

## STATE OF MISSISSIPPI

MISSISSIPPI ADVISORY COMMISSION ON MARINE RESOURCES

## COMMISSION MEETING

Tuesday, October 11, 2022, 9:11 a.m.,

Bolton Building Auditorium

1141 Bayview Avenue, Biloxi, Mississippi 39530

## COMMISSION MEMBERS:

Ronnie Daniels  
Jonathan McLendon  
Cammack "Cam" Roberds

## ALSO PRESENT:

Joe Spraggins  
Sandy Chesnut, Esquire

## REPORTED BY:

Melissa Burdine-Rodolfich  
mburdine@sbmreporting.com

1 COMMISSIONER DANIELS:

2 All right. Good morning, ladies and  
3 gentlemen. We're going to go ahead and call our  
4 October 11th meeting to order.

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

7 (Pledge of Allegiance was recited.)

8 COMMISSIONER DANIELS:

9 We've got Director Spraggins back with  
10 us this morning. He's here, so I'm going to ask  
11 him if he can lead us in a prayer this morning.

12 JOE SPRAGGINS:

13 Thank you very much. And first and  
14 foremost, let's talk about our people, our friends  
15 in Florida, and we know that -- what they are  
16 going through now. We have all been there. Most  
17 of us have been there. We've seen it. We  
18 understand what's happening.

19 Keep them in your prayers. There's  
20 things that we can do for them, to help them. We  
21 need to be looking at that. We need to be looking  
22 at ways to help them be able to recover from this  
23 horrible disaster. And we all know it takes 10  
24 years to get your feet on the ground, and that's  
25 just to get your feet back on the ground, so it's

1 going to be a while for them.

2 And we've got Louisiana and Texas over  
3 the last few years prior to that. We have been  
4 lucky. Let's just pray to the Lord that we stay  
5 lucky.

6 And with that, if I could, let's go to  
7 the Lord.

8 (Moment of prayer.)

9 COMMISSIONER DANIELS:

10 Thank you, Joe.

11 All right. Approval of the minutes,  
12 last month we had to table the August minutes  
13 because they were not completed. So we'll look  
14 for them --

15 JOE SPRAGGINS:

16 I think we're going to table them again.

17 COMMISSIONER DANIELS:

18 Are we? Is that -- that's not  
19 applicable.

20 JOE SPRAGGINS:

21 That's going to be on later down.

22 COMMISSIONER DANIELS:

23 Oh, I have got it. Okay.

24 SANDY CHESNUT:

25 The August minutes aren't ready yet.

1 We'll take that up next month.

2 COMMISSIONER DANIELS:

3 Okay. All right.

4 JOE SPRAGGINS:

5 That will be an action update.

6 COMMISSIONER DANIELS:

7 So do we need to make a motion to table  
8 that again?

9 SANDY CHESNUT:

10 No, we don't.

11 COMMISSIONER DANIELS:

12 Okay. We're good.

13 All right. Motion to approve the  
14 September 20th minutes.

15 COMMISSIONER ROBERDS:

16 I'll make a motion.

17 COMMISSIONER DANIELS:

18 I will second that.

19 All in favor?

20 COMMISSIONER ROBERDS:

21 Aye.

22 COMMISSIONER McLENDON:

23 Aye.

24 COMMISSIONER DANIELS:

25 Aye.

1 All right. Approval of the agenda, can  
2 we get a motion to approve today's agenda?

3 COMMISSIONER McLENDON:

4 I will make that motion.

5 COMMISSIONER DANIELS:

6 I will second that. All in favor?

7 COMMISSIONER ROBERDS:

8 Aye.

9 COMMISSIONER McLENDON:

10 Aye.

11 COMMISSIONER DANIELS:

12 Aye.

13 All right. Mr. Joe, it's all yours.

14 JOE SPRAGGINS:

15 Well, thank you very much. And let's  
16 see. We're looking at -- the very first thing we  
17 want to talk about are, our employment contracts  
18 and if we could, bring them up. I know I've got  
19 somewhere so I can look at them.

20 All right. We've got Brianna Andrews,  
21 who is an environmental/natural resources  
22 specialist II with the Grand Bay NERR.

23 We have Jacob Nickerson, and he is  
24 environmental/natural resources specialist II in  
25 the marine fisheries Lyman Hatchery.

1           We've got Eric Gigli. I'll get it right  
2 one time. He's been with us a while, but he's  
3 been promoted as specialist team lead.

4           Any questions on that?

5           (No response.)

6       JOE SPRAGGINS:

7           All right. As far as contracts, I don't  
8 think we have any right now.

9           And let's see. As far as procurement  
10 contracts, I think we're good on that. We have  
11 them. Don't think we're not doing procurement  
12 contracts, but there's only -- we have to meet a  
13 certain level that we bring to y'all and we don't  
14 have any to do at this time. Is that right,  
15 Leslie? Am I correct?

16       LESLIE BREWER:

17           Correct.

18       JOE SPRAGGINS:

19           If you have public comments, please let  
20 either Crystal or T.J. or someone know, and we  
21 have a form for you to be able to get that to us  
22 to let us know.

23           Motion to modify the agenda to add -- is  
24 there something there, Crystal, that I didn't know  
25 about?

1 CRYSTAL MATTA:

2 No, it's just blank.

3 JOE SPRAGGINS:

4 Oh, I was fixing to say, what is that?  
5 Okay. All right. We've got the -- I didn't know  
6 what it was.

7 Agency update, one thing we are going to  
8 look at before we get out of here today is maybe  
9 making a motion to change the December meeting  
10 because that's Christmas week. And we might want  
11 to change that, but we can do that before the end  
12 so we will try to keep up with that.

13 Give you a little bit of an idea of  
14 what's going on. The derelict vessels, you know,  
15 we got the legislation passed last year to be able  
16 to do derelict vessels, and since then, we have  
17 had a total of 63 derelict vessel cases that have  
18 been reported and we have started tracking.  
19 Thirty-six of those have already been removed.  
20 All right? Twenty-seven are pending removal, and  
21 eight we have received court orders to remove.

22 So the team is doing a heck of a job on  
23 that, and they're moving it forward and we're  
24 getting this done. And Sandy and her group is  
25 helping us fantastically to be able to get these

1 court orders and get them done. And just  
2 thinking, if -- we've got 36 of the 63 already  
3 removed. And it's amazing how many people just  
4 jumped out there and moved them once we told them  
5 we were serious about it, so we're doing good.  
6 We're doing very good.

7 And we just applied for a grant with  
8 GOMA and the grant is a federal grant to be able  
9 to do this for the future, so hopefully we'll be  
10 able to get some money there. And that's not just  
11 derelict vessels, but it's to remove anything,  
12 like -- you know, after a storm, especially,  
13 there's all kind of stuff, but there's a lot of  
14 things that we can remove out of the water.

15 All right. Another thing is  
16 October 16th, we have the Gulf State Marine  
17 Fisheries Commission, the 73rd annual meeting in  
18 San Antonio, and Rick and -- I will be there till  
19 the 19th. He'll be there until the 20th. And on  
20 the 20th I'll be in the Gulf of Mexico Alliance in  
21 Gulf Shores. And the 24th, we start the Gulf  
22 Council meeting here in Biloxi at the Beau Rivage.  
23 It will be here all week. And then on  
24 October 31st, I will leave and go to San Diego for  
25 National States Directors for NOAA, so we're



1 finally getting to have one of those. It's been  
2 three years we've been trying to plan this thing  
3 so we're finally getting to do it.

4 Other than that, let's see. We got our  
5 processor update, Traci?

6 TRACI FLOYD:

7 Good morning, Mr. Chairman,  
8 Commissioners, Director Spraggins and Ms. Chesnut.

9 We are in final legal reviews and  
10 finances, going over the paperwork, getting  
11 signatures and we're almost there, so thank you.

12 JOE SPRAGGINS:

13 Yeah. And we should have that -- we are  
14 to the point of about to go to finance for the  
15 payment, right?

16 TRACI FLOYD:

17 Yes. They're with finance now and  
18 they're working through the process.

19 JOE SPRAGGINS:

20 But everyone and we -- can you kind of  
21 just give a little overview of how the process was  
22 so everybody understands?

23 TRACI FLOYD:

24 Sure. So applications were open from  
25 July 1st through August 16th. We reviewed all of

1 paperwork, made sure it was legit and would meet  
2 the grant requirements. We finalized the process  
3 of -- we used a formula that gave everybody the  
4 same percent of their loss until they -- until the  
5 funds were used, so it was split equally that way.  
6 And then we have that in the paperwork that each  
7 recipient will receive, and we have turned all  
8 that information over to the finance and legal  
9 offices for the recipients to review. They can  
10 sign the paperwork as they agree with it and then  
11 they will be paid.

12 JOE SPRAGGINS:

13 About 1.6 million, just shy of that, is  
14 what we're distributing, right?

15 TRACI FLOYD:

16 Yes, sir.

17 JOE SPRAGGINS:

18 Okay. Any questions for her on that?

19 (No response.)

20 JOE SPRAGGINS:

21 All right.

22 Rick, you got anything on the Bonnet  
23 Carre?

24 RICK BURRIS:

25 Unfortunately, there is no updates on

1 the Bonnet Carre. It's the usual monthly update.

2 But I will feed off of what Director  
3 Spraggins said about the Gulf Council meeting.  
4 It's been 2020 or 2019 since we've had it here in  
5 Mississippi. But on Wednesday, there is a  
6 public -- Wednesday afternoon, a public comment  
7 period, and so anybody that wants to provide  
8 public comment on what's currently on the agenda  
9 or anything that you think the council needs to  
10 hear about, Wednesday afternoon, you can call in,  
11 but because it -- it's here in person. That will  
12 be a good opportunity to get those comments in.

13 JOE SPRAGGINS:

14 Okay. Any questions on that?

15 (No response.)

16 JOE SPRAGGINS:

17 Sandy, action updates?

18 SANDY CHESNUT:

19 Yes. Last month we had the state  
20 saltwater finfish records for Rodie Armes,  
21 conventional tackle, redfin needlefish, and fly  
22 fishing records, hardhead catfish. The Commission  
23 recommended approval, and the Director approved  
24 those.

25 And the pending item we have going

1 forward is the approval of the August 18th meeting  
2 minutes, and that's it.

3 JOE SPRAGGINS:

4 We're going to continue with that. It  
5 has not been completed yet.

6 All right, sir. Anything else? If not,  
7 that's my report.

8 COMMISSIONER DANIELS:

9 Thank you, Joe.

10 Either one of y'all got anything to  
11 report on today?

12 COMMISSIONER McLENDON:

13 No.

14 COMMISSIONER ROBERDS:

15 No.

16 COMMISSIONER DANIELS:

17 All right. Nothing on the  
18 commissioners' report.

19 So Chief.

20 KYLE WILKERSON:

21 Good morning. I hope everybody is well.

22 Our report actually is pretty short and  
23 sweet. Nothing just jumps out at me. I do always  
24 like reading how many stops we make during the  
25 month. We are over 2,200 stops for the month of

1 September. Also looking at the citations, 53 were  
2 written during that month, but looking at it,  
3 Commissioners, everything looks pretty  
4 straightforward. Nothing just jumps out at me.

5 If you have anything that you may want  
6 to talk about, I may not know the answers at the  
7 time, but I can get them. So anything, go right  
8 ahead, sir.

9 COMMISSIONER DANIELS:

10 Y'all got anything?

11 COMMISSIONER ROBERDS:

12 No.

13 COMMISSIONER DANIELS:

14 It seems like each month I get to  
15 commend y'all on a successful stop that they made  
16 on me. We had another one this month. They do a  
17 great job every time too.

18 KYLE WILKERSON:

19 Yes, sir. Yes, sir. Well, we talked  
20 about that in text. I understand. And they're --  
21 they like -- they like doing their job and they  
22 like what they do.

23 COMMISSIONER DANIELS:

24 Yeah. So my clients actually commented  
25 on how professional and courteous they were

1 whenever everything was over. One of them was  
2 drinking a beer. He said, am I going to get in  
3 trouble for this? I said, no, you're okay. I  
4 just can't have one.

5 KYLE WILKERSON:

6 Well, thank you. And that goes a long  
7 way.

8 COMMISSIONER DANIELS:

9 Yeah. Good job out there.

10 JOE SPRAGGINS:

11 Does that mean we've got to take the GPS  
12 off his boat?

13 KYLE WILKERSON:

14 Yes, sir. Thank you.

15 COMMISSIONER DANIELS:

16 All right. We're going to move on to  
17 Office of Finance and Administration, Ms. Leslie  
18 Brewer.

19 LESLIE BREWER:

20 Morning, everyone. I'm Leslie Brewer,  
21 CFO. I will be presenting the financials for the  
22 month ending September 30th, 2022.

23 At the end of September, our state  
24 revenue was 3.4 million. Our agency revenue was  
25 4.2 million. Our state net income was 2 million,

1 and our agency net income was a negative \$382,000.  
2 And as soon as we get our tidelands check, that  
3 will flip into the black.

4 After three months, we have 96.9 percent  
5 of the budget remaining for the operating budget  
6 and then 94.1 percent for tidelands.

7 Does anyone have any questions?

8 COMMISSIONER DANIELS:

9 No, ma'am. Looks like we're good.

10 Thank you.

11 LESLIE BREWER:

12 Thank you.

13 COMMISSIONER DANIELS:

14 Ms. Charmaine.

15 CHARMAINE SCHMERMUND:

16 Good morning, Commissioners, Director  
17 Spraggins, Ms. Chesnut.

18 The Mississippi Department of Marine  
19 Resources had no media mention since the September  
20 MACMR meeting. Marine patrol participated in  
21 National Night at St. Clare Church on October 1st,  
22 as well as Paddle Paradise in Diamondhead on  
23 September 24th, which the Mississippi Gulf Coast  
24 National Heritage area also provided a booth.  
25 Shrimp and Crab Bureau Director, Jason Saucier,

1 took part in career day at Pass Road Elementary  
2 School yesterday. And today, Director Spraggins  
3 and Trevor Moncrief will be present at the Biloxi  
4 Rotary Club meeting to update about our agency and  
5 inshore fishing.

6 COMMISSIONER DANIELS:

7 All right. Thank you.

8 We've got a few people waiting on this  
9 one, so next up would be Jason Rider with our  
10 oyster reef assessment.

11 ELLEN COFFIN:

12 Good morning. I am not Jason Rider. My  
13 name is Ellen Coffin, and I am the shellfish  
14 biological coordinator or the specialist team  
15 lead.

16 And today, we are going to talk about  
17 our 2022 oyster reef assessment, so here is a  
18 graph that we have all seen many times. This  
19 shows kind of where we were at in the '90s, early  
20 2000s and where we're at now. As you can see,  
21 it's important to note that the last recent years  
22 from '19 to '20 were 100 percent off-bottom  
23 oysters aquaculture harvest, so all those numbers  
24 were converted to sack numbers.

25 So to get into our reef assessment of



1 the reefs, we performed 71-minute dredge tows and  
2 198 dye square meter sample sites, which equates  
3 to 396 dye samples. So we're going to go  
4 through -- and that was across the Mississippi  
5 Sound, so we're going to go through the public  
6 harvestable historic reefs only and not the  
7 ancillary ones.

8 So all the reefs are going -- or all the  
9 slides are going to look very similar. You're  
10 going to have the notes in the top left, the map  
11 in the top right and that's pretty much the  
12 natural reef footprint and cultch plants.

13 The red dots are indicating either  
14 there's no material or there's just dead oysters.  
15 This year it was mostly no material. The green  
16 dots are indications of live oysters. If there is  
17 a green halo, which, I guess, is kind of hard to  
18 see on this, that indicates proportionally that  
19 there was more oysters in that location or on that  
20 dye site.

21 The bottom left is going to show you the  
22 size distribution, so it goes from spat size, all  
23 the way up to market size. And then the bottom  
24 right is going to show you the best year in the  
25 past 10 years, which is majorly 2014 and --

1 compared to this year, so that kind of shows you  
2 where we would like to be.

3 So we'll start off. We will go worst to  
4 best, and we will start off with Henderson Point.  
5 So Henderson Point is approximately 1,300 acres.  
6 We found a lot of hook mussels on the material  
7 that we pulled up, limited suitable material for  
8 reef expansion, and the majority of the areas  
9 sampled were soft/moderate mud or material was  
10 buried.

11 So the potential action would be to  
12 monitor a long-term recovery mode. A lot of the  
13 reef bottoms that we sampled were soft mud, so it  
14 seems like the bottom is changing in that  
15 location.

16 St. Joe: St. Joe is almost 500 acres.  
17 The predators were low. The majority of oysters  
18 were found within the cultch plants only, and  
19 salinity seems to be a major factor in oyster  
20 growth and spawning.

21 So our potential action is just to  
22 monitor mortality and the seed size as they grow.  
23 As you can see, we've got a lot of seed sizes, but  
24 not a lot of market size oysters.

25 Pass Christian Tonging: It's almost 900

1 acres. We had moderate predators. Reef material  
2 was deteriorating due to low recruitment, and the  
3 majority of the oysters were found within that  
4 single cultch plant right there. Surrounding  
5 cultch plants are almost entirely sand or shell  
6 hash. So we saw that essentially since there  
7 wasn't a lot of recruitment, a lot of the material  
8 that we put down is starting to deteriorate.

9 So our potential action is to  
10 additionally cultch to expand the productive plant  
11 there.

12 So as you can see, we're still on the  
13 low end of size class distribution. We are not  
14 seeing market size oysters there yet, and we're  
15 not where we were in 2014.

16 Pass Christian Dredging is approximately  
17 933 acres. We had low predators. Same thing as  
18 Pass Christian Tonging. We have limited suitable  
19 material for reef expansion. Reef material is  
20 deteriorating due to low recruitment, and the  
21 majority of the oysters were found within the two  
22 bottom cultch plants.

23 So our recommendation is an additional  
24 cultch to expand the productive cultch plants that  
25 we found.

1           Okay. Telegraph Reef is approximately  
2           1,260 acres. We typically observe a yearly spat  
3           set but experience mortality when they reach seed  
4           size, and that's a trend we have noticed over  
5           multiple years.

6           So our potential action is to monitor  
7           salinity levels and effects on size distribution  
8           and survival. So you can see the graph on the  
9           bottom left is heavy on the spat sizes more than  
10          anything else.

11          Pass Marianne: Pass Marianne is  
12          hopeful, rocking and rolling. Reef footprint is  
13          2,300 acres. It's the most productive reef in the  
14          west. However, the majority of their oysters are  
15          found within those top left cultch plants.  
16          However, we are seeing size classes indicating an  
17          early spawn in June and July, which could indicate  
18          that bridge stock was spawning all spawning  
19          season, so that's a good thing.

20          Potential action: So as you can see up  
21          here, the cultch plants that we have are very  
22          productive, so we would like to fill the voids and  
23          kind of connect them all, so we would like to  
24          connect past cultch plants to increase  
25          productivity.

1           So it's important to note that on the  
2 bottom left, you -- we see a great, healthy,  
3 variation of size classes. As well as, in the  
4 bottom right, you can kind of see a similar trend  
5 to where we were in 2014. Obviously, our numbers  
6 aren't where they should be, but we're getting  
7 back to that.

8           Biloxi Bay: The reef footprint is 227  
9 acres. The population and size classes are  
10 increasing annually since 2019. Obviously, it's  
11 all -- that reef footprint is entirely cultch  
12 plant, so there is a lot of material in Biloxi  
13 Bay.

14           Recommendation is to continue remote  
15 setting in strategic locations, to increase spat  
16 settlement and brood stock development and to also  
17 cultivate and monitor reef development.

18           To elaborate on the map, so we have --  
19 here we go. That's our 2021 remote set deployment  
20 areas. And the one on the right, the 2022 remote  
21 set deployments. So we separated the size class  
22 graphs instead of showing the best year to show  
23 the difference between with the remote set and  
24 without so you can see the size class variations  
25 that way.

1           So in conclusion, here is our 2022  
2 oyster stock assessment, so it's kind of a table  
3 of all of the market size oysters that we have  
4 calculated based on our reef assessment. As you  
5 can see, we are moving in the right direction.  
6 Pass Marianne, Biloxi Bay, Pass Tonging and  
7 Henderson are better than they were last year.

8           It's important to remember that 2019 we  
9 had the Bonnet Carre. 2020, we had limited brood  
10 stock available because of the Bonnet Carre, so we  
11 weren't getting a lot of spat sets. 2021, there  
12 was a lot of rainfall in the beginning of the  
13 season, so that could have stunted spawning  
14 activity. And then this year, 2022, we had great  
15 water quality. We had limited rainfall, so that's  
16 why the oyster distribution is better this year.  
17 And with that being said, conditions are favorable  
18 going into next year.

19           So our staff recommendation, the samples  
20 indicate positive growth in the resource but  
21 confirm the lack of size classes variation and a  
22 resource that is still recovering from limited  
23 recruitment, so we would like to recommend  
24 continue cultch plants and spat on shell  
25 deployments to increase diversity in size classes.

1 And we also recommend the continuing harvest  
2 closure for the '22-'23 harvest season.

3 That's it. Any questions?

4 COMMISSIONER DANIELS:

5 So back whenever we were talking about  
6 Henderson Point and you said the majority of the  
7 area was soft/moderate mud and the bottom is  
8 changing. Is that silting over or is the cultch  
9 that we're dumping there, is that sinking?

10 ELLEN COFFIN:

11 So it's probably a combination. So the  
12 cultch plant is -- or the cultch is sinking  
13 because of no recruitment and the oyster shell  
14 that we put there is deteriorating also because of  
15 low recruitment. And I think a lot of the  
16 hydrodynamics of the area is dumping a lot of silt  
17 on those reefs.

18 COMMISSIONER DANIELS:

19 So does the potential for recruitment  
20 play into deciding where we're going to dump this  
21 cultch, because it seems like we've dumped a lot  
22 of stuff over the past few years with not a whole  
23 lot of positive?

24 ELLEN COFFIN:

25 Yes, so -- correct. So the oysters --

1 or the cultch material that we put down, we use  
2 our GIS to use our reef assessment to make those  
3 decisions on where to put cultch plants down. We  
4 also use polling and try to decide the best  
5 bottom, but unfortunately, you know, things are  
6 changing. We have had poor recruitment, so we  
7 haven't had the best situation in terms of the  
8 productivity and rebounding our reefs.

9 COMMISSIONER DANIELS:

10 So whenever you say to continue  
11 cultching, like Henderson Point, will we continue  
12 to cultch there, even though it seems like it's  
13 almost lost or --

14 ELLEN COFFIN:

15 It my opinion, Henderson Point would  
16 probably not be an ideal place to cultch plant  
17 because of the bottom type. It's important for us  
18 to put down cultch material on moderate mud, sand  
19 or existing cultch plants just like a sprinkle  
20 over it to keep it healthy.

21 COMMISSIONER ROBERDS:

22 I have a -- real quick, the time frame  
23 from '09-'10, there is just such a drastic  
24 difference to 2010 to '11. What was the -- that  
25 was on the second slide. Not anywhere in



1 particular, just the --

2 ELLEN COFFIN:

3 Oh, this one.

4 COMMISSIONER ROBERDS:

5 What was -- the range was so significant  
6 from one year to the next. I was --

7 ELLEN COFFIN:

8 Eric, do you want to take that one?

9 JOE SPRAGGINS:

10 We had the Bonnet Carre open in 2011.

11 COMMISSIONER ROBERDS:

12 Was it in 2010 and '11?

13 JOE SPRAGGINS:

14 Yeah.

15 ELLEN COFFIN:

16 Okay. Yeah, there you go.

17 COMMISSIONER ROBERDS:

18 Got ya.

19 JOE SPRAGGINS:

20 That was a major thing there. The  
21 Bonnet Carre opened. If you look back in 2005,  
22 '-6 was Katrina and then the Bonnet Carre and the  
23 oil spill that just happened that was in 2010.

24 ELLEN COFFIN:

25 Yes.

1 COMMISSIONER ROBERDS:

2 And we haven't been able to recover  
3 from --

4 JOE SPRAGGINS:

5 Yeah. We had both of them that hit in  
6 2011, so that was something that kind of, you  
7 know, took a lot of it out of there, so that's  
8 what we have.

9 ELLEN COFFIN:

10 Yes.

11 COMMISSIONER ROBERDS:

12 Thank you.

13 JOE SPRAGGINS:

14 One other thing, we are looking at some  
15 things, too, and Ellen and them are doing a  
16 fantastic job. And they're working hard trying to  
17 get things -- you know, as much money as we spend  
18 on oysters, we would hope that we'd have some  
19 because we -- you know, we keep trying. Nature is  
20 fighting against us sometimes, and we have to work  
21 on that and the way it is.

22 Two or three things that we're looking  
23 at to try to help bring this to a different look  
24 is, Number 1, you know, we have lost a lot of  
25 water. People don't realize, but we need fresh

1 water during this time of the year. Other  
2 times -- you know, summertime especially, we need  
3 the fresh water.

4 Well, in the past, we used to -- years  
5 ago whenever you'd see all these big mounds of  
6 oyster shells everywhere in the world back  
7 30 years ago, it's because the Pearl River was  
8 flowing into the Gulf and it was coming in around  
9 all those western reefs and everything. It was  
10 keeping the drills down, and the drills wasn't  
11 eating up the oysters as fast and it made a whole  
12 lot of difference of what was happening.

13 And then we turned around and somehow or  
14 another in our infamous knowledge years ago made a  
15 diversion up around Monticello and diverted  
16 about -- supposedly it was going to divert close  
17 to 50 percent. And then it failed a few years  
18 back and when it did, now about 70 percent of the  
19 water out of the Pearl is going to the west over  
20 into Lake Pontchartrain area. Well, we have lost  
21 that water and we need to get it back.

22 One of the things we're looking at is  
23 doing a study, and we have done a lot of work on  
24 it in the past and it was to -- and Mr. Vic Mavar  
25 is -- God rest his soul, was one of the men that

1 taught me a lot about what to do here, and the  
2 idea is we have got to divert it. All right? So  
3 what we're looking at is, we're looking at a  
4 possible diversion to take the western Pearl and  
5 divert some of it back into the eastern Pearl and  
6 somewhere in the Sound. All right?

7 How do you do that? Well, we're going  
8 to have to find a spot, and right now through some  
9 of the studies that we have done so far and looked  
10 at, somewhere just north of the I-10, over in  
11 Hancock County in the marsh area to be able to  
12 divert that and we've got to look at it. We're  
13 going to have to do a study to decide what it  
14 would cost. We've got to get the Corps involved  
15 in it to see if this would work.

16 And I think that we have -- Louisiana  
17 seems to be on board with us to say that  
18 everything is fine. We'd love to see some of it  
19 diverted out of Lake Pontchartrain. That could be  
20 a tremendous help to us, because right now, this  
21 time of the year -- well, this time not so much,  
22 but the -- June, July and August, you know, if you  
23 go to some of the reefs out there, the reason that  
24 they're not productive is because the drills are  
25 just killing us. And, I mean, they are just

1 absolutely killing us and -- you know, at this  
2 time. When you think about that, you sit back and  
3 you say, well, okay, where were they at in the  
4 past? Well, they keep coming every year as long  
5 as salinity stays where it is high enough.

6 And we're looking at some other things,  
7 and that's to rebuild some islands, the Cat Island  
8 area, and to rebuild some other areas and to be  
9 able to change the water coming from the south to  
10 be able to give -- to keep the salinity down. The  
11 salinity of the water is tremendously what's  
12 causing a lot of the Western Sound issue.

13 Now, in the springtime, salinity is  
14 nothing. That's our problem because we're getting  
15 all this rain. Last year, record rainfall, record  
16 rainfall in the State of Mississippi. We didn't  
17 get the Bonnet Carre open, but we got record  
18 rainfall.

19 I mean, come on. It seems like every  
20 time we turn around, there's some little something  
21 hitting us right square in the face, right? But  
22 we have to look and we have to say, okay, we got  
23 record rainfall. Now let's see what we can do.

24 We're looking at an oyster setting and  
25 trying to -- and Ellen and them are now in the

1 middle of doing a study to be able to decide  
2 what's the best way to do this, and I think we  
3 will get something that comes out of that to where  
4 we will decide how we can put some oysters in the  
5 water and continue to rebuild this over the years  
6 and continue -- and continue to rebuild it.

7 So it's not like they're sitting down  
8 there and twiddling their thumbs. I can tell you  
9 that. They're doing hard work every day. The  
10 off-bottom is doing great and hopefully we'll  
11 expand it more. We met with people over the last  
12 few weeks that are looking at different types of  
13 off-bottoms and they're looking at ways of doing  
14 it, and I think there's -- got a lot of people  
15 that have got a lot of great ideas, and some of  
16 them is, how do you grow water in a restricted --  
17 grow water to restricted areas and then deplete  
18 it and how we can do it. I think there is a lot  
19 of great ideas there.

20 We're looking at Pass Christian -- I  
21 mean, Pascagoula over there now, and, you know, we  
22 have a lot of oysters over there and they're  
23 beautiful. But the problem is, when you try to  
24 move them, you wind up killing about a third of  
25 them or whatever. So the idea is how can we

1 possibly do something. Is there a chance that we  
2 can do something over this next year to where we  
3 can move some small portion of those and able --  
4 to be able to not kill them all when we move them  
5 and have some form of a harvest? And that might  
6 be something that we can look at.

7 But there is a lot of things that are  
8 going on that we've just got to -- we've just got  
9 to give it time. And I know -- and if everybody  
10 says, well, you know, gosh, it's been since 2016  
11 we've really had a harvest, right, and we didn't  
12 have much then, well, go over to Florida and look  
13 at some of the biggest areas there. They've been  
14 shut down for five to seven years. There is a lot  
15 of places in the same boat that we're in and a lot  
16 of them have had the same issues. And Florida  
17 issues are the same problem. Georgia is damming  
18 up the water and not letting it come down to them,  
19 so a lot of the issues over there is the same  
20 issues that we have here.

21 And so we have just got to get better at  
22 what we're doing as far as -- we're getting  
23 smarter. I can tell you that. And they're moving  
24 them and just exactly -- I love their statement.  
25 As a scientist, she would recommend that. Okay?

1 That's because she has done the study. That's  
2 because she has done the work. That's because  
3 she's looked at it and said, I just don't think  
4 this is a smart thing to do. And it's also -- she  
5 would tell you, if it was my back pocket, I  
6 wouldn't spend it there, right?

7 ELLEN COFFIN:

8 Yeah.

9 JOE SPRAGGINS:

10 I mean, seriously.

11 ELLEN COFFIN:

12 Yeah.

13 JOE SPRAGGINS:

14 If it's coming out of my back pocket, I  
15 wouldn't spend it there, I would spend it  
16 somewhere else. Well, guess what? This money  
17 that we're spending, it's coming out of every back  
18 pocket in this room and across the State of  
19 Mississippi and everywhere else because every dime  
20 that we need somehow, some way comes out of  
21 taxpayers somehow. And so everything that we're  
22 spending on this comes from a taxpayer some way  
23 somehow.

24 And I love the attitude that they're  
25 doing it and I love the attitude of what --



1 they're trying to make this work. And I just ask  
2 that everybody -- if it comes that we have  
3 zero-zeros in 2022-23 season, please understand  
4 why.

5 COMMISSIONER DANIELS:

6 Just one other point on that. You know,  
7 you brought up Florida and the other places, and I  
8 know that they have been dealing with stuff. But,  
9 Joe, you know, you and I have talked a lot about  
10 this. I spent a lot of my days just a little bit  
11 south of there in the Biloxi Marsh, and we're  
12 saying that drills are our biggest problems.

13 Do they not deal with that there or how  
14 does --

15 ELLEN COFFIN:

16 So yes. What Director Spraggins said  
17 about the drills needing that fresh water to kind  
18 of keep them at bay, it depends on salinity, on,  
19 you know, times when we do our reef assessment,  
20 so -- but we have not seen a lot of drills in  
21 Biloxi Bay.

22 COMMISSIONER DANIELS:

23 No, not Biloxi Bay. The Biloxi Marsh  
24 right cross the Louisiana line. In the upper end  
25 of the Biloxi Marsh in Louisiana waters there, I

1 mean, those reefs out there seem to be thriving.

2 Are they not dealing with the drills  
3 like we are here?

4 JOE SPRAGGINS:

5 Well, you're talking about private  
6 reefs, which are a little different, okay, because  
7 they can -- what they will do -- and if they own a  
8 private reef, they will go out there and put  
9 drills. They'll move the oysters. They will just  
10 pack them up and move them because they have that  
11 capability. And once again, it's coming out of  
12 their back pocket, and so they're trying to find a  
13 way to make them work.

14 And they are having issues. I mean,  
15 don't get me wrong. Everybody has the same issues  
16 and -- but we're -- Telegraph Reef is not far from  
17 there, right -- Rick, you'd know -- from the  
18 Biloxi Marsh?

19 RICK BURRIS:

20 It's closer, yes, sir.

21 JOE SPRAGGINS:

22 That's probably the closest area to it?

23 RICK BURRIS:

24 St. Joe, yes.

25 JOE SPRAGGINS:

1 St. Joe.

2 RICK BURRIS:

3 St. Joe is the deepest one.

4 JOE SPRAGGINS:

5 St. Joe would be the closest one to it,  
6 so you can get an idea of what we're looking at.  
7 But there is a lot of things about where they are  
8 at too. They back up behind an island, which  
9 makes it a little bit different on the salinity,  
10 the way the water goes. So there's a lot of other  
11 things that you're looking at. I know the one  
12 that you're talking about that does all the reefs  
13 over there. And I'll tell you; they're moving  
14 them around too.

15 And that's the other thing. We want to  
16 look at how in the future that we can get more  
17 people -- and I'm talking private individuals --  
18 doing their own reefs because we need that. We  
19 need that in Mississippi, because guess what?  
20 They're going to fight theirselves to death to  
21 keep that thing alive, and we want to try a way --  
22 try to find a way to help them, and that's what  
23 we'd like to do.

24 I'd love to have a program put together  
25 and that's what they're working on right --

1       there's some other programs -- to where we could  
2       help subsidize somebody to get in business and  
3       then we turned around and the Secretary of State  
4       leases them or, you know, through us, lease the  
5       bottoms to them at a good rate and then be able to  
6       use those bottoms and fish them.

7                 Now, don't get me wrong. We've still  
8       got to have public reefs, but we still need to  
9       have some others involved in it. And I think that  
10      we have put a whole lot of effort in the oysters  
11      in the last few years. I can tell you that.

12                And I think Jonathan had a question,  
13      didn't you?

14      COMMISSIONER McLENDON:

15                Oh, I'm just curious on the production  
16      end. So you've got all of the reef data over  
17      here, but it's been so long since a lot of these  
18      oyster harvesters have brought in any income.

19                What is the current infrastructure like  
20      or -- so if we have one of these 300,000 sack  
21      seasons, are they going to be able to handle it,  
22      like the vessels, unloading locations?

23      ELLEN COFFIN:

24                That's a good question.

25      JOE SPRAGGINS:

1           Let me help you out. The answer is, we  
2 can. Every oyster we can get we can sell. All  
3 right? Right now, everybody I have met with,  
4 everybody that I have talked to that are dealing  
5 with oysters -- some gentlemen we met with  
6 yesterday, that -- you know, they could sell every  
7 oyster they can get their hands on. And the  
8 question is can we get them? Jennifer Jenkins  
9 told me, she said, I'm not even -- I don't need to  
10 go -- I can't get enough oysters. I sell every  
11 one I have. The people are selling it. I believe  
12 we can do that.

13           Now, the problem that you're talking  
14 about is if it's a private -- I mean, a public  
15 reef, are we going to have enough fishermen. All  
16 right? And that question may be that we don't.  
17 We may not have enough fishermen to do it as far  
18 as public fishermen because the one thing that we  
19 have done and it's killed us, 2011, Bonnet Carre.  
20 2016, we got the money. Come on, five years  
21 later.

22           Here it is, 2019, we got the Bonnet  
23 Carre -- had the Bonnet Carre issue. Here we are  
24 in '22 and still don't have the money. Fixing to  
25 be in '23, four years later. That's what's

1 killing us because part of that money is supposed  
2 to go to help pay for those people to stay in  
3 business to be able to operate. We're losing them  
4 right and left.

5 It's the same thing in the shrimping  
6 industry and the same thing in everything that  
7 we're doing. We are not gaining fishermen; we're  
8 losing them every day. And if I'm wrong, Rick,  
9 tell me, but I think that's 100 percent. We're  
10 losing them in every aspect of the fisheries, not  
11 just oysters, and that's hard. That's tough.

12 ELLEN COFFIN:

13 Anything else?

14 JOE SPRAGGINS:

15 No.

16 COMMISSIONER DANIELS:

17 Anything else, Cam?

18 COMMISSIONER ROBERDS:

19 I'm good.

20 ELLEN COFFIN:

21 Thank you.

22 COMMISSIONER DANIELS:

23 Thank you for the presentation.

24 JOE SPRAGGINS:

25 Then we have got the Trevor Show.

1 COMMISSIONER DANIELS:

2 Rodie Armes' Show.

3 TREVOR MONCRIEF:

4 Yeah. I would say if we go one more  
5 month and it's just Rodie that has a saltwater  
6 record, let's just change it to the Rodie Show,  
7 just keep it that way.

8 All right. So we've got one youth  
9 conventional tackle record for y'all today. It's  
10 a blacktip shark, *Carcharhinus Limbatus*,  
11 58 pounds, and the angler was Mr. Rodie Armes.  
12 There is a picture of the fish.

13 JOE SPRAGGINS:

14 Bigger than he is.

15 TREVOR MONCRIEF:

16 There is a picture of Rodie with the  
17 fish. So all we need is the motion to recommend  
18 the adoption of the new state record.

19 COMMISSIONER DANIELS:

20 I will make a motion to approve.

21 COMMISSIONER McLENDON:

22 I'll second.

23 COMMISSIONER ROBERDS:

24 Second.

25 COMMISSIONER DANIELS:

1 All those in favor?

2 COMMISSIONER McLENDON:

3 Aye.

4 COMMISSIONER ROBERDS:

5 Aye.

6 COMMISSIONER DANIELS:

7 Aye.

8 Thank you, Trevor.

9 TREVOR MONCRIEF:

10 All right.

11 COMMISSIONER DANIELS:

12 Today, we're getting an update from the  
13 Grand Bay NERR. We've got Ms. Gray.

14 MARGO POSTEN:

15 Hi. I'm actually Margo Posten. I'm  
16 stepping in for Ayesha today.

17 COMMISSIONER DANIELS:

18 I'm getting them all wrong today. I'm  
19 sorry.

20 MARGO POSTEN:

21 That's okay. You're reading what's on  
22 your list. Thank you.

23 JOE SPRAGGINS:

24 Switched around on us.

25 MARGO POSTEN:



1           So as I said, I'm Margo Posten. I'm  
2 with the Grand Bay National Estuarine Research  
3 Reserve. I'm the Coastal training program  
4 coordinator, and today, I'm just going to provide  
5 you an update on some of the things we've been  
6 doing out there since the beginning of our funding  
7 in July.

8           But first off, I just want to mention  
9 Amanda Free. She is our new Davidson fellow, and  
10 her -- she is with the Mississippi State  
11 University. Her adviser is Eric Sparks. She is  
12 working with MSU, of course, and DMR Fisheries to  
13 do some tracking -- some bacterial source tracking  
14 in Grand Bay waters.

15           So currently, our waters are closed to  
16 shellfish fishing because of the high E. coli  
17 numbers and she is doing tracking for us just to  
18 find out what kind of E. coli that is, if it's  
19 just a natural-occurring E. coli from the animals  
20 that are out there or it's actually related to  
21 human.

22           So right now, we don't know. We do know  
23 that it's out there, so she's using DNA to try to  
24 determine what type of E. coli that is. And if it  
25 is indeed from septic systems, then we will follow

1 that up and see where that might be coming from.

2 But she is currently working on this.  
3 She is collecting and processing. She is doing  
4 some of her processing over at the EPA lab, I  
5 think, in Gulfport, so she's also working with  
6 them too. And this was in coordination with,  
7 again, MSU and then the DMR Fisheries, and I think  
8 it's a two-year project. But we're happy to have  
9 her out there.

10 And then just an update on our NRDA  
11 project, so we've been doing this for a few years  
12 now. Recently, we had the 7 Brothers Unit  
13 mulched. We hired contractors, the EcoRestore,  
14 that do the mulching. It's a big piece of  
15 equipment that comes in and just kind of chews up  
16 everything in its path. They have worked -- done  
17 work with us before, but this tract was about  
18 110 acres that they did. We did have -- so  
19 they're mulching up invasive species for the most  
20 part.

21 So we had an opportunity for DMR's IT to  
22 come out, and they flew some drones and so we were  
23 able to kind of look at the areas that we knew  
24 where invasive species were. They flew the  
25 drones. We were able to put these polygons and

1 other shapes on the areas just to verify that they  
2 were actually getting the areas that we needed  
3 mulched in order to kind of eradicate some of  
4 those invasive species. And so they did a good  
5 job, and we appreciate the help from IT.

6 So this is another project. So Iwo  
7 Gross, he's a graduate student with Auburn. He's  
8 looking at the genetic diversity between ornate  
9 diamondback terrapins that -- a population that's  
10 in Mississippi, as well as a population in  
11 Alabama. He's looking at -- to see if there is  
12 different populations or if there is distinct  
13 populations between the two states.

14 So Stewardship, they help him go out and  
15 he collects terrapin eggs, so this -- it nests out  
16 on Point Aux Chenes, so he came out and we  
17 collected eggs. He took them back to Auburn.  
18 They hatched out. Once they hatched out, he takes  
19 his genetic sampling and then he puts them back  
20 about where -- the same place they were found.

21 So the -- our Stewardship group, they  
22 ended up releasing 102 hatchlings from 13  
23 different clutches. We're kind of actually happy  
24 about this because there is a very high predation  
25 on the hatchlings and the nests that are the Point

1 Aux Chenes. Actually, all of our terrapin sites  
2 are heavily predated upon.

3 So we know that there is 102 of them  
4 that are going to be out there. Now, whether or  
5 not they all survive for seven or eight years  
6 before they come back and lay their own nests --  
7 eggs, we don't know because few survive, but at  
8 least these little guys are going to get a good  
9 start.

10 These are just some pictures that Sandra  
11 Bilbo took while she was releasing them. They're  
12 pretty cute and hopefully at least one will come  
13 back to reproduce.

14 This is the training, Coastal training.  
15 This is my section. We have been pretty busy  
16 since the beginning of July. We've held two  
17 wilderness first aid courses. Wilderness first  
18 aid, we partner with a group out of Utah, Longleaf  
19 Medicine. There's not very many of these type of  
20 groups around the United States, but they come in.  
21 They teach us how to improvise when you're out in  
22 the field far away from any kind of emergency  
23 responder so if there is an incident, that you  
24 look around, you improvise with what you do have  
25 to try and stabilize that person until you get

1       them either all the way back or until emergency  
2       personnel can reach them as far as taking care of  
3       any kind of first aid or emergency issue that  
4       needs to be done.

5               So as I said, we held two of these. One  
6       was for the general public because, you know,  
7       local resource management, they're oftentimes out  
8       in -- far away from any kind of medical response  
9       as well. Consultants, Boy Scout leaders, they go  
10      on trips and so -- out in the woods and so they  
11      want to have that training. And then there is a  
12      just a few people that were there just because  
13      they like to hike out in the wilderness, and so  
14      they have that training as well.

15             The other training was for staff,  
16      specifically staff. We were -- actually had two  
17      personnel from DMR that actually came over, too,  
18      to have -- to participate in those trainings.

19             In -- October 18th, we have a wetlands  
20      delineation plant ID course coming up. We had one  
21      in April. It was over -- it was filled. We had a  
22      waiting list and from that waiting list, we  
23      decided to fill this course. We have a waiting  
24      list for this course. I think -- after COVID, I  
25      think that there -- a lot of people weren't able

1 to do a lot of trainings, and so we've had an  
2 overwhelming response for this course. So if we  
3 get a big enough list, waitlist on this course,  
4 then we'll plan on having another one in April.  
5 So that's -- so that's -- yeah, so we will see at  
6 the end of this one.

7 We were awarded an EPA grant in -- for  
8 stormwater -- for some stormwater work that we're  
9 trying to do over in Moss Point. That was awarded  
10 to us in February, but we had our first community  
11 meeting in September. We had about 40 people that  
12 showed up, which I was very happy to get that big  
13 of a response. They -- we talked to them about  
14 current issues with their flooding in their  
15 neighborhoods, and also tried to -- we collected  
16 their input and then also tried to get recruitment  
17 for helping us to monitor flood waters and then  
18 also help with the -- some of the Green  
19 Infrastructure installation and maintenance. So  
20 we're very happy that we had that kind of response  
21 and looking forward to continuing with the work  
22 for the EPA award.

23 Other awards that we have tried to do --  
24 or that we have tried to receive, we have a new  
25 education grant that we did receive. Brianna

1 Andrews, Mr. Spraggins had mentioned her earlier.  
2 She's a new-hire on this project. It's the  
3 Biodiversity, Relationship and Aquatic Chemistry  
4 Knowledge in Saline Habitat or BRACKISH. They  
5 will be working with eighth grade students, and  
6 they will actually go out into the estuary, get  
7 samples -- and fish samples and have a better  
8 understanding of the estuary and marine habitats  
9 conditions, so that one -- we were awarded that  
10 one.

11 We're also working with the University  
12 of Southern Mississippi on another Academy of  
13 Science grant that we're working with them. It's  
14 a six-month grant. It should have started the 1st  
15 of October, which we're gearing up to get started  
16 on that.

17 The other two, the Digital Coast, we  
18 have submitted. That's basically to do some rain  
19 gardens and -- demonstrations on rain gardens as  
20 an education piece. We have submitted that one.

21 And the next one with NOAA, we're still  
22 working on that. They extended that -- they  
23 extended that deadline until the end of October,  
24 but, again, that's relating to stormwater over in  
25 Moss Point.

1           And then the next one, the NFWF, that  
2           was actually with the -- Mississippi State, not  
3           the University of Southern Mississippi. That's  
4           actually Mississippi State. But the next one, the  
5           NOAA, that's another one that we submitted.  
6           That's also with Mississippi State and University  
7           of Southern Miss, but all of these are related to  
8           stormwater management over in Moss Point since  
9           they have such a huge flooding issue.

10           This is our education section. You can  
11           see that they have been quite busy since August.  
12           We have done several -- we have done a Raptor Road  
13           Show. We have done several home schools, fly tie  
14           class. We have had a lot of kids come out,  
15           elementary kids come out for kayaking and just  
16           seeing the habitat that's out there.

17           They did do a teacher open house over at  
18           the Infinity Center which they had teachers come  
19           in and talk to them about some of the topics out  
20           in the marsh.

21           We had our National Estuaries Day on  
22           September 24th. I think we had something like 90  
23           people that were on the boats that we got out into  
24           the estuary to teach them about what they have  
25           here in the backyard.



1           Then, a new program that we started  
2           which is kind of exciting, it's with the veterans  
3           group over in Biloxi. This is for the hearing  
4           (sic) impaired. You probably know that frogs have  
5           their own calls, similar to birds. So they were  
6           able to get the visually-impaired folks out into  
7           the habitat so they could listen to those frogs  
8           and they could help -- or they could hear them and  
9           then identify the type of frogs that they are  
10          listening to so I thought that was pretty cool.

11           And I think that that's it. This is  
12          just more pictures from our outreach, so that's  
13          all the updates I have. I will take any questions  
14          that you might have.

15           I will say with the NRDA project, that  
16          piece was 110 acres. So far they have masticated  
17          210 acres. They've got 500 acres that they're  
18          looking at that they will be going in for  
19          thinning, which they're cutting all the slash pine  
20          six inches, but a total of 800 acres have been  
21          cleared either through mastication or thinning.

22           So any questions?

23          JOE SPRAGGINS:

24           Thank you, Margo.

25           Hey, and Jared, we have -- we're working

1 on some other one, I think, too, with -- to buy  
2 some land over in that area; is that right?

3 MARGO POSTEN:

4 Yes.

5 JOE SPRAGGINS:

6 Margo, you know about that land?

7 MARGO POSTEN:

8 I don't have all the updates on that,  
9 but I know we're getting some surveys done.

10 JOE SPRAGGINS:

11 Yeah, I'm talking about working with  
12 Chris Wells and them with DEQ about doing a  
13 purchase on some land over there that some of it's  
14 wetlands; some of it's uplands.

15 MARGO POSTEN:

16 Yes. Thank you.

17 JARED HARRIS:

18 Yes, I don't know the exact details. I  
19 know they're looking at it. Jennifer sits in  
20 those calls with the land acquisition, but they  
21 are actively looking at parcels coastwide to  
22 purchase and there are some over there in that  
23 area.

24 JOE SPRAGGINS:

25 I want to say there's like 3- or 400

1 acres that's uplands and then the rest of it's --

2 JARED HARRIS:

3 I was in New Hampshire last week, but I  
4 know they went on some site visits, so maybe they  
5 went. And I actually haven't seen her. We  
6 haven't crossed paths. She has been out, and  
7 she's at DEQ today, so maybe they're looking into  
8 that some more.

9 JOE SPRAGGINS:

10 Okay. That's a good update. If you  
11 hadn't been to the NERR, you need to go out there  
12 and -- you'd be a little bit impressed on what's  
13 going on with them.

14 COMMISSIONER DANIELS:

15 It's one of the Coast's best kept  
16 secrets, I guess. People really should go visit  
17 there. They came out and helped out with our  
18 kids' event at the boat show last year and they  
19 were a big hit with the stuff they taught the  
20 kids, so doing good things over there.

21 All right. We got any public comments?

22 JOE SPRAGGINS:

23 No public comments, but I do have a  
24 couple things on other business.

25 COMMISSIONER DANIELS:

1 All right. Well, that's what I was  
2 headed into.

3 JOE SPRAGGINS:

4 All right. Rick, could y'all give us an  
5 update on the snapper season?

6 RICK BURRIS:

7 Yes. So right now, as of last weekend,  
8 we caught an estimated 112,781 pounds, which is  
9 roughly 74.4 percent of our ACL, which, as we  
10 talked about, is 151,550 pounds.

11 Had a good weekend last weekend. The  
12 weather is starting to cool down. The water is  
13 starting to cool down, and the CPUE is going up.  
14 That average weight is going up, so we -- I don't  
15 know if the trend is going to continue, but they  
16 have started catching a few more fish.

17 JOE SPRAGGINS:

18 And we're meeting obviously with NOAA --  
19 I mean, with the Gulf Council and all. We'll be  
20 meeting at the end of this month, but I can tell  
21 you the situation that's going on with our  
22 snapper, they're not backing off trying to cut our  
23 allocation. They're still trying to do it, and  
24 Trevor is fighting hard for us in the SSC. And  
25 Trevor is fighting to keep us to where we're at.

1 We've got several scenarios that we're looking at,  
2 but I don't see that we'll get out of here with  
3 150,000 pounds after -- in 2023.

4 And Trevor, Rick, y'all want to --  
5 anything you want to bring up on that?

6 TREVOR MONCRIEF:

7 So we have -- I mean, we've looked  
8 through the wave-specific estimates. We've looked  
9 through the data. We've had our arguments. We  
10 made our presentations to the transition group.  
11 We've -- we've really laid everything out there,  
12 and we've laid it out there multiple times.

13 What that has culminated to is a  
14 difference in understanding that has to be  
15 resolved so we can move forward with management.  
16 So essentially, what we are proposing in our  
17 scenarios is a way to calibrate our landings while  
18 also taking into account the effects that seem to  
19 hit our state much harder than any other state.

20 So what we're proposing is to eliminate  
21 wave 5 from the conversation and only use high-use  
22 waves, waves 3 and 4, knowing that there is still  
23 some issues with wave 3 and 4 that we see, but  
24 it's a better argument for us, and constrain the  
25 years to 2018 to 2020, essentially to make up for

1 those large-scale issues that we're seeing.

2           And what that would do -- the proposal  
3 gives us approximately 109,000 pounds, which is  
4 right around, as you see, what we have harvested  
5 in this season to date and it seems like to us  
6 about the best compromise for the situation and  
7 allows us to understand -- or allows us to --  
8 essentially what we're saying, that we know there  
9 are fundamental differences between our program  
10 and the MRIP program, but we should not be fully  
11 penalized because of those differences. We should  
12 be able to, you know, find a balance between the  
13 biases that affect our state and our program and  
14 figure out a number that works for both sides. So  
15 that's kind of where we're at right now.

16 JOE SPRAGGINS:

17           And just to give you an idea, if you  
18 think about it, you know, we've been open how many  
19 days now, Trevor? You have any idea? Over 100,  
20 isn't it?

21 TREVOR MONCRIEF:

22           Yes, it's over 100. It was 103.

23 JOE SPRAGGINS:

24           And normally, that type of season --  
25 what I would like to see -- and this is what

1 Trevor and Rick and Matt and them are working on  
2 and Traci, what I would like to see is a set deal  
3 to where we get a number, and say it is the  
4 109,000. Okay? That's our number. That's what  
5 we get. Let's say that's where the number is at,  
6 that we set a season and we open and close. And  
7 we give people a year ahead of time or as much as  
8 possible to say, this is what we're going to do.

9 In other words, we have to give them  
10 time to regenerate and rebuild over the pressure  
11 on the reefs and all. But if I went in and said,  
12 okay, we're going to open up the last weekend in  
13 April and then we're going to open up the whole  
14 month of May and June or whatever and then we're  
15 going to close down. I'm just throwing numbers.  
16 I mean, don't get me wrong. None of these are out  
17 there yet.

18 But something that we could lay out to,  
19 like, the charter boats that they could turn  
20 around and say, okay, I know when I can charter.  
21 All right? The fishermen that are coming down --  
22 not just the ones that live here in South  
23 Mississippi, but the ones that are coming down to  
24 set their time frame to say, I want to come to  
25 South Mississippi this time because that's when

1 the season is going to be open and I can fish.  
2 Kind of like we do in hunting and everything else,  
3 you know, just put something out there that would  
4 be structured. And we could still probably do  
5 somewhere between 55 to 80 days or 70 days. We  
6 could still do that, but we could structure it.

7 In the summertime when you figure like  
8 from the middle of July to the middle of August  
9 especially, there's a breeding time, right?

10 TREVOR MONCRIEF:

11 Uh-huh.

12 JOE SPRAGGINS:

13 There's a huge breeding time for  
14 snapper. Why don't we give them a break during  
15 that time. Why don't we back off and look at them  
16 during that time and say, hey, this helps us out  
17 more than one way because the snapper can, you  
18 know, have the pressure off them.

19 Number 2, the discards, when you discard  
20 the snapper that are discarded in the temperature  
21 of that water, then, you know, a large majority of  
22 them are not going to live. Let's get it to where  
23 they're going to be in a time frame to where we  
24 can get more out of them -- out of it. That's  
25 what we're looking at.



1           And Trevor, I know I messed it up  
2           somewhere, but --

3           TREVOR MONCRIEF:

4           No. So, I mean, if you think about what  
5           we're dealing with currently, we never had to face  
6           this issue all the way up through the past two  
7           years, right? We were harvesting our quota in  
8           time and it was more of when are we going to  
9           close, not how long is the season going to be  
10          open.

11          So in the beginning, that time frame was  
12          60 to 75 days. And, you know, we have discussed  
13          it amongst ourselves and everything, but, you  
14          know, the practice of always shooting for a  
15          number, as far as the quota is concerned, can get  
16          you down the path quickly of extending seasons and  
17          running into these issues that we're seeing now  
18          where the season is 103 days long and we've only  
19          harvested 75 percent.

20          And what we'd really like to do here and  
21          what the proposal is, to have some standardized  
22          season, some fixed season that we know allows our  
23          anglers a maximum opportunity, but also ensures  
24          the fishery and keeps our CPUE up where we want it  
25          to be, around 1.2 or 1.3, and kind of really

1 stabilizes overtime.

2 And it's us taking what I would call a  
3 proactive approach to management of this fishery  
4 that hasn't been taken before. We keep kind of  
5 going down these routes that happened in the '90s,  
6 that happened in the 2000s if you look through the  
7 history books, and we kind of get ourselves caught  
8 in this need to extend the season out as long as  
9 we can to hit a number.

10 And what we're kind of proposing now is,  
11 well, why don't we, you know, have a season that  
12 provides the opportunity for our anglers and at  
13 the same time try to make it beneficial for the  
14 stock as well and keep this going for the long  
15 haul.

16 COMMISSIONER DANIELS:

17 What do you do if you end up with an  
18 environmental factor, you know, a lot of winds for  
19 that first half of the season to where people  
20 can't get out there or something like that?

21 TREVOR MONCRIEF:

22 Yeah. I mean, that's definitely  
23 something that we would have to take into account,  
24 and I think it would be more so on the back end of  
25 the season. So, you know, you would think on the

1 front end of the season, there would a fair amount  
2 of opportunity there. And the scenario I could  
3 see is potentially having some pounds left and  
4 having it open during Labor Day like we have in  
5 the past couple of years, and all of a sudden we  
6 try to give our anglers that, you know, one more  
7 week of fishing and a tropical storm is nearby or  
8 anything else and it's blowing 40 and our guys are  
9 stuck at the house saying, this is great, thanks a  
10 lot for it. I mean, I think in those cases, we  
11 definitely try to give them another opportunity  
12 for it.

13 But I think the thing we'll have to talk  
14 about and the understanding that's going to have  
15 to come through is, you know, it might not be  
16 exactly to that number every year. We won't be  
17 shooting to harvest 99 percent of the ACL. We'll  
18 be shooting to provide our fisherman as many days  
19 as possible within that season that we have  
20 constructed and not -- keep it, you know, moving  
21 along. So trying to provide that consistency that  
22 we have always had while assuring the stocks held.

23 JOE SPRAGGINS:

24 Trying to shoot for not necessarily, as  
25 he just said, the number. The number is one

1 thing. Okay? That's something we have to live  
2 within. But the number that we're looking at is  
3 what gives the most effort that we can put as far  
4 as how can our anglers across the State of  
5 Mississippi or anyone coming from out of state  
6 that's coming here to catch our snapper, how can  
7 we give them the best ability to know when to come  
8 and how -- and be able to take the pressure off  
9 and keep the fish the way they are and have the  
10 least mortality and the discard. That's what  
11 we're looking at. That's more important than  
12 anything.

13 We can -- if we see down the way that  
14 the numbers are changing, we can always go back,  
15 you know, for additional allocation, if we see  
16 things are working and everybody else is seeing  
17 things do it.

18 But right now, that 110,000 pounds is  
19 probably a good number and -- because, Number 1,  
20 the cost of everything to go out and the way the  
21 price is. And it's not just us. Alabama is,  
22 what, a third of what -- somewhere in that  
23 neighborhood of what they caught last year.  
24 Florida is extending their season all the way to  
25 the end of November because they haven't caught

1 it. You know, are we really doing anything by  
2 just extending the season, or are we doing  
3 something by managing the resource? And that's  
4 what we want to be. We want to be a part of the  
5 answer and not a part of the problem, and that's  
6 what we're looking for.

7 COMMISSIONER DANIELS:

8 All right.

9 JOE SPRAGGINS:

10 One other thing we have is the  
11 December 20th meeting. It's the week of  
12 Christmas, and if the Commission would like to, I  
13 would like to ask the possibility of changing it  
14 to December 13th, which is the Tuesday of the week  
15 before and that way we can give people ample time  
16 to understand. Is that something y'all would  
17 entertain?

18 COMMISSIONER DANIELS:

19 I'm good with that on my calendar.

20 COMMISSIONER McLENDON:

21 Yep.

22 COMMISSIONER DANIELS:

23 Cam?

24 COMMISSIONER ROBERDS:

25 (Nodding head affirmatively.)

1 JOE SPRAGGINS:

2 Sandy, do we just need to make a motion  
3 to that or what?

4 SANDY CHESNUT:

5 Yes, sir, just make a motion. And if  
6 you want to stick with the 9:00, just state that  
7 for the record as well.

8 COMMISSIONER DANIELS:

9 I would like to make a motion to move  
10 December's meeting to 9:00 a.m. on December 13th  
11 as opposed to December 20th.

12 COMMISSIONER ROBERDS:

13 I will second.

14 COMMISSIONER DANIELS:

15 All in favor?

16 COMMISSIONER ROBERDS:

17 Aye.

18 COMMISSIONER McLENDON:

19 Aye.

20 COMMISSIONER DANIELS:

21 Aye.

22 All right. We have no public comments.

23 Do we have a motion to adjourn?

24 COMMISSIONER ROBERDS:

25 I will make a motion.

1 COMMISSIONER DANIELS:

2 I will second.

3 All in favor?

4 COMMISSIONER ROBERDS:

5 Aye.

6 COMMISSIONER McLENDON:

7 Aye.

8 COMMISSIONER DANIELS:

9 Aye.

10 Thank y'all.

11 (Adjourned at 10:13 a.m.)

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## 1 CERTIFICATE OF COURT REPORTER

2 I, MELISSA BURDINE-RODOLFICH, Court Reporter  
3 and Notary Public, in and for the County of  
4 Harrison, State of Mississippi, hereby certify that  
5 the foregoing pages, and including this page,  
6 contain a true and correct copy of my stenotype  
7 notes and/or electronic tape recording of the  
8 testimony of the witness, as taken by me at the  
9 time and place heretofore stated, to the best of my  
10 skill and ability.

11 I further certify that I am not in the employ  
12 of, or related to, any counsel or party in this  
13 matter, and have no interest, monetary or  
14 otherwise, in the final outcome of the proceedings.

15 Witness my signature and seal, this the  
16 \_\_\_\_\_ day of \_\_\_\_\_, 2022.

17  
18 /s/\_\_\_\_\_

19  
20 Melissa Burdine-Rodolfich  
21 My Commission Expires 4/28/24  
22  
23  
24  
25