but we expect to have lots of input from other people,  
21 as well.

22 Just out of curiosity, this may be a mistake,  
23 but show of hands, how many people here think this person  
24 should have a Ph.D.?

25 Okay. I hope you come up and make your comments

5

7

1 the Senate. Same thing here. The governor makes the  
2 appointment, but it's got to be approved by the Senate.

3 And that means that one of our criteria has got  
4 to be that this person is somebody that the Senate will  
5 approve. And I don't see any roadblocks in any one of these  
6 processes, but just so you know.

7 And the third thing is that it says an executive  
8 director shall be knowledgeable and experienced in marine  
9 resources management.

10 Now, that can be interpreted fairly broadly.  
11 And some of the e-mails I'm getting state that this person  
12 should have a Ph.D. in marine sciences or a comparable degree,  
13 have an advanced degree like that. And that's not necessarily  
14 required by the statute. That could be something that we look  
15 for.

16 My personal feeling on this, by the way, if  
17 anybody cares, is that we need somebody to manage. The  
18 Department of Marine Resources is a -- I guess a resource  
19 management department. So we need a manager who can manage a  
20 management department. We really need somebody who's good at  
21 that. And that's my number one criteria, somebody who can  
22 manage. Yes, they need to be familiar with our system. They  
23 need to be familiar with our fisheries, the economic impact of  
24 those fisheries, what our waters are like, the conditions are  
25 like out there. That would be -- it's all great. But this

6

1 and let me know why you think that. I'm going to be calling  
2 you up. By the way, if you haven't filled out one of these,  
3 please fill it out. I'm going to want to hear your comments on  
4 that because I may change my mind on it, as well.

5 Okay. So we're going to put together this  
6 advertisement based on your comments, based on our discussion  
7 here. We're going to advertise and bring people in. We're  
8 going to interview them. And we will put together our list.

9 MR. COLLOTT: Do we have to approve the agenda?

10 DR. ASPER: Thank you. We do. Is there a  
11 motion to approve the agenda?

12 MR. COLLOTT: I so move.

13 DR. ASPER: Is there a second?

14 MR. DRUMMOND: I second.

15 DR. ASPER: Those in favor say aye. Everybody  
16 see the agenda. It's pretty short. Just remember to push your  
17 button.

18 Okay. Thank you.

19 With that, I'm going to start calling names --  
20 not calling names, call you up here. Please come to the mic  
21 and state your name. I'm going to say it, but you say it for  
22 the record in the mic. And then I'm going to have a little  
23 timer here, and I'm going to time you to three minutes. When  
24 it's three minutes, I will like do this to you or something,  
25 letting you know your three minutes are up. So once that's up,

8

1 if you can wrap it up.  
2 If you have questions you would like to ask,  
3 you're free to ask those questions. I'm not guaranteeing that  
4 we will have the answers, but you're welcome to ask questions,  
5 as well.

6 MR. GOLLOTT: Mr. Chairman, one more thing. If  
7 you run out of time and you want to submit some more, you can  
8 submit it to us in writing.

9 DR. ASPER: Yes. And anybody who is not here  
10 tonight, you can tell your friends if they want to submit  
11 comments, submit them in writing.

12 And one of the easiest ways to do that is to  
13 send them to my e-mail. I am Vernon Asper. Google me, and  
14 you'll find that I'm the only one, so it's easy to find my  
15 e-mail.

16 Okay. First up is Ed Cake.

17 MR. CAKE: Good evening. Thank you for this  
18 opportunity to address the commission. And I have given my  
19 remarks to you in writing already.

20 After observing and working with all of the  
21 directors, deputy directors, and executive directors in the  
22 last 40 years and serving on various committees and task forces  
23 with the OMR and the EMR, I feel that I have some insight into  
24 what's gone on in the past.

25 And I've given you eight requisites for the new

1 the marine resources of one or more of the Gulf states where  
2 they worked.

3 Number seven. The candidate should be willing  
4 to cease all outside business related activities by placing his  
5 or her existing business assets in a blind trust.

6 And finally, number eight. The candidate should  
7 have no record of arrests, fines, forfeiture, etcetera, related  
8 to marine resource use or abuse.

9 And finally, some of you know that I am  
10 circulating a petition to this commission asking that the  
11 commission appoint a citizens advisory council to take part in  
12 this process. So I'll be accepting anyone who wants to sign  
13 onto that petition.

14 Thank you very much.

15 DR. ASPER: Okay. Thank you, Ed.

16 Next we have Chris Balius.

17 MR. BALIUS: My name is Chris Balius. I'm a  
18 lifelong commercial fisherman.

19 At this time, I would like to give my time to  
20 Mr. A.J. Ross so he can read a letter that was texted to him.  
21 It's going to take a few minutes for him to read it.

22 Thank you.

23 MR. ROSS: Hello. My name is A.J. Ross. I'm  
24 here on behalf of Danny Ross. Also eighth generation fisherman  
25 who couldn't be here today because he's shrimping right now as

1 commissioner -- the new executive director. They are:

2 The candidate should have an advanced academic  
3 degree, such as a Master's or Doctor's of Philosophy degree in  
4 marine resource related field, such as marine biology, marine  
5 ecology, marine ecosystem restoration, fisheries biology,  
6 fisheries management, marine environmental science or  
7 biological oceanography.

8 Number two. The candidate should have a minimum  
9 of seven years of active employment and/or research experience  
10 in a marine resource related position in the Gulf of Mexico  
11 region.

12 The candidate should have a total of at least  
13 seven years of proven experience in the management of marine  
14 resources at the state, regional, or federal level.

15 The candidate should have at least seven years  
16 of experience in the administration and management of personnel  
17 in a marine resource agency.

18 Number five. The candidate should have at least  
19 seven years of experience in working with legislators and  
20 government officials in marine resource related efforts to  
21 promote and fund agency budgets, programs, projects, and  
22 personnel.

23 Number six. The candidate should have a proven  
24 track record of working well with the community and political  
25 leaders to satisfactorily manage, protect, enhance, and restore

1 we speak.

2 With the current system in place, we have been  
3 led to believe the best interest for the seafood resources  
4 industry and public were in mind. Five minutes have been  
5 offered to us so we can convey to you what we think would be  
6 the best for our future.

7 This would definitely have been avoided had the  
8 truth of the intention of the board and the people in place in  
9 charge to have the transparency and oversight of why we are  
10 here today.

11 Every grant disaster proposal has been handled  
12 by this organization in the name of the residential commercial  
13 sector plus the public. How do we regain the trust is the  
14 battle cry over the news media. Easily it's obvious that a  
15 total reconciliation of the system is necessary. Due to the  
16 way the fishermen are used to get the funds and never  
17 (inaudible) their consideration, I should remind you that it  
18 was a group of fishermen that worked relentlessly to bring this  
19 commission to the coast even after being told it would be used  
20 against us by a very well known politician, the fishermen and  
21 the public would be a definite step in the trust and the future  
22 of the board and the agency involved.

23 In the past, we were always shunned and  
24 dismissed -- sorry -- with all our thoughts and suggestions on  
25 the issues even though it was all relevant to our livelihood

1 and way of life.

2 This is not just a job. This has always been a  
3 lifestyle choice that you have to love, so let's keep in mind  
4 the fishermen are very worried and heartfelt to what happens or  
5 who takes part in these decisions.

6 Please remember millions of dollars are sent to  
7 this area from taxpaying U.S. citizens. We are challenging you  
8 to make that after going only decisions possible for the best  
9 management and all our future.

10 This is necessary to elaborate on the mountain  
11 of deceitful and biased decisions over the past 20 years or  
12 more. Feel free to bring it up at workshops between  
13 knowledgeable and honest men. I'm sure everyone here would be  
14 more enlightened.

15 If these requests are too far reaching, then  
16 please disband all that was said. And thank you for your time.

17 DR. ASPER: Thank you, A.J.

18 Let me just explain a little bit about how the  
19 commission works in case some of you are not familiar with who  
20 we are and why we're here.

21 We are volunteers. We don't get paid to do  
22 this. It's not our full-time job. We all have full-time jobs.  
23 We are appointed by the governor to four year terms. They're  
24 staggered. And we all represent different constituencies. I'm  
25 a non-profit environmental corporation or something like that.

13

1 statement, I'd like to make some related comments.

2 One is that CCA is a non-profit organization  
3 which means that we are involved with policy and not politics.

4 Currently, our membership runs roughly about 1500  
5 in the state. We have a national membership of close to  
6 100,000. Now, we are recreational fishermen, conservationists  
7 by nature.

8 Mississippi came into existence in the mid-1980s  
9 when CCA was basically a Gulf organization, coming out of  
10 Texas, since spreading to the Atlantic, and now it's the  
11 Pacific Northwest.

12 What we involve ourselves with is marine  
13 management at all levels. Y'all have dealt with us in terms of  
14 state issues, and we have agreed with or challenged some things  
15 that y'all might have done. There's a regional Gulf issue that  
16 the Gulf Council is meeting currently in Mobile, and we have  
17 members that are involved in that, and I was there all day  
18 yesterday.

19 We're at the national level pursuing policy  
20 again in terms of legislation that would be helpful to  
21 recreational fishing and to the resource.

22 And internationally, things like the ICMT that  
23 is involved with pelagic species that are international in  
24 nature.

25 DMR therefore is very important to us and the

15

1 I can't remember the exact words now. But we have a seafood  
2 processor. We have a recreational fisherman. We have  
3 commercial fisherman. We have a charter boat operator.

4 And those qualifications are in statute, and we  
5 are appointed by the governor and we have to be approved again  
6 by the Senate.

7 So we've all been on here for varying lengths of  
8 time. I'm in my nineteenth year now. So I've been here a  
9 while.

10 One of the things you mentioned was that the  
11 fishermen were responsible for getting the commission down here  
12 on the coast. And that is really true. I remember when that  
13 happened. A lot of us were here. And we do recognize that and  
14 appreciate it.

15 Thank you.

16 Albert John Ross. That's you. Okay.

17 F.J. Eicke.

18 MR. EICKE: Good evening. You all have seen me  
19 before you before.

20 DR. ASPER: State your name.

21 MR. EICKE: Ch. My name is F.J. Eicke. I'm  
22 representing the Coastal Conservation Association, in this case  
23 of Mississippi.

24 I've given you a statement that hopefully you  
25 will take a look at later on. And rather than read that

14

1 leadership of this organization or this agency is important to  
2 us. When we look at this, we know that the marine environment  
3 is a very complex entity. Decisions that y'all make and that  
4 we support are by statute science based which leads to the  
5 question of what this agency does, and we have a tremendous  
6 respect for a lot of the scientists that are associated with  
7 this agency at all levels.

8 Needless to say, it goes from the speckled trout  
9 project to other projects that we have fostered and supported  
10 in the past.

11 With that science base, we're trying to sustain  
12 resources. And it's only then that the commission needs to  
13 look at how it handles questions that relate to recreational  
14 and commercial fishing, the stakeholders and how that would be  
15 affected in sustaining the resource.

16 We can mess up a resource in short order, and I  
17 think it's pretty clear that we can. There's a fight going on  
18 in the Northeast right now about cod that some of you may be  
19 aware of. And if that thing keeps going, they're going to  
20 decimate the cod population in the Northeast and it's going to  
21 be gone. It's virtually gone now.

22 So it's only then that what we want which is  
23 more fishing and more fish to catch and the commercial sector  
24 more resource to harvest that that comes into play.

25 So we need a leader whose management and

16

1 organizational skills really do that possess a reputation of  
2 doing this and instill that in the people that would be under  
3 that person, whether it's a he or a she, so that DMR is very  
4 important to us. We share a mission. We share a lot of  
5 activities in terms of our children's activities, as well as  
6 some other things.

7           So we would like to be very supportive of DMR  
8 and are very hopeful that the next leader will be able to carry  
9 out that mission.

10           DR. ASPER: Okay. Your time is up. Thank you  
11 very much. And just want to let everybody know that F.J. comes  
12 to most of our meetings, so we do know him, and the OCA has  
13 been instrumental in a lot of things that we've done. They're  
14 a very valuable collaborator.

15           Andrew Barrett.

16           MR. BARRETT: My name is Andrew Barrett. I'm  
17 from Pass Christian. I'm a general contractor, avid fisherman,  
18 got a degree in archaeology. I've done a little bit of  
19 cultural resource management.

20           And I guess I just want to reiterate what Mr.  
21 Cake said. I think the need is for a scientist basically,  
22 somebody who understands what the goals and principles of DMR  
23 are, you know, fisheries as well as law enforcement, you know.

24           I followed this story since November, so it  
25 seems apparent that there's trouble. I know you said we don't

17

1           And we're all aware of the critical needs of  
2 DMR.

3           Based on my experience, I think your most  
4 critical need is someone with impeccable honesty. You've got  
5 to restore the public trust, and yet this person has to manage  
6 the agency's multi-million dollar budget while resisting the  
7 temptations of those offered by those who would abuse the  
8 taxpayers' money.

9           I think the second most critical need given this  
10 agency has well over 100 employees is for the director to be an  
11 excellent manager of people. People are any organization's  
12 greatest asset, and they deserve to be managed with proper  
13 care.

14           I think the third most critical need is this  
15 person be fair minded when dealing with employees and the  
16 public. My experience has been it's far more important for the  
17 chief executive officer to be respected than to be loved.

18           I think it's helpful that the director would be  
19 knowledgeable of the management of our marine resources, but  
20 given the number of scientists who are currently on the staff  
21 at DMR, I don't think this is what I'd call a critical need.  
22 It's an important need, but I wouldn't put it in the critical  
23 category, at least not today.

24           I think it would also be helpful if he or she  
25 was familiar with the local political environment, mostly to be

19

1 want to look into the past. Well, this isn't the past; this is  
2 happening right now.

3           And in my opinion, you know, I don't know if you  
4 need to be in a rush to appoint a new DMR head, you know. In  
5 fact, I would think there should be a hiring freeze right now,  
6 you know. Obviously there's 130 employees and they're not all  
7 corrupt. They do good things. It seems to me that you could  
8 look within those departments, find somebody within the  
9 department. If you can't find an individual, maybe you can do  
10 it by committee, people who understand their departments and  
11 what the needs are and what the goals of DMR are.

12           Like I said, I don't want to take up much more  
13 of your time. I know you've got a pile of paper there. That's  
14 just all I have to say. Thank you.

15           DR. ASPER: Okay. Thank you.

16           Bruce Duckett.

17           MR. DUCKETT: Good evening. I'm Bruce Duckett.  
18 I'm an industrial engineer by education, a plant manager by  
19 profession. I've managed 24 hour a day seven day a week  
20 manufacturing plants for Fortune 500 companies ranging in size  
21 from 65 employees to 340 in Mississippi, Louisiana, and South  
22 Carolina.

23           So I understand the problem you're faced with.  
24 I've had to hire managers and engineers for over my 30 year  
25 career.

18

1 aware of who not to get involved with, as well as to who to  
2 team up with.

3           So I guess my estimation of the important  
4 qualities are in this order: Impeccable honesty, good people  
5 skills, fair mindedness, an understanding of the management of  
6 marine resources and local political knowledge.

7           With this in mind, I think if you look within  
8 your organization, you'll find people who have these  
9 characteristics. I think currently your deputy director Danny  
10 Guice has these skills I've listed, and he comes from a family  
11 who has served the Mississippi coast for generations with honor  
12 and energy.

13           And I would encourage you to put him in your  
14 list of three people.

15           Thank you very much.

16           DR. ASPER: Okay. Thank you.

17           The voice of experience. That really helps.

18 Thank you.

19           Manny Skinner.

20           MR. SKINNER: Thank you, gentlemen. My name is  
21 Manny Skinner. I'm a commercial fisherman, longer.

22           And I would like to see the next commissioner  
23 try to refurbish some of these reefs that we have that we  
24 haven't used in years, such as down around Pascagoula, and  
25 maybe somewhere in the midst of all this confusion, maybe try

20

1 to build a new reef here in the Biloxi area.  
 2 We have the White House reef, we have other  
 3 several reefs, and they've been destroyed by hurricanes; the  
 4 wind and the sand has covered them up. And these reefs have a  
 5 whole lot of different attributes that they could be used for.  
 6 We have commercial men that work for these casinos that take  
 7 these tourists out, and the only place they have to take these  
 8 people to is these oyster reefs that we ain't got no more.  
 9 Keesler reef is about one of the only reefs we got left.

10 And I would like to see the next commissioner  
 11 dedicate a whole lot of his time to the oyster industry. The  
 12 shrimping industry and the crabbing industry and the hook and  
 13 line fishing industry pretty much stands for itself. But the  
 14 oyster industry is very delicate. And for a fact right now,  
 15 since Christmas, five weeks we've only got one week, and then  
 16 it rained today, and I imagine out of the whole month of  
 17 February we will not work again.

18 These men are hardworking men. And I know Mr.  
 19 Walker tried to do the best he could with what he had to do  
 20 with. He just got caught up in a bad situation.

21 But this group of people right here, they're  
 22 fixing to get a lot of money. I heard BP is fixing to give \$20  
 23 million to the states of Mississippi, Louisiana, and Florida to  
 24 refurbish basically the oyster reefs on this coast.

25 Now, I don't know why we can't spread it out a

21

1 biology, you go around and you visit each of these people and  
 2 you talk to them, and you'll learn what all of these DMR people  
 3 are doing.

4 I was there for a while, and I was amazed, and I  
 5 just knew I was not technologically inclined, and I was an  
 6 idiot in a lot of things when I started talking to the DMR  
 7 people.

8 And another thing, the next time someone is  
 9 drowning or the boat is sinking out there, you go ask that  
 10 person if they love the DMR. Okay?

11 Now, my opinion is this. I have a lot of things  
 12 to say, but you give me three minutes. Bruce, you know I take  
 13 more than three minutes.

14 Now, you've given a lot of criteria, but let me  
 15 tell you something. When you have an executive director, that  
 16 fellow ought to learn how to smile sometimes. I haven't seen  
 17 an executive director smile in ten years, and it's about time.

18 You need an open door policy, open door, greet  
 19 people, learn how to say hello, come in. And when you talk to  
 20 them, you listen to that fisherman, you listen to that  
 21 oysterman that's dredging and pulling those trawls and working  
 22 hard. You listen to those people who work hard to make you  
 23 where you are today and to give the executive director what  
 24 they can be. Okay?

25 Now, I want to just say this, that the DMR was

23

1 little bit and not just have all our apples in one basket down  
 2 at Pass Christian.

3 Thank you very much.

4 DR. ASPER: Okay. Thank you.

5 I can comment a little bit on that. One of the  
 6 challenges that we face in putting new reefs down in the  
 7 Jackson County area is simply water quality. The water quality  
 8 is not good enough to produce healthy oysters. The oysters are  
 9 fine, but we don't feel confident letting people eat them,  
 10 especially raw. So that's one of the issues we're working on.  
 11 It's a challenge that we face all the time.

12 But thank you very much for your input.

13 Della McCaughan.

14 MS. MCCAUGHAN: Bruce Duckett, I taught you in  
 15 1956. I recognized you.

16 DR. ASPER: Could you state your name for the  
 17 record, please, Della?

18 MS. MCCAUGHAN: He just did. Della McCaughan.

19 Okay. This is not to be timed right now. I  
 20 want to say something to the Sun Herald, and you listen to me.  
 21 Due to the fact of a few people that have brought the  
 22 embarrassment and shame to this DMR, that needs to be corrected  
 23 by -- you know, there's so many wonderful people in the DMR,  
 24 brilliant brains, people who know technology, people who work  
 25 their tails off. And if you want to learn a lot of marine

22

1 one of the most valuable agencies in this state. We can't let  
 2 Jackson take it. Boy, they're going to be on the move to move  
 3 the DMR up there, I imagine. We want it here.

4 Now, commissioners, you need to get more  
 5 involved with all of these people. And you need to sell this,  
 6 too.

7 And another thing, with all of these millions of  
 8 dollars, you give some buses to where you give free rides to  
 9 people to learn about the Grand Bay NERPS out there where  
 10 there's Jennifer Buchanan, David Ruple. Do you know that they  
 11 give free lectures? They have programs for children, for  
 12 senior citizens, a wonderful, wonderful place. Very few people  
 13 in this audience tonight know all the wonderful opportunities  
 14 that would be available to these people if we spent some money  
 15 letting our people know about the wonders and the  
 16 accomplishments and all of these wonderful personnel that are  
 17 working their tails off because they're so dedicated and  
 18 they're so interested in making people realize the importance  
 19 of our marine resources.

20 DR. ASPER: I hate to cut you off, but you're  
 21 beyond your three minutes.

22 MS. MCCAUGHAN: I could go 30 minutes. But I  
 23 was going to say that Jimmy Taylor could yield his time. I  
 24 think I taught him, too.

25 MR. TAYLOR: Well, you did. First of all, I

24



1 want to make a comment about Ms. McCaughan. She's not an  
2 idiot. I was in her class somewhere '67, '68, and if it had  
3 not been for Camille, I would have been a marine biologist,  
4 which bankrupted my daddy. And inspired many of us and  
5 probably the reason I'm here now is for love of fishing and Ms.  
6 McCaughan. Very hands on teacher and a great person that has  
7 the heart of the Gulf in her heart.

8 And for 60 years old, she looks pretty good.

9 MS. MCCAUGHAN: Eighty-four.

10 DR. ASPER: Following Della, we have Steve  
11 Sheperd.

12 MR. SHEPERD: My name is Steve Sheperd. I don't  
13 really think I have a lot to say because I think I really like  
14 the criteria that Ed Cake set up. And I hope you will look at  
15 his written version.

16 I think I might differ with him a little bit in  
17 that I think that if we get the Ph.D. that he has outlined  
18 rather than possibly a Master's, I think the high degree is  
19 valuable if you get someone who has had a Ph.D. for years and  
20 has been in this marine -- you know, experience that he  
21 outlined, if they have that experience, and they become  
22 managerial.

23 And I also would really -- I think if you're  
24 going to make a new break and a new start seriously, seriously  
25 search out of state. I really do think so. I know that it's

25

1 possible a person could come in from out of state and fall into  
2 exactly what we've had in the past, but I think when we look  
3 within the state, we're already dealing with people that have  
4 had some -- I mean, that was a very tangled web, and it's not a  
5 tiny web. I mean, just about everybody around here had  
6 something to deal with.

7 And when I say that, I think that almost  
8 everybody here had nothing to do with it, but they were right  
9 there near it, and so it gives an impression. And if we can  
10 get away from that impression by getting somebody who comes  
11 completely new from a new direction, I just think it will have  
12 a better impact on what the public thinks about the DMR.

13 So, I mean, that's the main variation on what Ed  
14 Cake had laid out. I just think that sounds very intelligent,  
15 the number of years, that kind of thing.

16 So thank you very much.

17 DR. ASPER: Thank you, Steve.

18 Nonnie deBardeleben.

19 MS. DEBARDELEBEN: My name is Nonnie  
20 deBardeleben. I'm from Pass Christian.

21 I haven't been before y'all in a long time. I'm  
22 here representing the Concerned Citizens to Protect the Isles  
23 and Point which is a citizens organization in the Henderson  
24 Point, Pass Christian Isles area. And I'm also here as the  
25 coordinator of the Mississippi Women of the Storm.

26

1 The Mississippi Women of the Storm is a totally  
2 bipartisan group of women from all the counties across the  
3 coast that have worked diligently on securing the passage of  
4 the Restore Act legislation, and we're very involved now in  
5 helping to ensure that the implementation of the monies go to  
6 meet the necessary projects.

7 A lot of people have said different things  
8 already, and some of which I totally agree with. I think the  
9 individual that you consider has to be one who exhibits an  
10 understanding of and the ability to offer fiscal  
11 accountability. And that is paramount to regain the  
12 credibility of the DMR.

13 I think the individual should have experience in  
14 management of a work force as large as the DMR.

15 This person could or should have some type of  
16 degree and experience in coastal management, which would  
17 include water resources, ecology, fisheries, and wetlands.

18 This person should have an understanding of the  
19 Mississippi coastal plan and the wetlands use plan and how it  
20 is implemented.

21 The wetlands use plan is critical in our current  
22 situation since Katrina, on so much vacant land, people wanting  
23 to sell property, develop property, and we have to remember  
24 what those wetlands mean to us and therefore have an  
25 understanding of the plan.

27

1 This person should be capable of revamping the  
2 process that's currently in place of awarding contracts to  
3 ensure more transparent accountability and eliminate any  
4 potential conflicts of interest.

5 And by revamping the process, the questions need  
6 to be asked about who you know and where are they within the  
7 department.

8 The commission, I applaud you in undertaking  
9 this public hearing, but you need to be able to ask each  
10 candidate specific questions about their positions on  
11 potentially controversial issues that will be coming before the  
12 commission and the Department of Marine Resources.

13 And it's very important to reiterate this lady's  
14 comment that the commission be allowed to remain here on the  
15 coast and correct the problems that they have encountered  
16 because I remember back when DMR was under Wildlife &  
17 Fisheries, too, and the people and the citizens of the Gulf  
18 Coast did not have an avenue to express their concerns. The  
19 manner of appeal was cumbersome. At least here, we know who is  
20 sitting on the commission, and we have access to them. And I  
21 think that has to be -- that particular issue has to be  
22 conveyed to the governor that I think most people here on the  
23 coast want to see the commission remain in place.

24 DR. ASPER: Okay. Thank you, Nonnie.

25 Next is James Miller.

28



1 MR. MILLER: How y'all doing today? Mr.  
 2 Richard, Mr. Shelby, Mr. Vernon. I ain't had time to meet you.  
 3 Yeah, you wouldn't return my call. I've left several messages  
 4 for you. Mr. Bosarge, that leaves you. I'm here, Mr. Taylor.  
 5 I've had issues with you, Mr. Taylor. I've had  
 6 issues with you, Mr. Richard Gollott. I've had issues with  
 7 you, Mr. Shelby.  
 8 And I'm destruck (sic) that no one on this board  
 9 today -- because we can't move forward because there's still  
 10 some dishonesty amongst this board. And that's how I feel  
 11 because the paper reads what Mr. Phil Bryant said. We might  
 12 need to just wipe this board out and start over because there  
 13 ain't no way eight years went by and nobody knew what my buddy  
 14 Bill Walker did because I got a ninth grade education, and I  
 15 ain't no dummy. Okay?  
 16 I'm a hardworking fisherman. And I am tired of  
 17 being boosted around by you, Richard Gollott, because you got a  
 18 Gollott name. I'm done. You done drug me the farthest I could  
 19 ever go with you.  
 20 And Mr. Shelby, remember that day we got in an  
 21 argument in the parking lot, sir? You called me a disgruntled  
 22 fisherman, you people. Sir, man, I'm not no disgruntled  
 23 person. I'm just tired of y'all abusing funds that was put out  
 24 for the fishermen like us that we have to starve to death and  
 25 listen that there wasn't nothing there for us.

29

1 And I think a lot of people's got a lot of hold on that.  
 2 So it's got to start with the board. You know  
 3 what I'm saying, Mr. Vernon? You need to reconstruct that  
 4 board.  
 5 DR. ASPER: All right. Thank you.  
 6 Daniel Collins.  
 7 MR. COLLINS: Daniel Collins from Biloxi.  
 8 I just have a few comments. For far too many  
 9 years, this department has been heavily influenced in  
 10 decisionmaking by politics and politicians. We need a director  
 11 who will not bow to political pressure even if it means he or  
 12 she loses her job. They need to have some balls, if you excuse  
 13 me, and do what's right.  
 14 We need a director who will listen to the many  
 15 dedicated scientists who work for this department and make  
 16 decisions based on the science and the law.  
 17 You can restore confidence in this department by  
 18 picking a director who is independent, honest, a good manager,  
 19 and who is very knowledgeable of our resources.  
 20 I don't necessarily see the need for an advanced  
 21 degree, Ph.D., but somebody really needs to know the resources  
 22 and all of the environmental conditions that we have here on  
 23 the coast.  
 24 I would agree with Mr. Cake that I think the  
 25 citizens advisory committee would be a good idea to assist the

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1 DR. ASPER: Catfish, I really appreciate --  
 2 MR. MILLER: No, you got to hear me out, Mr.  
 3 Vernon, because I got a question to ask you. Here comes your  
 4 question. Wow. How can you trust these board members to  
 5 appoint someone for us to guide us into the future? There's no  
 6 possible way. You done ruined my record.  
 7 And I'll tell Phil Bryant today in the Daily  
 8 Herald, the board needs to be dismantled before you can move on  
 9 to put ~~someone~~ where Mr. Guice is. That's the way I feel.  
 10 I've been here a long time, all my life a fisherman. Since  
 11 I've been four years old, Mr. Richard Gollott, my daddy's  
 12 fought with you. We're done.  
 13 My number is (228) 297-6949, and I ain't running  
 14 and hiding no more. I'm done.  
 15 DR. ASPER: Thank you, Catfish. Always a  
 16 pleasure to hear your input because you never pull any punches  
 17 and you tell us what you think. We always --  
 18 MR. MILLER: I always have a lot, Mr. Vernon,  
 19 with this council, and I want to let y'all know that I'm not  
 20 that disgruntled fisherman that y'all so see me to be for the  
 21 last two years of my life. You know what I'm saying?  
 22 I'm here now, but I want y'all to talk to me.  
 23 If there's something I disgruntled you people about, talk to me  
 24 because I want to hear it out because I think this economy and  
 25 the DMR, you know, they doing a bad job on us in the future.

30

1 commission in making this decision.  
 2 Thank you.  
 3 DR. ASPER: Okay. Thank you.  
 4 Bob Usey.  
 5 MR. USEY: Quick question before you start my  
 6 time. Is it now where the executive director under statute or  
 7 whatever, I thought they reported to y'all and not to the  
 8 governor. Is that correct?  
 9 DR. ASPER: They actually -- this person  
 10 actually reports to the governor.  
 11 MR. USEY: To the governor directly.  
 12 DR. ASPER: To the governor directly.  
 13 MR. USEY: I didn't understand the play in the  
 14 paper about having the next executive director report directly  
 15 to him. So he's the one -- he should have been overseeing.  
 16 DR. ASPER: He already does report, but we as a  
 17 commission oversee the policies of the department.  
 18 MR. USEY: I understand. But I understand the  
 19 politics coming out of Jackson, Mississippi, which that  
 20 explains that.  
 21 My name is Bob Usey. I'm a real estate broker  
 22 on the Gulf Coast. At age 14 and for the next six years, I  
 23 earned \$100 a week at \$1 an hour working in shrimp factories.  
 24 I understand a little bit about the Gulf Coast.  
 25 My parents came here and worked for over 40 years in Baltimore

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1 and Louisiana in the shrimp industry.

2 I'm here tonight because no one asked me to show  
3 up. I haven't been to any of your meetings. I'm here for  
4 twofold reasons. One, to express myself to the governor, and I  
5 think you've answered my question to the governor. And that is  
6 not to do away with the commission, people that you are serving  
7 as, and as stated before, he did state that he wanted the next  
8 executive director to report directly to him, which they should  
9 have been doing anyhow.

10 So I guess -- and the second reason here is to  
11 maybe tell you a little bit my thoughts on the next executive  
12 director, but to the first point: Don't throw out the baby  
13 with the bath oil. I served for 12 years in the state senate  
14 representing Biloxi and Gulfport. And I can tell you this,  
15 that if any of you are not doing the job, Phil Bryant has the  
16 authority to call you in and say why don't you resign quietly,  
17 okay? And if you're doing the job, he needs to do it, and he  
18 needs to take the responsibility of what has happened and let's  
19 don't go back there.

20 Now, if the governor wants everybody to report  
21 to him, let's do away with the IHL, let's do away with every  
22 board and every committee, every advisory committee in the  
23 state, and everybody just go to the governor's mansion on the  
24 weekend, and we'll run the state that way. But that's not the  
25 way it should be.

33

1 I agree with the people that said you should  
2 remain here, but the governor needs to look at each of you and  
3 you will have to answer to him.

4 Now, to the second point of the executive -- so,  
5 Governor, your idea to get everybody report to you directly is  
6 a bad, bad idea.

7 To the second point. Next executive director of  
8 the Commission on Marine Resources. There are people here  
9 tonight who've got a lot of experience in the marine area, in  
10 the biology area. I have to disagree with Ed Cake on having  
11 this degree in marine biology or some related biology area.

12 I think we need a person that in my opinion has  
13 a diverse background with management, organizational skills,  
14 combined with communication and administration delegation of  
15 authority should be at the top of the list.

16 Now, I understand it's your job and you already  
17 stated to make three recommendations. I would hope as I had  
18 heard this gentleman over here make, I would hope that you  
19 would consider making one of the recommendations after you look  
20 many times and recommend the present acting director, Mr. Danny  
21 Guice.

22 No one asked me to come here today. I just know  
23 of the Guices. I know Mr. Guice. He has an exemplary career  
24 as a Justice Court judge. He was a state legislator and a  
25 parole board member, and he's now serving as deputy director.

34

1 Let me state something about the parole board.

2 It is state statute, unless that needs to be changed for this  
3 position, I would have received an appointment after leaving  
4 the legislature, but I could not because I'll just tell you, I  
5 owed so much money that I had to make money. I had five kids  
6 in Mississippi State at one time. I could not accept that  
7 limited job. I would have had to not have any other outside  
8 interest.

9 He has already been doing that for the number of  
10 years he served on the parole board. He cannot have any other  
11 outside interest. If it is, then he probably needs to go to  
12 jail.

13 DR. ASPER: Bob, I'm afraid your time is up. If  
14 indeed Danny applies for the job, as we assume that he will,  
15 you are welcome to write a letter in support of him. That  
16 would be very useful.

17 MR. USEY: Okay. One statement quick. There  
18 are all kind of politicians: elected, selected, appointed, and  
19 appointed. If you've ever coached Little League ball, been  
20 involved in the Girl Scouts or anything else, you are a  
21 politician. You better be a good one.

22 DR. ASPER: Thank you.

23 Amanda Kennerly.

24 MS. KENNERLY: Dr. Asper, don't count this yet,  
25 but I read in the paper I had five minutes and timed my speech

35

1 with a microwave. Do I have three or five?

2 DR. ASPER: You have three, but several people  
3 have been running over a little bit, so...

4 MS. KENNERLY: It did say five, sir.

5 DR. ASPER: It did.

6 MS. KENNERLY: Well, I'm Amanda Kennerly. I'm  
7 an attorney from Ocean Springs. I've lived on the coast since  
8 1982 right on the water of the Ocean Springs harbor.

9 Friends, employees, countrymen, lend me your  
10 ears. I come not to bury Mr. Guice, but to praise him. The  
11 evil that men do lives after them; the good is oft interred  
12 with their bones. And I believe that in a very short time and  
13 under extenuating circumstances, he has done much good.

14 My experience with both Mr. Guice and the DMR  
15 has been limited. But in the words of the bard: Here I am to  
16 speak what I do know.

17 No one asked me to come. You on the commission  
18 may remember the first time I came before you. I came five  
19 months ago with a group called the Friends of the Ocean Springs  
20 Harbor to protest the trading of the Harbor Landing property,  
21 and what we saw was an attempt to circumvent both CTAP deed  
22 restrictions and court rules obtained by our group after almost  
23 three years of litigation, shutting down the bar and  
24 inappropriate development on Harbor Landing.

25 This land swap was proposed and almost

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1 successful under the cloak of secrecy passed from willing ear  
2 to willing ear.

3 I know I spoke to some of y'all in an attempt to  
4 discover how far this plot had gone and where the property was  
5 even located.

6 I was met with opposition and secrecy by certain  
7 people at the highest level, as well as my own city officials.

8 Many of the staff still here were willing to  
9 help, but hardly anybody knew anything. It was tense, and I  
10 was terrified that our effort would be undermined by the old  
11 regime of insiders who appeared hell bent on concealing their  
12 dealings from the public and from most of their own employees.

13 Through the efforts of many and God bless the  
14 free press, those days are behind us and a new man is at the  
15 helm. But Mr. Guice is not a new man to me. Although I have  
16 no personal association, I have known Mr. Guice for years and  
17 his wife. I believe he is someone worthy of my trust and the  
18 trust of the public.

19 I have had occasion to contact him as an  
20 attorney while he was serving on the parole board, and his  
21 response was immediate and accurate.

22 Since his appointment, Mr. Duckett and I, on  
23 behalf of our group, met with Mr. Guice about returning the  
24 CIAP purchased Harbor Landing to public use. I found him to be  
25 well-informed about the CIAP properties and the purpose of

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1 their acquisition, and he was open, honest, and approachable.

2 In short, after 20 years, I was really glad to  
3 see him. Yes, he has been a politician. But despite his  
4 chosen career, I think he is sincere in his desire to keep this  
5 agency up and running while dealing with the mess his  
6 predecessors made.

7 It seems he has done some major housecleaning in  
8 a very short time, and that can't have been easy.

9 I think he knows that the vast majority of  
10 employees here do their jobs and have no part in monkey  
11 business. Besides, his wife and kids already have jobs.

12 Mr. Guice is from the coast and has always kept  
13 a home here. He understands the way we feel about the water,  
14 the wildlife, and hopefully the barrier islands and the  
15 importance of their continued preservation.

16 If a science background was a guarantee of  
17 integrity, we would not be here tonight.

18 I am aware some of you would prefer a marine  
19 biologist, but let me say I would be frightened by tossing a  
20 newcomer into this situation.

21 I was only required to research one small issue:  
22 the ability of CIAP purchased property be sold and the  
23 restrictive easements for preservation eliminated. And people,  
24 this took me months of reading reams of paperwork, grads, laws,  
25 regulations, both federal and state.

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1 The Byzantine complexity of funding and  
2 regulations and policies and procedures here at this agency is  
3 not easy to grasp, even for an old state and federal trained  
4 lawyer like me. But Mr. Guice has grasped and understood much  
5 under extreme duress.

6 This is no job for someone who can't tell the  
7 land sharks from the land dolphins.

8 In closing, I give y'all three examples of why I  
9 advocate retaining Mr. Guice in his position.

10 Think of a hospital. When a hospital  
11 administrator runs it, most docs dislike him or her, but the  
12 job gets done. Hand the hospital to a doctor, and the  
13 priorities shift, and not in a good way. Liability and  
14 animosities come into play.

15 The President has just appointed Sally Jewel as  
16 our new Secretary of the Interior. Like Danny, she had jobs  
17 preservationists and ecologists hate: petroleum engineer and  
18 banker. That's the double death. But she crossed over, and  
19 Mr. Guice is doing that, as well.

20 So Mr. Guice, I am happy to see you here.  
21 Please smile for us sitting there and hope you will still be  
22 there in the future.

23 I have one request, Mr. Guice, something that is  
24 dear to my heart and important to many of us is protecting the  
25 barrier islands from risky and too profit of drilling.

39

1 If you can seriously consider and hopefully  
2 support the goals of the Twelve Miles South Coalition in  
3 restricting drilling around our islands and natural preserves,  
4 you could use your expertise as a politician and leader to  
5 persuade those feds at the Bureau of Ocean Management to give  
6 us the same relief as other states have.

7 DR. ASPER: You're over time. Your comments  
8 have digressed from dealing with specifics. Thank you very  
9 much for your comments.

10 MS. KENNERLY: Thank you for your time.

11 DR. ASPER: The next person is Tao Vu.

12 MS. VU: Good evening, Dr. Asper and commission.  
13 My name is Tao Vu. Thank you for giving me this opportunity to  
14 express my views.

15 I'm a member of the Mississippi Coalition for  
16 Vietnamese American Fisher Folks and Families. We are a  
17 non-profit organization.

18 First of all, I strongly support Dr. Cake's  
19 summary of the eight qualifications and credentials that I  
20 think that the commission should seriously consider.

21 And I also support the formation of a citizens  
22 advisory council body to help inform in this process.

23 There is a significant number of commercial  
24 fishermen behind me, not just Vietnamese American, but other  
25 fishermen.

40

1 And particularly since the BP oil spill, and  
2 this is not a mere spill, but has been a tremendous disaster,  
3 many of the commercial fishermen have expressed serious  
4 concerns about livelihood sustainabilities and their ability to  
5 continue fishing and provide support for their families.

6 And I use the example of the oyster reefs that  
7 for almost three years now have been closed. It's only been  
8 open for a limited number of days in 2011, and last year was  
9 open approximately maybe a month. And what has happened to the  
10 livelihoods of these oystermen.

11 We would like in addition to some of the  
12 suggestions that have been brought forth in terms of integrity,  
13 honesty, scientific background or expertise, organization and  
14 financial management experience, is that this person is willing  
15 to sit down and listen, seriously listen, to the needs of the  
16 community. I think that's a very important, very, very  
17 important trait that this person -- actually this person needs  
18 to have, you know.

19 It's been a very, very difficult challenging  
20 post BP for these fishermen to interact with this agency. And  
21 it's beyond mind boggling why it should be an adversarial  
22 position.

23 We need to be able to sit down together, you  
24 know, in a respected manner, and truly listen to each other and  
25 learn what the respective roles, responsibilities of the

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1 community, as far as their needs and how to address these  
2 issues we have in our communities.

3 Our Gulf is a national treasure. It's our home.  
4 And we need to restore it properly. We need to engage folks  
5 who have practical knowledge and experience of the Gulf, and  
6 not only depend on academic knowledge alone. And we would like  
7 this new executive director of this agency to be able to sit  
8 down and work with commercial fishermen and to bridge this gap  
9 and to give their meaningful involvement engaged in coastal  
10 restoration efforts.

11 Thank you.

12 DR. ASPER: Carol Lightener.

13 MS. LIGHTENER: I'm from D'Iberville,  
14 Mississippi.

15 First, thank the Sun Herald for the work they've  
16 done.

17 And I had to rewrite my notes because I couldn't  
18 voice all the opinions that I had.

19 And the tentacles of this reaches from  
20 Washington, D.C., to Jackson, Mississippi, Harrison County,  
21 Jackson County, and even D'Iberville. They have misused money  
22 for restoration of the Gulf, wetlands, wherever, and the people  
23 that were actually affected by the disasters.

24 Our whole ecosystem, our way of life, has been  
25 -- so much is destroyed.

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1 Also, I would like to say that I do agree with  
2 Dr. Ed Cake for the qualifications.

3 Also, why should Governor Bryant or Bill Walker  
4 select or elect Danny Guice or Ashley Edwards, etcetera?  
5 That's business as usual. Besides, the disaster happened on  
6 the Mississippi Gulf Coast, not Jackson, Mississippi.

7 There should be an election and select someone  
8 with qualifications that actually cares about our well-being,  
9 the ecosystem, the environment.

10 Why do they get to ride off in the sunset and  
11 enjoy their retirement, unlike us?

12 Danny Guice and Governor Barbour has a horrible  
13 track record. They pardoned murderers, rapists, child  
14 molesters, drug dealers, failing to notify victims and their  
15 families.

16 They've also lawyered up even with London BP  
17 lawyers. John Grisham could write a book on this. It can't  
18 make it -- you can't possibly make this up.

19 Thank you.

20 DR. ASPER: Thank you.

21 Vincent Feranda.

22 MR. FERANDA: Vincent Feranda. I was born and  
23 raised here. I played football with a few of these gentlemen  
24 there, some not.

25 I'd like to say if anybody thinks here that no

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1 one knew that they had their hand in the till, that they're  
2 very well mistaken.

3 The GAO to account for this much money that was  
4 misappropriated is obnoxious. To give this guy this much free  
5 wheeling to do whatever he wanted with nobody else to be  
6 accountable is unacceptable.

7 As far as fisheries, which I was raised here, as  
8 what you need as far as abilities to be a biologist, the  
9 biologist didn't matter. The money flew. When they bring a  
10 big bowl of cash in Mississippi, it disappears. It always  
11 disappears. And there's nobody held accountable.

12 Nobody held accountable. The money just goes.

13 Now, if a person commits a crime against a  
14 senior citizen with a weapon, it's an enhanced crime. As a  
15 politician, you're standing up there, you are educated, you are  
16 a trustee of the citizens, if anything happens, why isn't the  
17 same thing transferred over to you?

18 You are a trusted official. You would put  
19 someone else, Mr. Guice was on the prison system, and enhance  
20 that crime.

21 Of these people, how many will go to jail? We  
22 have a good idea. It will be a goose egg. It will be a goose  
23 egg.

24 Plausible deniability, I do not trust anything  
25 down here. It is amazing how the money just flows and no one

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1 has an idea where -- what happened to it or what.  
 2 And it's not about the fishing. And it is.  
 3 It's all about the cash. And the cash is disbursed. And if  
 4 anybody in here can break down how many millions has  
 5 disappeared and where it went, that's what I would like to  
 6 know.

7 And if you think that this gentleman hired  
 8 everybody on his road and there's no collusion, no nepotism,  
 9 then I need to go get another drink, gentlemen, because I am  
 10 done.

11 I love this place. I came down here to live  
 12 here. And I dealt with the entities, not just from this, to  
 13 the water district, to every entity. They answer to no one.  
 14 They are entity in themselves.

15 And it's just amazing how -- it's like a  
 16 hydrant. Everybody is separated so you can't kill it, so  
 17 nobody has responsibility.

18 And I love this place, and I will die here,  
 19 gentlemen. And I hope I don't die broke.

20 Thank you very much.

21 DR. ASPER: Chuck Stein.

22 MR. STEIN: My name is Chuck Stein. I'm a long  
 23 time lifelong resident of the Gulf Coast. And I'm here on  
 24 behalf of a good friend of mine, Danny Guice, who has met the  
 25 qualifications that I think the people that really matter, the

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1 people that live here, the people that work here, the fishermen  
 2 who are shrimpers that have made their way of life off of the  
 3 water, Danny has always been an open door policy guy. He's  
 4 always been a guy that you could call, you could talk to. The  
 5 short time he's been here, he's rallied the troops. He's let  
 6 them know that they can get back to their jobs, they don't have  
 7 to worry about losing their jobs, that this isn't about them.

8 So on a personal note, when I was president of  
 9 the Chamber of Commerce of D'Iberville, I had a friend,  
 10 schoolmate, lost her mother and father, at the  
 11 D'Iberville-Sangrani-I-110 interchange before a light was  
 12 there. So I took it upon myself to go and get letters from all  
 13 our elected officials, and I called Danny and asked him for a  
 14 letter, and he asked me to hold up a minute. Put down the  
 15 phone. The next time he came back on, he had the highway  
 16 commission on the phone with me, explained what happened, said  
 17 he had constituent down here that was really trying to push  
 18 this through to get this done.

19 That's what Danny Guice can do. Danny, as far  
 20 as qualifications, sure, a lot of people say, well, you have to  
 21 have a degree for this, a law degree. A lot of us came up in  
 22 the school of hard knocks. Richard, you could attest to that.  
 23 We've learned by mistakes. We've corrected them. We've moved  
 24 on. We've tried to help people. That's what Danny Guice does.

25 Danny has been a legislator. He's made laws for

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1 the betterment of the community and the state. He's been a  
 2 Justice Court judge and enforced those laws. And now he's in a  
 3 leadership where he needs to stay and do a good job for the  
 4 rest of us. And I applaud him for taking it because I know it  
 5 can't be a job that was fun to walk into.

6 But again, I'm for Danny. I hope Danny applies  
 7 for the job. I think there's a lot of support for Danny in  
 8 this room and on this coast. Thank you very much.

9 DR. ASPER: Thank you.

10 Maxine Ramsey.

11 MS. RAMSEY: My name is Maxine Ramsey. And as a  
 12 citizen, voter, and a taxpayer, I'm exercising my democratic  
 13 rights of speaking tonight.

14 Since so many people so far have praised Mr.  
 15 Guice, I do not know him personally, but I know his record.

16 We need a person friendly to the environment,  
 17 and Mr. Guice has a proven record that he is not that person.  
 18 He sided with the notorious former oil lobbyist Governor Haley  
 19 Barbour of wanting to drill offshore in sight of locals and  
 20 tourists alike.

21 Also, it's reported that he was with the group  
 22 that wanted to -- for economic development to close off and dam  
 23 up Bluff Creek.

24 Being on the parole board is no OJT for this  
 25 position's requirements.

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1 Being selected by former Director Walker paints  
 2 Guice with the same brush in the public's eye.

3 Was the deputy director position advertised?  
 4 Was there three candidates who were interviewed for the  
 5 position?

6 Governor Bryant has jumped on board with his  
 7 suggestion for a director by the name of Ashley Edwards. We do  
 8 not need another career politician or a good old boy that will  
 9 mean business as usual at DMR.

10 We need a nationwide search for a candidate that  
 11 is experienced in marine and environmental sciences.

12 You have a written job description already, so  
 13 use it.

14 Choosing Mr. Guice will not satisfy the public  
 15 or employees of DMR. Choose the most qualified applicant and  
 16 not the most politically connected person such as he.

17 You may think I'm a little biased against Mr.  
 18 Guice, but he has used the media for free advertisement to sell  
 19 his position, wanting the executive director's position, so as  
 20 a taxpayer and a voter, I'm using this public meeting to sell  
 21 the fact that we need a qualified executive director, and in my  
 22 books, Mr. Guice is not it.

23 Mississippi is Number 50 in everything bad. Let  
 24 us do one good thing and get DMR off the front page of the Sun  
 25 Herald.

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1 By the way, our thanks go to the Sun Herald for  
2 their excellent investigative coverage of the DMR story because  
3 without their reporting, the public would still be in the dark  
4 as to what occurred at DMR. And may your group of journalists  
5 win the Pulitzer Prize this year because you well deserve it.

6 Commissioners, thank you for this opportunity to  
7 speak on how our tax dollars are spent with the hope of a  
8 democratic selection of a new executive director.

9 I'll leave you with one statement: If you  
10 select Danny Guice, Jr., or Ashley Edwards, which is Governor  
11 Bryant's choice, you have failed to represent the people.

12 DR. ASPER: Thank you, Maxine.  
13 Marvin Flowers.

14 MR. FLOWERS: Good evening. My name is Marvin  
15 Flowers. I was born and raised here in Biloxi for 81 years,  
16 and I've never seen a mess like this.

17 And I came tonight to throw everybody under the  
18 bus, but there don't seem to be any more room so there's not  
19 much else for me to say. I yield the rest of my time to the  
20 next speaker.

21 DR. ASPER: Next is Tom Becker.

22 MR. BECKER: Good evening. My name is Tom  
23 Becker, president of the Mississippi Charter Boat Captains  
24 Association and also president of the National Association of  
25 Charter Boat Operators, so I'm dealing with problems all over

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1 what you are doing.

2 That's why I'm asking the question. That's all  
3 I have. Thank you.

4 DR. ASPER: Thank you, Tom.  
5 Tom Walters. Not here?  
6 Terese Collins.

7 MS. COLLINS: Good evening. My name is Terese  
8 Collins. I live in Biloxi. I feel like I'm screaming in the  
9 mic. I'm here to represent Gulf Islands Conservancy. And I  
10 thank y'all for opening the door to all of us.

11 I think one thing that we have found over the  
12 past few years is that the commission has not welcomed us the  
13 way we had been in the past, and I hope this is a change for  
14 the better. And I thank you very much for having us here.

15 I support a lot of comments that have been made  
16 tonight. I, too, think that the advisory committee should be  
17 appointed. But to the point of the director's job, I think the  
18 person should have demonstrated prior experience in successful  
19 and technical program management related to natural resources  
20 and marine resource sciences and wetlands management with a  
21 Master's degree or at least ten years of prior experience that  
22 would make them qualified. And that's stuff that we can get  
23 into later.

24 They should be knowledgeable and experienced  
25 with critical aspects of marine resource management, management

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1 the country, also, with their problems and trying to back them  
2 up.

3 We had a meeting last night, and we discussed  
4 this at length about what we wanted to see of the new  
5 commission. And one of the things that they all said was we do  
6 not want to see a politician in that seat. We want somebody  
7 that is like yourself, Mr. Asper, a doctor, and knows the  
8 fisheries.

9 We have the laws that we have to deal with with  
10 NOAA. And we have them for the state here. It's a problem  
11 that we try to work with and try to make a living at.

12 In the Sun Herald on Sunday, there was a very  
13 neat article about the DMR. The last part is all I'm going to  
14 read. The more we learn about DMR, the more convinced we are  
15 that the next executive director will be forced to make  
16 significant changes at the DMR, both in personnel and in  
17 policies.

18 And that convinces us that a political figure,  
19 whether in or out of office, or connected to someone in or out  
20 of office, should not be chosen because DMR is far beyond the  
21 point where political skills alone will restore public trust  
22 and confidence.

23 I have talked to Dr. Walker many times, have  
24 asked him about certain issues. We're working on it; that's  
25 all I would get. I want the next executive director to explain

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1 of fisheries, management of wetlands, protection of wetlands,  
2 coastal beaches and islands, vulnerable marine life like our  
3 dolphins and turtles, and fisheries.

4 The potential director should not have taken or  
5 had or held past positions or taken actions which could be in  
6 conflict with the rules, regulations, guidelines and procedures  
7 of the Mississippi Coastal Program, the wetlands use law, the  
8 wetlands use plan, the fisheries regulations, the federal grant  
9 programs and requirements. All of these things are very  
10 complicated and time consuming, and we need a director that  
11 understands these things.

12 This agency seems to have put wetlands  
13 protection and the wetlands use plan and the Coastal Program at  
14 the back of the bus because if you look at the website, it  
15 doesn't exist any more. And that used to be the guiding force  
16 of this agency. And I don't know what happened to it other  
17 than Dr. Walker removed it. And we would like to see that  
18 change back to being a guiding force for how you manage this  
19 agency.

20 There should be a broad search for the  
21 candidate. It could be a national search. But that candidate  
22 should have knowledge of the Gulf and of Mississippi coastal  
23 waters and resources. It's a major important issue that they  
24 understand our problems and our resources.

25 So whether they're from here or not is not

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1 important. It's what they know about this region and how they  
2 can control it. And they should understand the political  
3 problems. But if they have the experience that are outlined by  
4 what I said in your guidelines, then that shouldn't be a  
5 problem.

6 Again, I support the comments that will be made  
7 by GRN, Mississippi Women of the Storm which I am a member of,  
8 Ed Cake, and some other people, that matters not at this point.

9 The director should be willing to protect the  
10 marine resources, even if his job is on the line. We've had  
11 that problem before. I worked with DMR, which was the  
12 predecessor of DMR, when we had Jackson telling us what to do.  
13 And we had directors whose jobs were threatened by Jackson.  
14 And they took stands which could have cost them their jobs.  
15 And that is not happening any more.

16 We need a director that will listen to the  
17 staff, whether they like what the staff is saying or not. You  
18 have a very qualified staff here. You need to use them. And  
19 if they disagree with the director, the director should allow  
20 them to make their opinions known. And then you can decide  
21 whether you want to take that opinion or not.

22 But this staff is qualified, and you hire them  
23 for a reason. We're paying for these people. Listen to them.  
24 Let them give you their opinions, and you decide there. That  
25 has not been the case in many years. And it's time to support

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1 that opens the door for transparency. And I can't thank you  
2 enough for that.

3 I know you're about to shut me off.

4 DR. ASPER: Yes, we are.

5 MS. COLLINS: Three more things. Follow the  
6 GCRL's process for interviewing a director or the USM process  
7 where they let the staff interview your candidates, also, which  
8 would give your staff a chance to look at these people. And  
9 beware that we have a lot of money coming down from BP we  
10 think. We have wasted a lot of money on this coast because of  
11 the things that are going wrong here. We don't want that to  
12 happen again. We want the money to go to restoring the  
13 resources. If you restore the resources, you will restore our  
14 economy.

15 And thank you gain for letting us all voice our  
16 opinion.

17 DR. ASPER: Thank you.

18 Mark Stewart.

19 MR. STEWART: How y'all doing tonight?

20 Mark Stewart, commercial fisherman.

21 A lot of points have been touched on here  
22 tonight. Some of them haven't.

23 One thing is that I don't think this board here  
24 wants to hear anything the fishermen got to say. They don't  
25 like what the fishermen have to say, and they don't want to

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1 your staff.

2 Transparency and oversight is the bottom line,  
3 has to start with you. And you need to start asking the tough  
4 questions and not just abdicate your authority to the director.

5 We want more than anything to keep the OMR. We  
6 fought to get OMR. The commission is more important than you  
7 can ever understand because driving to Jackson to talk to three  
8 people, one might have something to do with the coast, was a  
9 very difficult thing and was unfair to the coastal people and  
10 taxpayers. So let's keep the OMR, but open yourselves up to  
11 talking to any of us.

12 I've called some of you and have not gotten  
13 phone calls back, either, maybe because you don't like me. I  
14 don't care if you like me or not. It doesn't matter. Listen  
15 to me or listen to everybody. It's not just me, it's everyone  
16 here. There are people -- I can tell you people that did not  
17 come to this meeting tonight because they think this is  
18 predisposed and it's a done deal. And you can't convince them  
19 otherwise. And we have to change that opinion.

20 And I would like to say one thing in support of  
21 what's happened, and she's going to kill me for doing this, but  
22 Susan Perkins is now the director of public relations or  
23 whatever you call it. That was a brilliant move. She is a  
24 very qualified, honest, hardworking person, and I think you've  
25 done a great job putting her in that position. And I think

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1 hear it. Come in here and ask questions, and no comment, and  
2 that's the answer. I don't think that cuts it.

3 You know, as far as our resources and all up and  
4 down this coast, it's pitiful, pitiful. I don't know who's  
5 been think they doing their job, taking up with the oysters and  
6 all. I just come off them reefs a few weeks ago, and it's the  
7 worst I've ever seen them in my life. And if they stay like  
8 that, I ain't going back. How am I going to make any money?  
9 How are the rest of the fishermen going to make any money if  
10 there ain't nothing done about this?

11 Just read an article last night where  
12 Louisiana's got pristine oysters, best ones around here, due to  
13 like the Pearl River and stuff coming out. Every time the  
14 Pearl River comes up, we're out of work. Louisiana says that's  
15 why their oysters are the best.

16 All across the coast here, we got oysters all  
17 over the place. Yet we're over here in this one little prison  
18 yard over here. It ain't right. Alabama's got the cleanest,  
19 most pristine oysters anywhere. Where at? Soon as you cross  
20 our state line where ours are polluted, theirs are the best  
21 ones around. They catch them all year.

22 DR. ASPER: Could you please talk about the  
23 situation at hand?

24 MR. STEWART: I am. The whole situation -- I'll  
25 tell you about it. You want to know about it. I think this

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1 whole board needs to be abolished. Y'all don't listen to us.  
2 You don't care. You got one fisherman on the board; he don't  
3 even count. Y'all don't listen to him. He don't even matter.  
4 Y'all call him up and tell him what's going on. You don't ask  
5 his opinion.

6 I know what's going on. Everybody else does,  
7 too. There's people in here that don't even represent the  
8 American fishermen, you know. You know, what is this? The DMR  
9 partners? You know, I keep hearing about BP and their partners  
10 and their partners. I keep reading it and checking out. Well,  
11 the DMR is their partner. How is that?

12 You know, can you tell me?

13 It ain't right. And the reason is the DMR is  
14 partners with BP is because, well, BP is the only one got any  
15 money given to y'all.

16 One of y'all's that's on that board up there  
17 told me that. I don't think it is.

18 But, Mr. Guice, I don't know you, but I ain't  
19 heard you say nothing about the fishermen. I ain't heard you  
20 taking up for making the resources better for our fishermen,  
21 commercial fishermen or recreational, either one. I know  
22 you've been blowing your horn and, you know, bragging on  
23 everybody that works here which there's a lot of good people  
24 work here, I'm sure.

25 But I guarantee, there's a bunch of them tangled

1 The recent revelations over DMR's use of CIAP  
2 funds in questionable ways have only served to amplify these  
3 concerns.

4 Some housecleaning is in order, and we are  
5 heartened that the DMR has called this meeting and expressed an  
6 interest in conducting a transparent and wide search for the  
7 next director of DMR.

8 I urge you to follow through on this commitment  
9 and conduct the nationwide search for qualified candidates.

10 The letter of the law says that the DMR director  
11 should be knowledgeable and experienced in marine resources  
12 management. In addition to a background in marine science, the  
13 next director must have experience as an administrator and the  
14 ability to oversee a large agency like DMR which deals with  
15 millions of dollars in grants and other funding every year.

16 Plus, any candidate to take over as the new  
17 executive director should be motivated by solid science and a  
18 desire to protect the health of Mississippi's coast, not  
19 politics.

20 As Mississippi's share of billions of dollars of  
21 BP fines from the Restore Act and NRDA begins to roll in, DMR  
22 will play a central role in distributing and overseeing these  
23 funds. The public needs to know that this money will be used  
24 wisely and effectively on restoring the coast, not pork barrel  
25 politics.

1 up in that mess with that one that left here. Need to find who  
2 the rest of them are and get them out of here.

3 And if this board can't listen to the fishermen,  
4 what good is it? Can't listen to the people, get rid of  
5 them.

6 DR. ASPER: Thank you, Mark.

7 The last sheet I have here is for Julia O'Neal.

8 If you're here and you want to speak but haven't  
9 filled one of these out, please do so and get it up to us  
10 because we want to hear everybody.

11 MS. O'NEAL: My name is Julia O'Neal, and I'm  
12 from Ocean Springs, but I'm speaking for the Gulf Restoration  
13 Network.

14 Founded in 1994, GRN is a network of groups and  
15 individuals committed to empowering people to protect and  
16 restore the natural resources of the Gulf of Mexico.

17 GRN has long been critical of the purposes of  
18 some coastal impact assistance program projects administered by  
19 DMR that seem to destroy habitat rather than to restore it,  
20 such as the City of Pass Christian dredging public beaches to  
21 expand its harbor.

22 In addition, we are concerned that under Dr.  
23 Walker DMR failed to take a hard look and ask tough questions  
24 about how MDA's proposal to open up oil and gas drilling in  
25 state waters could impact the marine environment.

1 The new leader at DMR must be committed to  
2 greater accountability and transparency, but the commission  
3 must also better exercise their powers over the director when  
4 necessary, including through oversight.

5 Finally, the Marine Resources Foundation should  
6 be either dissolved or some kind of reliable firewall should be  
7 created between DMR and the foundation. Public monies meant  
8 for DMR should under no circumstances flow to the foundation or  
9 another similar organization in the future. Too many ethical  
10 problems exist in the present arrangement.

11 Most of the staff at DMR are exemplary public  
12 servants committed to their work and the health of the coast  
13 communities and environment. But the recent revelations about  
14 some members of DMR's leadership have been a black eye for the  
15 agency. We urge the commission to choose candidates for  
16 executive director with the management skills, scientific  
17 background, and commitment to protecting the health of the  
18 Mississippi Sound that is needed to restore the public trust in  
19 DMR.

20 Thank you.

21 DR. ASPER: Thank you. Let me comment, the  
22 others who brought written comments, be sure we get a copy of  
23 those.

24 We have one more sheet here. Don Joost.

25 MR. JOOST: My name is Don Joost, commercial

1 fisherman, and I'm here on behalf of the Mississippi Gulf Coast  
2 Fisherman's organization.

3 And I see where you've heard some of the  
4 frustration that these people are feeling. I mean, it's hard  
5 enough trying to make your living. But when we look at a new  
6 director, we need someone who understands modern fisheries  
7 management. And it's not just managing the resource. We have  
8 to manage it now in such a way that people can make a living  
9 from it.

10 And we haven't felt that in the last few years.  
11 That's why you've seen attendance drop off at meetings and just  
12 like that. It doesn't matter to us really what the person's  
13 management experience is. I mean, I don't see any ladies up  
14 there, and I've sure learned a lot from them tonight, you know.  
15 I mean, we need to look at that.

16 We have tremendous resources here with military  
17 personnel, and no one is going to get more organized than that.

18 But the point is, we just can't continue in the  
19 same old same old. These policies are mired in the 1950s, and  
20 we have to come to the 21st Century.

21 Thank you.

22 DR. ASPER: Okay. I believe that's all of the  
23 sheets.

24 Does anyone want to change their mind and speak?

25 If not --

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1 control the person that's under it.

2 Thank you for your time.

3 DR. ASPER: Thank you.

4 That concludes the public comment section.

5 Is there any other business? Or is there a  
6 motion that we adjourn?

7 MR. CRUMMOND: I make a motion that we adjourn.

8 MR. GOLLOTT: Second.

9 DR. ASPER: We're adjourned.

10 (Meeting adjourned 8:05 p.m.)

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1 MR. FREY: I'd like to. I haven't filled out a  
2 sheet.

3 DR. ASPER: Come up to the podium and say your  
4 name, please.

5 MR. FREY: My name is Rob Frey. I've always  
6 been under the idea that a commission would control the person  
7 that was under it. And what is the point in having a  
8 commission if you don't control the man that's under you?

9 Another thing, why should Jackson be involved in  
10 something on the coast here? We need to control everything  
11 that's on the coast. Jackson don't know a damn thing about  
12 what's going on down here, and they don't even care.

13 Years ago, they sent three experts they called  
14 them down here to examine how many deer we had per acre. They  
15 were so stupid they didn't realize that it was a mating season,  
16 and a buck was messing around with his girlfriend and had all  
17 kinds of tracks. So what they did -- this is funny -- they  
18 said there were so many deer per acre that it would ruin the  
19 whole herd of deer. Like I said, they didn't realize that a  
20 buck was fooling around. So they opened up a doe season, and  
21 they killed off more does.

22 I mentioned to these idiots, why didn't you give  
23 out so many permits if you wanted so many deer killed?

24 Anyway, I'm finished with my statement. Once  
25 again, I think the commission should get off their butts and

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1 COMMISSION ON MARINE RESOURCES

4 COURT REPORTER'S CERTIFICATE

5 I, Norma Jean Ladner Soroe, Certified Shorthand  
6 Reporter, do hereby certify that to the best of my skill and  
7 ability I have reported the special meeting of the Commission  
8 on Marine Resources and that the foregoing 63 pages constitute  
9 a true and correct transcription of said special meeting held  
10 on the 7th day of February 2013.

11 I do further certify that my certificate annexed  
12 hereto applies only to the original and certified transcript.  
13 The undersigned assumes no responsibility for the accuracy of  
14 any reproduced copies not made under my control and direction.

15 Witness my signature this the 26th day of February  
16 2013.

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23 NORMA JEAN LADNER SOROE, CSR #1297  
24 Certified Shorthand Reporter  
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