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MISSISSIPPI ADVISORY COMMISSION ON MARINE RESOURCES
COMMISSION MEETING

Tuesday, May 18, 2021

9:00 a.m.

Bolton Building Auditorium
1141 Bayview Avenue
Biloxi, Mississippi 39530



COMMISSION MEMBERS:

- Ronnie Daniels, Chairman
- Natalie Guess, Vice Chairman
- Cam Roberds (Zoom)

Also Present:

- Joe Spraggins, Executive Director DMR
- Sandy Chesnut, Assistant Attorney General

1 COMMISSIONER DANIELS: I would like to call
2 today's Commission meeting to order.

3 To start off, I would like to recognize State
4 Representative Larry Byrd for joining us today. We
5 appreciate you coming, sir.

6 LARRY BYRD: Thank you.

7 COMMISSIONER DANIELS: I would like to ask
8 Director Spraggins to lead us in the Pledge of Allegiance.

9 (Pledge of Allegiance was recited.)

10 COMMISSIONER DANIELS: If y'all don't mind, we
11 will say a quick prayer to get this thing started.

12 Dear Lord, we humbly ask you that you bring
13 bring comfort to the Gollott family. We lost
14 a good member of the Commission and a man that
15 did a lot for marine resources.

16 we also continue to ask you to give us sound
17 judgment to make good decisions based on our
18 resources that we are protecting here.

19 In Jesus Christ's name I pray. Amen.

20 COMMISSIONER DANIELS: Approval of minutes.

21 Do we have a motion to approve the minutes from
22 the April 20, 2021, meeting?

23 COMMISSIONER GUESS: I'll make the motion.

24 COMMISSIONER DANIELS: I'll second that.

25 All in favor?

26 COMMISSIONER GUESS: Aye.

1 COMMISSIONER DANIELS: Aye.

2 COMMISSIONER ROBERDS: Aye.

3 COMMISSIONER DANIELS: Approval of the Agenda.
4 Do we have a motion to approve today's agenda?

5 COMMISSIONER GUESS: I'll make a motion.

6 COMMISSIONER DANIELS: I'll second it.

7 All in favor?

8 COMMISSIONER GUESS: Aye.

9 COMMISSIONER ROBERDS: Aye.

10 COMMISSIONER Daniels: Aye.

11 COMMISSIONER DANIELS: Mr. Joe, I turn it over to
12 you.

13 JOE SPRAGGINS: well, first off it is good to be
14 back once again to have meetings in public and be able to
15 look at faces and talk to people. Always great to have.
16 we have a couple of things up here.

17 Obviously, all of us at DMR want to tell the
18 Gollott family how sorry we are for the loss of a good
19 friend of ours, Richard.

20 Richard was a twenty-year commissioner
21 basically. He was appointed in 2004, so it is almost
22 twenty years.

23 He did a real good job for with the shrimp
24 industry and with the processors and was always there for
25 us.

26 I have learned a lot over the last few years and

1 I think that his knowledge was impeccable, the knowledge
2 that he had of what can be done.

3 Once again, I just want to tell the Gollott
4 family how sorry we are and I know he is in a better
5 place.

6 One other thing we are going to do this morning;
7 something a little different. We have had a couple of
8 things change around in the agency.

9 I met with the Governor's office last week and
10 we have decided on our new Chief Operations Officer and I
11 would like to introduce Patrick Levine.

12 Patrick, come on up here.

13 Patrick is our new Chief Operations Officer. He
14 comes to us out of Marine Patrol, the Assistant Chief of
15 Marine Patrol, and has done a fantastic job there and will
16 do a fantastic job as our Chief Operations Officer.

17 (Applause.)

18 Patrick, is there anything you want to say?

19 PATRICK LEVINE: Well, I want to say thank you
20 for the opportunity. It has been a privilege to serve
21 almost twenty years in Marine Patrol.

22 I shared with the staff yesterday. I said I
23 can't talk about it because I was tearing up a little bit
24 thinking that I was walking away from the guys that I
25 worked with for so long, but I know that we are going to
26 still be working together, and I am excited for this new

1 opportunity to serve with Director Spraggins as we look at
2 ways that we can enhance, protect and conserve the
3 resources on the Mississippi Gulf Coast.

4 I know it is going to be a new challenge. It is
5 going to be exciting to work with the other departments
6 and learning what they do and seeing how we can make a
7 difference with the resources that have been given to us
8 here in Mississippi and how we can better serve the
9 citizens of the State of Mississippi.

10 Thank you for the opportunity.

11 JOE SPRAGGINS: You are more than welcome. We
12 are glad to have you.

13 COMMISSIONER DANIELS: Thank you for everything
14 you do, Patrick.

15 COMMISSIONER GUESS: Congratulations.

16 COMMISSIONER ROBERDS: Congratulations.

17 PATRICK LEVINE: Thank you.

18 COMMISSIONER DANIELS: Joe, if you don't mind, I
19 am going to interject real quick just one thing we need to
20 get on the record.

21 Commissioner Guess and I are here in person.

22 Commissioner Roberds is on Zoom. So he is a
23 part of the meeting. We do have three Commissioners here,
24 even though you can't see all of us. He is listening and
25 he will be chiming in.

26 JOE SPRAGGINS: Employment contracts.

1 we've got a few people that have moved up.
2 Eric Gigli is now promoted to DMR Marine
3 Fisheries Scientist V. He is out of the Finfish Bureau.

4 Cassy Porter is promoted to NERR Resource
5 Specialist V.

6 Jada Whittington is promoted to Sergeant in
7 Marine Patrol.

8 Demetria Gowdy-Boykin is our new Accounting
9 Specialist, and she came to us from one of the casinos and
10 does a great job with us.

11 Jacob Goff is a NERR Resource Specialist.

12 Donovan Dawsey is a port Security Officer and he
13 is going to help us out in our new Port Security mission.

14 we've got some good people coming in. Plus,
15 we've got a new COO. It is a lot of good people coming in
16 to do the work.

17 we have eleven interns that will be starting
18 June the 1st. We are very proud to do this. We have
19 interns that come to us out of the colleges in the local
20 area and they want to work with something to do with
21 Marine Science.

22 It is a good opportunity for us to be able to
23 look at them and talk with them and give them an
24 opportunity to come here and understand a little bit about
25 Marine Science, as far as Department of Marine Resources.

26 I tell you, we've got quite a few that came here

1 as an intern and wound up being full-time employees when
2 they graduated. That is a good deal when you do that and
3 you get a chance to look at them.

4 The power company and other places do it, and I
5 tell you it is great for us to be able to do that.

6 We look forward to having them here. We've got
7 two of them in Fisheries and one at Lyman Fish Hatchery.
8 We've got two at the NERR and one in Public Affairs. Four
9 in Coastal and one in IT. We are getting a little bit
10 spread around to everything on it.

11 Hurricane response is here. Here we are in
12 2021. Hurricane season is here.

13 We are not going to get over alarmed on
14 anything. They have projections out there. Projections
15 are just a projection, but I can tell you, Commissioners,
16 that DMR is ready. We will have our personnel ready. We
17 will have our equipment ready. We will be standing by.

18 Patrick has been doing that for the last couple
19 of years with us and we will have him right there to make
20 sure that we have everything done. In case we do have
21 another hurricane, or something, hit the Coast of
22 Mississippi, we will be prepared.

23 Also, we have teams that are prepared. If
24 something happens somewhere else on the Gulf Coast, or
25 anywhere else, we can send them to them.

26 That is another good thing that we can do.

1 Mississippi has teams that can go and do search and
2 rescue, and that will be a very good deal.

3 COVID. We have been doing fairly well with it.
4 I think you have noticed that the Governor has released
5 the mask mandate.

6 what we have done in DMR is we have asked. The
7 question is whether, or not, you want to wear a mask. I
8 am not going to mandatory require that masks be worn.
9 However, we ask each other to be a little bit considerate
10 about everyone else.

11 Myself, I have had the shots over two months,
12 both of them. I feel like I am fairly safe. Even though
13 that I am supposedly inoculated to it, I can come back and
14 be able to contract it and maybe pass it on to someone
15 else.

16 we ask them, just wear a mask, if you don't
17 mind. Be considerate of other people and look at them and
18 think about maybe they haven't had the disease and maybe
19 we need to do something with it to help them out.

20 I tell you what. It is not a funny thing to
21 happen. We want people to do it. We are trying to fight
22 this battle in Mississippi. The Governor has done an
23 outstanding job with his team fighting this battle and we
24 want to continue to help him fight this battle.

25 That is where our policy is at DMR, as far as
26 that.

1 Just real quick, too, the skimmer trawls, the
2 TED's that Rick is sending out for reimbursement, we had a
3 total of thirty-three applications received and completed
4 applications is ten at this time. Twenty-three incomplete
5 applications that we are waiting to work on. Ten payments
6 were mailed April the 30th.

7 Now, they did extend that. I think it was all
8 the way to the first of August.

9 Is that right, Rick?

10 RICK BURRIS: Yes.

11 JOE SPRAGGINS: They extended to the first of
12 August, but we are here. We have the money to pay it. If
13 you have a skimmer trawl and you need to have the TED for
14 it, get with us. We will tell you what to do and we will
15 set you up in the system. You can see Traci Floyd and she
16 will make sure it is done and get you the money.

17 We want to pay you for it. We don't want to
18 make you have to do it by yourself. We will be glad to
19 pay you for it.

20 It is up to seven hundred dollars.

21 Is that right, Traci?

22 TRACI FLOYD: That's correct.

23 JOE SPRAGGINS: Anything that you want to do with
24 that, we would appreciate it. It is going to be a
25 requirement. I don't see them being able to extend that
26 past the first of August because we have already done one

1 extension.

2 Other than that, Commissioners, we are doing
3 good, the DMR, right now.

4 Our budget was passed, in case you didn't see
5 it. We do have a budget, a little over ninety-two million
6 dollars. It is a good budget.

7 We have GOMESA projects, we have Tidelands
8 projects, we have funds to be able to operate the agency
9 with no problem and we have the personnel.

10 We are very thankful to the legislature, both
11 House and Senate, and we are also thankful to our Governor
12 and Lieutenant Governor and the Speaker for fighting hard
13 for us to get this done.

14 Thank you very much, sir.

15 I forgot something. I keep looking at notes
16 Crystal gave me.

17 Real quick on the CARES Act. Right now it is
18 sitting with Governor's office and we should get back an
19 answer to be able to go out for public comment.

20 Is that correct?

21 TRACI FLOYD: Yes, sir.

22 JOE SPRAGGINS: This is round two of the CARES
23 Act which is three million dollars out of one point five
24 million.

25 If you have any questions, please call her.

26 2019 Bonnet Carre update.

1 Rick, where is it at this time?

2 RICK BURRIS: It has been submitted to NOAA. We
3 are just waiting on final approval from them and the
4 Office of Management and Budget.

5 Once we get that done, then, we will actually
6 get the funds here, but we are still waiting on approval
7 from them. It is still in process.

8 JOE SPRAGGINS: We are trying to push for that.
9 We are trying to get that out sometime this summer. It
10 would be nice.

11 Just to give you an indication, the 2011 Bonnet
12 Carre Funds, the funds were not given to us until 2016.

13 This is 2019. We are only in 2021. We feel
14 like we are ahead of the ball game a little bit. We are
15 getting this thing moving forward.

16 RICK BURRIS: Yes, sir.

17 JOE SPRAGGINS: Actions update from prior
18 meetings, Sandy.

19 SANDY CHESNUT: At the April meeting, the
20 Commission made a motion to recommend approval of MDEQ's
21 request for a variance, use plan change, and permit to
22 construct breakwaters along the southern shoreline of Big
23 Island.

24 Director approved that request with the
25 conditions that were requested, also, by the staff.

26 Director also approved the motion to recommend

1 approval of the request for three variance requests and
2 permits by the Jackson County Board of Supervisors for
3 Catherine Roberts Bayou and Dutch Bayou and the mitigation
4 plan that was talked about and the conditions that the
5 staff recommended.

6 we have three pending items, and we may have an
7 update on one.

8 Commissioner Daniels requested that the DMR work
9 with the Federal Government regarding the process to
10 obtain a permit for any type of activity within one mile
11 of the Gulf Islands.

12 I don't know if we have an update on that, or
13 not. We May.

14 The second one was the Commission's motion to
15 recommend a violation and fine in the amount of five
16 thousand dollars to Shawn Gollott. That is still pending.

17 The Commission's motion to recommend the request
18 for after-the-fact authorization for the existing
19 boathouse and approval of the proposed boathouse and a
20 recommended fine for a violation to the contractor, Cleo
21 Benward. That is still pending until we can obtain more
22 information.

23 COMMISSIONER DANIELS: I am going to ask Patrick
24 Levine to give us a little rundown on what happened with
25 the permits.

26 PATRICK LEVINE: Thank you for asking me to give

1 an update on what happened with the permits with the
2 charter fishery.

3 I reached out to acting Director, Darrell
4 Echols, of the National Park Service, and he looked into
5 the situation and come to find out what was happening is
6 individuals would put in for a permit and they would start
7 the process there and it would go back to the fisherman.

8 Often, whenever they would send a request back
9 to the fishermen, it would go to their spam box in their
10 email and it was left there pending.

11 We reached out, had a conversation with them and
12 asked them to put a phone call out to each of the
13 fishermen that had applied for a permit to help facilitate
14 the process.

15 They said that is a reasonable request, and I am
16 thankful for the partnership between the Department of
17 Marine Resources and the National Park Service to
18 facilitate this request and hopefully get those guys back
19 out to those islands as soon as possible.

20 COMMISSIONER DANIELS: Thank you, Patrick.

21 Hopefully, this will streamline it and make it a
22 little easier. We appreciate your work.

23 JOE SPRAGGINS: Is everybody okay with what we
24 are doing so far?

25 We will look at the ones that are pending and we
26 will get to them. As soon as we get some kind of

1 resolution, we will get with you.

2 One last thing is a presentation for a
3 proclamation for Mrs. Della McCaughan.

4 Matt Hill is going to come up and do this.

5 My understanding is she was an outstanding
6 teacher that did a great job and I think brought quite a
7 few people to DMR.

8 MATT HILL: Just bear with me one second.

9 "Good morning" is what we used to hear walking
10 into Mrs. McCaughan's class. Good way to start out the
11 day.

12 I was in some of the last classes that Mrs.
13 McCaughan taught at Biloxi High School. I appreciated her
14 very much. She got me started in where I am today. I am
15 currently the Bureau Director for the Finfish Bureau.

16 She has had a lot of influence on many people's
17 lives. It has been noted in the paper in several
18 articles.

19 As everyone noticed, I carried some books up
20 here. She was famous for textbooks because they didn't
21 have textbooks in Marine Biology when we first started.

22 Like I said, this is a little difficult for me.
23 I have done these a few times, but I will just try to get
24 through it. So bear with me.

25 If you go to the cover of these books, the front
26 page has a list of people.

1 Does everybody see (indicating book)?

2 It says, "Research and Publication Consultant,
3 Della M. McCaughan."

4 Now, it doesn't say writer. It doesn't say
5 editor. It says "Research and Publication Consultant".

6 what that means is she was the boss and she was
7 definitely the boss of these. I think all of y'all know.

8 These books are very important to me. I keep
9 them at my house. I use them in my everyday work. I
10 think a lot of people have forgotten about these books.
11 Our agency sponsored these books. They financed these
12 books. It is something very important in our history.

13 One thing I do want to share. I was going
14 through some papers last night and I was at a symposium in
15 2008 and Mrs. McCaughan received a reword and her comments
16 were - and these are quotes:

17 "Her inquisitive students made her keep
18 learning and that they did more for her
19 than she did for him. Although she has
20 been recognized numerous times for her
21 teaching accomplishments, she said being
22 honored by her former students was the
23 best honor yet."

24 That is what her class was about. It wasn't
25 about her. It was about the students and you didn't have
26 to necessarily have a passion for it. She just wanted you

1 to have an understanding for it.

2 I am going to try to end this on a little
3 funnier note, what she means to our agency.

4 Some people in here remember this, but this
5 agency went through some troubling times and we had a
6 public hearing one evening in this room. It was standing
7 room only and it was about the direction that we were
8 going to go, what our future was going to be.

9 Several of her former students, including myself
10 and the current Marine Fisheries Director, Joe Jewell,
11 were standing in the back of the room. Mrs. McCaughan
12 came in. She come up to us and we gave her a hug.

13 Later, everybody went through there and we
14 noticed that she was getting up and she was coming to this
15 podium right here. She had all the Commissioners's
16 attention. She had our Executive Director's attention at
17 that time and she brought us back to what it says in this
18 book, and this is what she said:

19 "The mission for the Department of
20 Marine Resources is to enhance,
21 protect and conserve marine
22 interests by managing all marine
23 life, public trust wetlands and
24 adjacent uplands, and waterfront
25 areas known as the Coastal
26 Mississippi Zone for optimal

1 commercial, recreational,
2 educational and economic use
3 consistent with the environmental
4 concerns and social changes.
5 This mission cannot be accomplished
6 unless our citizens are fully aware
7 of the value of our marine resources.”

8 During that meeting, Mrs. McCaughan came up and
9 spoke and she said those words, or very close to them. I
10 can't remember, but I know she had those on a piece of
11 paper.

12 A Commissioner at that time was one of her
13 former students, Mr. Jimmy Taylor. He was the charter
14 boat representative at the time, and she began to scold
15 Mr. Taylor - he was the chairman at the time - trying to
16 get the Commission to head back in the direction they
17 needed to go and the direction the agency needed to move
18 forward with.

19 This went on for five, or six, minutes, and
20 there was a timer up there. She ignored it. It was three
21 minutes. She didn't care.

22 Like I said, the room was full and Joe and
23 myself were in the very back of the room, and this was
24 something that you knew if you were in her class, that she
25 had eyes in the back of her head.

26 She continued to scold Commissioner Taylor and

1 Joe and I said, "Look at her go. Look at her go. She is
2 not going to stop."

3 well, all of a sudden she turns around. She
4 says, I don't know what you two are giggling for because
5 you two are next and she pointed at Joe and I. Then, she
6 began on us.

7 That is just the kind of person she was. She
8 was firm. She was very firm. She was very understanding.
9 She didn't necessarily try to steer you in the direction
10 of the sciences, but she definitely wanted you to have an
11 appreciation of our coastal sciences because that is where
12 you live. That is where you were from.

13 I am going to read into the record the
14 resolution. Just bear with me.

15 "WHEREAS, the Mississippi Department of
16 Marine Resources is a duly constituted
17 governmental entity, created to serve
18 the Great State of Mississippi, and
19 acknowledges contributions to the
20 betterment of the fisheries of the Gulf
21 of Mexico through significant biological,
22 industrial, legislative, enforcement or
23 administrative activities; and
24 WHEREAS, Mrs. Della Marie Sims McCaughan
25 was a teacher, educator and lifelong
26 ambassador for marine resources; and

1 WHEREAS, Mrs. McCaughan established
2 and taught the country's first high
3 school level marine biology class
4 conducting marine biology field trips
5 to the Mississippi Barrier Islands
6 and organized the first overnight
7 high school marine biology field trip
8 to the Chandeleur Islands; and
9 WHEREAS, Mrs. McCaughan worked
10 diligently to preserve the delicate
11 balance of life in the Mississippi
12 Sound and along the Barrier Islands
13 of Mississippi - testifying on
14 several occasions before Congress
15 on the value of Mississippi's natural
16 resources; and
17 WHEREAS, Mrs. McCaughan compiled the
18 four volume set Marine Resources and
19 History of the Gulf Coast for the
20 Mississippi Department of Marine
21 Resources, and
22 WHEREAS, Mrs. McCaughan was recognized
23 as Mother of the Year, Teacher of the
24 Year and awarded an Einstein
25 Congressional Fellowship to work in
26 the U.S. Senate as an educational

1 advisor; and
2 WHEREAS, Della Marie Sims McCaughan
3 passed away on February 4, 2021;
4 NOW THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, in a
5 duly constituted and executed
6 resolution, that the Mississippi
7 Department of Marine Resources
8 recognizes and appreciates the long
9 valuable career and service of Della
10 Marine Sims McCaughan to the
11 enhancement, protection and conservation
12 of marine resources for the State of
13 Mississippi.

14 DONE AND RESOLVED, in this duly
15 constituted and executed resolution,
16 on this the 18th day of May. 2021.”

17 I appreciate the family and the friends for
18 being here.

19 Like I said, I was in the last few classes with
20 Mrs. McCaughan before she retired. I missed the famous
21 beehive hairdo. We didn't get that, but it was
22 interesting. It was different, the classroom.

23 We had textbooks at that time. We had come a
24 long way. We did have Marine Science textbooks. She
25 didn't use them. They weren't good enough. They didn't
26 say the things exactly like she wanted to say. So we

1 would go back to the old paper ones that she had
2 developed.

3 I want to thank her. This agency owes a great
4 deal to Mrs. McCaughan for serving and in writing these
5 books and carrying on the culture, the history. It talks
6 about the organizations, just how these communities were
7 developed.

8 I'm going to stop now, but I appreciate having
9 this opportunity and thank y'all for being here.

10 (Applause.)

11 JOE SPRAGGINS: Maybe one family member would
12 like to introduce the rest of the family.

13 DIANA RODWIG: I'm Diana Rodwig, one of her
14 daughters, my husband, Dr. Robby Rodwig, and our two
15 daughters, Aimee and Isabella Rodwig.

16 That is a sampling. We couldn't have the whole
17 crew here today. There are others that were unable to
18 attend.

19 JOE SPRAGGINS: We thank her very much. I didn't
20 have the honor of knowing her, but I'm very sorry for
21 that.

22 My understanding is she was an outstanding woman
23 that took care of a lot of things and, if it hadn't been
24 for her, we wouldn't have a lot of the people working in
25 the Department of Marine Resources today.

26 we thank you so much and we can't give you

1 enough information as to how much we appreciate what she
2 has done.

3 DIANA RODWIG: Thank you.

4 JOE SPRAGGINS: She has done a great job for us
5 and we thank you very much.

6 As you saw with Matt, those were the first
7 books. That meant a lot to us and I am sure it meant a
8 lot to the people.

9 we would like to present to you our
10 proclamation.

11 COMMISSIONER DANIELS: We are honored to present
12 this to you on our behalf.

13 DIANA RODWIG: Thank you.

14 (Applause.)

15 COMMISSIONER DANIELS: Matt, thank you for that
16 presentation. She sounds like she was an amazing woman
17 for sure.

18 At this time, we will move on to the
19 Commissioners report.

20 Do any of our Commissioners have anything to
21 report today?

22 COMMISSIONER GUESS: I don't have anything.

23 COMMISSIONER DANIELS: Cam?

24 COMMISSIONER ROBERDS: Not today.

25 COMMISSIONER DANIELS: Nothing from me.

26 we will move right on through, Office of Marine

1 Patrol, Chief Kyle.

2 KYLE WILKERSON: Good morning Commissioners,
3 Director, counsel.

4 Before I get started, I would like to speak
5 about Patrick a little bit.

6 Patrick Levine, he has always been a close
7 personal friend of mine. We have been together a long
8 time, twenty-odd years.

9 Director, you do know you are getting a
10 phenomenal trooper there and we are losing one.

11 I would like to say he is a good trooper, but he
12 is a great friend.

13 PATRICK LEVINE: Thank you.

14 KYLE WILKERSON: Now, to the mundane Marine
15 Patrol items. Once again, the guys and girls have been
16 busy. We probably had over twelve hundred stops this
17 month. Several oyster violations were cited. Some
18 seafood dealer licenses cited.

19 Other than that, it is pretty textbook,
20 Commissioners.

21 If you have any questions, I will entertain
22 them.

23 COMMISSIONER DANIELS: Five no dealer's license.
24 That seems kind of high.

25 KYLE WILKERSON: Well, a lot of that was north of
26 I-10. That was in the Waynesboro area. It's not high,

1 but we have got to give them corrected.

2 COMMISSIONER DANIELS: Well, keep up the great
3 work. Nothing but good praises that I hear about y'all
4 whenever people are interacting with our officers.

5 KYLE WILKERSON: Well, thank you, Commissioner.
6 I appreciate it. That's what we strive for.

7 COMMISSIONER DANIELS: Office of Coastal
8 Resources. Looks like we've got a presentation by Madison
9 Parker.

10 MADISON PARKER: Yes, sir.

11 Good morning. My name is Madison Parker. I am
12 a member of the Coastal Preserves Bureau, and today I am
13 going to tell y'all a little bit about a prescribed fire
14 that we did on Deer Island back in April.

15 The fire was conducted on April 21st of this year
16 and the approximate size of the management unit that the
17 burn was conducted on was around a hundred and thirty
18 acres.

19 There are several reasons why we do these
20 prescribed fires.

21 First, it allows us to reduce the heavy fuels on
22 the island that can potentially cause new wildfires, along
23 with it assists with removal of any hurricane debris which
24 we saw a lot of in the past few months after Hurricane
25 Zeta. That definitely helped us out a lot this year.

26 Then, it also helps with removing any trash left

1 behind by recreational boaters who visit the island quite
2 often.

3 A controlled fire also helps with invasive
4 species control. It allows us to decrease the population
5 of invasive Chinese Tallow saplings growing on Deer Island
6 and it also helps us open up the island so that we can get
7 in there and treat any cogon grass, or other invasive
8 species present with our backpack sprayers and other
9 equipment as well,

10 A prescribed fire also helps with forest
11 thinning. We had an extremely dense population of slash
12 pine that really popped up after Hurricane Katrina, over
13 five hundred trees per acre. We have been working with
14 manual tools all through these years, as well, to help
15 decrease that population.

16 Then, lastly, really habitat enhancement. We
17 have several residential species, animal species that do
18 live on the island that the understory of shrubs and
19 grasses can get very dense for. When we do these burns,
20 it clears that out and allows the fresh seeds to grow and
21 it really helps them for foraging and for their nesting
22 habitats, as well.

23 This is an aerial photo taken by drone over Deer
24 Island. We also have some done from aerial flights, as
25 well. The yellow portion there is the management unit
26 that we burned. It was to the east of the Deer Island

1 pier. It is mainly the central portion of the island that
2 was burned. The burn went very well this year.

3 Here, we just have some photos before the burn,
4 showing just really how dense it had gotten and why it is
5 so beneficial for us to clear out some of that dead plant
6 matter and other pine litter as well, and that is a photo
7 during the fire.

8 This was taken a day after. I took this the day
9 after the fire this year. As you can see, it left all of
10 the trees of substantial size, but it really cleared out
11 all of that dead shrub layer on the bottom there
12 (indicating photograph).

13 This photo is actually after the Deer Island
14 burn in 2018. That was the last burn that was conducted
15 on Deer Island.

16 That is one month after the burn, and you can
17 see how much difference one month makes, and it really
18 does promote that fresh growth for that new year
19 (indicating photograph).

20 That is another photo really just a better
21 comparing contrasts image, also after the 2018 Deer Island
22 fire.

23 The left one was just days post burn and the
24 right one was also a month post burn. Such a significant
25 difference (indicating photographs).

26 This really is just showing the current

1 conditions we have on the island. It is kind of dense in
2 several areas, more than we would like it. We would like
3 it to be more like the image you see there on the right,
4 more of a Pine Savannah with less dense shrubbery and less
5 of an overpopulated woody understory there (indicating
6 photographs).

7 This is actually some drone footage that WLOX
8 was kind enough to release to us that they took the day of
9 our controlled burn.

10 As you can see there, we had a very good
11 significant wind pushing the fire toward the ocean. It is
12 coming from the north. We had a north wind pushing the
13 smoke toward the south.

14 They captured some really good footage for us,
15 as well, and I thought I would share that with you today
16 just so you could see a little bit how well it went for us
17 that day. We didn't have a lot of smoke pushed toward the
18 beach. That was very beneficial and positive.

19 Other than that, it went very well and we were
20 really glad to be able to do it this year.

21 Are there any questions I can answer?

22 JOE SPRAGGINS: Commissioners, I talked about
23 interns. Well, Madison and Sierra were two interns that
24 came to work with us a little over a year ago, almost two
25 years.

26 MADISON PARKER: 2019.

1 JOE SPRAGGINS: They were University of Southern
2 Mississippi graduates and came to work with us, and, now,
3 full time with us.

4 If you ever see two little young women in a
5 boat, be careful because they are carrying chain saws and
6 everything in the world and they are out there, and they
7 are taking care of anything. They just do a dynamic job.
8 They will even get on a skidsteer. You have got to watch
9 them.

10 MADISON PARKER: We do. We enjoy it.

11 JOE SPRAGGINS: They do a great job. That is
12 perfect product of what we get right here from our
13 internship.

14 Madison, thank you.

15 MADISON PARKER: Thank you.

16 COMMISSIONER DANIELS: Thank you.

17 MADISON PARKER: Thank you very much.

18 COMMISSIONER DANIELS: Next up is going to be Ms.
19 Leslie.

20 LESLIE BREWER: Good morning Commissioners,
21 Director, legal.

22 My name is Leslie Brew, CFO. I will be
23 presenting the financials for the agency for April 30th,
24 2021.

25 At the end of April, our State Revenue was four
26 point four million. Our Total Agency Revenue was forty-

1 five point five million.

2 Our State Net Income was a negative seven
3 hundred and fifty-three thousand, and our Total Agency Net
4 Income was twenty-six point eight million.

5 After ten months of fiscal year 2021, we have
6 seventy-three point nine percent of our Operating Budget
7 remaining, while the Tidelands Budget is at forty-seven
8 percent.

9 We did receive our GOMESA funds of twenty-nine
10 million in April. That is why the jump there.

11 We are still waiting for our State
12 appropriations. We probably won't get that until after
13 the fiscal year ends.

14 JOE SPRAGGINS: And that is why we are negative?

15 LESLIE BREWER: That is why we are negative.

16 JOE SPRAGGINS: We are waiting on the State
17 appropriations.

18 LESLIE BREWER: Just from the State.

19 Any questions?

20 COMMISSIONER DANIELS: We're good. Thank you.

21 LESLIE BREWER: Thank you.

22 COMMISSIONER DANIELS: Public Affairs, Ms.
23 Charmaine.

24 CHARMAINE SCHMERMUND: Good morning
25 Commissioners, Director Spraggins, Ms. Chesnut.

26 The Mississippi Department of Marine Resources

1 was mentioned twenty-seven times in local, state and
2 national media since the April CMR meeting.

3 News items included the announcement of
4 Mississippi's Red Snapper season, a prescribed burn on
5 Deer Island and Mississippi finalizing plans for the
6 allocated twenty-one million dollars in Federal Relief for
7 Fishing Industries harmed by the 2019 opening of the
8 Bonnet Carre Spillway.

9 In April, Marine Patrol participated in the
10 United Way's annual Gulf Coast Dragon Boat Race, the
11 Mississippi Gulf Coast Boat Show in Biloxi and the City of
12 Biloxi's Hurricane Preparedness video.

13 That is all I have.

14 COMMISSIONER DANIELS: Thank you, Charmaine.

15 CHARMAINE SCHMERMUND: Thank you.

16 COMMISSIONER DANIELS: Marine Fisheries.

17 We have Jason Saucier with an update on our
18 shrimp season.

19 JASON SAUCIER: Good morning Commissioners,
20 Director, Sandy. I'm Jason Saucier with the Office of
21 Marine Fisheries Shrimp and Crab Bureau, and I am
22 providing an update on the shrimp season for you.

23 This slide just kind of shows you our historical
24 opening dates. We do open in the spring based on brown
25 shrimp reaching market size.

26 As you can see, we had a real early opening in

1 2020. Shrimp growth was quicker than average a little bit
2 earlier last year.

3 Then, in 2019, you will notice a relatively late
4 opening and that was due to some impacts from fresh water
5 that we are all familiar with, impacting growth and
6 migration patterns in our brown shrimp.

7 This gives you a historical opening day effort.
8 As you can see, there is a consistent decline starting in
9 2014. We attribute that to a couple of factors, including
10 shrimp prices and fuel prices.

11 Similarly on this slide you will see a decline
12 in license sales pretty much across every license type
13 beginning in 14-15.

14 I just wanted to talk briefly about what we do
15 to open the season. We do some fishery independent
16 sampling, which includes post larval sampling that is done
17 by the lab beginning in February. That kind of gives us
18 an indication of when the shrimp are going to be
19 recruiting into the Sound.

20 They do use the standardized beam plankton trawl
21 for that sampling at historical stations.

22 Then, in April, our staff begins to sample using
23 the standard methodology which includes sixteen foot
24 trawls at our historical stations across the Sound.

25 We do chart growth of Brown Shrimp specifically
26 and we are looking at growth so that we can project when

1 they will reach legal size of sixty-eight count per pound.

2 I just wanted to mention one other thing. We do
3 look at water quality, or hydrology information in our
4 bays because it does have a significant bearing on growth
5 and movement of shrimp.

6 we did see a lot of rain in April. I did hear
7 that there was highest rainfall localized on record, and
8 we do have some realtime hydrological monitoring stations
9 that we monitor specifically in the mouth of the bays, and
10 we saw lower temperature, average temperature across
11 April, as well as lower salinity.

12 with Brown Shrimp, two of the factors that
13 influence growth are temperature, water temperature and
14 salinity.

15 we are looking for salinity of ten parts per
16 thousand, or greater, for maximum growth, and we looking
17 for a temperature of sixty-eight degrees Fahrenheit, or
18 greater, and we did not see an average temperature in
19 April this year above sixty-eight. That is kind of an
20 indication that things may be a little late.

21 This map shows our historical stations that we
22 do sample with the sixteen-foot trawl. Currently, we are
23 doing it twice a week. So far this year, we have gotten
24 about ninety trawls.

25 with that said, we do present this to you every
26 year in May, but we ask for your recommendation that the

1 2021-2022 shrimp season be opened by the Director when
2 sampling does show that Brown Shrimp have reached the
3 average of sixty-eight count per pound.

4 COMMISSIONER DANIELS: Thank you, Jason.

5 I've just got a question. I had a shrimper pose
6 a question to me and it's not about the opening of the
7 season. It is about whenever we closed it.

8 Do we sample prior to the closing that we just
9 had?

10 The concern that he brought up to me was
11 primarily all they were still seeing were the older white
12 Shrimp. They weren't seeing any young Brown Shrimp.

13 From what you are saying with the water
14 temperatures being low and everything kind of being a
15 little late, could we have possibly drug that out a little
16 longer?

17 JASON SAUCIER: There is a risk. We do have
18 closures based on when we know shrimp do recruit to the
19 Sound.

20 Our effort in our management protocol is based
21 on an effort to protect that size class of smaller shrimp
22 and specifically juvenile sub-adult Brown Shrimp from
23 being harvested prior to being market size. We are trying
24 to protect not only the shrimp, but the fishery. We are
25 trying to help the fishery so that they've got marketable
26 shrimp.

1 We do start sampling. As I mentioned, on a
2 previous slide, we begin our trawl samples. You will see
3 we've got a few stations over in the west, seven, eight
4 and nine, that we start in April, and those samples begin
5 prior to the closure.

6 To answer your question, yes, we do sample.
7 There is opportunity for us to extend, and we have in
8 previous years extended closure, but this year based on
9 the sampling we didn't feel like that was appropriate.

10 If we do see those Brown Shrimp, then, that is
11 what sort of prevents us from being able to extend that.

12 COMMISSIONER DANIELS: That triggers it.

13 JASON SAUCIER: Just to let you know, we do
14 sample year round, now, once a month because we do want to
15 monitor what the system looks like outside of opening and
16 closing times and that way, in the future, we can track
17 any trends. Maybe there is a change in when the shrimp
18 recruit to the Sound. Maybe there is a potential need for
19 a change in the way we do openings and closings.

20 COMMISSIONER DANIELS: I appreciate that.

21 I told him I would ask the question and get an
22 answer.

23 JASON SAUCIER: We appreciate all those
24 questions.

25 COMMISSIONER DANIELS: Thank you.

26 JOE SPRAGGINS: Jason, do you have any idea?

1 Are we talking maybe the third week, or fourth
2 week, or the end of the month?

3 JASON SAUCIER: I think it is a little early for
4 us to really predict. I don't think it is going to be
5 early like we saw last year.

6 I will say that the more data we get the more
7 accurate our prediction is. We are kind of hesitant to
8 predict this early and we usually sample right up until we
9 recommend it opening, probably that day, and we are going
10 to try to give the fishermen, obviously, as much notice as
11 we can, but we want to make it right, make sure we get the
12 right date as well.

13 We don't want to open it too early because that
14 could be detrimental for the fishery as well.

15 JOE SPRAGGINS: Maybe it is already being done.

16 Is there something for the fishermen that we can
17 do to put this out on our website as to what we are
18 getting each week as we get closer and closer, and they
19 could look at it, and maybe we can give them counts as to
20 where we are?

21 Is that possible?

22 JASON SAUCIER: I don't know that that is
23 anything we have done in the past, but we can definitely
24 look into it.

25 JOE SPRAGGINS: Maybe have something that says
26 "Shrimp Season" on the website, and, then, post weekly

1 where we are.

2 If we start getting close to the sixty-eight,
3 they can start looking then and start preparing. I'm just
4 trying to give them every opportunity we can.

5 JASON SAUCIER: I think that is something we can
6 possibly discuss.

7 Just as a reminder, too, I didn't put the map in
8 this presentation. We usually show our harvest waters and
9 where we do closures.

10 There is an area and it is specifically the area
11 south of the tugboat lane and the ICW and east of Gulfport
12 Ship Channel that does stay open year round. There are a
13 portion of our waters that never close, unless there is an
14 extenuating situation like an environmental disaster.

15 In this case, there are some harvest waters that
16 are accessible to the fishermen and will be moving into
17 the actual opening.

18 COMMISSIONER DANIELS: We've got the water
19 temperatures on the western end of the Sound. I just
20 don't think we've got the salinity yet.

21 JASON SAUCIER: I would agree with that for sure.
22 We are seeing really low salinity. We do collect that
23 information at every trawl station and it is not where it
24 should be.

25 COMMISSIONER DANIELS: One of our captains pulled
26 up a freshwater catfish in his crab trap in Pass Harbor

1 the other day.

2 JASON SAUCIER: We pick them up regularly in our
3 trawls, when we do have freshwater out in the Sound.

4 COMMISSIONER DANIELS: Thank you.

5 JASON SAUCIER: You're welcome.

6 COMMISSIONER DANIELS: Do we have a motion for
7 the staff's recommendation?

8 COMMISSIONER GUESS: I'll make the motion that
9 the shrimp season be opened by the Director when sampling
10 shows sixty-eight count.

11 COMMISSIONER DANIELS: I'll second that motion.
12 All those in favor?

13 COMMISSIONER GUESS: Aye.

14 COMMISSIONER DANIELS: Aye.

15 COMMISSIONER ROBERDS: Aye.

16 COMMISSIONER DANIELS: Motion passes.

17 JASON SAUCIER: Thank you, Commissioners.

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

20 JOE SPRAGGINS: I have one thing real quick, if I
21 could.

22 Obviously, we have been graced so far this year
23 and I don't want to jinx it about the Bonnet Carre, but
24 things have worked out pretty well. Even though we do
25 have some low salinity in the western Sound area, it is
26 not near as bad as it could have been.

1 I haven't been given any information from anyone
2 from the Mississippi River Commission, or anyone, thinking
3 that they may have to open anything at this time.

4 Keep your fingers crossed and keep saying your
5 prayers. We might make it through this year, and that
6 will be the first time in three years that we haven't had
7 to do this. Just keep thinking about it and praying for
8 it.

9 The other thing, Matt, could you just come and
10 give a quick synopsis again for Red Snapper season since
11 it starts the end of this month?

12 MATT HILL: We do have the opening order. We
13 will put that out today. We sent up the press release
14 which will go out. There will be a lot of information in
15 it.

16 We try to make that as informational as possible
17 for the first one with the Tails n' Scales system, but it
18 will begin on Friday, May 28th, and we are planning our
19 potential closure will be July the 5th, right now. That is
20 the official holiday for July 4th. That will give us a
21 chance to evaluate everything and see if there is a
22 potential for extending the season and see when the best
23 time to reopen it would be, if we possibly could.

24 I do expect that we will be able to reopen it
25 past that, but this is just a safety net for us to be able
26 to look at all the data, look at what we got, get with

1 Director Spraggins and make some inferences about where we
2 can go from there.

3 Currently, we will open Friday, May 28th. That
4 is what is set in stone, right now.

5 COMMISSIONER DANIELS: Matt, is there anything
6 new with Tails n' Scales that the fishermen need to know,
7 any updates?

8 MATT HILL: We update it every year. That is
9 part of it. It is always up, but we take it down in the
10 background for our purposes, when the season is closed.
11 We overhaul the system, any bugs, any kinks that we have,
12 and we have some. People just don't get to see that part
13 of it.

14 There is a new version out. There is a new
15 version out every year. Most phones automatically update
16 that. You can check and see. If you have your automatic
17 updates on, it will do it automatically.

18 We do strongly recommend that you get rid of
19 that one and erase the old one, if you don't have those
20 automatic updates.

21 The view will look the same. There are some
22 minor changes in the data background to make it easier on
23 my staff, mainly Trevor and Erik, to get those realtime
24 decisions that we need when we are trying to extend this
25 season out as much as we can and give everybody the
26 opportunity to continue fishing.

1 We do a lot of things in the background, but the
2 face of it, the user face stays the same.

3 COMMISSIONER DANIELS: Y'all are doing a great
4 job with that. I know everybody up here knows it, but for
5 people that don't, we've got the most accurate reporting
6 system in the Gulf of Mexico and y'all did a fine job
7 putting that together.

8 MATT HILL: We appreciate it and, like I said, we
9 continue to strive to make it better and a little more
10 user friendly. We do take everybody's comments at the end
11 of the year. We get calls, and we try to do what we can
12 do to fix any issues that we possibly can.

13 Mainly, I think we have the user portion of it
14 where it needs to be. The main things that we are
15 correcting now makes it easier on us. It just makes it
16 easier on the data handling because it is a lot of data
17 coming in.

18 Director Spraggins, he wants an update pretty
19 quickly. We try to do the best we can.

20 JOE SPRAGGINS: One of the things, too. Last
21 year we only had the month of June season basically. A
22 lot of people were out of work, gas was a little over a
23 dollar a gallon, and the weather was absolutely beautiful
24 in the month of June. A lot of reasons why we fished our
25 allocations that quick.

26 Maybe this time it won't go as quickly and we

1 will be able to spread it out a little better.

2 MATT HILL: That is one of the things we have
3 been talking about. It was definitely an extraordinary
4 year last year. People had a lot of time on their hands
5 and gas was in a recent record of an all-time low. It was
6 very cheap to go.

7 I have said it on record many times. I could
8 take my family of four out there. We could go and it was
9 less than a hundred dollars. If you can do something like
10 that because fuel is so cheap, you can't have a better
11 time than that.

12 I don't expect that to happen this year. I
13 think a few more people have to be at work now and the
14 fuel prices do continue to rise. When it starts affecting
15 their pocketbook a little bit, that is probably going to
16 slow down.

17 COMMISSIONER DANIELS: Hopefully, this big fan
18 will turn off before we open the season. I'm getting
19 tired of it.

20 Thank you, Matt.

21 MATT HILL: Yes, sir.

22 COMMISSIONER DANIELS: Do we have anybody wanting
23 to make a public comment?

24 RYAN BRADLEY: Yes, sir.

25 COMMISSIONER DANIELS: Mr. Ryan Bradley.

26 RYAN BRADLEY: Good morning Commissioners,

1 Director Spraggins and counselor Chesnut.

2 My name is Ryan Bradley. I'm the Executive
3 Director of Mississippi Commercial Fisheries United.

4 I just have a couple of announcements and a
5 couple of things I wanted to get on the record.

6 It has been awhile since I have gotten to see
7 y'all in person and speak to you directly. I would like
8 to take advantage of that opportunity today. Good to see
9 y'all.

10 I just wanted to announce that Mississippi
11 Commercial Fisheries United has a derelict crab trap
12 program for our commercial shrimpers. We are in the third
13 consecutive year of the program. It offers a five dollar
14 reward for all the derelict crab traps that the shrimpers
15 catch in their trawls that are properly turned into our
16 program.

17 Those traps are tagged and we track who is
18 turning those in and we work diligently to return those
19 traps that are good, the good serviceable ones, to the
20 crabbers.

21 I wanted the folks to know that, and there is
22 still plenty of opportunity for any shrimpers that are not
23 participating that want to sign up. They can go to our
24 website at www.mscofu.org, and they can sign up and learn
25 more about the program there.

26 We do have disposal sites for these traps set up

1 in Bayou Caddy, Pass Christian, Biloxi Small Craft I think
2 we've got one coming soon, Ocean Springs harbor and at the
3 Biloxi Ice and Fuel Dock.

4 The program is lead by Mississippi State
5 University Extension Center and it has been made possible
6 with generous funding from the EPA Gulf of Mexico Program.

7 To date, we have collected over two thousand
8 three hundred derelict crab traps in the program for the
9 first two years of the program.

10 We are doing some good work there and we hope
11 that we get more shrimpers to participate.

12 If any crabbers would like to contact us, the
13 can do so at info@mscfu.org, or they can call us at 228-
14 254-3068.

15 We are compiling a list of contact information
16 for crabbers. If we get good traps that we can return to
17 them, we are doing that. We are calling them and
18 contacting them to come pick those up.

19 If anybody thinks they may be missing some, they
20 can contact us and we will be glad to get those to them,
21 if we have them.

22 Next, I just wanted to thank the agency, how
23 y'all handled the CARES Act money just recently. That was
24 a big shot in the arm for a lot of the fishermen and
25 charter fishermen, too. We thank y'all for working
26 diligently to get that done.

1 we know y'all are working hard on the Bonnet
2 Carre and the second round, and I just wanted to say
3 thanks. That was a really big deal for us.

4 One other thing I just wanted to get on the
5 record is it hasn't been stated at the Commission
6 meetings, but we are currently absent two Commission seats
7 that represent the commercial fishing industry.

8 For those of you that don't know, the State
9 legislature, the senators declined to confirm our two
10 seats, Mr. Steve Bosarge and Mr. Richard Gollott, during
11 the last session. I thought that was quite unfortunate
12 because they were two great men that did a great job
13 representing the industry.

14 I hope the Governor will move quickly to
15 reappoint these seats to get some representation for the
16 commercial fishing sector.

17 with that being said, that is all I've got.

18 we've got Mr. Jimmy Rafferty in the building
19 today. He is the Republican candidate for Mayor of the
20 City of Pass Christian. I had a chance to speak with him
21 and I can tell you he is committed to protecting the
22 marine resources in the Mississippi Sound and getting our
23 oysters back in Pass Christian. That is certainly a big
24 deal for him.

25 I hope, General, you get well acquainted with
26 Mr. Rafferty and I'm sure we can all work together to get

1 our resources back going in Pass Christian.

2 That's all I've got today. Thank you for your
3 time. Have a great day.

4 COMMISSIONER DANIELS: Thank you, Mr. Bradley.

5 JOE SPRAGGINS: Mr. Rafferty, if you are anything
6 like Chipper, you will be calling us about every week.

7 COMMISSIONER DANIELS: Thank you for attending
8 today, Mr. Rafferty.

9 JIMMY RAFFERTY: My pleasure. Thank you. I look
10 forward to partnering with y'all.

11 COMMISSIONER DANIELS: If we've got nothing else,
12 is there a motion to adjourn?

13 COMMISSIONER GUESS: I'll make the motion.

14 COMMISSIONER DANIELS: I'll second it.

15 All those in favor?

16 COMMISSIONER GUESS: Aye.

17 COMMISSIONER DANIELS: Aye.

18 COMMISSIONER ROBERDS: Aye.

19 COMMISSIONER DANIELS: Thank y'all for coming out
20 today. Have a good week.

21 (Whereupon, at 9:58 o'clock, a.m., the May 18,
22 2021, meeting of the Mississippi Advisory Commission on
23 Marine Resources was concluded.)

24

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26

CERTIFICATE

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2
3 I, Lucille Morgan, Certified Shorthand Reporter,
4 do hereby certify that the above and foregoing 45 pages,
5 including this page, is a true and correct transcript of
6 the May 18, 2021, meeting of the Mississippi Advisory
7 Commission on Marine Resources, as taken by me at the time
8 and place heretofore stated in the aforementioned matter
9 in shorthand, with electronic verification, and later
10 reduced to typewritten form to the best of my skill and
11 ability; and, further, that I am not a relative, employee,
12 or agent, of any of the parties thereto, nor financially
13 interested in the cause.

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16 _____
17 COURT REPORTER
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