

MISSISSIPPI ADVISORY COMMISSION ON MARINE RESOURCES

COMMISSION MEETING

Tuesday, February 16, 2020
1:00 p.m.
Zoom webinar

Commission Members:

Ronnie Daniels, Chairman

Natalie Guess, Vice Chairman

Steve Bosarge

Richard Gollott

Mark Havard

Also Present:

Joe Spraggins, Executive Director DMR

Sandy Chesnut, Esq., Assistant Attorney General

1 COMMISSIONER DANIELS: We will start the
2 February 16th, 2021, Mississippi Advisory Commission on
3 Marine Resources meeting.

4 I would like to ask Chief Wilkerson to lead us
5 in the Pledge of Allegiance today.

6 (Pledge of Allegiance was recited.)

7 COMMISSIONER DANIELS: Thank you, Chief.

8 We will have a moment of silence and, if you
9 don't mind, we will have prayer during that moment of
10 silence.

11 Dear Lord, we ask you today to watch
12 over our neighbors that are without
13 power in these cold temperatures and
14 we ask you to watch over the men that
15 are working to restore that. Thank you
16 for protecting and watching over all
17 of our staff, family and friends that
18 have to be out in this today. Please
19 grant us the wisdom to make sound
20 decisions on the issues that we have
21 before us. In Jesus Christ's name I
22 pray. Amen.

23 COMMISSIONER DANIELS: Approval of minutes.

24 Do we have any discussion on the minutes from
25 last month?

1 (No response.)

2 COMMISSIONER DANIELS: No discussion.

3 Do we have a motion to approve?

4 COMMISSIONER HAVARD: This is Commissioner
5 Havard. I would like to make a motion that we approve the
6 minutes for January 19th, 2021.

7 COMMISSIONER DANIELS: Do we have a second?

8 COMMISSIONER GUESS: I'll second, Commissioner
9 Guess.

10 COMMISSIONER DANIELS: Motion by Commissioner
11 Havard; seconded by Commissioner Guess.

12 All those in favor.

13 Commissioner Guess?

14 COMMISSIONER GUESS: Aye.

15 COMMISSIONER DANIELS: Commissioner Havard?

16 COMMISSIONER HAVARD: Aye.

17 COMMISSIONER DANIELS: Commissioner Gollott, are
18 you on here?

19 (No response.)

20 COMMISSIONER DANIELS: Commissioner Daniels,
21 aye.

22 I'm sorry, Steve. I didn't know you had made it
23 on.

24 Commissioner Bosarge?

25 COMMISSIONER BOSARGE: Aye.

1 COMMISSIONER DANIELS: Unanimous. All four that
2 are on were ayes.

3 Approval of the agenda.

4 Do we have a motion to approve the agenda for
5 today?

6 COMMISSIONER BOSARGE: I had a question on the
7 agenda.

8 COMMISSIONER DANIELS: Yes, sir.

9 COMMISSIONER BOSARGE: When you go down on the
10 agenda to K.2, Spotted Seatrout Endorsement, can you
11 enlighten us a little bit what that is on the agenda for?

12 JOE SPRAGGINS: Do you want me to go ahead,
13 Commissioner Daniels?

14 COMMISSIONER DANIELS: Yes, sir, please.

15 JOE SPRAGGINS: Commissioner Havard had called
16 and asked us if we would look at it. He wanted to just
17 review it and that's what we did. We put a review on
18 there. He wanted to review the endorsement, in reference
19 to the amount of Spotted Seatrout that had been caught.

20 COMMISSIONER BOSARGE: I mean, Mr. Joe, we have
21 been over and over and over this. I think you were here
22 the last time we brought it up. I think you were the
23 Director. I'm pretty sure you were. We had a lengthy
24 discussion on it and pretty much got all of this planned
25 out.

1 I mean, it's a commercial fishing endorsement
2 and we have a recreational fisherman asking to bring it
3 up. I don't understand.

4 Can you give me a little purpose and need?
5 what is the problem with it?

6 JOE SPRAGGINS: I guess the situation and it was
7 in the statement -- and Commissioner Havard, you are
8 welcome to chime in anytime, but, basically, we are
9 sitting here with only eighteen thousand pounds of fish
10 that were caught last year and they were looking at the
11 endorsement and the question is, do we need to go back and
12 readdress this because the situation now is do we have
13 enough fishermen to do it, what we are looking at. It
14 could be that COVID caused a lot of it. It could be a
15 situation that people couldn't sell them so they didn't go
16 catch them.

17 COMMISSIONER BOSARGE: Mr. Joe.

18 JOE SPRAGGINS: I'm sorry.

19 COMMISSIONER BOSARGE: Everything has been off
20 especially for commercial fisheries because landings are
21 nowhere near what they were last year on any species.

22 I can't pick up the need and the purpose. We
23 have been through this and been through it and the last
24 time I think it took us about three meetings to come up
25 with a definition, and I don't understand why we need to

1 go back and visit this.

2 COMMISSIONER DANIELS: Joe, let me interject for
3 just a second.

4 I have not seen this presentation.

5 Is it just a review, or is there something on
6 the table that will be voted on today?

7 COMMISSIONER BOSARGE: There is something to be
8 voted on. As a matter of fact, Commissioner Daniels, I
9 tried to pull it up. I was able to pull everything else
10 on the agenda up to look at the presentation, except this
11 Spotted Seatrout Endorsement. I just got it yesterday,
12 the first time I was able to actually pull it up and
13 actually look at it.

14 It sure would have been nice to have just a
15 little bit of time. I have looked at it some, but I'm
16 like you. It kind of caught me off guard.

17 COMMISSIONER DANIELS: Can we just take a look
18 at the presentation today and forgo any type of votes
19 today to give everybody some time to look at it and think
20 about it?

21 COMMISSIONER BOSARGE: I would really like that,
22 just a little bit of time.

23 COMMISSIONER DANIELS: Are you okay with that,
24 Commissioner Havard?

25 COMMISSIONER HAVARD: I am, and the biggest

1 thing is I just had a lot of folks contact me in regards
2 to the license requirement, the endorsement requirement,
3 since we moved it to a percentage of their last year's
4 income. There are not that many fishermen out there.
5 There are just a couple that can meet those requirements,
6 and we left a lot of fish on the table this year.

7 I think that our population is healthy at this
8 point and, if there are fish out there to be caught,
9 regardless of whether it is commercial, recreational,
10 whatever the case is, if there are fish to be caught,
11 let's make it where our commercial guys, in this case, can
12 go catch them.

13 COMMISSIONER DANIELS: If we are going to forego
14 a vote, why don't we discuss this when we get to that
15 point and we will go ahead and get the meeting moving
16 along and we will address this when we get to K.2.

17 JOE SPRAGGINS: Commissioner Daniels, it does
18 say "just review". It doesn't say anything about a vote.

19 COMMISSIONER DANIELS: Okay.

20 COMMISSIONER BOSARGE: You have to look at the
21 presentation. On the presentation, it actually gives
22 suggested motions and options.

23 That's fine. Let's just discuss it, then.

24 COMMISSIONER DANIELS: Do we have a motion to
25 approve the agenda for today?

1 COMMISSIONER HAVARD: Commissioner Havard would
2 like to make a motion that we approve the agenda as
3 written today.

4 COMMISSIONER DANIELS: Do we have a second?

5 COMMISSIONER BOSARGE: I'll second that,
6 Commissioner Bosarge.

7 COMMISSIONER DANIELS: Motion by Commissioner
8 Havard; second by Commissioner Bosarge.

9 All those in favor.

10 Commissioner Guess?

11 COMMISSIONER GUESS: Aye.

12 COMMISSIONER DANIELS: Commissioner Daniels,
13 aye.

14 Commissioner Havard?

15 COMMISSIONER HAVARD: Aye.

16 COMMISSIONER DANIELS: Commissioner Bosarge?

17 COMMISSIONER BOSARGE: Aye.

18 COMMISSIONER DANIELS: Is Commissioner Gollott
19 still not on?

20 Are we not going to have him?

21 CRYSTAL MATTA: We are still working on it.

22 COMMISSIONER DANIELS: If he comes in, if you
23 would, just let me know, Crystal.

24 JOE SPRAGGINS: Crystal, he is not with his
25 sister is what he told me.

1 CRYSTAL MATTA: She has been talking to him.

2 JOE SPRAGGINS: Okay.

3 COMMISSIONER DANIELS: As to the approval of the
4 agenda, we have four ayes, zero nays. The agenda is
5 approved.

6 Director, I am going to turn it over to you.

7 JOE SPRAGGINS: Okay. If we could, bring up the
8 employment contracts.

9 Coralie Rose is our new Dry Lab Director, just
10 hired in on the 16th of last month.

11 If you are not familiar, we have built a new dry
12 lab and we are trying to finish everything up on it as we
13 talk. We are trying to get certifications on it. We will
14 be able to do our own testing now. I think that is going
15 to be a great deal for us and hopefully save us a lot of
16 money in the future.

17 Any questions on that?

18 (No response.)

19 JOE SPRAGGINS: Ralph Terry is our new Seafood
20 Officer, Seafood Technology Bureau, hired in the first of
21 this month.

22 Greg Christodoulou has moved up to the Deputy
23 Director of Wetlands Permitting and Mitigation Compliance.

24 Any questions on any of those?

25 COMMISSIONER BOSARGE: Congratulations to Greg.

1 JOE SPRAGGINS: Yes, good guy, and welcome the
2 other two coming on board.

3 As far as contracts, we have a Request for
4 Qualification to Remote Oyster Setting Facility
5 Feasibility Study.

6 If you are not familiar, this has been going on
7 for five years now that we have been looking at this.

8 When Director Miller was here, they did a thing
9 called the Oyster Council by Governor Bryant and under
10 that, one of the things they did with the study there was
11 they came back and they said that we should look at having
12 a setting facility and being able to put oysters in the
13 water with a setting facility, and we looked at the
14 Gulfport Harbor and that is what we had picked as a place
15 to do it.

16 That has been going on for quite a while and now
17 we have finally got a feasibility study started. What we
18 are looking at is we want to know several things.

19 Number one is how much would it cost to build
20 something that we would need to do it.

21 Number two, what is the amount of tanks and the
22 amount of things that we would need there on the area to
23 do it.

24 Also, what would be the outcome?

25 If we were able to put two-and-a-half billion

1 larvae into those tanks in a year's time during the times
2 that they can be processed from Southern Miss and be able
3 to take them and put them on shell, how many of those
4 would live if we put them in the water, what is the
5 probabilities.

6 We are trying to get something to say is it
7 worth spending ten million dollars that we have a grant
8 for?

9 Is it worth spending ten million dollars to
10 build something?

11 Are we going to be able to get what we need out
12 of it?

13 Is it going to give us what we would see?

14 The other thing is, how are we going to operate
15 it, or who is going to operate it?

16 That was never put in the budget. There was
17 never anything about that was ever put in the budget.

18 We have got to find out, does this make sense,
19 or does it not. That is what we are doing. The idea is
20 to do a feasibility study, before we try to go and spend
21 any more money.

22 Any questions on that?

23 (No response.)

24 JOE SPRAGGINS: We will let you know as soon as
25 we get any information on the feasibility study.

1 COMMISSIONER BOSARGE: Mr. Joe, this is
2 Commissioner Bosarge.

3 The feasibility study, what do you think that is
4 going to run us?

5 Do you have any idea?

6 JOE SPRAGGINS: Six hundred thousand dollars.

7 COMMISSIONER BOSARGE: I'm sorry. Say that
8 again.

9 JOE SPRAGGINS: Six hundred thousand.

10 COMMISSIONER BOSARGE: For a feasibility study?

11 JOE SPRAGGINS: Yes, sir.

12 COMMISSIONER GUESS: That's what this is for,
13 but I'm just curious to know.

14 Do we work with all the economic development
15 people along the Coast for Harrison County, Jackson
16 County, to see if there are existing buildings that are
17 empty that could be converted into something like this, or
18 is that something that whoever presents an RFQ?

19 JOE SPRAGGINS: It has to come off of it,
20 Commissioner Guess. We need to have it on the dock.

21 COMMISSIONER GUESS: Right.

22 JOE SPRAGGINS: And it needs to be water fed
23 straight from the Gulf in the tanks, off the tanks.

24 COMMISSIONER GUESS: Okay.

25 JOE SPRAGGINS: There are only certain times of

1 the year, and Joe Jewell is free to chime in anytime, or
2 Rick, or any of you that are on, but there are only
3 certain times of the year that we can actually plant the
4 larvae into the tanks and be able to move them out. There
5 are only several months out of the year that we can do it,
6 and I want to say it is in the springtime through the
7 summer.

8 Is that right, Joe?

9 JOE JEWELL: I think so.

10 Are you talking about the actual spat that are
11 placed on shells?

12 JOE SPRAGGINS: Yes, placing the spat on the
13 shells in the tanks down on the harbor, and, then, being
14 able to take it from there on the Port and be able to take
15 it from there and put it in the water. It is, like, April
16 to October.

17 Is it somewhere in that time frame that we can
18 operate?

19 In cold weather, obviously, you couldn't do it.

20 JOE JEWELL: That's right. On average it occurs
21 most successfully in the warmer months. That's correct.

22 JOE SPRAGGINS: One of the biggest things,
23 Commissioner Bosarge, we are trying to find out is, is
24 this thing going to allow us to get five million oysters
25 growing extra a year, or fifty million oysters extra a

1 year, or what.

2 what is the feasibility of that and is it worth
3 spending -- because we are estimating right now. That is
4 another thing. Tell us how much it is going to cost.

5 Is it going to cost us a million dollars a year
6 to run this operation, or what is it?

7 Is it better to find a way to buy these
8 somewhere else?

9 Aqua Green has an area that they can put a
10 million oysters in the water a year for a certain amount
11 of money.

12 which is the best way to go?

13 That is what we are looking at. We just want to
14 know which is the best way to make it work and is it
15 feasible at all to do this.

16 They got the numbers and it came out of looking
17 at Chesapeake Bay. It is working at Chesapeake Bay, but
18 they are sure spending a lot of money in Chesapeake Bay to
19 do this, and one of their biggest issues is they are using
20 those oysters to seed other oysters. They are using them
21 to put them in areas that are not harvestable, and, then,
22 they are taking those and being able to seed oysters for
23 other areas.

24 I'm not sure that that is what we are trying to
25 do, at this point. We are trying to grow oysters to be

1 able to be harvested, anytime the Bonnet Carre, or
2 anything else, causes something to happen.

3 We want to know what is the best we can get,
4 without having any disaster, but that is what we are
5 looking at.

6 It is not a cheap operation, sir.

7 COMMISSIONER BOSARGE: Mr. Joe, I was invited
8 out to the facility right above Pearl River County.

9 JOE SPRAGGINS: You are talking about Aqua
10 Green?

11 COMMISSIONER BOSARGE: Yes. They were actually
12 doing that putting spat on the shell. Anyhow, that is a
13 big operation. It was impressive.

14 JOE SPRAGGINS: They are growing the spat all
15 the way, and, then, putting it on shell, and, then, taking
16 it and putting it in the Gulf and letting it bulk in the
17 Gulf in baskets, and, then, bringing it and selling it to
18 people.

19 As a matter of fact, we've got sixty million we
20 bought from them this year that should be out somewhere
21 around May time frame. May to June time frame we will
22 have them in the water and they will be about size of a
23 quarter, about sixty million oysters that we are putting
24 in the water to try to help seed things.

25 we bought some from them before and, obviously,

1 Bonnet Carre killed every bit of that after they had
2 started growing.

3 Theirs is a combination, Commission Bosarge, of
4 what we would be doing with Southern Mississippi.
5 Southern Mississippi is building their hatchery to be able
6 to grow the larvae. They are trying to get it to where
7 they can grow somewhere in the neighborhood of five
8 billion larvae a year. They are saying that they could
9 possibly give us around two-and-a-half billion a year to
10 be able to put on shell, and, then, they are going to take
11 the other two-and-a-half billion and use it for research.
12 That's what they are looking at.

13 what we would be doing is kind of a combination
14 of what you saw there, but it would be us buying the
15 larvae -- not buying it. Southern Mississippi giving us
16 the larvae to put on the shell, and, then, once the shell
17 is put in the water, then, we try to let it set for a
18 couple of weeks in the Port, and, then, after that, from
19 the larvae to the spat and goes out into the Gulf and
20 hopefully see how many of those we can allow to keep alive
21 over a year to a year and a half to two years time frame
22 to harvest them and see where we are.

23 COMMISSIONER BOSARGE: I guess in this
24 feasibility study they will be looking at whether it is
25 feasible for us to do it, or maybe to have Aqua Green do

1 it for us?

2 JOE SPRAGGINS: No. The feasibility study is to
3 tell us what it would cost us to do it and whether, or
4 not, it is cost effective for us to do it, or either try
5 to do it in a different way.

6 CRYSTAL MATTA: Joe, I have Richard on, now.

7 JOE SPRAGGINS: Okay.

8 I think that it is a situation -- they
9 originally were just going to go build it, and, then, I
10 said, wait a minute. Let's at least study it and find out
11 what the heck is going on because the big thing that got
12 me was when they told me they are going to build it
13 because this is coming through the RESTORE Act and they
14 were just going to go out and they were going to build the
15 facility.

16 My questions are, who is going to operate it,
17 where are we going to get the money to operate it, because
18 I didn't have the money in the budget and I didn't know
19 where they were going to get the money.

20 I think it was something that had a lot of
21 ground work going to start with. I think Dr. Kelly Lucas
22 and Jamie and them had originally started this and it was
23 something that was worth looking at to see if it was
24 feasible to keep going, and that is why we backed up and
25 said, let's do a feasibility study. Once we get that,

1 then, we will know.

2 It is really, by the time everything is done,
3 right at a million dollars, Commissioner Bosarge, because
4 they have already spent some of it.

5 After everything is done, it is probably going
6 to be about ten percent of the budget just to do the
7 feasibility study. Nothing is cheap.

8 COMMISSIONER BOSARGE: Do you know who is going
9 to do the feasibility study?

10 JOE SPRAGGINS: We are doing the Request for
11 Qualification, right now.

12 Leslie, are any of y'all on?

13 Is anybody from contracting on?

14 LESLIE BREWER: I'm on, but I'm not sure where
15 we are on that. I know they have talked to several
16 people, but I'm not sure.

17 JOE SPRAGGINS: I thought we went out and we
18 hired an architect engineers.

19 LESLIE BREWER: Yes. They came in and did some
20 presentations, I thought, unless I'm getting confused with
21 another project.

22 JOE SPRAGGINS: I thought one had been chosen.

23 LESLIE BREWER: Not that I'm aware of.

24 JOE SPRAGGINS: Commissioner Bosarge, I will let
25 you know as soon as I find out.

1 COMMISSIONER BOSARGE: I think it would probably
2 be a wise move, if we are going to study it, study if it
3 would be feasible just to have Aqua Green -- instead of us
4 building the whole thing and doing all of that, let's just
5 see if it is feasible to have Aqua Green do it for us.

6 In other words, like you said, you don't have
7 the money to man this place and everything else.

8 Anyhow, just another option.

9 JOE SPRAGGINS: I am talking to Walter on a
10 regular basis and we are looking at it, could Aqua Green,
11 and the other thing is he cannot do the amount that we are
12 looking at. That's one thing.

13 The other part is do we do something and, if it
14 is something that is feasible, do we give it to another
15 university, like, Mississippi State, or Alcorn, or
16 somebody else, to help with Southern.

17 There are a lot of things to look at here, sir,
18 and I think, until we get some good idea of what it is
19 going to cost and what it is going to be and how much we
20 are going to get out of it, I really don't know where to
21 go with it at this point.

22 COMMISSIONER DANIELS: Joe, is this the same
23 type operation that we tried to do here in Pass Christian?

24 JOE SPRAGGINS: It is a complete huge larger
25 scale of that.

1 Now, we moved all the Pass Christian over to --
2 the one that we were doing there, we were actually growing
3 the larvae, too, in Pass Christian, and, then, we moved
4 that and, now, we are basically just doing a setting
5 facility over in Gulfport, but it got torn up in Zeta. So
6 we are having go fix it, that small setting facility.

7 Joe, if y'all are on, I don't know where we are.
8 I know we were trying to get money back from it to be able
9 to fix it, but I think it is down for this year and it
10 will probably take most of the time -- as soon as we are
11 able to get anything from the Feds to be able to fix it,
12 we will be able to go in and bring that back up.

13 We are not actually doing the hatchery anymore
14 part of it. We are only doing the setting.

15 COMMISSIONER DANIELS: One other question I had,
16 you said Aqua Green, they are up in Pearl River County?

17 JOE SPRAGGINS: Yes, Poplarville.

18 COMMISSIONER DANIELS: The facility that you are
19 talking about doing has to be Gulf side in order to pump
20 water in, but they are growing them all the way up there?

21 JOE SPRAGGINS: They are doing the same thing
22 that we are doing in Lyman. We are making saltwater with
23 those different ponds up there and growing Speckled Trout.
24 They are doing the same thing. They are making their own
25 saltwater which is fine and everything is fine with that.

1 It all started as a big project and the whole
2 thing was they started growing something and it was not
3 oysters when they first started that area up there. I
4 can't remember what they were growing. It may have been
5 some type of fish, or something. I can't remember what
6 they were growing up there.

7 SANDY CHESNUT: It was some type of fish.

8 JOE SPRAGGINS: Yes, some type of fish, and,
9 then, they got into this, and, then, Southern Mississippi
10 was going to buy them out, and, then, when the Federal
11 Government came in and gave them the appraisal, it was a
12 lot less than what Walter was willing to take and they
13 couldn't give them more than what the appraisal was. So
14 it just got crossways, and, then, Southern Mississippi
15 wound up building their own facility, the hatchery part of
16 it.

17 Now, the question is, how do we do the setting
18 part?

19 As you said, Commissioner Bosarge, it might be a
20 situation where it is more feasible to just give it to
21 them and let them sell it.

22 COMMISSIONER BOSARGE: My memory is starting to
23 come back to me. Really, Aqua Green is now Spat-Tech, I
24 believe.

25 Is that right?

1 JOE SPRAGGINS: You are exactly right. It is
2 Spat-Tech, now.

3 COMMISSIONER BOSARGE: That is what they are
4 doing is oysters. That is a massive facility.

5 JOE SPRAGGINS: Yes, and they've got a great
6 operation going and they are selling oysters to a lot of
7 places, not just us. They are selling them to Louisiana
8 and they are selling them to other states. They are doing
9 some good operation there and we are working hand-in-hand
10 with them.

11 The biggest problem this year, the COVID caused
12 an issue, and, then, the Bonnet Carre in 2019 caused an
13 issue.

14 We have had to slip our contract over and over a
15 couple of times with them on this second contract to keep
16 them going, but I hope we are going to get everything in
17 the water sometime in May, or June, of this year.

18 COMMISSIONER HAVARD: Joe, I think it is very
19 smart of you to be looking at a feasibility study before
20 we just go spend ten million bucks. I think that is very
21 smart and that tells me that you are treating our taxpayer
22 dollars just as if they were yours. I appreciate you
23 looking at that and not just going and spending it and
24 worry about how to man it and staff it and make it work
25 after the fact.

1 JOE SPRAGGINS: I don't want to spend it unless
2 it is good money to be spent and I hate to spend this much
3 money doing a feasibility study. I promise you, but there
4 is no way I can do around it.

5 Any other questions on that?

6 (No response.)

7 JOE SPRAGGINS: I will keep y'all updated, once
8 we get something going. As soon as I find out who is
9 doing the contract, I will let y'all know on that, also.

10 No more procurement.

11 As far as the Agency update, obviously, we have
12 bills in the legislature right now. We only had two bills
13 to go live I believe is what it is.

14 Of the two bills that are still alive, one of
15 the bills deals with administrative penalties and I don't
16 know where it is going. It died in the Senate. It passed
17 out of the House and didn't pass out of the Senate. I
18 don't know where they are going with it.

19 The other one is the highwater mark. It passed
20 out of the House, also. It did not come out of the
21 Senate, but now it will go back to the Senate because it
22 came out of the House, and that is so we can be able to do
23 our own bulkhead, as far as giving them permits, and that
24 is just to straighten it out.

25 The Marine Patrol one died in the House and the

1 Senate, and the reason it died is because it was a
2 situation that all agencies wanted to look at it. They
3 wanted to go back and say that we were talking about doing
4 reserve officers and paying reserve officers, or to that
5 point, but we want to look at every agency. We want to
6 look at wildlife. We want to look at Highway Patrol. We
7 want to look at any law enforcement agency in the state
8 and let's look at all of them together and see how this
9 would work, and I said that's fine. We will definitely do
10 that. It's not going to kill us. We are fine.

11 A couple of other bills that started out and
12 died, one of them was to you start a new commission as to
13 how to spend GOMESA and RESTORE Act money. That died. It
14 came out of the Senate, but I think it didn't make it out
15 of committee. I think it died on the floor. It never
16 came up. That one is over with.

17 There were a couple of other things out there.
18 There was one about allowing seafood, as far as our bait
19 fish, shrimp, and being able to sell them in other states,
20 and that died. That was something, after Senator Seymour
21 and us talked about it, he said, I think this is not the
22 right way to go with that. He basically let it die in
23 committee.

24 That is pretty much where we are. We do have a
25 bill in the House right now that just passed called 1360.

1 what happened was this past year they only had seven point
2 four million in Tidelands. They wanted five million of
3 that to go public access, and, then, we had to have one
4 point two million to pay the bond debt which only left us
5 a million and thirty-nine thousand dollars in spending
6 authority to be able to run the agency.

7 The agency has to have more than that to be able
8 to run off of Tidelands with what we do because we have to
9 match the money with the NERR, we have to match it with
10 Heritage, we have to also match it with Marine Patrol, we
11 run Lyman off of it and there are just a lot of things
12 that operate it, plus our water quality testing and all
13 runs off of it.

14 They came back and they said, okay, well, we
15 will just go give you -- I didn't need any additional
16 money. I just needed the actual spending authority
17 because we had money in there to do it. There is a bill
18 now to give us another two million in spending authority
19 and that's all it is. It is just spending authority; no
20 additional funds.

21 Any questions on any of that, as far as the
22 legislature that we are talking about?

23 (No response.)

24 JOE SPRAGGINS: As far as the Commissioners, I
25 have talked to the Governor's office and we have three

1 Commissioners up for reappointment. I have talked with
2 the Governor's office about it and he told me that they
3 would try to get it on the schedule here shortly, but he
4 has had so much going on.

5 They have it. They have the names. They have
6 everything moving. At this point, I don't see any issues
7 with it. It is just a matter of when it will come up;
8 sometime next month probably.

9 Any other questions on that, as far as the
10 Agency update there?

11 (No response.)

12 JOE SPRAGGINS: As far as today, most of them
13 are working from home because of the weather. We decided
14 to let people work from home because we didn't want
15 anybody on the icy roads.

16 With this new thing that we have in the world
17 called zoom and other things, we can do a lot of things
18 that we couldn't do before. That really helps.

19 CARES Act. The money has been sent out. We are
20 the first one in the Gulf to be able to send the money
21 out. Mississippi was the first one to get money out to
22 everybody. I don't have the numbers.

23 Traci, are you on?

24 (No response.)

25 JOE SPRAGGINS: Rick, are you on?

1 RICK BURRIS: Yes, sir, I'm on.

2 JOE SPRAGGINS: Do you know the numbers?

3 RICK BURRIS: I want to say it was four, or
4 five, thousand for the commercial fishermen and about the
5 same for the charter fishermen. I can't remember what the
6 processors was.

7 JOE SPRAGGINS: It was about thirty thousand for
8 the processors, I think.

9 RICK BURRIS: That sounds right, yes, sir.

10 JOE SPRAGGINS: It was different amounts for
11 different people. What happened was we could not make you
12 any better than whole.

13 whatever you lost, if you lost thirty-five
14 percent, then, we could give you up to thirty-five percent
15 to a certain number. If you lost seventy percent, then,
16 we could get you as close to seventy percent as we could
17 with the amount of money that we had in each one of the
18 categories.

19 It seemed to work out because some people only
20 lost five hundred dollars. Well, it wasn't right to give
21 them five thousand. We had to go back and fix it, and it
22 was done according to what your loss was with a formula
23 that they use at NOAA, to come back and say this is what
24 we are paying.

25 So far, I have not heard any grumbling about it.

1 Have any of y'all heard anything?

2 (No response.)

3 JOE SPRAGGINS: If not, we are doing all right.
4 That is out. As I said, we are the first state
5 in the Gulf.

6 Then, the next is the 2019 Bonnet Carre. It is
7 working.

8 Rick, you are onboard, so go ahead and give any
9 updates you have on it.

10 RICK BURRIS: Yes, sir. I received our first
11 review from NOAA last week. We are currently working on
12 that response. We will send that back to them and, if
13 they are good with it, then, they will forward it on to
14 OMB. Once OMB approves it, then, we will be awarded the
15 money.

16 That sounds easy, but it is still going to take
17 a little bit of time. I imagine it is going to go through
18 a couple more review periods, but the process is started
19 and, like I said, we are going to get some information
20 back to them next week and, hopefully, they will forward
21 it on to OMB.

22 JOE SPRAGGINS: We are hoping to have that. If
23 everything works right, maybe by the summer we could have
24 something we hoped for and be able to get some money to
25 the fishermen and the different processors.

1 This is the first time in history that the
2 processors and the charter boats and all have been
3 included in the Bonnet Carre funds that I know.

4 Is that correct, Rick?

5 RICK BURRIS: We did pay them last year, when we
6 paid them at the end of the year.

7 JOE SPRAGGINS: The charter boats were not
8 included in it.

9 Right?

10 RICK BURRIS: That is correct, yes, sir.

11 JOE SPRAGGINS: Plus, bait shops are included
12 and other things in this one.

13 RICK BURRIS: That's right.

14 JOE SPRAGGINS: It is something a little
15 different. We have a little over twenty-one million
16 dollars. Right at that number is what we have accessible.

17 It is going to be something that hopefully we
18 will be able to go out and do good and help some people,
19 and maybe we can keep our fishing fleet open for another
20 year, or so, and we can get nature to turn around and help
21 them get back on course.

22 COMMISSIONER BOSARGE: Rick, I had a question.

23 RICK BURRIS: Yes, sir.

24 COMMISSIONER BOSARGE: Last time when we had the
25 2011 Bonnet Carre Spillway Disaster Relief, we had a

1 special meeting. I'm trying to remember. I think it was
2 up on the sixth floor, if I remember correctly, but,
3 anyhow, we went over that spend plan.

4 Are we going to do anything like that this time?

5 I mean, on the CARES Act, we didn't have any
6 input on it at all.

7 I would like to know that we had just a little
8 input on this 2019 Bonnet Carre Spillway Disaster Relief.

9 JOE SPRAGGINS: I don't have a problem with
10 that, Commissioner Bosarge.

11 We've got a spend plan that we have sent to
12 NOAA, and I'm sorry if we got our cart in front of the
13 horse here. I'll be honest with you.

14 Rick, go ahead and send the Commissioners, if
15 they haven't already receive that, the spend plan that we
16 have now that the Governor has looked at.

17 RICK BURRIS: Okay. We can do that.

18 JOE SPRAGGINS: Then, we will get together, if
19 we need to. If y'all feel a need and we want to do that,
20 we will definitely sit down.

21 This spend plan is not in concrete right now.
22 This is just a draft.

23 COMMISSIONER BOSARGE: So this spend plan
24 includes the breakdown of monies, how they will be spent
25 for education and --

1 JOE SPRAGGINS: (Interposing) Yes, sir,
2 everything is in there.

3 COMMISSIONER BOSARGE: That was where we kind of
4 hashed everything out in that meeting.

5 JOE SPRAGGINS: Okay and, once again, this spend
6 plan can be modified at any time.

7 COMMISSIONER BOSARGE: I got you. That's fine.
8 All right. Thank you, Mr. Joe.

9 JOE SPRAGGINS: Any other questions on the
10 Bonnet Carre?

11 (No response.)

12 JOE SPRAGGINS: If not, Sandy, are you ready to
13 do the update on actions?

14 SANDY CHESNUT: Yes, sir.

15 The action discussed at the January 2021 meeting
16 was the Jackson County Board of Supervisors' request for a
17 ten-year --

18 COMMISSIONER HAVARD: (Interposing) Excuse me,
19 Sandy.

20 Do you mind getting a little bit closer to the
21 mike?

22 I can barely hear you.

23 SANDY CHESNUT: Sure.

24 At the January 2021 meeting, the item discussed
25 was the Jackson County Board of Supervisors' request for a

1 ten-year permit and required variance to the Mississippi
2 Coastal Program for beach renourishment for the Front and
3 East Beach in Ocean Springs and Pascagoula Beach.

4 The Commission recommended approval of this
5 request and the Director approved the request, and we have
6 no pending items.

7 JOE SPRAGGINS: Any questions on that?

8 (No response.)

9 JOE SPRAGGINS: If not, sir, that is all I have,
10 and I will turn it back over to you, Commissioner Daniels.

11 COMMISSIONER DANIELS: Thank you, Director.

12 Do any of our Commissioners have anything to
13 report today?

14 (No response.)

15 COMMISSIONER DANIELS: Office of Marine Patrol.
16 Chief Wilkerson, have you got a report on
17 citations?

18 KYLE WILKERSON: Yes, sir, I do.

19 Hopefully, we find all of you well and warm
20 during this cold time we are having.

21 Pretty self-explanatory, the reports are.

22 I had several citations written. The officers
23 have been extremely busy this last month. We are always
24 busy, but it seems the colder it gets the busier it gets.

25 Let me look at the number of stops. I always

1 like to see how many stops a do a month. We are tracking.
2 We had about eleven hundred and eighty-one total stops for
3 the month.

4 If you have any other questions on any of these
5 citations, please ask them and I will field them.

6 COMMISSIONER DANIELS: Pretty good.

7 I hope y'all are staying warm out there on that
8 water. I know how cold it gets out there.

9 KYLE WILKERSON: Yes. I was just thinking about
10 it. We can't zoom from the water. So we have got to be
11 out there.

12 COMMISSIONER DANIELS: Yes.

13 KYLE WILKERSON: Thank you, sir.

14 JOE SPRAGGINS: We can get you a satellite and
15 you can zoom.

16 COMMISSIONER DANIELS: Office of Coastal
17 Resources. Looks like the first presentation is by Matt
18 Murphy.

19 MATT MURPHY: Yes, sir.

20 Good afternoon. My name is Matt Murphy and I
21 have a quick request for a permit extension by the Jackson
22 County Board of Supervisors. It is in the Davis and Stark
23 Bayous in Ocean Springs, the General Use District, and the
24 agent is Seymour Engineering.

25 Here is a quick aerial of the original project

1 location, and, then, on the next slide is just a slightly
2 more zoomed-in area.

3 For the original project description, it was
4 maintenance dredging, three thousand nine hundred and
5 fifty feet long by forty to fifty feet wide, maintenance
6 dredged to a depth of three feet below mean low water.

7 This is simply a permit extension request. They
8 are not changing any dimensions to anything.

9 On the next slide, there is the original
10 diagram, or one of the original diagrams, and, then, one
11 more.

12 On April 19th of 2011, the project was originally
13 presented to the Commission and was approved as
14 recommended.

15 Then, January 7th of this year, we received a
16 request for a permit extension by Seymour Engineering.

17 Based upon departmental review and evaluation,
18 staff recommends approval of the applicant's extension
19 request.

20 Are there any questions?

21 COMMISSIONER BOSARGE: Matthew, I had one
22 question. This is Commissioner Bosarge.

23 MATT MURPHY: Yes, sir.

24 COMMISSIONER BOSARGE: Is the dredge material
25 going to be used in the beneficial use sites?

1 MATT MURPHY: I believe right now there aren't
2 any sites available and they will have to write a letter
3 of exception, or we will.

4 COMMISSIONER BOSARGE: So, I guess the Deer
5 Island place is pretty full?

6 MATT MURPHY: Last I heard I think so.

7 COMMISSIONER BOSARGE: All right. That's the
8 only question I had.

9 JENNIFER WITTMAN: Commissioner Bosarge, this is
10 Jennifer Wittman.

11 The Deer Island Beneficial Use Site that the
12 Commission approved a couple of years ago, it still has
13 not been approved by the Corps of Engineers and so we are
14 awaiting all of our Federal permits before we can proceed
15 with that Deer Island Habitat Restoration site that is to
16 the west of the mouth of Grand Bayou on the north side of
17 Deer Island.

18 COMMISSIONER BOSARGE: Jennifer, it has been two
19 years and we still haven't gotten it approved?

20 I mean, they haven't approved it?

21 JENNIFER WITTMANN: It will be three years in
22 April.

23 COMMISSIONER BOSARGE: Okay. Thank you.

24 JENNIFER WITTMANN: Yes, sir. You are welcome.

25 COMMISSIONER BOSARGE: I will make the motion

1 that we accept the staff's recommendations.

2 COMMISSIONER DANIELS: I will second that
3 motion.

4 Motion made by Commissioner Bosarge; seconded by
5 Daniels.

6 All those in favor.

7 Commissioner Guess?

8 COMMISSIONER GUESS: Aye.

9 COMMISSIONER DANIELS: Commissioner Gollott?

10 COMMISSIONER GOLLOTT: I'm in favor.

11 COMMISSIONER DANIELS: Commissioner Havard?

12 COMMISSIONER HAVARD: Aye.

13 COMMISSIONER DANIELS: Commissioner Bosarge?

14 COMMISSIONER BOSARGE: Aye.

15 COMMISSIONER DANIELS: Commissioner Daniels,
16 aye.

17 It passes.

18 MATT MURPHY: Thank you.

19 COMMISSIONER DANIELS: Thank you.

20 Next up is Greg. I'm not going to butcher that,
21 Greg. I'm sorry.

22 GREG CHRISTODOULOU: That's okay.

23 Can everybody hear me okay?

24 COMMISSIONER DANIELS: Yes, sir.

25 GREG CHRISTODOULOU: Well, good afternoon

1 everyone.

2 I am just going to be presenting a permit
3 request by the agency for an expansion of the leased area
4 south of Deer Island for off-bottom oyster aquaculture
5 and, right now, it is the General Use District.

6 If you go to the description, the impacts are
7 going to be the same as what was allowed previously for
8 the other leased areas; a maximum twelve percent coverage
9 of the site total for the floating basket method of
10 culture, and, then, the impacts itself with their choice
11 of either screw-down anchors, or pilings.

12 In this case, the wooden pilings and the PVC
13 pilings would be used more for the walking longline of the
14 longline system, as opposed to the baskets.

15 There is no variance request, but there is a Use
16 Plan change as we have had previously with the other two
17 areas from a General Use to S-2 and S-3 Special Use areas.

18 You can look at the diagram just to see where it
19 is in relation to the previously permitted areas. It will
20 be just to the north of the previously permitted areas.

21 The reason for that is it is a little bit
22 shallower water. A lot of the fishermen who want to
23 utilize that longline system tend to find it more
24 efficient to work their gear by walking, or wading,
25 through the water. This affords them a little bit of

1 opportunity to use that system.

2 we did put the public notice in The Sun Herald.
3 we did it on a couple of occasions, and, then, we did have
4 what I will call a modified public hearing to justify the
5 Use Plan change.

6 what I did was I basically set up a table in the
7 lobby of the building after hours at the main entrance,
8 and anyone who wanted to make a comment on the project
9 could come in one at a time wearing a mask and have their
10 comments recorded on the record. They would have up to
11 three minutes to speak, and we would do that until
12 everyone had their comments in, or drop off any more
13 written comments.

14 we did have no one show up to make comments, but
15 I was there anyway.

16 DEQ is reviewing the project.

17 we had no objections from Archives and History.

18 No comments from Wildlife, Fisheries and Parks.

19 Secretary of State's office has said a lease
20 will be required.

21 The recommendation is that the project does
22 provide public benefit by creating jobs and providing a
23 product that is in demand and not currently available
24 through local, traditional harvest, and it also provides a
25 nearshore habitat for recreational and commercial fish and

1 invertebrate species.

2 Staff is recommending approval of the Use Plan
3 change as well as the permit all contingent on water
4 quality certification from MDEQ.

5 COMMISSIONER DANIELS: I've got to tell you that
6 after what happened to our oysters it sure is nice to be
7 able see some people eating locally grown Mississippi
8 oysters. I'm in favor.

9 I will make the motion on this one.

10 COMMISSIONER BOSARGE: I will second that
11 motion.

12 I also just want to put in there
13 congratulations, Greg, on the promotion. If anybody
14 deserved it, you definitely did.

15 GREG CHRISTODOULOU: Thank you.

16 COMMISSIONER DANIELS: We've got a motion by
17 Commissioner Daniels; a second by Commissioner Bosarge.

18 All those in favor.

19 Commissioner Guess?

20 COMMISSIONER GUESS: Aye.

21 COMMISSIONER DANIELS: Commissioner Havard?

22 COMMISSIONER HAVARD: Aye.

23 COMMISSIONER DANIELS: Commissioner Gollott?

24 COMMISSIONER GOLLOTT: Aye.

25 COMMISSIONER DANIELS: Commissioner Bosarge?

1 COMMISSIONER BOSARGE: Aye.

2 COMMISSIONER DANIELS: Commissioner Daniels,
3 aye.

4 Motion passes.

5 Ms. Leslie is up next.

6 LESLIE BREWER: Good afternoon Director,
7 Commissioners and legal counsel.

8 You will have to excuse my voice. I'm under the
9 weather today.

10 My name is Leslie Brewer, CFO. I will be
11 presenting the Agency's financials for the month ending
12 January 31st, 2021.

13 At the end of January, our State Revenue was
14 three point nine million. Our Total Agency Revenue was
15 fourteen point one million.

16 Our State Net Income was four hundred and fifty-
17 nine thousand and our Total Agency Net Income was one
18 million.

19 Next slide, please.

20 After seven months of fiscal year 2021, we have
21 eighty-one point seven percent of the Operating Budget
22 remaining, while the Tidelands Budget has fifty point six
23 percent remaining.

24 Do you have any questions?

25 COMMISSIONER DANIELS: We don't have any

1 questions.

2 LESLIE BREWER: Okay. Thank you.

3 COMMISSIONER DANIELS: Thank you, Leslie. Hope
4 you are feeling better.

5 LESLIE BREWER: Thank you.

6 COMMISSIONER DANIELS: Ms. Charmaine.

7 FRANCESCA LINTHICUM: Good afternoon. This is
8 Francesca. I'm giving Charmaine's report for her.

9 COMMISSIONER DANIELS: Okay.

10 FRANCESCA LINTHICUM: The Mississippi Department
11 of Marine Resources was mentioned eight times in local,
12 state and national media since the January MACMR meeting.

13 Popular news items included the opening of
14 commercial fishing season for Spotted Sea Trout and a
15 shrimp boat that had been stranded since Hurricane Zeta.

16 So far in FY21, Marine Patrol has taught six
17 boat-and-water safety classes with a total of a hundred
18 and fifty-six students.

19 Fisheries, Marine Patrol and Public Affairs also
20 assisted Pathways 2 Possibilities, a program that educates
21 eighth grade students across South Mississippi about
22 various career paths, by providing a video describing the
23 career fields available in Marine Science and Law
24 Enforcement at the MDMR.

25 That's all I have.

1 COMMISSIONER DANIELS: Thank you for that.
2 Office of Marine Fisheries, Mr. Joe. We haven't
3 heard from you in a little while.

4 Are you here?

5 (No response.)

6 COMMISSIONER DANIELS: Jason Saucier.

7 JASON SAUCIER: Good afternoon Commissioners.

8 My name is Jason Saucier, and I would like to
9 provide a brief follow-up presentation on our recent
10 Derelict Crab Trap Cleanup.

11 The public cleanup was conducted on January 28th
12 through the 30th.

13 We recovered three hundred and ten traps with
14 the help of volunteers, fishermen and MDMR staff, during
15 this year's event.

16 You can see there a breakdown for each
17 collection site. We had a hundred and ninety-five
18 collected at Ocean Springs Harbor, seventy-eight at
19 Pascagoula Point Park and thirty-nine collected at Bayou
20 Caddy (indicating slide).

21 Since 1999 when the program began, we have
22 collected over twenty-two thousand two hundred and fifty
23 traps.

24 I would like to recognize our partners this
25 year. We had some assistance from Owens Scrap Metal who

1 provided a dumpster for us to put all the collected pots.
2 MSU staff contributed with trailers and hauling collected
3 pots to our central location. CGRL staff helped us in
4 collection and reconnaissance work. We got the help of
5 many commercial fishermen and public volunteers this year
6 for a successful event.

7 That's all I have, unless anybody has any
8 questions.

9 COMMISSIONER DANIELS: Thank you, Jason.

10 Good thing getting those out of the water. They
11 make a mess whenever a boat prop hits them. I can tell
12 you from experience.

13 JASON SAUCIER: Yes, sir, they do.

14 COMMISSIONER DANIELS: Next is K.2, Spotted
15 Seatrout Endorsement.

16 MATT HILL: Good afternoon Commissioners.

17 We were asked to review the language in the
18 endorsement. We have looked at it and we actually have
19 the current language up first as status quo, and we do
20 have some options from some of the things we have seen
21 and, obviously, it will be up to the Commission and
22 Director Spraggins on where we go from here.

23 The first line is our current Spotted Seatrout
24 language. This went into effect November 15th of 2018.

25 We are currently working on our fifty thousand

1 pound quota. This quota season begins February 1st and
2 ends October 31st. It is broken into two segments of
3 twenty-five thousand pounds each. The first segment is
4 February 1st through May 31st, and the second segment is
5 June 1st through October 31st.

6 In order to qualify for the annual spotted
7 seatrout endorsement, you must have twenty percent of your
8 taxable income from commercial fishing activities and the
9 documentation provided will be a filed IRS tax form
10 showing the taxable income for that for the previous year.

11 A Marine Fisheries Trip Ticket officer will run
12 a sales summary for the year chosen using trip tickets to
13 determine if the eligibility requirement has been met. It
14 is tied to your Federal tax returns and what the fisherman
15 has currently in the trip ticket system.

16 Next slide.

17 Proposed language in Option one would be to
18 alter the season from February 1st to October 1st and make
19 it a twelve-month season beginning January 1st and ending
20 December 31st to fall in line with the rest of our quota
21 seasons.

22 We would also change requirements to those
23 established prior to 2019 of the five thousand dollars of
24 seafood product, or ten percent of net income from
25 commercial fishing activities.

1 we would keep the ten percent, how it was
2 before. If the actual fisher can't fill out the form that
3 we were providing, we request that for the five thousand
4 dollars of documentation that that be linked to the Trip
5 Ticket system.

6 If the Commission and the Director so choose to
7 go this route, that was one of the issues that we did have
8 is we were accepting receipts, out-of-state receipts, in-
9 state receipts, things that we weren't able to verify. It
10 was very difficult. So we would ask that that five
11 thousand dollars be linked to the Trip Ticket system for
12 their commercial activities.

13 Next slide.

14 This is basically what it would read. It would
15 look much like it did before the 2018 change, although the
16 things that I mentioned would be in there and the main
17 thing would be the fisher must have a minimum of five
18 thousand dollars of seafood product sales in any twelve
19 consecutive months in the Trip Ticket system, or the
20 fisher must present ten percent and that would be
21 determined by the tax preparer. That would be the same,
22 but the five thousand dollars would have to be linked to
23 the Trip Ticket system.

24 Next slide.

25 Proposed language for Option Two. We would do

1 the same thing. We would move the season, extend the
2 season which is currently February through October to
3 January through December, also change the corresponding
4 season segments to six-month periods, and we would
5 completely change the requirement for qualification from
6 twenty percent of taxable income to one thousand dollars
7 of Finfish caught and sold by the applicant in the MDMR
8 Trip Ticket system.

9 Next slide.

10 This is what that complete language would look
11 like. Basically, it would be the extension of the season
12 from January through December with the two six-month
13 segments.

14 We would do away with the IRS tax forms and it
15 would be a flat dollar rate of one thousand dollars of
16 Finfish; not only seafood product, but just Finfish, in
17 the Trip Ticket system.

18 These are, obviously, the three things that are
19 up for discussion, or any questions.

20 I understand that y'all haven't had a lot of
21 time to review this.

22 If there are any questions on what this would
23 look like, please feel free.

24 COMMISSIONER BOSARGE: Matt, this is
25 Commissioner Bosarge.

1 MATT HILL: Yes, sir.

2 COMMISSIONER BOSARGE: Why are we here?

3 I don't understand.

4 In other words, what is wrong with what we did
5 back in 2018?

6 MATT HILL: Why we are here -- and my position
7 is I did not request this -- we were asked to review this
8 language, so we did have the opportunity. This is
9 something that was not brought up by the Marine Fisheries
10 Office, but, when it was brought up, it definitely was an
11 opportunity because I will be blunt about it.

12 It had nothing to do with the quota, or not
13 meeting the quota, some of these changes. The staff that
14 continuously has to work with this every day is having a
15 very difficult time with the IRS tax forms. They are
16 extremely difficult to decipher.

17 We do not have someone that is qualified to do
18 that on a day in and day out basis. We are lucky that we
19 have, in the Trip Ticket Department, a Certified Public
20 Accountant and she has been able to do this, but that is
21 not her job.

22 COMMISSIONER BOSARGE: Matt, on your tax form,
23 there is one line. It says "Taxable Income". I don't
24 understand what you are having such a problem with that.

25 MATT HILL: Well, we are having a difficulty

1 with -- and it is. It is that simple. We are doing that,
2 but we are having people come in with some things with the
3 -- so many things have changed since this has happened and
4 we are having to keep up with it, and we are getting
5 pressured and questioned by accountants that do this for a
6 living; what is taxable income, what is not taxable
7 income. We talked about retirements, investments.

8 COMMISSIONER BOSARGE: Net income is a question.
9 I can understand net income because you really can't
10 define that. It is according to who you are and what you
11 do, but taxable income, that is on everybody's tax
12 statement. That is one line. You read it. No more
13 questions.

14 MATT HILL: And we have several that are filing
15 jointly, and that has been a big issue with both of them
16 in the business. We are having difficulty deciphering
17 whose is what.

18 COMMISSIONER BOSARGE: Maybe we need to go
19 closer to Louisiana, then.

20 I mean, have you seen Louisiana's qualifier for
21 this?

22 MATT HILL: Yes, sir, I have.

23 COMMISSIONER BOSARGE: You want me to read it to
24 you?

25 MATT HILL: I have read it, and Florida's is

1 very restrictive, also.

2 COMMISSIONER BOSARGE: In other words, the point
3 I'm trying to make is we are relatively simple and
4 relatively easy which we tried to do that when we set it
5 up, but we wanted to make sure this is a commercial
6 license and it was for commercial fishermen. It wasn't
7 for recreational fishermen who wanted to sell their fish.

8 That's the way we set it up and that's the way
9 it needs to stay.

10 MATT HILL: And I agree with that, but some of
11 the options and some of the things that we are proposing
12 are specific in that way. If it is linked to the Trip
13 Ticket system, they have a commercial license and they are
14 selling these products and we have the numbers to show
15 where these cutoffs are it makes it a whole lot cleaner
16 when we have the system that we have.

17 COMMISSIONER BOSARGE: We divided that season
18 into two seasons for a reason and, now, you are wanting to
19 combine it back.

20 MATT HILL: No. I'm not wanting to combine it
21 back. I want to keep it in two seasons. I want to
22 extend it from a nine month to a twelve month. Instead of
23 having the two smaller seasons. We would have two six-
24 month segments.

25 COMMISSIONER GOLLOTT: Matt, the reason for the

1 nine months is because December and January are your cold
2 months. The trout move up the rivers. For people that go
3 up there and catch them, they are not supposed to and they
4 are making a living up there in these rivers and stuff
5 which is illegal.

6 why would we open that season back up, when
7 we've got it closed so that people are not...

8 JOE JEWELL: Let me answer that question,
9 Richard, because you and I were there when that occurred.

10 There were reports that commercial fishermen
11 were going into the areas north, or west, of the CSX
12 railroad. Although none was ever cited for that, there is
13 always the potential they could do that.

14 The actual season, you are correct about. That
15 is when the trouts move upstream into the deeper waters
16 into the lower river areas. The only people that have
17 access to that are the recreational fishermen, not the
18 commercial fishermen.

19 If commercial fishermen are actually violating
20 that no matter what time of year it is, Marine Patrol
21 should cite them.

22 That was the reason. You are correct. That is
23 the reason why we modified the season because it was
24 twelve months long like the rest of the commercial
25 fisheries.

1 COMMISSIONER GOLLOTT: well, isn't it illegal
2 for recreational fishermen to go up the river and catch
3 fish and sell them?

4 JOE JEWELL: To sell them, yes, but they can
5 land whatever amount they want to catch. If there are
6 five hundred pounds there, they can catch five hundred
7 pounds.

8 COMMISSIONER BOSARGE: The point I'm trying to
9 make is if you realize we have been through all of this,
10 we have had all of these discussions, we hatched all of
11 this out and we came up with the best plan that I thought
12 was fair for everybody, I don't understand why we are back
13 through this again.

14 COMMISSIONER GOLLOTT: Because we've got some
15 people that want to circumvent the law is what it is.
16 They want to get back in there and sell it so they can pay
17 for their boats and their recreational fishing trips.

18 COMMISSIONER HAVARD: I don't think that is the
19 case at all, Commissioner Bosarge.

20 COMMISSIONER GOLLOTT: well, when this was going
21 on, I knew the people that were catching the fish up the
22 river, trolling for them and all and selling them. So it
23 was a big deal.

24 we didn't cite anybody because we just didn't
25 catch them. They were too smart.

1 I can't see changing any of this. It has been
2 successful.

3 COMMISSIONER HAVARD: Well, if you've got the
4 department that is having trouble reading the tax returns
5 and you've got a quota that is not being able to be met,
6 that tells me that we are leaving fish on the table for
7 the commercial world and we are not doing a good job
8 within because we don't have the knowledge base to assess
9 every way taxes can be submitted; whether it is joint,
10 head of household, filing single.

11 There are just some holes that are in this
12 language that need to be corrected from a CPA standpoint,
13 but from a quota standpoint, if you guys aren't worried
14 about leaving that much quota on the table, nor am I.

15 COMMISSIONER BOSARGE: In Louisiana they
16 actually -- if you guys are having a problem reading their
17 tax return and trying to figure it out, in Louisiana you
18 would have to submit your tax return to the Department of
19 Revenue, and, then, the Department of Revenue lets the
20 Louisiana Fish and wildlife know if you qualify.

21 If that's what we need to do, maybe that is what
22 we need to do.

23 COMMISSIONER HAVARD: Okay. We visited it and
24 I'm okay with it. From the recreational world, if you
25 want to look at it from that angle, they are glad to have

1 the quota knocked down where the commercial world is not
2 able to maximum on the quota.

3 I'm just speaking from the standpoint of the
4 Department not being able to read the tax returns and get
5 clarification there and that's it.

6 If you guys feel that there is no change needed
7 at this time, I'm okay with tabling the issue, or quashing
8 it and letting it move on.

9 COMMISSIONER BOSARGE: I think that's what we
10 need to do.

11 COMMISSIONER DANIELS: Is that all of the
12 discussion we've got on it?

13 COMMISSIONER HAVARD: That's all that I have on
14 it, Commissioner.

15 COMMISSIONER DANIELS: Thank you for the
16 presentation, Matt.

17 MATT HILL: Yes, sir.

18 COMMISSIONER DANIELS: Do we have any other
19 business today?

20 JOE SPRAGGINS: Commissioner, I have a couple of
21 things real quick for you. We did get an answer as to
22 that contract. I thought that contract had already gone
23 out and I was right. Machado Patano are the ones who won
24 that contract. That is an engineering firm. So they are
25 the ones that are going to do the feasibility study.

1 COMMISSIONER DANIELS: Okay.

2 JOE SPRAGGINS: One thing real quick, too. I
3 know everybody has probably heard it. There is a big
4 fight going on for Red Snapper as far as the allocation.
5 There is a big fight going on right now in the Gulf
6 Council.

7 The Gulf Council has some thoughts that they
8 think that -- they did an assessment and they used what
9 they call the MRIP assessment and Matt, or one of them,
10 could very easily tell you more about it than I can
11 because they are so much more knowledgeable of it, but
12 basically what it is, they do a mail-in survey and the
13 mail-in survey comes back, and, then, they use that and
14 they put factors into it, and their factors, as far as I'm
15 concerned, are totally out to lunch on what could have
16 happened in Mississippi.

17 They are trying to hold it to -- and NOAA saying
18 that they need to hold this and this is what it is. It
19 went to the SSP. They upheld it.

20 what we are looking at now, if that goes
21 through, then, this year we are trying to look at when we
22 are going to set the Red Snapper quota and the Red Snapper
23 quota will go down from a hundred and fifty-one thousand
24 pounds to fifty-eight thousand in Mississippi.

25 we had a big fight with it. When I say "fight",

1 it is just some are for it and some are against it. I
2 don't mean to call it the word "fight". I don't think
3 that is a good way to put it. We had a big discussion on
4 it.

5 That is what they are calling Option Two and in
6 that Option Two, Mississippi would lose two thirds of
7 theirs, Alabama would lose forty to fifty percent of
8 theirs, and Florida would gain a bunch, and Louisiana
9 would gain some, and Texas would stay the same.

10 This is an antiquated system that they are
11 using. It is called a mail-in. They are saying that our
12 Tails n' Scales cannot be counted because it does not have
13 five years of data.

14 Our Tails n' Scales are by far the best of any
15 of them out in the Gulf, I believe. I believe that we are
16 probably the best in the United States as far as what we
17 are doing with it and even NOAA believes that. NOAA
18 believes that, also, that it is good.

19 However, they feel like that they need to stand
20 their ground.

21 We are fighting very hard right now with
22 Louisiana and Texas and others and Florida. Congress is
23 getting involved in it. The Senate is getting involved in
24 it.

25 It is not going to come out as a beautiful thing

1 either way about it, but the thing that we have to
2 understand is if we did what NOAA said, we caught three
3 hundred and thirty thousand pounds of Red Snapper in 2019,
4 and I don't believe that at all, and we had a hundred and
5 six thousand trips.

6 That would have meant that we had to have
7 roughly fourteen hundred trips a day for seventy-nine
8 days.

9 we have never had more than around four hundred,
10 or four fifty, a day and that is even on the 4th of July,
11 or whatever.

12 It is totally skewed out of proportion, and we
13 are fighting very hard to change this.

14 I tell you we are going to fight very hard with
15 it. We are going to fight for everything we've got to
16 make sure that they don't do it. We are going to fight
17 that they do not hold Mississippi to that because it is
18 wrong. It is not fair. It is not what should happen.

19 We have a Great Red Snapper Count which has just
20 been an initial assessment that was brought out and has
21 not been made official, but that Great Red Snapper Count
22 says that we've got about three times the Red Snapper in
23 the Gulf of Mexico than NOAA thought we had.

24 If you add the Great Red Snapper Count into the
25 equation, if they did that and this came back, then,

1 Mississippi would get just a small bump in it because of
2 that, and, then, Louisiana would get some and Alabama and
3 Florida. Everybody would be okay. Alabama would lose a
4 little bit, but not much. If they did it that way, that
5 is the way -- I think what we are going to ask them is
6 what we I have been asking for the last two meetings with
7 the Gulf Council and that is that they do nothing with the
8 2021 quota until they can incorporate the Great Red
9 Snapper Count.

10 COMMISSIONER DANIELS: How many years do we have
11 on Tails n' Scales?

12 JOE SPRAGGINS: We only have one, or two, that
13 we actually had official reporting.

14 We have been doing it, Matt, what it is, almost
15 five years now?

16 MATT HILL: Yes, sir, we have been doing it five
17 years, and we have had two years of the EPF, and, then, a
18 year of the one fifty-one that we just did.

19 COMMISSIONER DANIELS: How many years of useable
20 data do you have?

21 MATT HILL: In my opinion, I have five years of
22 useable data.

23 COMMISSIONER DANIELS: In their opinion, how
24 many do you have?

25 MATT HILL: Three at the max. Depends on which

1 one is looking at the it.

2 COMMISSIONER DANIELS: Mark, did you have
3 something to say?

4 COMMISSIONER HAVARD: That is the exact same
5 question I had, Commissioner Daniels. So I'm good.

6 COMMISSIONER DANIELS: Keep fighting. That MRIP
7 is a mess.

8 Matt, do you know when the Great Red Snapper
9 Count will be considered, I guess, relevant?

10 Is that the right term for it?

11 MATT HILL: To my knowledge, I know there are
12 some meetings coming up where they are going to start to
13 discuss an analysis that is coming out. The SSC is going
14 to meet and begin to discuss the relevance -- it's
15 obviously relevant, but how the Science Center decides to
16 include those numbers into the actual interim analysis of
17 the assessment. That will be one of the bigger meetings
18 coming up. I believe it is at the end of March.

19 Hopefully, early April we will know a little bit
20 more about what is going on. It is kind of in the hands
21 of the Science Center and the SSC at the moment.

22 COMMISSIONER DANIELS: Is there any possibility
23 of them holding off until that data is useable before they
24 do something, or are they going to move forward with this?

25 MATT HILL: I was encouraged. I mean, Director

1 Spraggins and Rick talked a little more about it, but just
2 from what I heard from the last meeting, I was encouraged
3 that obviously some things got put off, and I believe that
4 the further down the road we can kick the can on this
5 until all this data is useable the better off we are, the
6 state.

7 I hate to say it like that, but, right now, the
8 data definitely doesn't favor us with what they want to
9 use, but, if we can get the Great Red Snapper Count and
10 there is some other data out there. We put a lot stock
11 into that particular data stream, but there is some other
12 data out there that they are looking at and, hopefully,
13 that will have a positive impact just on the overall
14 biomass and help us out in the long run.

15 Right now, time is in our favor, I believe. The
16 closer we get to that Memorial Day when those states are
17 all planing on opening up the better off we are.

18 COMMISSIONER DANIELS: Y'all keep up the good
19 work. I know it is a lot on this one particular fish.

20 JOE SPRAGGINS: Commissioner Daniels, this is
21 going to come to vote again in April. When we have our
22 Gulf Council in April, it will have to come up again at
23 that point.

24 Obviously, the Mississippi stats on that is that
25 we don't want to do anything until the Great Red Snapper

1 Count is brought in.

2 If we felt like that we were overfishing in
3 Mississippi, it would be an entirely different story, but
4 we know we are not overfishing the way that they are
5 looking at. There is just no way in the world that we
6 caught the kind of fish and we had the number of trips
7 that even come close to it.

8 I think they said a hundred and six thousand
9 and, Matt, I think you said we had right at twenty
10 thousand trips last year.

11 Is that correct?

12 MATT HILL: Yes, sir, that's correct.

13 JOE SPRAGGINS: I mean, our Tails n' Scales is
14 very, very deliberate. The people have to report it. If
15 they don't, they get caught with it. We have the law
16 enforcement agency that is sitting there watching them
17 come out of there. They know where they are going and
18 they know the people, where they are fishing. It is not
19 like we are not doing a good job here.

20 If it was something that I thought there was any
21 chance and I told the council this at the last meeting
22 that if I thought there was any way in the world that we
23 were overfishing, I would not, and I don't believe there
24 is a director of any one of the five states that would do
25 that, would ever try to overfish our population.

1 That is not what we are after, but I am not
2 going to sit back and let them do antiquated data to come
3 up and tell us that we have done something we haven't, and
4 I'm not going to sit back on it, and I am going to fight
5 it.

6 If I can get the senators and the congressmen
7 fighting it with me -- they are doing it right now -- I am
8 going to get them to do it in Washington and the Governor
9 looking at it with us. This is not something that we need
10 to take.

11 Some people in the Gulf Council think that we
12 will be in violation of Atkinson Stevenson Act and I can
13 understand that. I understand that totally and I
14 understand their thoughts there. I understand where they
15 are coming from. I never want to be in violation of any
16 Act.

17 The point is we know. As I put it to them the
18 other day, it is like you bring someone to trial and you
19 know there is evidence that is coming out in another two,
20 or three, weeks, or a month later, and you go ahead and
21 try the guy, or the person, and say hang them. You hang
22 them, and, then, wait for the new evidence to come out and
23 say, well, we shouldn't have hung him. That is crazy.

24 We know the evidence is there. We know that we
25 have the numbers there. We know it is out there. NOAA

1 knows it is there.

2 Just because the Ocean Conservancy is a little
3 concerned about it, I think the Ocean Conservancy even
4 knows it and I don't think they are pushing the button
5 nearly as hard as NOAA thinks they are, and I think that
6 they are really trying to do what is right.

7 Ocean Conservancy doesn't want to see us
8 overfish and we don't want to see ourselves overfish.

9 I can tell you even Roy Crabtree himself big
10 statement, Alabama and Mississippi, the way that MRIP
11 works does not fit them, but they will not take it out and
12 tell us that we can be assessed on it. It is just not a
13 workable solution.

14 I am not going to back down. I am going to
15 fight it to the very end. If there is something y'all
16 could help me with, I would appreciate it.

17 COMMISSIONER DANIELS: I can tell you I know
18 what our local boat launches look like on a normal basis.
19 I would hate to see them if we had sixteen hundred snapper
20 boats a day going out.

21 JOE SPRAGGINS: I don't think we have ever had
22 sixteen hundred boats on the water at one time anywhere.

23 COMMISSIONER DANIELS: I hear you.

24 JOE SPRAGGINS: Much less snapper fishing.

25 I just wanted to bring y'all up to date on it.

1 It is coming. You will probably see something being
2 spread around on it. We are looking hard at it. We are
3 fighting our battles.

4 COMMISSIONER BOSARGE: Mr. Joe, I didn't hear
5 you quite clearly.

6 Did you say who was actually going to do the
7 feasibility study?

8 JOE SPRAGGINS: Yes, sir. It is Machado Patano.

9 COMMISSIONER BOSARGE: Okay. Good deal.

10 I think, from my understanding, the thing that
11 is holding up the Red Snapper count is the final report
12 from that Great Red Snapper Count. It's not the Science
13 Center, or any of them. It is that they haven't issued
14 the final report.

15 JOE SPRAGGINS: You are talking about as far as
16 the Great Red Snapper Count?

17 COMMISSIONER BOSARGE: Correct.

18 JOE SPRAGGINS: Once again, they do know that
19 that report, they feel very accurate with it. It was done
20 by a scientific review of people, not just any one group,
21 a bunch of scientists working on it and they feel very
22 strongly with it.

23 For us to sit here and think that we are going
24 to get another two thirds more Red Snapper to be able to
25 catch, that is not going to happen.

1 COMMISSIONER BOSARGE: I'm with you, Mr. Joe,
2 the science. It is all about the science.

3 JOE SPRAGGINS: Yes, and it should be.

4 COMMISSIONER BOSARGE: When the science gets
5 there, the better off hopefully we will be. The more
6 science you have the better you can manage these
7 fisheries.

8 JOE SPRAGGINS: That's right.

9 Even on the light side, Commissioner Bosarge, on
10 the light side if it goes up twenty-five percent instead
11 of three hundred percent, or two hundred percent, if it
12 goes up twenty-five percent, it is still going to make
13 things work even across the board for everybody, and they
14 know it is going to go that much. There is no question in
15 anybody's mind it is going to be twenty-five percent, but
16 the question is how much over twenty-five percent.

17 I don't think there is a single state that is
18 willing to go out there and say, wait a minute. You are
19 saying we've got two thirds more. Let's take at least a
20 third more, or whatever, or a half more. No. They are
21 not after that.

22 They want to manage it, too. They want to look
23 at it the same way and everybody wants to make sure that
24 we keep this growth and we keep this fishery going, and it
25 is a lifeblood for a lot of people.

1 I tell you it is huge tourism down here for us.
2 It is huge, and it means a lot for the state of
3 Mississippi for the income that the state gets as far as
4 tourism because a lot of people come down here just to go
5 out there and take their boat and go snapper fishing.

6 I you don't believe it, watch it and you will
7 see, but it never happened. There is no way in the world
8 we ever had thirteen, or fourteen, hundred boats in any
9 one day ever. Maybe a third of that at the max that we
10 have had at some time, or another, the busiest day of the
11 year.

12 Anyway, sir. I didn't mean to hold y'all up.

13 COMMISSIONER DANIELS: Do we have any public
14 comments today, Director?

15 JOE SPRAGGINS: No, I have none.

16 Crystal, you didn't send me any.

17 Right?

18 CRYSTAL MATTA: No, sir. There are no public
19 comments today.

20 COMMISSIONER DANIELS: Do we have a motion to
21 adjourn?

22 COMMISSIONER BOSARGE: So moved, Mr. Chairman.

23 COMMISSIONER DANIELS: I'll second it.

24 All those in favor.

25 Commissioner Guess?

1 COMMISSIONER GUESS: Aye.
2 COMMISSIONER DANIELS: Havard?
3 COMMISSIONER HAVARD: Aye.
4 COMMISSIONER DANIELS: Gollott?
5 COMMISSIONER GOLLOTT: Aye.
6 COMMISSIONER DANIELS: Bosarge?
7 COMMISSIONER BOSARGE: Aye.
8 COMMISSIONER DANIELS: Daniels, aye.
9 Everyone have a nice day and try to stay warm
10 out there.
11 JOE SPRAGGINS: Thank y'all. Thank you for
12 changing with me.
13 COMMISSIONER DANIELS: Anytime, Joe.
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CERTIFICATE

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3 I, Lucille Morgan, Certified Shorthand Reporter,
4 to hereby certify that the above sixty-six pages,
5 including this page, is a true and correct transcription
6 of the zoom webinar of the February 16, 2021, meeting of
7 the Mississippi Advisory Commission on Marine Resources to
8 the best of my skill and ability; and, further, that I am
9 not a relative, employee, or agent, of any of the parties
10 thereto, nor financially interested in the cause.

11
12
13 s/ _____

14 LUCILLE MORGAN, CSR 1251

15 COURT REPORTER
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