

COMMISSION ON MARINE RESOURCES

COMMISSION MEETING

Tuesday, June 16, 2020  
9:00 a.m.  
Zoom Webinar

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Commission Members:

Ronald Daniels, Vice Chairman

Steve Bosarge

Richard Gollott

Natalie Guess

Also Present:

Joe Spraggins, Executive Director DMR

Sandy Chesnut, Esq., Assistant Attorney General

1           COMMISSIONER DANIELS: We will begin the June  
2 16<sup>th</sup> Commission on Marine Resources meeting. We would like  
3 to get this meeting started.

4           I will ask our Executive Director to lead us in  
5 the Pledge of Allegiance.

6           (Pledge of Allegiance recited.)

7           COMMISSIONER DANIELS: Thank you for that, Joe.

8           If y'all don't mind, we will take just a moment  
9 of silence to gather our thoughts and think about things  
10 that are going on today.

11          (Moment of silence observed.)

12          COMMISSIONER DANIELS: Moving on to Section B,  
13 the approval of minutes.

14          We will need to get approval of the minutes on  
15 the May 19<sup>th</sup>, 2020, meeting.

16          Do I have a motion for that?

17          COMMISSIONER BOSARGE: So moved, Mr. Chairman.

18          COMMISSIONER DANIELS: Commissioner Bosarge  
19 makes the motion.

20          Do I have a second?

21          COMMISSIONER GUESS: I'll second it.

22          COMMISSIONER DANIELS: Commissioner Guess  
23 seconds.

24          All those in favor?

25          Commissioner Bosarge?

1 COMMISSIONER BOSARGE: Aye.

2 COMMISSIONER DANIELS: Commissioner Guess?

3 COMMISSIONER GUESS: Aye.

4 COMMISSIONER DANIELS: Commissioner Gollott?

5 COMMISSIONER GOLLOTT: Aye.

6 COMMISSIONER DANIELS: Commissioner Daniels,  
7 aye.

8 Moving on to Number 2, approval of the special  
9 session minutes for May 27<sup>th</sup>, 2020.

10 Do I have a motion to approve those minutes?

11 COMMISSIONER GUESS: I make the motion.

12 COMMISSIONER DANIELS: Commissioner Guess makes  
13 the motion.

14 Do we have a second?

15 COMMISSIONER BOSARGE: I will second that  
16 motion.

17 COMMISSIONER DANIELS: Commissioner Bosarge  
18 seconds.

19 We will take a vote.

20 Commissioner Guess?

21 COMMISSIONER GUESS: Aye.

22 COMMISSIONER DANIELS: Commissioner Bosarge?

23 COMMISSIONER BOSARGE: Aye.

24 COMMISSIONER DANIELS: Commissioner Gollott?

25 COMMISSIONER GOLLOTT: Aye.

1 COMMISSIONER DANIELS: Commissioner Daniels,  
2 aye.

3 Motion passes.

4 We've got the approval of the minutes done.  
5 Now, we need to do approval of today's agenda.  
6 I understand we have a change.

7 Is that correct, Director?

8 JOE SPRAGGINS: It is correct, sir. If you  
9 don't mind, we would like to ask if the Commission would  
10 entertain a motion to add K.4, which is Mississippi's 2020  
11 Recreational Red Snapper Season.

12 COMMISSIONER DANIELS: All right.

13 COMMISSIONER BOSARGE: Say that again?

14 JOE SPRAGGINS: A motion to add K.4, the  
15 Mississippi 2020 Recreational Red Snapper Season and that  
16 is in reference to y'all gave us the approval to start the  
17 season, but you didn't give us approval to stop it, or do  
18 any of the interval times.

19 COMMISSIONER BOSARGE: All right.

20 COMMISSIONER DANIELS: If we don't need any  
21 discussion on that, do we have a motion to approve adding  
22 K.4 to the agenda?

23 COMMISSIONER GUESS: I'll make that motion.

24 COMMISSIONER DANIELS: Commissioner Guess makes  
25 a motion.

1 I will second it.

2 All those in favor?

3 Commissioner Guess?

4 COMMISSIONER GUESS: Aye.

5 COMMISSIONER DANIELS: Commissioner Daniels,  
6 aye.

7 Commissioner Bosarge?

8 COMMISSIONER BOSARGE: Aye.

9 COMMISSIONER DANIELS: Commissioner Gollott?

10 COMMISSIONER GOLLOTT: Aye.

11 COMMISSIONER DANIELS: Everyone voted aye. So  
12 the agenda has been modified.

13 we will move on to the Executive Director's  
14 report.

15 Joe, it looks like you've got a little bit for  
16 us here today.

17 JOE SPRAGGINS: Hang on one second. I think  
18 Sandy said we had to do something.

19 SANDY CHESNUT: Yes. You need to make a motion  
20 to approve the agenda as modified.

21 COMMISSIONER DANIELS: Okay.

22 COMMISSIONER BOSARGE: So moved, Mr. Chairman.

23 COMMISSIONER DANIELS: Commissioner Bosarge  
24 makes the motion. I will second it.

25 All those in favor?

1 Commissioner Bosarge?

2 COMMISSIONER BOSARGE: Aye.

3 COMMISSIONER DANIELS: Commissioner Daniels,  
4 aye.

5 Commissioner Guess?

6 COMMISSIONER GUESS: Aye.

7 COMMISSIONER DANIELS: Commissioner Gollott?

8 COMMISSIONER GOLLOTT: Aye.

9 COMMISSIONER DANIELS: That motion passes.

10 Now, it is your turn, Joe.

11 JOE SPRAGGINS: If you have a public comment  
12 that you would like to share with the Commission, if you  
13 could text Crystal.

14 The number, Crystal?

15 SANDY CHESNUT: It is on our website. You just  
16 go to the website, fill out the form and it will come to  
17 my email.

18 JOE SPRAGGINS: If you can do that, if you have  
19 any issues, give us a call here at DMR and we will try to  
20 straighten it out.

21 Just to give you a couple of updates, as far as  
22 contracts and procurement, we do not have any new ones at  
23 this time. I can tell you that we have a couple of new  
24 contracts we are working on now. One has to do with the  
25 CARES Act and we will talk about it in a minute.

1           The update on MDMR operations. We are operating  
2 now. We came back the first of June basically. Most of  
3 the personnel have come back to work. We do have some  
4 that are working at home through telework that have  
5 compromised immune systems. We have some that are working  
6 because of a situation that they would have that qualified  
7 them, and they are working three-two schedules. They are  
8 on three days one week and two days the next week, and  
9 they work telework the other times.

10           I think yesterday ended the one that was working  
11 half days here, and, then, half days off, but we are  
12 working on each one of those situations.

13           We are trying to work with each person virtually  
14 and make sure that we can help them get through their  
15 situations of what is happening to them to be able to keep  
16 the agency operational.

17           The Governor, in his new Executive Order, says  
18 that as of 1 July that no more administrative leave will  
19 be approved. At that point, he is expecting everyone back  
20 at work, unless they have some outlying circumstance.

21           We will look at that each individually and run  
22 it through Sandy and the Attorney General's office to make  
23 sure we have the correct answer to it, and we will answer  
24 each one individually at that point, but right now we will  
25 be back probably ninety-five percent working a hundred

1 percent in the agency starting 1 July.

2 Do the Commissioners have any comments, any  
3 questions on what we are doing, or any issues, or maybe  
4 some suggestions?

5 (No response.)

6 JOE SPRAGGINS: If not, we will give you an  
7 update on the NOAA Fisheries and CARES Act Funds.

8 The 2011 NOAA Fisheries Funds, we are in the  
9 process now of finishing it up. We have done both the  
10 crab processors and crab fishermen, and we have done the  
11 oyster processors and oyster fishermen.

12 Sandy, we have one, or two left, I think, that  
13 are pending in court cases.

14 Is that right?

15 SANDY CHESNUT: We actually have nine in court.

16 JOE SPRAGGINS: Okay.

17 SANDY CHESNUT: They will have to go through the  
18 court process.

19 We have, I think, five out of the nine that we  
20 have all the paperwork back and we have actually filed  
21 those, and we've got court dates for all of those.

22 JOE SPRAGGINS: We did that process, and I want  
23 to thank the whole staff. Everyone did a great job. They  
24 worked hard to do this, and I have heard back from quite a  
25 few of them, very happy fishermen especially because they



1 have been able to receive some funds and they are very  
2 happy that it happened and they will be able to get  
3 something during this time, when they are hurting so bad.

4 we did give them a chance to appeal and we went  
5 through an appeal process. If anybody did not receive  
6 what they thought they should, or did not receive any at  
7 all, we did allow them to go through a complete appeals  
8 process and everything has worked out great with it.

9 I think we have done the best we could with it.  
10 The money has been distributed. Everybody should have  
11 their checks by now, or at least be very close.

12 we had a couple of them that had some issues  
13 with them. When they would send it to the bank, it was  
14 the wrong number, or something with the bank, and they  
15 would have to send them back and, now, we've got to go  
16 back and reprocess those, but we are working those  
17 individually.

18 Do any Commissioners have any questions on that?

19 (No response.)

20 JOE SPRAGGINS: As far as the CARES Act, the one  
21 point five million, a little over one point five million  
22 that was given to us with the CARES Act, we are in the  
23 process now. Gulf States is going to basically manage  
24 part of that to the point that it is coming down from NOAA  
25 to them, and, then, it will be distributed to us, to our

1 fishermen and the different departments.

2 The processors are involved. The bait shops are  
3 involved. The charter boats are involved. The fishermen  
4 are involved, commercial fishermen, and also any retail  
5 shops.

6 We are looking at it very hard. We are in the  
7 process, we sent out for quotes yesterday for people to  
8 bid on being able to help us do this process. We are  
9 going to need some help because the agency right now is a  
10 little bit behind, due to the fact that we have been shut  
11 down for two-and-a-half to three months with not a hundred  
12 percent force and we have got to catch back up. We are  
13 going out advertising.

14 If you know anybody that would be interested in  
15 that, please tell them to get in touch with Michelle, or  
16 myself, or Leslie, or anyone from the agency here, and we  
17 will get them the paperwork so they can apply for that  
18 because we are looking for a group of people that can go  
19 in and analyze.

20 They are going to have to actually personally  
21 talk, or email backed up with a personal conversation with  
22 everyone that has a license as far as commercial fishing  
23 of any type, for everybody that has a charter boat  
24 license, any processors, any seafood dealers and any bait  
25 shops.

1           whoever does this is going to have to personally  
2 talk to these people either on the phone, or through an  
3 email conversation, and get them qualified.

4           NOAA is going to give us an affidavit, which  
5 they have not given us. They have been promising it for  
6 two weeks. As soon as we get the affidavit, that will be  
7 sent to the people.

8           The affidavit is telling us if they got any  
9 money from any CARES Act in the past for anything that has  
10 happened, as far as the Governor, or anyone else, then,  
11 that has to be counted against it.

12           They have to have a thirty-five percent loss to  
13 be able to do this. Someone that had a sixty percent loss  
14 and they got twenty percent from the State on some other,  
15 they can still qualify under the CARES Act.

16           You can never make them more than whole, but you  
17 could make them whole.

18           Insurance is another issue. If they received  
19 any insurance, that is another issue we have to look at, a  
20 lot of different things.

21           Do any of the Commissioners have questions on  
22 that, or how we are operating it?

23           (No response.)

24           JOE SPRAGGINS: If you do, please feel free to  
25 give me a call anytime, text me, or email me, whatever,

1 and we will look at it.

2 The 2019 Bonnet Carre Funds are twenty-one point  
3 three million. We are in the process now -- I will be  
4 honest with you. We are trying to get through the 2011  
5 payout, and, then, we are working the CARES Act and  
6 getting it headed in the right direction because we've got  
7 to get something back to NOAA soon with a statement of  
8 work of how we are going to do this, as far as a spend  
9 plan, but we are waiting on them to answer a few  
10 questions.

11 We are concerned. The biggest thing on the  
12 CARES Act is if they are going to count 2019 against our  
13 fishermen and our processors and all because that was a  
14 devastating year and, if they count it against them, then,  
15 that hurts them being able to show the loss.

16 We are trying to find out a way to be able to  
17 give them the right to have the correct loss and not  
18 because of something already being skewed.

19 The 2019 Bonnet Carre, we will start working on  
20 it. We are working on it and we will get some  
21 information. We are trying to put together -- they gave  
22 us some guidelines. We are asking NOAA to give us more  
23 guidelines. We will work that.

24 I think Rick Burris is handling that for us  
25 through the Fisheries Department and Traci is handling the

1 CARES Act.

2           Hopefully, we will have that underway soon and  
3 be able to get some money to the right processors and the  
4 right fishermen and the bait shops and the charter boats  
5 and also our commercial sales.

6           Any questions on that?

7           (No response.)

8           JOE SPRAGGINS: I know it is kind of confusing,  
9 but we are working every one of them every day. We will  
10 keep you abreast of what is going on.

11           As soon as we get any idea of where we are to do  
12 a spend plan, I will send it to the Commissioners and let  
13 y'all look at them. Before we send that spend plan out, I  
14 will also send it to the Governor and get his approval on  
15 it, before we send it back to NOAA.

16           The other thing is the legislative update. The  
17 House Bill 632, the Riparian Rights for Deer Island, has  
18 been passed by the House and the Senate and is now in the  
19 process before the Governor to be signed, and this will  
20 give us the area to be able to do some additional off-  
21 bottom and it moves it back about four hundred yards,  
22 instead of seven hundred and fifty, and that will give us  
23 an extra area to be able to operate where people can  
24 operate walking and turning their baskets which they will  
25 be able to do a lot quicker, and I think it will help us a

1 whole lot in our process and maybe increase the amount of  
2 sales and amount of oysters that we have in the off-  
3 bottom.

4 I think this is a great thing and I appreciate  
5 the Senate and the House for passing that.

6 Any questions on it?

7 (No response.)

8 JOE SPRAGGINS: The other one is House Bill 827.  
9 That's the CFO and it was basically changing it from where  
10 a CFO could have a Master's and years of experience, but  
11 it did not put a CPA in it. We asked them to have a  
12 Master's in Finance, or a CPA. So that is what they are  
13 putting in there on it. That is the one that they made  
14 the other change to.

15 If anybody has any questions, we will talk about  
16 it at this time.

17 COMMISSIONER BOSARGE: What changes are you  
18 referring to, Joe?

19 JOE SPRAGGINS: That's the one that they went in  
20 and made that amendment to it with the Commission as to  
21 the authority of the Commission, sir.

22 COMMISSIONER BOSARGE: That is interesting, Joe,  
23 really interesting.

24 JOE SPRAGGINS: It is interesting and I can  
25 promise you, I can tell you that that was as big a

1 surprise to me as it was to anybody else because whenever  
2 I sat down with the Senate on the day before and talked  
3 with them and the House and I told them I needed two  
4 bills. I needed the one for high-water mark and I needed  
5 the one for the Riparian Rights. I told them, I said, "I  
6 need those two."

7 The CFO, I could have lived without because I  
8 had a CFO and I could keep her and I could live without  
9 it, even though I would rather have it changed, but that  
10 could wait until January, if it had to.

11 They promised me that they would get those two  
12 bills out. They said, "I promise you we will get those  
13 two bills out and those two bills will be out that day."

14 I even called them back. I said, "Do I need to  
15 come back to Jackson?"

16 "No. You don't need to be here. We are just  
17 going to sign them."

18 well, after the meeting was over, I got a call  
19 and they told me what had happened, and I did not know  
20 anything about it.

21 I picked up the phone and called the Governor's  
22 office and asked them if they knew anything about it and  
23 they did not either.

24 COMMISSIONER BOSARGE: So, in your opinion, this  
25 is the way you think this needs to go?

1           JOE SPRAGGINS: No, sir, I personally do not,  
2 but --

3           COMMISSIONER BOSARGE: (Interposing) You have  
4 been lobbying against it, Joe?

5           JOE SPRAGGINS: sir?

6           COMMISSIONER BOSARGE: You have been lobbying  
7 against that change?

8           JOE SPRAGGINS: If you say "lobbying", I have  
9 not lobbied either way because I talked to the Governor's  
10 office about it and I asked the Governor, "What do y'all  
11 want to do with this?", and they have not given me an  
12 answer.

13           Then, I sat down and I talked with the Senate  
14 and the House members, and I will be honest with you. I  
15 talked with them point-blank and asked them, I said, "why  
16 did you not ask me? why did you not even talk to us about  
17 this?"

18           And they told me point-blank that they left me  
19 out of it deliberately.

20           And I said, "why?"

21           And they said, "we don't want it to come back on  
22 you as if you had something to do with it."

23           And I said, "well, you are definitely right. I  
24 did not have anything to do with it."

25           I asked them another question about passing it,



1 and the Senate told me that they were going to pass it and  
2 they did.

3 I asked the House. I said, "Are you going to  
4 let this die on the floor?"

5 And they said, "No. We are going to pass it."

6 And I said, "Well, is there any chance that we  
7 could look at this?"

8 And they told me, "No."

9 COMMISSIONER BOSARGE: We as Commissioners, we  
10 all have full-time jobs and we spend a lot of time a lot  
11 of effort. We give up a lot, in order to be able to make  
12 a difference. If this change does take place where we are  
13 nothing more than an advisory panel, I don't know how much  
14 of a difference we would make.

15 In my opinion, if that does transpire, then,  
16 hopefully -- not taking anything away from you, Joe, but  
17 you don't have a background in biology, or a background in  
18 fisheries.

19 In other words, I would hope that the Executive  
20 Director, from that point on, would at least have to have  
21 some background in biology, fisheries management, coastal  
22 ecology, something because, now, it is going to be laid  
23 all on your shoulders and, in order to do that job, you  
24 are going to have to have a whole lot more background than  
25 what you have now, if all we are is an advisory panel.

1           JOE SPRAGGINS: Sir, I understand your point  
2 there and I can tell you this. They can call you whatever  
3 they want to call you, as far as I'm concerned, but, if  
4 there is a Commission here, I am going to use the  
5 Commission to every ounce I can to give me every piece of  
6 advice I can possibly get, and I am not going to be the  
7 type person that is going to sit here and that is not my  
8 goal.

9           I don't want to do this. I think that it hurts  
10 me. I don't think it helps me because I think it hurts me  
11 because I'm not able to have the -- I can look at you --  
12 it's like I was telling Commissioner Daniels earlier  
13 today. It makes it a whole lot easier for me having a  
14 Commission that I can turn to than it is to have one that  
15 I can't turn to. I want to have one that I can still turn  
16 to.

17           I don't care what they do. I can't do anything  
18 about it. I do care, but I can't do anything about it.

19           I have been told point-blank, "You might as well  
20 just stay the heck out of this. You can't do anything  
21 about it."

22           COMMISSIONER BOSARGE: You and I both know that  
23 this Commission brings a lot of years of experience to the  
24 table.

25           JOE SPRAGGINS: It does.

1           COMMISSIONER BOSARGE: And we try to hammer out  
2 decisions based on science and best science available and,  
3 for the most part, try to keep politics out of it.

4           I don't see that happening now. I see it more  
5 as a political situation where politics will make the  
6 decisions and we just advise. I think the science is  
7 going to go by the wayside.

8           Anyhow, it is what it is, and we will try to  
9 make the best of it.

10          JOE SPRAGGINS: Yes, sir. I can promise you  
11 that if I stay here as the Executive Director and this  
12 does go through, that science is not going to go by the  
13 wayside because I am still going to go for it and I am  
14 going to look at it with everything I have in my power and  
15 let science be the reason for everything that we do.

16          The Governor, he has not told me what he is  
17 going to do, or not do, if it gets to him.

18          I did ask the team the other day and I asked  
19 them point-blank what are their thoughts, and they said  
20 that they would entertain it if it got to that point.

21          There is still a lot of thought that maybe it  
22 won't get through the House and, if it doesn't get through  
23 the House, then, that makes it entirely different. Then,  
24 we don't have to worry about it.

25          COMMISSIONER BOSARGE: Well, this Commission, if

1 I remember correctly, with the last time with Dr. Walker,  
2 we were the oversight for the DMR and I don't know. I  
3 guess that will be taken away from us, also.

4 Correct?

5 JOE SPRAGGINS: I hope not.

6 COMMISSIONER BOSARGE: It would appear, if we  
7 are nothing more than an advisory panel, there will no  
8 longer be any oversight. I guess Sandy would be the only  
9 oversight, then.

10 JOE SPRAGGINS: Once again, I don't want to get  
11 in a contest with the Senate and the House, and I'm not  
12 going to go against the Governor, but whatever the  
13 Governor tells me to do I'm going to do it.

14 That is my understanding with him that if we  
15 have an issue with anything, I will tell him what my  
16 thoughts are on that issue at that point, and, then, if we  
17 can't come to an understanding that this is one, or the  
18 other, then, I will definitely salute the department and  
19 walk away, and that is the way I do every business and  
20 everything I have done.

21 Somebody said, "well, this takes you away to  
22 where you are not covered by the Senate and everybody else  
23 and you only work straight for the Governor."

24 I said, "well, as far as I'm concerned, I work  
25 for the Commission and the Governor anyway. So it doesn't

1 matter to me.”

2 At any one time, if the Commission, or the  
3 Governor, decided that they did not want me to stay as  
4 Executive Director, then, I would definitely sit down and  
5 say, “Tell me what we need to do.”

6 If it comes down to where the Governor wants me  
7 to walk away, I will walk away. I will salute the  
8 department and walk away, and there won't be any question.

9 COMMISSIONER BOSARGE: Yes, sir. I don't think  
10 we are asking you to walk away. I just think that if it  
11 goes in that direction, there is going to have to be a set  
12 of standards set for the Executive Director with the  
13 correct background to be able to make the right decisions.

14 JOE SPRAGGINS: They did put something in the  
15 bill. I don't remember the exact wording, but it just  
16 says that -- I've got it somewhere here, but it was an  
17 amendment made to the bill.

18 COMMISSIONER BOSARGE: Yes, I think to be able  
19 to give the Governor the authority to terminate at will, I  
20 believe.

21 JOE SPRAGGINS: It does. He had that, as far as  
22 I was concerned, anyway.

23 I don't know how y'all feel, but, if he had told  
24 me that he didn't want me to stay, I would have turned in  
25 my resignation and told y'all I turned in my resignation.

1           COMMISSIONER BOSARGE: I think that goes for all  
2 of us.

3           JOE SPRAGGINS: I never have had that expression  
4 in my life that I would have done any different, but I was  
5 trying to read the wording.

6           Hang on a minute. It was an amendment to it  
7 that was put it in and it was put in by Senator Seymour.

8           It basically says that -- well, maybe I will  
9 find it. I don't know where it is in this bill.

10          COMMISSIONER BOSARGE: And I think there is  
11 another bill up there for Cat Island.

12          How is that doing?

13          JOE SPRAGGINS: Yes, sir. I was going to bring  
14 that one up, too, after this one. It is Senate Bill 2720.

15          Each one of the Commissioners, I promise you, I  
16 tell you these are my thoughts of this. Once again, let's  
17 see what happens. It is not a guarantee that this is  
18 going to pass. It has not made it to the Governor's  
19 office yet and it hasn't made it through the House yet.  
20 It hasn't made it out.

21          So I don't know if it is going to pass and until  
22 it passes, once again, I have no heartburn for anybody who  
23 wants to pick up the phone and call the Governor's office,  
24 or anybody else, and tell them their thoughts on it  
25 because I think that it has happened at some point.

1           when I found out about it, I called each and  
2 every one of you and told you that day.

3           COMMISSIONER BOSARGE: I agree, Mr. Joe. It is  
4 all good. I just think that you need to consider, or  
5 maybe Sandy, being the Attorney General's attorney, should  
6 consider some of the structure and oversight and think  
7 about that just a little bit. If it does occur, then, I  
8 think there are probably more changes than just that that  
9 need to be made to ensure some oversight.

10          JOE SPRAGGINS: I agree with you, sir, and I  
11 hope that each one of you will stay. I know Mark doesn't  
12 want to stay. Someone will have to appoint someone in his  
13 place and the others will stay, and, then, we can sit  
14 down, and I promise you I am going to still ask questions.

15          If it happens the way that they are looking at  
16 it, I want y'all to work with me just like I have worked  
17 with you in the past and we have done.

18          I value your opinion. I very much value your  
19 opinion and I am going to have to have your opinion to  
20 help me, if I stay here, and I would say the same thing  
21 for whoever is here after me. Whoever is after me is  
22 going to have the same issues. They are going to need the  
23 opinion of this Commission to help them be able to  
24 understand what to do because I don't care who you put in  
25 here the person is not going to have a hundred percent of

1 what each one of y'all have, or anywhere close to it.

2 If you find me a person that has been in  
3 commercial fishing, processing, environmental, charter  
4 boat and recreational all at one time, then, that is  
5 probably the perfect person, whoever that person is, but I  
6 don't think you are going to find that.

7 I apologize for it happening, but I can promise  
8 you that it was not anything that I had asked for, or even  
9 thought about asking for.

10 Last year, when somebody mentioned to me about  
11 possibly disbanding the Commission, I told him, I said,  
12 "Why would you do that?"

13 And their answer was, "Well, we can sit here and  
14 make..."

15 I said, "If you do that, you are going to break  
16 it down to where we can't do anything at DMR, until y'all  
17 go into session, and, then, you are going to have to wait  
18 until the end. So that means one time a year we are going  
19 to get something changed."

20 COMMISSIONER BOSARGE: All right, Mr. Joe.

21 JOE SPRAGGINS: The next bill is Senate Bill  
22 2720 and that is the net basically one-half mile off Cat  
23 Island. That one has passed the House and it passed the  
24 Senate and I think it has gone back to the House.

25 Let's see. I've got it right here. Yes,



1 transferred to the House with a couple of amendments on  
2 it.

3 That was obviously another bill that I knew  
4 about and I fought hard and I promised them. I told them.  
5 When they started to pass this bill, I expressed to them  
6 and Sandy was with me numerous times and we expressed this  
7 to them, number one, please don't do this to us. We feel  
8 like the Commission and the department has this headed in  
9 the correct direction right now and things are working.  
10 Why won't you just let us do this, but it didn't matter  
11 what we told them. It was going to happen.

12 COMMISSIONER BOSARGE: That's right. That's  
13 another one, though, that I'm talking about that we  
14 hammered out for a long time and hard here at the  
15 Commission level, a lot of years of experience, and it  
16 seems like it fell on deaf ears, but, anyhow, let's see  
17 where it goes.

18 JOE SPRAGGINS: It is going back to the House  
19 for them to look at it. The Senate voted for it. That  
20 was a Senator Thompson bill.

21 I sat with him many times and asked him to  
22 consider not bringing that bill out because we felt that  
23 we had this under control and that we didn't feel like it  
24 needed to happen, but you see where it is.

25 COMMISSIONER BOSARGE: Yes, sir.

1           JOE SPRAGGINS: Anything else on what is going  
2 on in the legislature?

3           (No response.)

4           JOE SPRAGGINS: If not, ladies and gentlemen,  
5 that is the end of the Executive Director's Report.

6           COMMISSIONER DANIELS: Thank you, Joe. That was  
7 a lot to talk about today. We will certainly be keeping  
8 an eye on how all of this unfolds.

9           Moving on to Commissioners Report, do any of our  
10 Commissioners have anything to report today?

11          COMMISSIONER BOSARGE: Yes, I had one thing to  
12 talk about. I believe, if I'm correct, Mr. Jan Boyd is  
13 retiring.

14          Is that correct?

15          JOE SPRAGGINS: Yes, sir, Mr. Jan is retiring.  
16 Jan, are you on?

17          JAN BOYD: Yes, sir, I'm on.

18          Can you hear me?

19          COMMISSIONER BOSARGE: Yes, sir, and I just  
20 wanted to say how much I have enjoyed working with you  
21 over the years and how good a job you have done and you  
22 will surely be missed by me. I guarantee you.

23          JAN BOYD: I sure appreciate it because I have  
24 enjoyed working with y'all, too.

25          COMMISSIONER BOSARGE: Yes, sir. I tell you,

1 Jan, you are always a pleasure there. You do a good job,  
2 a great job. Hopefully we've got somebody lined up to  
3 take your spot that can fill those shoes.

4 JAN BOYD: I hope so, too.

5 COMMISSIONER BOSARGE: Good deal. Thank you,  
6 Jan. Enjoy your retirement, sir.

7 JAN BOYD: Thank you.

8 COMMISSIONER DANIELS: Congratulations, Jan.

9 JAN BOYD: Thank you.

10 JOE SPRAGGINS: Also, Mr. Jeff Clark, his deputy  
11 is retiring with him, too.

12 COMMISSIONER BOSARGE: Same thing, Jeff. Same  
13 to you, sir.

14 JOE SPRAGGINS: I told them it is bad enough to  
15 lose one of them, but, now, both of them are walking out  
16 on me at the same time. I think that was kind of planned,  
17 when one of them left, the other one is going with them.

18 We are looking hard. I tell you what we did on  
19 that, just for y'all's information. We advertised  
20 internal only. We advertised that job internally only. I  
21 want to look inside our staff to find someone there, if  
22 possible, and see if someone there can take that job.

23 COMMISSIONER BOSARGE: Oh, yes. You've got some  
24 good folks within that division that I think could step up  
25 to the plate real quick.

1           JOE SPRAGGINS: Yes, sir.

2           COMMISSIONER DANIELS: Any of our other  
3 Commissioners?

4           (No response.)

5           JOE SPRAGGINS: One other thing while you are  
6 there, Kimberly Rasmussen, our Grant Administrator has  
7 resigned, also.

8           If y'all know anybody that is a Grant  
9 Administrator, we are looking everywhere for that. We are  
10 trying to find somebody to help us replace that, too. It  
11 is advertised statewide.

12           COMMISSIONER DANIELS: If none of the other  
13 Commissioners have anything, we will move on to Office of  
14 Marine Patrol, Assistant Chief Kyle Wilkerson.

15           Have you got us a report on citations today,  
16 sir?

17           KYLE WILKERSON: Yes, I do.

18           Good morning Commissioners, counsel and  
19 director.

20           I would like to reiterate that we are going to  
21 miss Jan Boyd and Jeff. Good people. Very outstanding  
22 individuals in their field. They will be missed, but I  
23 believe we have people in the ranks that will replace them  
24 and learn when they are replaced.

25           Let me get started. It has been a busy May. As

1 you know, shrimp season opened up. There were two, or  
2 three, hundred boats out there. A small opening. A  
3 couple of citations were written for shrimping in closed  
4 waters. Nothing just out of the ordinary.

5 Also, snapper season opened, as you guys know,  
6 Memorial Day weekend. We have checked a hundred and  
7 seventy-six vessels as of date. There were several  
8 citations written.

9 A couple of guys came in at Bayou Casotte with  
10 thirty-eight undersized snapper. Thirty-four were over  
11 the limit. There were several violations that have been  
12 written for snapper.

13 Failure to register with Tails n' Scales, we had  
14 seven violations there.

15 As you can see, it has been a very busy May.  
16 I will field any questions.

17 COMMISSIONER BOSARGE: You said you have a  
18 hundred and seventy-six intercepts, I guess, for the  
19 snapper season?

20 KYLE WILKERSON: As of right now, yes, sir.

21 COMMISSIONER BOSARGE: That's good. Good job.

22 I saw seven no Tails n' Scales. That's not bad.

23 I did have one question. You wrote a ticket for  
24 no numbers. I'm trying to looking at my notes here.

25 Can you go to the next page?

1 "Display of awarded number on vessel".

2 what is that?

3 I'm just curious.

4 KYLE WILKERSON: Actually, Commissioner, I was  
5 looking at it myself. I was also curious. I will do a  
6 little investigation and I will get back with you on that,  
7 if you don't mind.

8 COMMISSIONER BOSARGE: That's fine. I was just  
9 curious as to what that was. Thank you.

10 KYLE WILKERSON: Real quick I would like to say,  
11 also, I hope you guys are well. Marine Patrol has been  
12 very blessed during this pandemic. No one is ill and no  
13 one has come down with anything even close to this mess  
14 that is going on. I would like to say hopefully you guys  
15 are the same. Thank you.

16 JOE SPRAGGINS: Commissioner Daniels, if I  
17 could, I did get a call yesterday from the City of Biloxi  
18 to tell the Marine Patrol what a great job they did with  
19 all the boats that were out there for the blessing of the  
20 fleet, that they held a great presence there and that  
21 there were no issues. So thank y'all.

22 COMMISSIONER DANIELS: Absolutely. Marine  
23 Patrol always does a good job. Any run ins I have ever  
24 had with them, they have been absolutely professional and  
25 are a pleasure to deal with.

1 KYLE WILKERSON: Thank you, Commissioner.

2 COMMISSIONER DANIELS: Coastal Resources  
3 Management and Coastal Restoration and Resiliency don't  
4 have any presentations this month.

5 We move right on down to Office of Finance and  
6 Administration, Ms. Leslie Brewer.

7 You have a report for us?

8 LESLIE BREWER: I do.

9 Good morning Director, Commissioners, legal.  
10 My name is Leslie Brewer, CFO. I will be  
11 presenting the agency's financials for the month ending  
12 May 31<sup>st</sup>, 2020.

13 Next slide, please.

14 At the end of May, our State Revenue was four  
15 point nine million. Our Total Agency Revenue was sixty-  
16 five million.

17 Our State Net Income was a negative one point  
18 one million, and Total Agency Net Income was thirty-nine  
19 million.

20 Next slide, please.

21 After eleven months of fiscal year 2020, we have  
22 sixty-six point six percent of the Operating Budget  
23 remaining, while the Tidelands Budget has forty-eight  
24 point one percent.

25 We are still waiting on our State

1 appropriations. That is coming.

2 Any questions?

3 COMMISSIONER DANIELS: Thank you for that.

4 LESLIE BREWER: Thank you.

5 COMMISSIONER DANIELS: If none of the other  
6 Commissioners have any questions, we will keep on moving  
7 down this train.

8 Charmaine, Public Affairs.

9 CHARMAINE SCHMERMUND: Good morning  
10 Commissioners, Director Spraggins and Ms. Chesnut.

11 The Mississippi Department of Marine Resources  
12 was mentioned thirty-four times in local, state and  
13 national media since the May CMR meeting.

14 Popular news items included the opening of  
15 shrimp season, the start of Red Snapper season and  
16 commercial fishing license expiration date extensions.

17 Marine Patrol gave a Boat and Water Safety  
18 presentation to campers at Little Peoples Academy and  
19 Michael Lee with the Lyman Aquaculture facility assisted  
20 with a three-day fishing tournament in D'Iberville.

21 Mississippi Gulf Coast National Heritage Area  
22 Community Grants have been awarded and projects are set to  
23 begin July 1<sup>st</sup>.

24 National Heritage Area has also taken part in  
25 the GOMA Resilience Team call to discuss ongoing projects



1 and work on action items for Action Plan Four.

2 The agency has also published a second edition  
3 of the Oystermen's Guide. We just announced yesterday.  
4 It's the Oystermen's Guide to Mississippi Gulf Coast  
5 Oyster Reefs and the goal of this guide is to assist the  
6 fishing community on the Mississippi Gulf Coast. The  
7 public can find an electronic copy on our website at  
8 dmr.ms.gov/publications, or you can request a printed copy  
9 by mail by calling our phone number 374-5000.

10 That's it.

11 COMMISSIONER BOSARGE: Are you still there,  
12 Ronnie?

13 COMMISSIONER DANIELS: Oops. Sorry. I was  
14 still on mute. I forget to unmute it.

15 That you, Charmaine.

16 If none of the Commissioners have any questions  
17 on that, we will move on to Marine Fisheries and something  
18 I think we have all been waiting on for quite a while now.

19 Matt has a presentation on our speckled trout  
20 stock assessment.

21 MATT HILL: This is the 2019 Spotted Seatrout  
22 Stock Assessment and, yes, we have been waiting on it.

23 One good thing to point out about this one is it  
24 is up to date. It does include the 2019 season. We  
25 usually get behind on our numbers, but this is as close to

1 realtime as you can get.

2 COMMISSIONER BOSARGE: Matt.

3 MATT HILL: Yes, sir.

4 COMMISSIONER BOSARGE: I hate to interrupt you,  
5 but I requested a copy of that stock assessment with the  
6 reviewers' comments. I never got it.

7 MATT HILL: Yes, sir, I recall. After the last  
8 Commission meeting, we said we would have it available by  
9 the next Friday which we did have it available for  
10 distribution. The document was available and the peer  
11 reviewers did agree to release their comments, as I said.  
12 So it was sent along. I'm not sure exactly what happened  
13 to it.

14 COMMISSIONER BOSARGE: I mean, it is a public  
15 document.

16 Correct?

17 MATT HILL: Yes, sir, it is.

18 COMMISSIONER BOSARGE: I mean, it is going to be  
19 hard to have a discussion, when you have never seen it  
20 before.

21 MATT HILL: It is available.

22 COMMISSIONER BOSARGE: Pardon?

23 MATT HILL: Both of the documents that you  
24 requested are available and were passed along.

25 COMMISSIONER BOSARGE: It would have been nice

1 to have it before now, though.

2 All right. Go ahead, Matt.

3 MATT HILL: Giving some background, the initial  
4 draft was completed in December of 2019 by the Mississippi  
5 Stock Assessment Panel. This panel is comprised of staff  
6 from MDMR and the Gulf Coast Research Laboratory.

7 An internal review was completed by MDMR in  
8 December of 2019 and sent for peer review, as I stated  
9 earlier.

10 Final analysis and edits were completed in May  
11 of 2020.

12 Some of the model aspects. I know Commissioner  
13 Bosarge is very familiar with the model we were using.  
14 This was the first stock assessment conducted in  
15 Mississippi using the Stock Synthesis III model, commonly  
16 known as the SS3 model.

17 The assessment model has many similarities to  
18 the Age-Structured Assessment Program, or ASAP Model used  
19 in previous Spotted Seatrout assessments which is shown on  
20 our graph here later, and we will talk about it a little  
21 bit more.

22 This assessment effort can be considered a  
23 "continuity run" to determine if the outputs between the  
24 ASAP and SS3 are comparable. Again, we will talk about  
25 that, once we get to the SPR graph.

1           Based on the timeline of model development, 2019  
2 was able to be included as the terminal year of the  
3 assessment.

4           The model used for informing management  
5 decisions. The SS3 model is presently accepted on a peer-  
6 reviewed level and models have been identified as best  
7 available science.

8           The assessment was completed using this the SS3,  
9 which is widely used in SEDAR assessments for federally-  
10 managed species.

11           The next assessment will be a benchmark  
12 assessment and will also use the SS3 model.

13           COMMISSIONER BOSARGE: What do you mean by that,  
14 Matt?

15           When you say "next assessment will be a  
16 benchmark assessment", why was this not a benchmark  
17 assessment?

18           MATT HILL: This assessment, once we received it  
19 back from the peer review, some of the comments, or some  
20 of the inputs needed to be changed and some of the model  
21 parameters needed to be -- and Dr. Leaf can speak a little  
22 bit better on this. Unfortunately we are doing not in  
23 person right now, but there were some changes that needed  
24 to be made and it was suggested by the peer reviewers and  
25 also by our internal staff that as this was the first run

1 of the SS3, we just weren't comfortable with it being the  
2 benchmark and we also wanted it to be more of the  
3 continuity run so we could compare it back to the ASAP  
4 model.

5 It was more just to see what we compared with it  
6 and also, like I said, it was Dr. Leaf's first attempt at  
7 using this particular model, and it was in the document  
8 that that was made available for distribution, some of the  
9 peer review comments that we received and some of the  
10 changes that we ended up having to make.

11 We were just more comfortable with making the  
12 next one a benchmark assessment, the next run.

13 COMMISSIONER BOSARGE: And when will that be?

14 MATT HILL: As soon as possible. Since the 2020  
15 data is available, we would like to be able to include  
16 that so we would have an up-to-date and that would be the  
17 fifth year of regulation change, so it was very  
18 appropriate to have the benchmark assessment with 2020 --

19 COMMISSIONER BOSARGE: (Interposing) So would  
20 it be possible -- it sounds like Dr. Leaf has got a lot  
21 going on.

22 Would it be possible to have someone else do the  
23 model?

24 MATT HILL: Yes. We are exploring some other  
25 options right now with the business office to put out some

1 things and see who else is available.

2 We have reached out to some other universities  
3 and some other organizations. So, yes, it is a  
4 possibility to have someone else run the model.

5 COMMISSIONER BOSARGE: All right. Just curious.

6 MATT HILL: We are exploring other avenues  
7 currently.

8 As I said, the next assessment will be a  
9 benchmark assessment and we will also use the SS3 model.

10 This is the graph that everybody is waiting for.  
11 It is the Percent SPR for Each Assessment Year. You can  
12 see the lighter gray lines represent runs using the ASAP  
13 model in previous years and they are for comparison  
14 purposes.

15 What we were trying to do here is we swapped  
16 over to the SS3 model from the ASAP model, but we needed  
17 to see basically a lot of our calibrations. We are more  
18 focused on the word "comparison", just to see how it did  
19 compare throughout the years and, as you can see right  
20 here, they do follow the same trends. They are obviously  
21 going to be a little different for each model from year to  
22 year, but the trends are very similar.

23 Obviously, it was a very robust model run, and  
24 we are very confident to use it for management purposes.

25 The dark black line is the new run with the SS3

1 model and, again, you can see there obviously are some  
2 differences throughout the years, but the trends do remain  
3 the same and, as managers, we tend to focus on the trends  
4 more than the exact numbers.

5 COMMISSIONER BOSARGE: And you don't have a  
6 problem with that, I guess it looks like 2018?

7 MATT HILL: Yes, we did have -- I think we  
8 talked about some factors that we considered on the next  
9 slide, but we do obviously see some very high peaks and  
10 some very high valleys.

11 I have always liked to focus on the three-to-  
12 five-year average and, right now, we are sitting on a  
13 five-year average of seventeen point nine percent.

14 I do know the terminal year 2019 was less and  
15 2018 obviously went down, but the 2019 year is less than  
16 ten. The percentage SPR is less than ten.

17 COMMISSIONER BOSARGE: So would you consider  
18 2018 a lot outlier?

19 I mean, it looks to me like. I don't see it in  
20 the other model.

21 MATT HILL: I think you are talking about 2017?

22 COMMISSIONER BOSARGE: I can't tell. I mean,  
23 you've got to understand --

24 MATT HILL: (Interposing) I think you are  
25 focusing on 2017 as the outlier, yes, sir.

1           COMMISSIONER BOSARGE: If you take the outlier  
2 out, what do you have?

3           MATT HILL: If you take the outlier out of the -  
4 - with the SS3 model, if you take that outlier out, you  
5 would be less than fifteen percent SPR. I don't have a  
6 calculator with me, but just looking at it, it would be  
7 less than fifteen.

8           COMMISSIONER BOSARGE: All I've got to go by is  
9 what you gave me, Matt. Go ahead.

10          MATT HILL: And like I said, we could go back  
11 through here and take the outliers out, but we also do  
12 like to focus on what causes some of these trends, why do  
13 we see some of these larger fluctuations and, if we go to  
14 the next slide, some of the things that we could possibly  
15 start to look on.

16          when we talk about percent SPR, it is the ratio  
17 of reproductive output of a fished population relative to  
18 an unfished population.

19          It is not what we commonly refer to as a  
20 percentage, but it is actually a ratio that comes out of  
21 it and we convert it into a percentage.

22          The input information includes abundance,  
23 mortality and reproductive parameters.

24          Shifts in any of these inputs can result in  
25 fluctuations of percent SPR.



1           what we started seeing for decreased relative  
2 abundance. We began seeing decreases in the western Sound  
3 which, then, spread throughout the entire Sound  
4 encompassing the majority of our independent sampling  
5 sites which provide the relative abundance.

6           Obviously, a lot of this is what we point to as  
7 with the Bonnet Carre opening several years in a row. It  
8 has affected some of our independent sampling sites.

9           These sites, you can't just move them around.  
10 These are historical sites that have been here that we  
11 rely on to give us consistent numbers throughout the  
12 years, and the Bonnet Carre, in the past, it was not the  
13 norm for it to open up. However, now, it seems to be the  
14 norm. So we are going to have to begin to figure out some  
15 ways to take that into account, when we are dealing with  
16 the relative abundance for these models.

17           Obviously, there was decreased catches in the  
18 fishery independent surveys, as I just said, which led to  
19 decreased estimates of relative abundance.

20           The question for managers, do these decreased  
21 estimates represent a true decrease in abundance, or  
22 changes in sampling efficacy.

23           Now, that is a question that we have thrown  
24 around a lot here. We just don't have enough years of  
25 consistency. In the last five years, we have had some

1 openings. We have had some openings at different times  
2 that have affected things differently, but, obviously,  
3 that freshwater intrusion has affected some of our  
4 independent sampling sites. That is one of the things we  
5 are wrestling with, right now.

6 COMMISSIONER BOSARGE: I don't know where your  
7 sampling sites are, but, if I remember correctly, that  
8 Bonnet Carre Spillway pushed a lot of fish out, and there  
9 was a large abundance of fish around those islands and Cat  
10 Island, if I remember correctly.

11 MATT HILL: Yes, and that is one of the things  
12 that we did. A lot of the sites are, obviously, in our  
13 four estuarine systems. We have the Pearl, Bay St. Louis,  
14 Biloxi Bay and Pascagoula. Then, we have them throughout  
15 the Sound.

16 One of the things that we have done in the  
17 recent time is we have added two sites at Cat Island, as  
18 these fish are being pushed out. So we have added them  
19 for our year-round sampling sites to begin to try to  
20 capture some of this movement with these animals. We  
21 haven't had those before.

22 We also do have some sites around the other  
23 islands, but we are focused on Cat Island right now to see  
24 exactly what happens, but, as you know, Commissioner, it  
25 is going to take a little time for those numbers to catch

1 up and possibly those abundance numbers will stabilize at  
2 some point.

3 It is more of a trial-and-error thing, but we  
4 are trying to come up with some solutions for that to  
5 stabilize that abundance, that input.

6 We continue on with the percent SPR discussion.  
7 As stated previously, mortality is also an input for  
8 percent SPR.

9 when we talk about mortality, you have natural  
10 mortality which is the natural life cycle of the animal,  
11 and you have fishing mortality and that is the mortality  
12 that anglers place on these fish. As they harvest them,  
13 or throw them back, you have discard mortality.

14 Decreases in relative abundance along with  
15 sustained fishing pressure led to increased fishing  
16 mortality estimates.

17 We focus a lot on fishing mortality estimates,  
18 but natural mortality estimates remain very constant, or  
19 they are assigned some type of number at a certain point  
20 in their life, and that seems to stick with them all the  
21 way throughout.

22 Fishing mortality does fluctuate. However,  
23 obviously, we do know that fishing mortality increases as  
24 fishing pressure is increased, but we like to call it  
25 sustained fishing pressure as it hasn't seen significant

1 increases in the last few years. Over the last ten years,  
2 obviously, it is a little different story.

3 This combination of factors resulted in  
4 decreased percent SPR values derived in this assessment.

5 COMMISSIONER BOSARGE: Matt, are those numbers  
6 that you are using there the AFES numbers?

7 MATT HILL: Yes, sir. We do not use the FES  
8 numbers to run this model.

9 COMMISSIONER BOSARGE: Wait a minute.

10 In other words, are those the MRIP numbers, or  
11 are they the new AFES numbers?

12 MATT HILL: Those are the MRIP numbers. They  
13 are calibrated back down to the MRIP numbers for the  
14 historical harvest numbers. We calibrate everything to  
15 MRIP.

16 COMMISSIONER BOSARGE: So, if I calculate it  
17 correct, then, I didn't realize that the number was what  
18 I'm seeing on this graph.

19 I think the five-year average is a little over  
20 three million pounds recreational is what I saw.

21 MATT HILL: Trevor, he is sitting next to me and  
22 actually said in the figure, those are FES numbers. We do  
23 not use the FES numbers as we were running the model, but  
24 those are the FES harvest numbers that are obviously the  
25 new harvest numbers that are being used.

1           COMMISSIONER BOSARGE: So this is not MRIP  
2 numbers.

3           This is FES numbers?

4           MATT HILL: That is correct. However, when we  
5 get to the numbers on the next page, when we are talking  
6 about the biomass, those are the numbers that were spit  
7 out from the assessment itself.

8           TREVOR MONCRIEF: Just to provide a little bit  
9 of clarity, that figure was meant just to illustrate the  
10 trends in fishing over time due to sustained fishing  
11 effort and harvest. Actually, it is the AFES, but that is  
12 the visual we had on hand for the presentation.

13           COMMISSIONER BOSARGE: I guess, like I say, all  
14 I have is the information you provided me.

15           MATT HILL: Yes, sir. All of that is explained  
16 in the document. I do understand that you don't have  
17 that, but it is laid out clearly, the numbers used, the  
18 reasons they were used, the harvest estimates. All the  
19 inputs are clear.

20           COMMISSIONER BOSARGE: And I look at what you  
21 provided and I look at the total spawning stock biomass  
22 available for harvest, and we've got three million pounds  
23 that we are harvesting on average and, basically, you've  
24 got here saying that our yield could only be one million  
25 pounds.

1           How are we sustaining this?

2           MATT HILL: Obviously, you are in two different  
3 currencies. That's the new word we are dealing with,  
4 especially with snapper and, now, when we are starting to  
5 swap over to these models.

6           We can convert that last table on the previous  
7 slide. We can convert it into the same currency that we  
8 have with the model outputs, and we can provide the  
9 Commission and yourself with that.

10          COMMISSIONER BOSARGE: So you are saying that  
11 this graph that you are showing me now is not the FES  
12 numbers?

13          MATT HILL: No. These are the numbers that the  
14 actual model put out. So you have all of your relative  
15 abundance numbers and the harvest numbers are not the FES  
16 numbers.

17          This is not just based on the dependent harvest.  
18 This is all of our independent numbers and some of the  
19 dependent numbers, but it is in the old MRIP numbers that  
20 you are referring to.

21          COMMISSIONER BOSARGE: That is confusing, Matt.  
22 It sure would have been nice to have that information to  
23 be able to look at.

24          If you take the outlier out, which I consider is  
25 standard operating procedure, we are at about a fourteen-

1 point-something, right at fifteen percent SPR?

2 MATT HILL: When I did the trend line, it was  
3 slightly below fifteen percent and I did not see a  
4 decrease, but, however, there was not a noticeable  
5 increase. It was what I would consider more of a flat  
6 line. We are maintaining.

7 JOE SPRAGGINS: Matt, this is Joe.

8 Did you send that forward?

9 You said you sent it to me, but I have been  
10 trying to find it. I can't find any of the information.  
11 The computer system, it could go down, but definitely we  
12 want to get this to the Commissioners.

13 MATT HILL: Yes, sir. We sent it out the Friday  
14 after that Commission meeting.

15 JOE SPRAGGINS: I have had Crystal check, and we  
16 can't find it anywhere on my emails. That is what I was  
17 looking for.

18 I could have definitely overlooked it and, if I  
19 did, Commissioners, I am very sorry. I didn't mean to,  
20 but we definitely need to get this to them because I don't  
21 think we have to make a motion on anything today, but I  
22 want them to understand, before we go any further, what  
23 y'all's opinions are.

24 COMMISSIONER BOSARGE: You know, Joe, this is  
25 the most fished species and the most sought after species

1 and it is what everybody likes to go catch, and we have  
2 just got to be careful with it. We need to make sure that  
3 we still have this resource here for years to come. We  
4 have got to use the best available science, but it is hard  
5 to do with eight slides.

6 JOE SPRAGGINS: Yes, sir. I understand, and I  
7 am very sorry if I made the mistake of not sending it.

8 MATT HILL: We can go ahead and get that email  
9 and reforward everything. It is two documents. It is  
10 what Commissioner Bosarge had requested. I know he  
11 specifically requested the peer review, the comments of  
12 the peer reviewers. Also in that document is how MDMR and  
13 Dr. Leaf worked together to resolve some of the criticisms  
14 and comments that we were given. All of that is contained  
15 there, along with the actual stock assessment document.

16 COMMISSIONER BOSARGE: So based on everything  
17 you have seen here, Matt, are we overfished, or undergoing  
18 overfishing?

19 what are we at?

20 MATT HILL: I do not believe -- like I said, I  
21 do not see a significant decline, even when you take the  
22 outlier out. We are maintaining. However, we are not --  
23 if you take the outlier out, leave the outlier in, the  
24 target that was set by the Commission was a percent SPR of  
25 twenty. Obviously, the numbers speak for themselves. We



1 are not reaching that target. That is not overfished, or  
2 undergoing overfishing target. That was a target that the  
3 Commission felt was appropriate for this stock at that  
4 time, but the numbers do show that the biomass in the  
5 stock is currently not increasing, nor is it decreasing.  
6 We are maintaining.

7 It is the Commission's decision if that is  
8 acceptable.

9 COMMISSIONER BOSARGE: I know, and I guess my  
10 concerns stem from I look at Texas and the shape they are  
11 in, I look at Louisiana and the shape they are in, I look  
12 at Alabama and what they are having to do and Florida and  
13 what they are having to do, and you have got to wonder are  
14 we the only Gulf States that doesn't have a problem.

15 MATT HILL: Well, in some type of fairness, we  
16 did make a fairly significant change. I think we are in  
17 our fourth year currently and we are maintaining --

18 COMMISSIONER BOSARGE: (Interposing) I agree,  
19 and it was stated to me at the time that that is all we  
20 had to do to rebuild this stock, but we are still  
21 flatlined.

22 MATT HILL: Yes, sir. The stock did show some  
23 improvements in the beginning which are expected with an  
24 increase like that. However, since then, the increase has  
25 slowed and, obviously, we are maintaining.

1           One thing we did want to point out in some of  
2 this, with the Bonnet Carre, a lot of things -- I know you  
3 know, Commissioner Bosarge, a lot of what drives these  
4 assessments are your independent numbers. We are trying  
5 to get comfortable with what these openings are doing to  
6 our independent, our relative abundance numbers at some of  
7 our sites. Until we get a hold on that, I don't really  
8 want to say anything definitive, but we have added the Cat  
9 Island sites. You are right. They are pushing fish out  
10 there. We are seeing a marked increase in those sites  
11 immediately.

12           I think once some of that happens and we get to  
13 some type of stabilization in those numbers, it will  
14 provide us with a little better picture.

15           Will we get to the target percent of twenty that  
16 the Commission set, I don't know, but I think there are  
17 some other things driving these numbers right now, other  
18 than just your dependent fishery.

19           COMMISSIONER DANIELS: Matt, you answered what  
20 my question was going to be, but it seems to me like  
21 environmental factors have to have some contribution over  
22 the past couple of years to getting us up to that number,  
23 or stalling getting us up to that number.

24           COMMISSIONER BOSARGE: In my opinion, the  
25 environmental conditions have actually helped keep us at

1 those numbers basically because it pushed a lot of fish in  
2 this area that we normally would not have.

3 MATT HILL: I think until we actually know that  
4 answer, the problem is that it has pushed these fish in  
5 areas where we haven't historically seen them.

6 Our sampling sites, they were set up over  
7 twenty, or twenty-five years ago. So these sites have  
8 remained there in these historical areas where now these  
9 fish are not there. They are being pushed around because  
10 of some environmental factor.

11 We can't just pick up and move these sites on a  
12 whim. They provide a lot of historical stability data  
13 that we use. We have to be very careful, when we decide  
14 to move a site, even randomize a site. We are trying a  
15 little bit more randomization and, as I said, we added two  
16 sites at Cat Island to try to capture some of this  
17 movement.

18 Two, or three, years is not going to negate  
19 thirty years of independent data, and all of that data  
20 goes into this model every time we make a model run.

21 It is just going to take a little bit of time  
22 for it to stabilize, and, then, we can start answering  
23 some of those questions.

24 COMMISSIONER BOSARGE: And in the stock  
25 assessment, Matt, does it break out the different sectors

1 and what their production is, commercial, charter-for-  
2 hire, recreational?

3 MATT HILL: Yes, sir. In the stock assessment,  
4 you have all the numbers that were used and the currency  
5 that they were used and which sector that those numbers  
6 came from.

7 COMMISSIONER BOSARGE: All right.

8 MATT HILL: And, obviously, the commercial catch  
9 has little affect on it, and it is not because of the  
10 amount. It is because it is so stable. It has a quota on  
11 it. That is the stabilizing factor in there. So it  
12 negates itself pretty much every year.

13 Obviously, the recreational catch does play a  
14 significant role in that model input, but the independent  
15 data, in my opinion, what I have seen with these model  
16 runs, is what is driving these large fluctuations.

17 COMMISSIONER BOSARGE: All right.

18 COMMISSIONER DANIELS: Thank you, Matt.

19 Is this your last slide?

20 MATT HILL: I think there is one other summary  
21 slide. We pretty much covered everything.

22 The mean SPR in the last five years of the  
23 assessment is seventeen point five percent with a terminal  
24 year estimate of nine point eight percent.

25 The current twenty percent SPR target will

1 maintain, or increase, Spotted Seatrout population at  
2 current harvest and effort levels.

3 Decreased relative abundance derived from  
4 independent sampling is potentially a result of shifts in  
5 sampling efficacy due to freshwater impacts on our  
6 sampling sites.

7 A benchmark assessment will be completed with  
8 the terminal year 2020 utilizing the new age-structured  
9 model, Stock Synthesis 3, or SS3.

10 That is what we have and, like I said, we will  
11 make sure that Director Spraggins has the information to  
12 be forwarded.

13 COMMISSIONER DANIELS: Thank you.

14 Joe, you will get that to us, as soon as we are  
15 able to locate where that went.

16 Correct?

17 JOE SPRAGGINS: Yes. As soon as we find it, we  
18 will definitely get it to y'all. I am very sorry. I have  
19 not been able to find it and neither has Crystal, but that  
20 doesn't mean anything. It could be out there in the world  
21 somewhere.

22 COMMISSIONER DANIELS: We will blame it on  
23 COVID.

24 How about that?

25 JOE SPRAGGINS: Matt and IT will see if they can

1 find it for us.

2 In the future, especially, Commissioner Bosarge,  
3 please don't hesitate to call me and say, I never got what  
4 I asked for.

5 I am sorry, sir.

6 COMMISSIONER BOSARGE: Joe, like I said before,  
7 we have all got full-time jobs and it is hard for me to  
8 remember.

9 JOE SPRAGGINS: I know.

10 COMMISSIONER DANIELS: Up next we've got Erik  
11 Broussard on our Oyster Task Force Update.

12 ERIK BROUSSARD: Good morning Commissioners,  
13 Director Spraggins, Ms. Chesnut.

14 I have the Oyster Task Force Update.

15 On February 18<sup>th</sup>, the Commission voted to  
16 reestablish the task force. The motion passed three to  
17 one. It requires the task force to meet biannually and  
18 more, if needed.

19 On February 28<sup>th</sup>, a poll was sent to task force  
20 members and the first task force meeting of the year was  
21 scheduled. Unfortunately, March 15<sup>th</sup>, we postponed the  
22 meeting due to the pandemic.

23 May 21<sup>st</sup> was our second attempt to have our first  
24 task force meeting and the June 4<sup>th</sup> date was selected. The  
25 majority were able to participate.

1           Here is a list of the attendees, of the voting  
2 members and non-voting members (indicating slide).

3           Jeremy Forte, Dealer/Processor.

4           John Livings, Dredger.

5           Andrew Livings, Tonger.

6           Walter Boasso, Oyster Aquaculture.

7           Dennis Laubmeir, Recreational Harvester.

8           I will go through the final motions report,  
9 which is just the highlights of the meeting.

10           First up was nomination of officers. John  
11 Livings was elected Chair and Andrew Livings was elected  
12 Cochair. That motion passed five to zero.

13           Motion two was to take some money and spend it  
14 on preventative studies for future openings of the Bonnet  
15 Carre Spillway. That motion failed four to one.

16           Motion three was a substitute motion for motion  
17 two. It was to get someone from Louisiana to come to  
18 Mississippi and explain the Bonnet Carre operating system,  
19 including dredging issues at the mouth of the Mississippi  
20 River. That motion was tabled by the group.

21           Motion four was to prepare a resolution to get  
22 with Louisiana to come up with a joint protection project  
23 with Mississippi. This joint protection program would  
24 include a study and construction of a removable barrier to  
25 divert water from the Bonnet Carre Spillway south between

1 Cat Island and Chandelier Islands. This motion passed  
2 five to zero.

3 Motion five was for some of the 2019 Bonnet  
4 Carre funds to be spent on dealers and fishermen for work  
5 programs and direct payments; includes all components of  
6 the grant, to restore the resources. Dealers and  
7 fishermen to be involved in all disbursements of these  
8 funds. That motion passed five to zero.

9 The last motion of the meeting was to adopt the  
10 by-laws and SOP as advised, including the CMR making the  
11 Oyster Task Force a permanent body and meeting twice a  
12 year and restructuring of the voting and non-voting  
13 members. That motion passed five to zero.

14 That was the first task force meeting of the  
15 year, since its reestablishment. There was good  
16 participation and we will be scheduling the second task  
17 force meeting late summer, probably early fall.

18 That concludes the update.

19 COMMISSIONER BOSARGE: You did a good job, Erik.  
20 Thanks.

21 COMMISSIONER DANIELS: Thank you. Looks like  
22 y'all had some good discussions in there.

23 This is always the fun part of the meeting,  
24 seeing the new state records.

25 I personally enjoyed last month's section here.



1                   what have you got for us today, Matt?

2                   MATT HILL: We've got two records.

3                   The first one is a Youth Division record, a  
4 Spotted Seatrout. The angler is Mr. Maddox McDaniel. The  
5 new record is five pounds five point six ounces.

6                   Here is a picture of the fish. Here is a  
7 picture of Maddox with the fish (indicating photographs).

8                   The next is Conventional Tackle with a Ladyfish  
9 with the old record of three pounds nine point two eight  
10 ounces. The new record is five pounds six point zero six  
11 ounces. The angler is Mr. Doug Borries.

12                   Here is a picture of the fish and a picture of  
13 Mr. Borries with the fish (indicating photographs).

14                   what will be required for these two records  
15 would be a motion to adopt the new State Saltwater Finfish  
16 Records.

17                   COMMISSIONER DANIELS: Do we have a motion?

18                   COMMISSIONER BOSARGE: So moved, Mr. Chairman.

19                   COMMISSIONER DANIELS: Do we have a second?

20                   COMMISSIONER GUESS: I'll second it.

21                   COMMISSIONER DANIELS: Commissioner Bosarge made  
22 the motion. Commissioner Guess seconded it.

23                   All those in favor?

24                   Commissioner Bosarge?

25                   COMMISSIONER BOSARGE: Aye.

1 COMMISSIONER DANIELS: Commissioner guess?

2 COMMISSIONER GUESS: Aye.

3 COMMISSIONER DANIELS: Commissioner Gollott?

4 COMMISSIONER BOSARGE: I think you are muted,  
5 Richard.

6 COMMISSIONER GOLLOTT: Aye.

7 COMMISSIONER DANIELS: Commissioner Daniels aye.

8 Congratulations to the anglers with the new  
9 records. Motion passes.

10 Has anybody got any other business for today's  
11 meeting?

12 JOE SPRAGGINS: Commissioner, we added K.4.

13 COMMISSIONER DANIELS: Sorry. That's right.

14 JOE SPRAGGINS: I would like to say under K.4,  
15 if you could, give an update to the Commissioners on where  
16 we stand on the 2020 for the Red Snapper and what the  
17 catch is at this time.

18 COMMISSIONER BOSARGE: Joe, speaking of that, we  
19 normally get our weekly updates and I haven't seen  
20 anything.

21 JOE SPRAGGINS: No, sir, and I'm sorry. We have  
22 talked about that. Me and Joe were talking about it  
23 yesterday, this last week and things got messed up one  
24 way, or the other, and that is exactly right.

25 We were going to send you one out this week, and

1 I said, "Let's just give it to them because we will have a  
2 more updated one when we get it on the Commission  
3 meeting."

4 I'm sorry, sir. We are looking at that, and I  
5 did ask that question when I came back, and we are trying  
6 to correct that.

7 COMMISSIONER BOSARGE: So we are going to start  
8 getting our weekly updates?

9 JOE SPRAGGINS: Yes, sir.

10 COMMISSIONER BOSARGE: All right.

11 JOE SPRAGGINS: Matt, are you doing this one?

12 MATT HILL: Yes, sir. I will just run through a  
13 summary real quick. We don't have presentation for it,  
14 and we will read out the motion which is requested.

15 Up to this point, a raw reported harvest is  
16 seventy-two thousand eight hundred and sixty-five thousand  
17 pounds by the recreational sector.

18 We ran it through the estimator for non-  
19 compliance which right now is roughly three point nine six  
20 percent, and we came up with seventy-five thousand seven  
21 hundred and fifty-one pounds. This represents fifty  
22 percent of the ACL.

23 We have had two thousand and twenty-three trips  
24 completed, ten thousand six hundred and eighty-four Red  
25 Snapper harvested, thirteen thousand seven hundred and

1 fifty-six Red Snapper discarded, eight thousand one  
2 hundred and ninety-nine anglers participate in the  
3 fishery.

4 Our catch-per-unit effort, our fish per angler  
5 currently is one point three zero. Anglers for each trip  
6 is four point one, and we are sitting currently with an  
7 average weight of six point eight two pounds.

8 Are there any questions on this?

9 COMMISSIONER BOSARGE: That is up a little with  
10 the average pound.

11 Isn't it, Matt?

12 MATT HILL: Yes, sir. It was above seven for  
13 about the first hundred fish we weighed and we got thirty,  
14 or forty, more fish in and added those to it. So we went  
15 below seven, but we are still a little lighter than what  
16 we were seeing last year at the end. It is almost on par  
17 with what we were seeing at this time, but it has started  
18 to see a decline which we do expect right now.

19 COMMISSIONER DANIELS: Matt, typically, the  
20 majority of the fish are caught the first half of the  
21 season anyhow, and, then, everything kind of levels out.

22 Right?

23 MATT HILL: Yes, sir. Once you get to July 4<sup>th</sup>,  
24 when the heat sets in and the fishing gets tough and  
25 everybody gets a little tired, you usually see a pretty

1 steep decline.

2 We have always considered the first half of the  
3 season, Memorial Day to July 4<sup>th</sup>. Obviously, we catch much  
4 more fish. We have much more participation. The weather  
5 seems to be a little bit better, especially temperature  
6 wise. We definitely do begin to see a decline after July  
7 4<sup>th</sup>.

8 COMMISSIONER DANIELS: Overall, you are saying  
9 it looks like we a kind of right on par with what we have  
10 seen in the past years?

11 MATT HILL: I wouldn't say that. I mean, we are  
12 definitely higher, significantly higher than what we have  
13 been. We have had a lot of factors. I have been telling  
14 my staff and anybody that would listen you pretty much  
15 have fuel lower than it has been in recent times. With  
16 the COVID situation, people still weren't working. A lot  
17 of people had a lot of time on their hands. So we  
18 definitely have seen a marked uptick in the trips to this  
19 point.

20 I don't think it is necessarily that the fishing  
21 has anything to do with it. I think a lot has to do with  
22 boredom and it is very affordable to go, right now.

23 COMMISSIONER DANIELS: I'm pretty sure a lot of  
24 them still are not working. It is hard to find a parking  
25 spot in a boat launch anywhere over here, even on Tuesdays

1 and wednesdays.

2 MATT HILL: Yes. We actually ran the numbers  
3 today and we actually have over a hundred trips today, and  
4 we don't see that during the middle of the week,  
5 especially on a Tuesday, but we are starting to see much  
6 higher averages during the middle of the week. People,  
7 they haven't returned to work full time yet. So they have  
8 that opportunity.

9 JOE SPRAGGINS: Also, fuel prices, I think you  
10 mentioned, Matt, are extremely low and people don't mind  
11 running out a few miles.

12 MATT HILL: That's correct.

13 COMMISSIONER BOSARGE: Yes, and we haven't had  
14 much really weather to fish. I imagine that has kind of  
15 kept it down some, too. When the weather does break, I  
16 think the folks are deciding, well, instead of waiting for  
17 the weekend, I better go now while the weather is good  
18 because this year it has been blowing.

19 Matt, have you broke out what the state charter-  
20 for-hire has caught up to this point?

21 MATT HILL: Right now, we are sitting at  
22 approximately forty-three hundred pounds, right in there.  
23 I don't have the exact number written down, but it is  
24 right at forty-three hundred pounds.

25 COMMISSIONER BOSARGE: All right. I was just

1 curious. I didn't know if we still were tracking that.

2 MATT HILL: It is in the system. That was an  
3 artifact of the system. The federal guys are in there and  
4 the state guys are in there, and we try to break  
5 everything down as far as we possibly can just for now and  
6 in the future, if any decisions need to be made, we will  
7 have it.

8 COMMISSIONER BOSARGE: And canceled trips seem  
9 to be staying about the same percentage as they have been  
10 in the past?

11 MATT HILL: Yes. I mean, we haven't seen that  
12 uptick yet. They are very consistent to what they have  
13 been in the last couple of years, the abandoned trips,  
14 what you are talking about, but they are remaining very  
15 consistent.

16 COMMISSIONER BOSARGE: Got you.

17 JOE SPRAGGINS: Commissioners, if I could real  
18 quick, too, they canceled Gulf Council meeting now and one  
19 of the things that they were going to bring up was an  
20 assessment that NOAA had and it was basically the  
21 conservancy had filed and asked them to lower the speckled  
22 trout in three of the states and keep it the same in one  
23 and up it in another, as far as allocation.

24 They are using models that we are looking at.  
25 We have been fighting that issue. We are asking them,

1 now, to table that and let us look at it in the future, to  
2 be able to at least do the SSC before we do anything with  
3 it, but I can tell you right now -- it will be public  
4 knowledge I'm sure -- they are trying to cut Mississippi  
5 sixty-two percent.

6 COMMISSIONER BOSARGE: You are talking about Red  
7 Snapper, not Spotted Seatrout.

8 Correct?

9 JOE SPRAGGINS: Yes, sir.

10 Did I say Spotted Seatrout?

11 COMMISSIONER BOSARGE: Yes, sir.

12 JOE SPRAGGINS: I'm sorry, if I did.

13 I was talking on this snapper deal, where we  
14 are. They are trying to do something with it. We are  
15 asking them to let us go back and look at it because each  
16 one of the states has their own individual way of being  
17 able -- our Tails n' Scales, I believe, is a lot more  
18 accurate than MRIP, and we are trying to fight that.

19 They are in a meeting right now and hopefully we  
20 will get it tabled and be able to bring this to be more  
21 transparent, to let us look at it so each one of the  
22 states can look at it and see where we are as to what  
23 actually ought to be our allocation compared to what they  
24 are giving us.

25 COMMISSIONER BOSARGE: I don't about tabling it.



1 I think they need to discuss it. Maybe not take any  
2 action, but at least have the discussion.

3 JOE SPRAGGINS: The vote was going to be -- I  
4 don't know. Paul has been texting me back and forth, but  
5 the vote was going to be that they table it, and, then,  
6 have some discussions with it, also.

7 I don't know whether it happened. I'm not in  
8 the meeting. I will let you know as soon as I get  
9 something on it.

10 COMMISSIONER BOSARGE: I've got you. All right.

11 MATT HILL: I guess the crux of what we were  
12 asking for with this is Director Spraggins, we had a  
13 conversation the other day about a closure and some things  
14 like that and realized that we only had the authority to  
15 set a start date, which we did on May 22<sup>nd</sup>.

16 What we are asking for, now, is a motion  
17 granting the Executive Director the authority to manage  
18 Mississippi's 2020 Recreational Red Snapper Season under  
19 the guidelines established, and that would give Director  
20 Spraggins the authority to make some decisions based on  
21 some of the numbers that we are seeing.

22 COMMISSIONER BOSARGE: That sounds good to me,  
23 Matt. I will make the motion, but I would request we  
24 don't do this in a vacuum. In other words, let's keep  
25 everybody informed, especially with the weekly reports and

1 give us some information, something to look at so we have  
2 something to base a decision, the decisions you are making  
3 on.

4 I will make the motion that we give the  
5 Executive Director the authority to manage the Red Snapper  
6 season with openings and closures.

7 JOE SPRAGGINS: Commissioner Daniels, real  
8 quick. We do have a public comment that just came in on  
9 this.

10 Do y'all want to do it before your motion, or  
11 after?

12 COMMISSIONER DANIELS: Let's go ahead and let  
13 them make their comment now.

14 JOE SPRAGGINS: Sorry about that. It just came  
15 in, and that is Mr. Johnny Marquez.

16 BRADY SMITH: Johnny Marquez, your mike is live.  
17 You will have to unmute.

18 COMMISSIONER DANIELS: Mr. Marquez?

19 JOHNNY MARQUEZ: Am I live?

20 COMMISSIONER DANIELS: Yes.

21 JOHNNY MARQUEZ: Can you hear me now?

22 COMMISSIONER DANIELS: Yes, we've got you,  
23 Johnny.

24 JOHNNY MARQUEZ: Okay. It took a minute to  
25 unmute.

1           Commissioners and Director Spraggins, I  
2 appreciate the opportunity to comment.

3           I just wanted to quickly comment in favor of the  
4 motion. I don't know. This kind of got lost in the  
5 shuffle this year with all the discussion of the state  
6 charter-for-hire, but we had two very successful seasons  
7 of Red Snapper management by DMR for the 2018-2019 season,  
8 in which DMR had the authority to close the season. So we  
9 had a gap in there from just after July 4<sup>th</sup> until August,  
10 which allowed DMR to recalibrate their numbers and also  
11 provided a split the season that gave the recreational  
12 anglers an opportunity to fish for Snapper in August, when  
13 Amberjack opened up and they had multi-species trips.

14           I don't think anybody in the recreational  
15 community realized that we were changing the season this  
16 year from what we did the last two years.

17           I just wanted to speak out in support of giving  
18 the DMR the authority to manage the season and to have a  
19 closure, if necessary, as was mentioned in the earlier  
20 discussion.

21           I think we have some sort of unprecedented  
22 conditions with the COVID and low fuel prices that are  
23 producing some pretty extraordinary effort and it would be  
24 helpful for DMR to have the ability to close the season,  
25 if they need to.

1 I appreciate your consideration of my comments.  
2 Thank you.

3 COMMISSIONER DANIELS: Thank you.  
4 Joe, do we have any other public comments on  
5 this?

6 JOE SPRAGGINS: Not on this one.  
7 We do have one at the end under M.

8 COMMISSIONER DANIELS: We've got a motion on the  
9 table to give the Director the ability to open and close  
10 the season. Commissioner Bosarge made the motion. I will  
11 second the motion.

12 All those in favor?

13 Commissioner Bosarge?

14 COMMISSIONER BOSARGE: Aye.

15 COMMISSIONER DANIELS: Commissioner Daniels,  
16 aye.

17 Commissioner Guess?

18 COMMISSIONER GUESS: Aye.

19 COMMISSIONER DANIELS: Commissioner Gollott?

20 COMMISSIONER GOLLOTT: Aye.

21 COMMISSIONER DANIELS: Four to zero is the vote.  
22 That motion passes.

23 Do we have any other business?

24 (No response.)

25 COMMISSIONER DANIELS: Not hearing any, we will

1 move on to, I believe, our last public comment, Joe?

2 JOE SPRAGGINS: Yes, sir. It is Mr. Hunter  
3 Dawkins.

4 COMMISSIONER BOSARGE: Joe, under Other  
5 Business, when you send those reports, can you send them  
6 the same way that you have been sending them where you  
7 break out the recreational, the state charter-for-hire and  
8 the federal where we get a good picture of everything?

9 JOE SPRAGGINS: Yes, sir, we will definitely do  
10 that.

11 COMMISSIONER BOSARGE: All right.

12 BRADY SMITH: Hunter Dawkins, your mike is live.

13 HUNTER DAWKINS: Commissioners, Chairman,  
14 Executive Director and Ms. Sandy, just a quick question.

15 I did ask the Governor just the other day in a  
16 press conference and it was almost like he did not exactly  
17 know a hundred percent and I know that you guys have been  
18 on top of this, at least until recently, the GOMESA funds.

19 whoever can answer this question, could you  
20 express to the public what has been going on?

21 I know with Cristobal there was a little bit of  
22 damage, at least along the lines, and I am not necessarily  
23 sure where we are.

24 So thank you very much. Appreciate it.

25 JOE SPRAGGINS: Commissioners, is it okay if I

1 take this one?

2 COMMISSIONER DANIELS: Yes, Joe, go ahead.

3 JOE SPRAGGINS: We are in the process, sir. Out  
4 of the little over forty-seven million dollars that was  
5 allocated in 2018-2019 through GOMESA, there is about six  
6 hundred thousand that has not been obligated and out of  
7 that six hundred thousand, we hold that back just because  
8 we need to have that in case somebody overruns on a  
9 project, or whatever.

10 All of those projects are in process, at this  
11 time, being worked. Only a couple of them have been  
12 finished, but a lot of them are in the process of being  
13 completed.

14 As far as the 2020, the money that came to us,  
15 the forty-one million, that money, we have been taking in  
16 and what we have done we have looked to try to find shovel  
17 ready, anything that was shovel-ready projects that would  
18 fit and we are looking at those as we speak. We also have  
19 asked for people to put in any type of request that they  
20 have and we have, I think, about a hundred and sixty  
21 million dollars worth of requests, right now.

22 what we are doing we are sitting down with the  
23 Governor. Obviously, with the COVID and trying to get  
24 everything working, their schedules are very tight to be  
25 able to get things to look at, but what we are doing, we

1 are in the process, right now. We asked for spending  
2 authority to be able to spend some of that money in 2021  
3 so that we would be able to go forward and be able to do  
4 some of these projects that are in the pipeline now, where  
5 we can complete the pipeline of the ones on 2018 and 2019,  
6 and, then, add new ones for 2020 for the FY2020 money.

7 I cannot tell you where we are on it a hundred  
8 percent. I am waiting on them. I did send a request in  
9 for spending authority. I have not heard back from the  
10 chairman on it, as to whether that has been approved, or  
11 not. I am waiting on that, but also the Governor is  
12 looking at it and his staff is looking at it and we are  
13 evaluating the process as it is now, and we have, like I  
14 said, about a hundred and sixty million dollars worth of  
15 requests for the forty-one million. So there are plenty  
16 of requests out.

17 We are having the Attorney General's office look  
18 at each and every request and tell us whether, or not, it  
19 meets the criteria to the best of their ability, and,  
20 then, once that is brought to us, which we have done,  
21 then, we will take that and look at it.

22 We have a committee. The committee right now is  
23 Jamie Miller with MDA, myself, and, then, Chris Wells with  
24 DEQ, and we will sit down and look at it and we will try  
25 to prioritize these the best we possibly can.

1           Once we get that prioritized, then, we will send  
2 it to the Governor and say, this the list that we feel  
3 like meet, but, before then, it will go back to the  
4 Attorney General again and get some more review to make  
5 sure that we get everything just right.

6           We want to know that we are doing a hundred  
7 percent the way it is supposed to be done and that is what  
8 we are looking at. I know it takes a lot of time.

9           One of the things that we are working hard at is  
10 being able to say, okay, if we have RESTORE Act money and  
11 maybe Jackson County, or Hancock County, or Harrison  
12 County, or some of the cities, put in for some RESTORE Act  
13 money and it is in the process and those RESTORE Act  
14 Funds, maybe it is doing a seawall, or doing something  
15 that would meet this criteria, if that is there, then, is  
16 there a way that we can put part of GOMESA with it to be  
17 able to spend the very first part of it as GOMESA and the  
18 other part as RESTORE because it takes about a year-and-a-  
19 half, or two years, to get authority to spend the RESTORE  
20 part of it.

21           Those are things the Governor is looking hard  
22 at, too, as to what we can possibly do.

23           We are trying very hard to get something done.  
24 It is just a tough time, right now, with the COVID going  
25 on, being able to work through the process.



1 Does that answer your question, sir?

2 HUNTER DAWKINS: Yes, sir. Thank you.

3 COMMISSIONER DANIELS: Thank you, Hunter. Thank  
4 you, Joe.

5 No more public comments?

6 JOE SPRAGGINS: That was the last one.

7 COMMISSIONER DANIELS: Thank you very much  
8 everyone that was here today.

9 At this point, we will need a motion to close  
10 today's meeting.

11 COMMISSIONER GOLLOTT: Mr. Chairman, I make a  
12 motion that we adjourn. This is Commissioner Gollott.

13 COMMISSIONER DANIELS: Do we have a second?

14 COMMISSIONER GUESS: I'll second it.

15 COMMISSIONER DANIELS: Commissioner Gollott made  
16 the motion. Commissioner Guess seconded the motion.

17 All those in favor?

18 Commissioner Gollott?

19 COMMISSIONER GOLLOTT: Aye.

20 COMMISSIONER DANIELS: Commissioner Guess?

21 COMMISSIONER GUESS: Aye.

22 COMMISSIONER DANIELS: Commissioner Bosarge?

23 COMMISSIONER BOSARGE: Aye.

24 COMMISSIONER DANIELS: Commissioner Daniels,  
25 aye.

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Thank you. Everybody have a good week.

CERTIFICATE

I, Lucille Morgan, Certified Shorthand Reporter, do hereby certify that the above and forgoing 73 pages, including this page, is a true and correct transcription of the Zoom Webinar of the June 16, 2020, meeting of the Commission on Marine Resources, as taken by me in shorthand, with electronic verification, and later reduced to typewritten form to the best of my skill and ability; and, further, that I am not a relative, employee, or agent, of any of the parties thereto, nor financially interested in the cause.

s/ \_\_\_\_\_

LUCILLE MORGAN, CSR 1251

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