

STATE OF MISSISSIPPI

MISSISSIPPI ADVISORY COMMISSION ON MARINE RESOURCES

COMMISSION MEETING

Tuesday, November 15, 2022, 9:00 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 RONNIE DANIELS:

2 Good morning, everyone. Thank y'all for
3 attending today's commission meeting for Tuesday,
4 November 15th. We're going to go ahead and call
5 the meeting to order.

6 I'll ask Commissioner Roberds to lead us
7 in the Pledge of Allegiance.

8 (Pledge of Allegiance recited.)

9 RONNIE DANIELS:

10 We've got the director back in the house
11 today, so I'll ask him to lead us in a prayer this
12 morning.

13 JOE SPRAGGINS:

14 Before we start this morning, though,
15 you know, I asked this last month. A lot of
16 things have happened and we have got to keep our
17 people and our friends and our families and
18 everybody down in Florida in our hearts. You
19 know, they took a good hit down there.

20 We know what it feels like. We have
21 been there. We know what it feels like. We know
22 what Katrina did to us. They're going to be 10 to
23 15 years before they rebuild, so keep them all in
24 your hearts and in your prayers and all. And if
25 you get a chance, if there's something you can do

1 for them, go and help them. Let's go to the Lord.

2 (Moment of prayer.)

3 RONNIE DANIELS:

4 All right. Moving on, approval of the
5 minutes for October 11th, 2022. Do we have a
6 motion to approve the minutes?

7 JONATHAN McLENDON:

8 I make a motion.

9 CAM ROBERDS:

10 I second.

11 RONNIE DANIELS:

12 All in favor, aye.

13 CAM ROBERDS:

14 Aye.

15 JONATHAN McLENDON:

16 Aye.

17 RONNIE DANIELS:

18 Do we still not have those minutes back
19 that we've had hanging?

20 MS. MATTA:

21 Next month.

22 JOE SPRAGGINS:

23 Next month, yeah.

24 RONNIE DANIELS:

25 All right. We will deal with that next

1 month.

2 Approval of today's agenda?

3 I will make a motion to approve today's
4 agenda.

5 CAM ROBERDS:

6 I will second.

7 RONNIE DANIELS:

8 All in favor?

9 CAM ROBERDS:

10 Aye.

11 JONATHAN McLENDON:

12 Aye.

13 RONNIE DANIELS:

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

15 JOE SPRAGGINS:

16 All right. Well, you know, October has
17 been a busy -- was a busy month, and November
18 hasn't slowed down very much either.

19 So employment contracts, if you can see,
20 we have Dakota Ladner moved into a full-time
21 position, environmental/natural resources
22 specialist, marine fisheries. Jack Nickerson, he
23 is an environmental/natural resources specialist
24 II and he is in Lyman, and Kristi Taylor is a
25 dispatcher with us with marine patrol. Melody

1 Chaplin is promoted to environmental/natural
2 resources team lead in marine fisheries, shrimp
3 and crab, and Brett James is promoted to
4 environmental/natural resources specialist team
5 lead and coastal resources permitting.

6 So we were able to be -- able to promote
7 a few people, bring a few people up and got a
8 couple of new ones, so looking good in everything
9 so far. Any questions on them?

10 (No response.)

11 JOE SPRAGGINS:

12 All right. And contracts, we have one
13 contract. This was Spat Tech. It's \$800,000, to
14 put 925 sacks of oysters in the water. We're
15 still trying to rebuild. We're doing everything
16 we can, and they had some opportunity for us to be
17 able to work this.

18 And I will tell you what, I wish I had a
19 picture of them because they were some beautiful
20 oysters that we were able to put in the water and
21 they were set on -- I think it was concrete,
22 crushed concrete and some other stuff. It was
23 pretty good, real good. I think we will get some
24 use out of it.

25 Anything on the contracts?

1 RONNIE DANIELS:

2 Where did those go?

3 JOE SPRAGGINS:

4 They're going in the western and eastern
5 Gulf. We're going to -- we spread things around a
6 little bit, you know, to make sure -- these are
7 oysters that -- they're about the size of a half
8 dollar or something to that. You know they're in
9 their own shell and they're going in and they're
10 going to be able to put them and they'll be
11 spawning.

12 And Erik, Jason, do y'all know exactly
13 where they went? I'm not --

14 RONNIE DANIELS:

15 I was just wondering if they were spread
16 out on both sides.

17 JASON RIDER:

18 Good morning. We have put -- we have
19 deployed about half of those oysters at this time
20 and those went to Pass Marianne Reef. The
21 remainder will go to -- in the Tonging Box in the
22 west.

23 RONNIE DANIELS:

24 Cool. Thank you.

25 JOE SPRAGGINS:

1 And I don't know if it's in my notes.
2 If it is, I will jump around and get ahead of it,
3 but we are working and we're doing a test. You
4 know, we're trying to figure out what to do with
5 the off -- the on-bottom oysters and basically
6 what to do with the -- as far as the setting
7 facilities, as to whether we need to build one or
8 don't need to build one.

9 We've got Machado group to be able to go
10 in and do a study for us. They come back and gave
11 us their best that they could as far as what it
12 would cost to build one and what it would cost to
13 operate it and how -- what we'd need to do.

14 We're going now and we're looking at it
15 and the question is, is there a way to do a
16 hybrid? Is there something else that we can do?
17 Can we do a public-private partnership and how are
18 we going to do it?

19 We're open. I will tell you, we're
20 still wide open. We don't know. We're just --
21 we're trying to get all the facts. Is -- what I
22 like to do is I like to be able to get the exact
23 facts of what's going to happen and have
24 scientific data to back it. And if we can do
25 that, then that's what we're looking at.

1 We're working now. Jason and them have
2 been doing a test with Spat Tech. What -- we're
3 trying to grow oysters there and grow oysters down
4 here in the Gulf and see which one works the best.
5 And we're doing that test and it's undergoing
6 right now and it's about finished on that first
7 phase of it.

8 We're going to take the oysters that
9 have been put in the water by Spat Tech and see
10 what they do. I guess the oysters that we put in
11 the water and how they grow and we're going to be
12 able to look at this and see if there is any
13 difference, if there's a big problem there or if
14 it works with -- about the same. We're looking at
15 a possibility of doing another test to be able to
16 put spat on shell and try to be able to put it out
17 next year and to further do this test program.

18 We're going to find out what it takes.
19 The idea is to be able to get the oysters back in
20 the water. And if you get the oysters into the
21 water, they will take care of the estuary and
22 that's what we need, and we need that more than we
23 need anything else.

24 Now, obviously we love to eat oysters,
25 too, don't we? And we need to bring some sacks of

1 oysters in to South Mississippi and start getting
2 some revenue for the state for that, too, so we're
3 working on it. It's a process that's going to
4 take a little while. It's not something you just
5 jump into, but we have a little money set aside
6 to -- Restore Act to be able to do it. And we
7 have about 7.3 million left in it, and we're
8 looking at some other projects and the way we can
9 do it. So we'll let you know which way we're
10 going to go as soon as we get a good idea and what
11 kind of answer we think we are going to get.

12 Any questions on that?

13 (No response.)

14 JOE SPRAGGINS:

15 All right. We've got some derelict
16 vessels. We got pictures of that? Just to give
17 you an idea, we got the bill passed in July. It
18 went into effect July 1st. We had 66 derelict
19 vessels that we had identified. Forty-six of
20 those have already been removed. Fourteen are
21 pending removal and six are -- we have court
22 orders to remove them, so basically out of whole
23 bunch, we have got 20 of the 66 left that we're
24 working on.

25 The graph there for -- next slide. All

1 right. That one is over in Jackson County. I
2 don't know if you saw that one, but it was an old
3 shrimp boat that had been sitting there at a
4 woman's property for several years and we were
5 able to move it.

6 Next slide.

7 That's back in Gulfport Lake and there
8 is a bunch of boats, mainly sailboats, that have
9 been parked on property there, and we were able to
10 get them all moved.

11 Next slide.

12 That one is over in D'Iberville and
13 that's -- the last storm, there a lot of things
14 that just happened over there where that area is
15 at. And they're trying to rebuild it and we're
16 just trying to get them old derelict boats out of
17 there. So you can see what's there.

18 Next slide.

19 That's in D'Iberville also.

20 Next slide.

21 Hancock County, that one is over there
22 by Kendall Marque's operation over there, and it
23 was about to block the whole channel where they
24 couldn't even get their shrimp boats in and out so
25 we were able to get that one out.

1 Next slide.

2 And that was one is in Hancock County
3 also, over in Diamondhead.

4 So we have expended \$106,355.80 on it so
5 far, and that's at July 1st, being able to get rid
6 of it. This is something the legislature asked us
7 to do and they passed a bill for us. And we were
8 able to make it work and I think that's a good
9 thing for us. Hopefully, we'll have those other
10 20 out of the water before the end of the year.

11 And so if anybody has a problem and they
12 find a derelict vessel, please call the DMR and we
13 can get the information to you and what number to
14 call and you can just call and find out -- or you
15 can always call marine patrol dispatch or anything
16 else and we can get the information to them.

17 RONNIE DANIELS:

18 Joe, just curious, like these ones in
19 Harrison County, Gulfport Lake that you're talking
20 about, it looks like they're -- once we move
21 those, where do they go? What happens to them?

22 JOE SPRAGGINS:

23 We didn't really have to move them.
24 Once we really got to the point to where we could
25 do something because -- before, unless they were

1 impeding the waterway or spilling some type of
2 fluid, we couldn't touch them. But now they
3 passed a law that we could touch them if they was
4 in the waterway, basically anywhere, or on the
5 bank.

6 Well, once we did that, the people who
7 owned them decided they needed to do what's right,
8 you know. And it's amazing how people will tell
9 you they don't own that boat and then all of a
10 sudden, they'll go back and get it, you know. So
11 that's what we've done.

12 Now, some of them that we're not able to
13 salvage that way, we've just trashed them and put
14 them in some type of a dumpster, you know, and
15 taken them. We have sent some -- like the one,
16 the Ben, the Captain Ben, the big one, the way we
17 did that was they could have the boat and then
18 they could tear it up, you know, and scrap it and
19 so it was a lower cost to the State to be able to
20 do that.

21 So it was -- it worked out pretty good.
22 We're trying to do -- every way we can to be able
23 to cut the cost as much as possible. But, yet, I
24 think what happened when the legislature gave us
25 the opportunity to be able to do this now and

1 open -- and people realized that we were going to
2 fine them, we were going to charge them the cost
3 to move it, they all decided to go move a lot of
4 them theirselves and we move the rest of them.

5 RONNIE DANIELS:

6 That's what I was getting at. If there
7 is a boat that has any kind of value at all, I was
8 wondering if can we sell that and recoup the
9 money.

10 JOE SPRAGGINS:

11 Yeah, we would, and that's exactly what
12 would have happened. If they have not moved these
13 that you're looking at there, we would have taken
14 them over to a yard and had them pulled over to
15 that point and put them in an auction and sold
16 them and then the money would have went back into
17 it.

18 SANDY CHESNUT:

19 Commission, the Court orders that
20 Stephen's been getting from the Court, it
21 specifically says that the department has the
22 authority to make whatever disposition that we
23 deem necessary or appropriate, so it can be
24 disposal, storage, whatever. We can even sell it,
25 you know, or use it.

1 JOE SPRAGGINS:

2 The idea is to get them out of the water
3 and off the banks, so whatever it takes to do
4 that, that's what we're trying to do.

5 We also donated a vessel to the City of
6 Gulfport. We entered an MOU with them and
7 Department of Leisure Services there for them to
8 be able to use a vessel in boating events that are
9 going on. It was one that we were about to put
10 into auction because it was taking it out of the
11 fleet and so we put -- we were able to donate it
12 to them.

13 The Wildlife Foundation, if anybody
14 knows what it is, wildlife -- you know, DMR had a
15 foundation years ago and the foundation and -- is
16 no longer in existence. And rather than us
17 starting the foundation back or trying to do
18 anything to that effect, I talked with the
19 governor's office and they were okay with it. And
20 then I talked to some of the legislators. They
21 seemed to be fine with it. I talked to wildlife
22 and briefed them last week about the possibility
23 of the DMR being a part of the Mississippi
24 Wildlife Foundation and it will be a saltwater
25 side of it.

1 So we will have a saltwater foundation
2 part of that where we can go in -- and there is a
3 lot of good things that could come out of this.
4 We can have some fishing tournaments for -- like
5 handicapped fishing tournaments. We could have
6 children tournaments. We could have a lot of
7 things to do -- we could have wounded veterans,
8 soldiers. We can do -- a lot of things that we
9 can do.

10 And then we can also -- they will put
11 some money into this situation. People will -- we
12 will go out and ask people to donate to it and be
13 able to -- if we're part of it and be able to put
14 money into that. And then we'll use that for the
15 natural resources to restore areas and to do
16 things that need to be done.

17 And if we ever have to have like a match
18 fund, it's perfect for that or a scholarship. You
19 know, we can do scholarships for young men and
20 women to be able to go to the university and study
21 something to do with marine science. We have none
22 of that capability now.

23 And if this works out, it will be great.
24 We should know something shortly. I met with them
25 last week. They all seemed very appreciative to

1 do this and thought it would be a good idea, so
2 we'll just wait and see what happens.

3 All right. So any questions on the
4 foundation?

5 (No response.)

6 JOE SPRAGGINS:

7 All right. The other thing is, Joe
8 mentioned it. We're working on it. We have a
9 list right now. It's going to the governor and
10 we're looking at it, and the governor's office is
11 looking at it and the governor, and hopefully
12 we'll be able to spend somewhere close to around
13 \$50 million this year in GOMESA funds. So we'll
14 know something as soon as he has a chance to go
15 through it. He's very busy right now trying to
16 get our budgets and everything else done. We'll
17 see where we've at.

18 Just to give you an idea of meetings,
19 October 16th, we had the Gulf States Marine
20 Fisheries Meeting in San Antonio. And then we had
21 the -- October 20th, we had the GOMA, which is
22 Gulf of Mexico Alliance in Gulf Shores. The 24th,
23 we had the Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management
24 Council here in Biloxi and then October 31st, we
25 was at the National State Directors meeting in San

1 Diego.

2 I will tell you what, we met -- I got a
3 great opportunity to meet with Janet Coit, who is
4 over the marine fisheries for NOAA, in two of
5 those meetings, and we got to sit down and talk in
6 depth on a lot of things about Mississippi. She
7 is a former state director out of Rhode Island.
8 She understands us.

9 And I told her -- we were talking one
10 day at lunch and I told her, I said, Janet, you
11 know -- and I explained to her about all the
12 things about the Bonnet Carre and how long it's
13 taking and what it's doing and everything else,
14 and she was like, yeah, I know it. And I said, if
15 it was your state, would you be upset? She said,
16 yes. She said, I wouldn't -- she said, I
17 understand exactly where you're coming from. She
18 understands us. That is good.

19 And she is going to try to fight. She
20 is trying to streamline the process for that.
21 That's going to be one thing she's going to do.
22 Hopefully, she'll streamline it and we won't have
23 to -- it needs to be similar to everybody.

24 And, you know, it's not just Mississippi
25 that's having this problem. The fisheries

1 disaster in Alaska or everywhere else are having
2 the same problems. So we need to streamline this
3 and have a set way of doing it and the amount --
4 have set questions that need to be answered in how
5 they're done, and she is agreeing 100 percent. So
6 that's a great deal. We hope that that will work
7 out.

8 And it was just a great meeting. She
9 enjoyed her time. She was here on the Gulf Coast
10 for a couple of days and she enjoyed her time here
11 and I think that she'll come back and spend some
12 more time with us.

13 With that said, is there anything else
14 on the agency that y'all need to know about that
15 I'm missing here?

16 (No response.)

17 JOE SPRAGGINS:

18 All right. Processors update, Traci. I
19 think we're good. We have got great news on this,
20 right?

21 TRACI FLOYD:

22 Yes. So as you know, applications, we
23 stopped accepting those August 16th. We received
24 approval from the USDA for our payment plan. All
25 of -- as of October 31st, all the processors who

1 were eligible have been paid.

2 JOE SPRAGGINS:

3 Good deal. Thank you for your hard
4 work.

5 TRACI FLOYD:

6 Thank you.

7 JOE SPRAGGINS:

8 All right. Bonnet Carre, we're still --
9 as I said, we're trying to beat that horse. It
10 went to OMB. OMB sent it back to NOAA. NOAA sent
11 it back to us. We answered the questions. It
12 went back to OMB, so let's see what happens. You
13 know, we did -- I'm not going to make any kind of
14 projection on it, but it's coming. It would just
15 be a guess.

16 Action updates from the prior meeting?

17 SANDY CHESNUT:

18 At the October meeting, the Commission
19 recommended and the Director approved the state
20 saltwater youth fish record for conventional
21 tackle for Rodie Armes, blacktip shark, 58 pounds,
22 6.4 ounces.

23 And they changed the date of the
24 December commission meeting from December 20th to
25 December 13th at 9:00.

1 JOE SPRAGGINS:

2 Okay. Any questions?

3 SANDY CHESNUT:

4 And we still have the August meeting
5 minutes, and we will do that next month.

6 JOE SPRAGGINS:

7 All right. We're going to start the
8 Rodie Arms Museum somewhere around here.

9 RONNIE DANIELS:

10 He's not on there.

11 JOE SPRAGGINS:

12 He was.

13 RONNIE DANIELS:

14 He's not on there today.

15 SANDY CHESNUT:

16 No.

17 RONNIE DANIELS:

18 We missed a month with him.

19 JOE SPRAGGINS:

20 I know, but he was on there last month.
21 Yeah. Well, I think he must have something to do
22 with school or something.

23 All right. But anyway, that's all I
24 have today unless y'all have questions for me.
25 Thank you very much.

1 RONNIE DANIELS:

2 Thank you, Joe.

3 Commissioners, we got anything to record
4 today?

5 No, sir.

6 All right. Chief, we're going to turn
7 it over to marine Patrol.

8 MICHAEL STRICKLAND:

9 Hey, good morning. So I'm delivering
10 for Colonel Wilkerson who couldn't be here today.

11 So good morning, Director,
12 Commissioners, Ms. Chesnut. Hopefully, you have
13 had a chance to review the marine patrol report
14 for last month. You will notice that our numbers
15 pretty much stayed the same, except for our stops.
16 That was up quite a bit, recreational traffic and
17 obviously, the commercial traffic is picking up a
18 little bit, so marine patrol remained active. We
19 had a total of 60 citations for last month.

20 And if you have any questions on any of
21 them, I will be happy to address them.

22 RONNIE DANIELS:

23 Anything?

24 (No response.)

25 RONNIE DANIELS:

1 Thank you. Y'all keep up the good work
2 out there.

3 MICHAEL STRICKLAND:

4 Yes, sir.

5 RONNIE DANIELS:

6 All right. Coastal Resources
7 Management, James Davis.

8 JAMES DAVIS:

9 Good morning. This is just an annual
10 update for Coastal Preserves for 2022.

11 For invasive species control, we have
12 giant and common salvania. We've made 78 spray
13 missions with about 390 miles of waterway covered
14 within 20 different waterways.

15 Giant applesnails, we have captured
16 2,680 snails, removed 37,800 egg masses and
17 surveyed about 5,600 miles of shoreline.

18 We've removed -- 446 hogs have been
19 killed on coastal preserve sites. That includes
20 helicopter gunning and trapping.

21 And then we've also controlled, cogon
22 grass, tallow, Cherokee rose, climbing fern and
23 privet on eight coastal preserve sites.

24 We've done 12 miles of trails, mowed,
25 maintained and cleared. We have cleared about 14

1 acres of pine forest within three preserves.

2 And then outreach activities include a
3 booth at the Invasive Species Awareness Event at
4 the aquarium, summer camp talks on Deer Island and
5 then conservation talk within Gulfport school
6 district on preserves and conservation.

7 We have acquired approximately 980 acres
8 in Bay St. Louis this year. We have planted 2,000
9 pine trees on Deer Island BU sites.

10 And future projects include prescribed
11 burns, timber harvest, larger scale invasive
12 species treatments and updated kiosks on our
13 preserves trails.

14 Any questions?

15 RONNIE DANIELS:

16 Yes. Where do I sign up to help y'all
17 out with helicopter shooting hogs?

18 JAMES DAVIS:

19 That's through USDA.

20 RONNIE DANIELS:

21 I'm available anytime.

22 CAM ROBERDS:

23 If you need anybody that can actually
24 shoot, though, let me know.

25 JOE SPRAGGINS:

1 You know, maybe we ought to get with
2 wildlife, you know, and have a hog killing, see if
3 they want to come down and sponsor something and
4 have one. We're trying to get rid of those, and
5 we spend quite a bit of money every year just
6 trying to get -- just to keep control of them.

7 And I asked Jennifer the other day where
8 they go with them, and, you know, she said that
9 they feed them to the alligators. Is that right?

10 JAMES DAVIS:

11 Yeah. They take them -- the ones
12 trapped are taken to an alligator farm.

13 JOE SPRAGGINS:

14 Yeah. They feed them to the alligators.
15 They can't leave there alive. They have to take
16 them all out and they can't take them out alive,
17 out of the area. And so then they take them and
18 they feed them to the alligator farms. I'm like,
19 all right.

20 RONNIE DANIELS:

21 A lot of people don't realize how much
22 damage those things do.

23 JAMES DAVIS:

24 Yes, sir.

25 JOE SPRAGGINS:

1 Oh, I was over in Florida this last week
2 and Eglin Air Force. I went over there to the
3 golf course. And I said, you got most of them up?
4 And they said, well we've got about half of the
5 falcons and all the eagle. I said, well, what
6 happened to the half of the falcon. They said the
7 hogs eat them up. I said, huh. I would have me a
8 hog killing, you know.

9 JAMES DAVIS:

10 All right. Thank you.

11 RONNIE DANIELS:

12 Thank you.

13 All right. Permitting, Jennifer Wilder.

14 JENNIFER WILDER:

15 Good morning. I'm going to be
16 presenting a permit request of DMR's Beneficial
17 Use of dredged material program.

18 The location is in the Mississippi
19 Sound, seven miles south of Pass Christian and
20 five and half miles west of the western tip of Cat
21 Island. It is presently located in the General
22 Use District and the agent is Anchor QEA.

23 The applicant is requesting to fill 900
24 acres of unvegetated water bottoms. They plan to
25 dredge 917 cubic yards from inside that footprint

1 to create a containment berm. They are going to
2 overlay that sediment with 528,000 cubic yards of
3 armor stone. The berm that will be created will
4 be five feet at mean lower low water. The crest
5 width is 15 feet, and the berm base is varying in
6 width based on the design that's necessary to a
7 maximum of 135 feet.

8 Once this is created the point is to
9 take the dredge material that we received to
10 construct marsh. And once the marsh is created,
11 we're expecting it to range minus .5 to three feet
12 mean lower low water, and the applicant is
13 requesting a 10-year permit.

14 Here, you can see the project location
15 in relation to the Gulf Intercoastal Waterway,
16 Pass Christian and then the western tip of Cat
17 Island.

18 This is the cross-sectional diagram
19 showing the containment berm after the placement
20 of the dredge material in the middle.

21 The proposed project is allowable within
22 the General Use District, but the applicant is
23 requesting a change to the Coastal Wetlands Use
24 Plan for the footprint of the project to Special
25 Use District S-6 for Restoration Enhancement

1 Areas.

2 They're justifying that with Mississippi
3 Admin. Code Title 22, Part 23, Chapter 7, Section
4 105.06.01 and 105.06.02, stating that there is a
5 significant public benefit, impacts to public
6 access and adverse environmental impacts have been
7 minimized.

8 The general public and governmental
9 entities were notified of the project and the
10 public hearing was held.

11 They are also requesting a variance to
12 the Coastal Program for Title 22, Part 23, Chapter
13 8, Section 114.01 which states that permit of
14 coastal wetlands below the mean high tide line,
15 because of the potential environmental and
16 cumulative environment impacts, is not authorized,
17 justifying it with Title 22, Part 23, Section 8 --
18 Chapter 8, Section 118.04. This states, Impacts
19 to coastal wetlands would be no worse if the
20 guidelines were followed. This is based on
21 creating 820 acres of marsh habitat and that we
22 will be supplying a beneficial use site to western
23 Mississippi Sound.

24 The public notice ran. The *Sun Herald*
25 is required by law. And a public hearing was held

1 on October 19th. No comments were received from
2 DEQ or Wildlife, Fisheries and Parks, and Archives
3 and History and Secretary of State's office had no
4 objections.

5 The staff conducted a thorough
6 evaluation of the project based on the decision
7 factors and in accordance with the Mississippi
8 Coastal Program, and based on those findings found
9 that the project is consistent with the coastal
10 program because it serves a higher public purpose.

11 I just stated the 820 acres of marsh
12 habitat that will be created and the Beneficial
13 Use site in the western Mississippi Sound.

14 Staff requests a motion that the
15 Commission recommend to the Executive Director to
16 approve the requested variance, approve the use
17 plan change and to approve the permit as
18 requested.

19 Questions?

20 RONNIE DANIELS:

21 So we're essentially looking at building
22 an 800-acre island right there?

23 JENNIFER WILDER:

24 Yes, essentially, yes.

25 RONNIE DANIELS:

1 That's exciting. I like that.

2 JOE SPRAGGINS:

3 It's the Pelican Key. You know where
4 Pelican Key was years ago. It's the old Pelican
5 Key, and it's basically rebuilding it. And, you
6 know, one of the things, too, there's going to be
7 like little channels in it to where the fish can
8 come in and out of it, so it's not going to just
9 be a berm area, just one thing. It will be great
10 for the estuary. A lot of fish will go in and out
11 of there and fish, you know, and feed off of it.
12 It will be a fantastic deal.

13 I do have one comment that came from
14 F.J. Eicke. And F.J. sent me something, so if I
15 could, I would like to read that real quick if
16 that's all right. And it says: As governor of
17 relations committee chair for Coastal Conversation
18 Association of Mississippi, unfortunately I will
19 not be able to attend the meeting Tuesday. I do
20 note that G2a on the agenda has raised my
21 interest. Have we ever used the Mississippi Sound
22 for the beneficial use disposal of dredged
23 material? Can we recall when the TCA -- if the
24 issue has moved forward by the Corp of Engineers?
25 I don't know what he meant.

1 But anyway, I'm objecting to a disposal
2 area dredge around Pascagoula ship channel. And
3 it said, to be widened and deepened. I assume
4 that over an average of 900 acres of material will
5 be widely scattered, but such material will likely
6 impact something beneficial to recreational
7 anglers and the area as it -- extensive. Let's
8 see.

9 I have a competing -- anyway, he's
10 talking about something he's got to do.

11 But anyway, his idea is -- the question
12 is, will it -- have we ever used the Mississippi
13 Sound? Have we ever used the Mississippi Sound to
14 do dredge material? Can y'all answer that
15 question?

16 JENNIFER WILDER:

17 Jared?

18 JARED HARRIS:

19 Yes.

20 JOE SPRAGGINS:

21 We have. And where?

22 JENNIFER WITTMANN:

23 Round Island.

24 JOE SPRAGGINS:

25 Round Island is considered the Sound.

1 That's a question I had. I wasn't sure.

2 And we also used the area around Deer
3 Island, and so I just wanted to make sure that --
4 just wanted to clear those records. Those are the
5 two that I think of. Is there anything else that
6 y'all know of?

7 JENNIFER WITTMANN:

8 Greenwood Island is in Pascagoula Bay.
9 That is adjacent to Mississippi Sound.

10 JOE SPRAGGINS:

11 Sorry about that, sir. I just wanted to
12 put that on the record.

13 RONNIE DANIELS:

14 That's good.

15 CAM ROBERDS:

16 I have got a quick question. Is the --
17 so it's 800-and-some-odd acres. The perimeter
18 shows they will build the berm and then it will
19 have riprap in armor stone. Is that going to be
20 around the entire perimeter of the project? It
21 will have tidal access?

22 JENNIFER WILDER:

23 It will. There are going to be breaks
24 in it as they get closer actually to implementing
25 the plan and looking at engineering of it all is

1 when they're going to determine how far apart
2 those are going to be. But there will be breaks
3 to allow the tide of fisheries to go in and out.

4 CAM ROBERDS:

5 Got you.

6 JONATHAN McLENDON:

7 Now, once -- I see we're filling this
8 with dredge material. Where is material coming
9 from and what are we going to deepen?

10 JENNIFER WILDER:

11 Okay. So state law actually says that
12 if more than 2,500 cubic yards of state-owned
13 water bottoms are dredged and that the material is
14 suitable -- it has to go through rigorous
15 testing -- that that has to be used for beneficial
16 use, and that is where these kind of things come
17 from. We see them a lot in -- like, when counties
18 do dredging of -- maintenance dredging of channels
19 and things like that.

20 JARED HARRIS:

21 So usually -- she is correct -- on the
22 most of the sites, we fill them opportunistically
23 over the 10-year permit.

24 This site in general, if there is an
25 expansion of the Gulfport Shipping Channel, an

1 expansion, a widening and deepening, that's
2 when -- we're not just going to go build this site
3 like we do with the other ones. This one, if that
4 happens, we'll need somewhere to put it just
5 because it's pretty capital intensive.

6 So Round Island, we build those and fill
7 them opportunistically. This one will be for --
8 JOE SPRAGGINS:

9 How many cubic yards of beneficial use
10 would it possibly use?

11 JARED HARRIS:

12 This is Jared's estimate, about
13 15 million, but these sites seem to take a lot
14 more than -- actually, that's close to the
15 engineer's estimate, not Jared's estimate. I
16 think it will take more than the engineer's
17 estimate because these sites seem to -- once they
18 consolidate and dewater, then seem to take a lot
19 of more material than they estimate.

20 JOE SPRAGGINS:

21 One other thing this does, obviously --
22 and the fisheries department can probably talk
23 about this, but anytime that we rebuild that area,
24 we can help change the salinity in the Sound in
25 the summertime. Because of that, you know, the

1 amount of salinity coming in from the saltwater
2 coming in from the south in the summertime, it can
3 help in that area to be able to change that
4 salinity and help break it down.

5 That's one of the things that's happened
6 to us over the last 20, 30 years, 40 years,
7 whatever it is. But, you know, the island is
8 breaking down and because of that, there is more
9 saltwater coming into the Sound, which is doing a
10 lot of damage, especially with oyster drills and
11 all like that, you know, and being able to get the
12 salinities high. And then obviously, we need the
13 fresh water from the north that we don't get.

14 But there's a lot of things that we can
15 work at. Anytime that we can do any of this, I
16 think it helps it. That's what I've found. I
17 know Rick is not here, but Trevor, any of y'all
18 can speak on that? Matt, Trevor? I see Matt now.
19 I didn't see him back there.

20 TREVOR MONCRIEF:

21 As far as in an impact to the fisheries
22 and everything else? I mean, yeah, I think the
23 addition of breakwaters that have increased the
24 marsh edges to the western Sound have also shown a
25 positive benefit, and anytime you can increase the

1 moisture, you increase the amount of recruitment,
2 so, you know, it should have a positive impact on
3 a multitude of species that we manage.

4 JOE SPRAGGINS:

5 Thank you.

6 RONNIE DANIELS:

7 Thank you.

8 All right. So we're going to need a
9 motion and a second, but I am going to abstain
10 from this because of previous work that I have
11 done and potential future work.

12 JONATHAN McLENDON:

13 I'll make a motion that we approve the
14 recommendation.

15 CAM ROBERDS:

16 I'll second that motion.

17 RONNIE DANIELS:

18 All in favor.

19 JONATHAN McLENDON:

20 Aye.

21 CAM ROBERDS:

22 Aye.

23 JENNIFER WILDER:

24 Thank y'all very much.

25 RONNIE DANIELS:

1 All right. Ms. Leslie, finance and
2 administration.

3 LESLIE BREWER:

4 Good morning, everyone. I'm Leslie
5 Brewer, CFO. I'll be presenting the financial
6 statements for the month ending October 31st,
7 2022.

8 At the end of October, our state revenue
9 was 13.9 million. Our agency revenue was
10 15.5 million. Our state net income is
11 1.8 million, and our agency net income is 7.2.

12 We did get our tidelands funding in
13 October, so that's reflected there.

14 After four months of 2023, we have 94.2
15 percent of our operating budget remaining, and our
16 tidelands budget is at 91.3 percent.

17 Does anybody have any questions?

18 RONNIE DANIELS:

19 No, ma'am. Thank you.

20 Sondra Slater.

21 SONJA SLATER:

22 Sonja.

23 RONNIE DANIELS:

24 Sonja. I'm sorry.

25 SONJA SLATER:

1 That's okay. Everybody does it.

2 I'm Sonja Slater. I'm the tidelands
3 coordinator for those of you who don't know me. I
4 only do this once a year, so I don't get to meet
5 everybody. But I'm going to give you the update
6 on our 2023 tidelands funding cycle and our
7 application cycle for 2024.

8 We're going to start accepting for our
9 2025 cycle May 31st of 2023, and we should have
10 that whole cycle completed by December 2024.
11 Y'all have any questions? It's the same cycle we
12 do every year.

13 (No response.)

14 SONYA SLATER:

15 In 2024, we received \$34.9 million in
16 requested funding. Of course, we don't get that
17 much tidelands funding, but it's nice to get that
18 many applications. Ninety-four applications in
19 total. We had 50 public access applications and
20 44 managed projects applications.

21 Our appropriated funds for 2023 from the
22 legislators were 12.4 million. When we awarded
23 our public access funding, it was awarded in the
24 house bill, a total of 7.2 million, it was divided
25 between the cities, counties and some of our

1 non-profit agencies. We had seven board of
2 supervisors projects and 16 city projects and two
3 miscellaneous projects.

4 Our managed projects for FY23 have been
5 awarded through this agency through the director.
6 We were allocated in the house bill \$3 million for
7 managed project funding. We awarded 19 MDMR
8 in-house projects to -- and we awarded -- well,
9 actually we just did MDMR for 2023. And we had
10 our bond payment and we had -- we are also given
11 \$1 million for prior year award expenses.

12 Any other questions?

13 RONNIE DANIELS:

14 Y'all got anything?

15 (No response.)

16 RONNIE DANIELS:

17 No, ma'am. Thank you.

18 SONJA SLATER:

19 Thank y'all.

20 RONNIE DANIELS:

21 Ms. Charmaine.

22 CHARMAINE SCHMERMUND:

23 Good morning, Commissioners, Director,
24 Ms. Chesnut.

25 The Mississippi Department of Marine

1 Resources had 17 media mentions since the October
2 MACMR meeting. News items included the beach
3 outfalls in Harrison County; marine patrol
4 presented with a top agency award for Operation
5 Dry Water at the annual National Association of
6 State Boating Law Administrators Conference. It
7 was held in New Hampshire; and the \$10.3 million
8 tidelands check presented by Secretary of State,
9 Michael Watson.

10 Marine patrol participated in the Long
11 Beach Police Department's Night Out Against Crime
12 on October 22nd and Career on Wheels at Pass Road
13 Elementary School on October 26th.

14 The agency sponsored dinner events for
15 the stakeholder engagement at GCRL on October
16 13th, the State Personnel Board's training session
17 held on the Coast on October 19th and the Gulf
18 Council reception on October 25th in Biloxi.

19 Seafood Technology Bureau Director,
20 Kristina Broussard; shellfish scientist, Alicia
21 Carron and finfish scientist, Megan Fleming
22 presented the poster, "Cyanobacteria Bloom in the
23 Mississippi Sound 2019" at the 11th U.S. Symposium
24 on Harmful Algae, which was held on October 23rd
25 through the 28th in Albany, New York. New MDMR

1 HAB team member, seafood technology scientist,
2 Raul Anzola, joined the agency representatives at
3 the nationwide symposium where the theme was
4 "Science to Support Solutions from Shore to
5 Shore."

6 One oyster harvester training class was
7 held since last month's MACMR meeting. Five
8 participated in the class with four attending in
9 person and one virtually.

10 The Shellfish Bureau's Madison Parker,
11 Ellen Coffin, Gene Cossey, Kat Glover, Will
12 Larson, Alicia Carron and the Shrimp and Crab
13 Bureau's Melody Chaplin and Nick Moreno assisted
14 with the Deer Island cleanup on October 15th.

15 The Shellfish Bureau held oyster
16 harvester training sessions for the electronic
17 trip ticket app, VESL, here at the Bolton
18 Building. There were six participants on
19 October 19th and one participant on October 25th.

20 DMR's IT co-hosted the 10th annual
21 Mississippi Geospatial Conference at the USM Long
22 Beach Campus in October where Karen Clark
23 presented on the in-house mobile solution
24 developed for the applesnail project. The IT team
25 attended the Public Safety UAS Conference at the

1 Mississippi Fire Academy on November 2nd where
2 Karen gave a presentation on DMR drone activities.
3 IT attended Esri's Gulf Coast User Conference
4 November 9th and 10th where Karen presented again
5 on the in-house mobile solution developed for the
6 applesnail project. At the November 10th,
7 Mississippi Restoration Summit, IT joined the
8 University of Mississippi's Center for
9 Biodiversity and Conservation Research to
10 demonstrate the GulfSeeLife citizen science
11 application currently being developed.

12 Throughout October at the Grand Bay
13 NERR, Jennifer Cumbest taught St. Martin gifted
14 fifth and sixth graders about fire ecology using
15 an engaging activity to demonstrate fire on the
16 pine savanna. Sixty-two homeschool parents and
17 children from George and Jackson Counties had a
18 field trip to the Grand Bay NERR where they
19 kayaked the bayou, learned about the importance of
20 pine savannas and explored the NERR's interpretive
21 center.

22 Sandra Bilbo, and Jennifer Cumbest and
23 Brianna Andrews presented education programs
24 available at Grand Bay NERR for students and
25 teachers at the Mississippi Science Teacher's

1 Association Conference in Biloxi. Margo Posten,
2 Jonathan Pitchford, Michael Archer and Amanda Free
3 attended the NERRS/NERRA annual meeting in
4 Seattle, Washington. Sandra Bilbo and Jennifer
5 Cumbest attended the My Two Boots outreach event
6 held at Gautier High School where they saw 146
7 sixth graders from the Pascagoula-Gautier School
8 District and taught students about fishes found in
9 the Mississippi Sound.

10 October 17th through the 22nd, Grand Bay
11 NERR hosted an agency booth at the Jackson County
12 Fair where 2,349 visitors stopped by.

13 And in November, the Grand Bay NERR
14 hosted Mobile Christian School seventh graders for
15 a field trip. Students explored the upland and
16 estuarian habitats and learned how to throw cast
17 nets. Dr. Ayesha Gray presented to a group of
18 marine conservation biology students from the
19 Dauphin Island Sea Lab and University of South
20 Alabama and gave them a tour of the Grand Bay
21 NERR's facilities.

22 Avery Beck and Jennifer Cumbest
23 participated at an outreach event at the Biloxi
24 VA. Homeschoolers from George County participated
25 in a field trip at the Grand Bay NERR, exploring

1 habitats around the building. And Jennifer
2 Cumbest and Sandra Bilbo also kayaked with MGCCC
3 STEM club on the same day.

4 RONNIE DANIELS:

5 That was a mouthful.

6 CHARMAINE SCHMERMUND:

7 Busy for everybody. And this week, we
8 also have a lot of events with P2P,
9 Pathways2Possibilities, several school events.

10 JOE SPRAGGINS:

11 When is that calendar coming out?

12 CHARMAINE SCHMERMUND:

13 The calendar should be out probably the
14 second week of December. We always usually have
15 it ready mid December.

16 RONNIE DANIELS:

17 All right. Great. Thank you.

18 All right, Trevor. We have all been
19 waiting for it. Give us some good news.

20 TREVOR MONCRIEF:

21 We've got some good news on this one.
22 All right. So good morning, Commissioners. I'm
23 going to give y'all the latest from our spotted
24 seatrout assessment.

25 So it was completed in early 2022 by the

1 Stock Assessment Panel, and it's comprised of our
2 staff here at DMR and also the Gulf Coast Research
3 Lab. Dr. Robert Leaf is still running these
4 assessments. It completed internal MDMR review
5 and was sent for a peer review to multiple state
6 colleagues, two in the Gulf and one on the
7 Atlantic, and then the final analysis and edits
8 were completed October 2022.

9 Right now, it's still -- these age
10 structure assessment models are still presently
11 accepted on a peer reviewed level, and models are
12 identified as best available science when they are
13 able to run and complete. This assessment was
14 completed using on SS3, which is widely used in
15 the SEDAR, the federal assessments for the
16 federally managed species, and this model included
17 a re-evaluation of harvest estimates for 2016 due
18 to findings during the examination of the time
19 series.

20 So that's the largest change that we had
21 in this assessment. If y'all -- I don't know if
22 y'all ever looked at the estimates or anything,
23 but essentially, all this work we've been doing
24 with red snapper really illustrated how our
25 estimates are patterned and how some variables

1 might lead to large estimates of harvest during
2 times where we shouldn't see them.

3 This happened in 2016 for spotted
4 seatrout. We had a large shore-based estimate of
5 harvest for the species and a large private
6 recreational harvest that occurred in the months
7 of November and December. And going back through
8 and reviewing the data, we realized that that
9 wasn't actually reflective of what the fishery was
10 doing at the time, so we used an average from 2015
11 to 2017 to help bring that estimate down,
12 basically to say that the fishery was operating as
13 normal through those years. So that was the
14 largest change from previous estimates.

15 So our percent SPR, which was the
16 management goal that was assigned to this stock by
17 the CMR, 20 percent was the goal. As you can see,
18 the change in the time series has actually
19 increased the SPR. The pattern still remains the
20 same and the -- what we see in the retrofit, the
21 pattern remains the same. But the good news is,
22 is right now, we're above our management goal of
23 20 percent, but I will show you there is still
24 some things to look at here.

25 So we see shifts in relative abundance

1 and fishing pressure and that's what, you know,
2 helps drive our mortality estimates. And all
3 these drivers lead to fluctuations in our percent
4 SPR values. So we see the five-year average is
5 22.1 percent. Terminal year is 20 percent, so
6 we're in that goal that we want.

7 But if you look at the figures on the
8 right, while we see those positive trends in the
9 SPR, what you do see is a drop in the index of
10 abundance. That's the figure on the top, so you
11 can see that, as that index is dropping, we also
12 have a drop in our harvest estimates at the same
13 time and that's what's keeping that SPR level
14 steady.

15 Now, we talked in past years about the
16 effect of the large freshwater events that might
17 be taking place here, and it's something that we
18 have to continue to look at. Essentially, to see
19 if there has been some impact to improvement,
20 mainly in the western Sound as many of y'all have
21 probably seen. And the best way for us to do that
22 is to continue to monitor that index of abundance
23 up top.

24 So we illustrated kind of the concerns
25 we've had with the patterns of the harvest that

1 are coming from the recreational fishery. And
2 while they might not -- they might not be as
3 consistent as what we see, but that's the reason
4 why we conduct our fishery index sampling and
5 derive that index of abundance on that.

6 Some more -- another positive thing we
7 have done since the last time we have reported an
8 assessment, through SuRF funds from the Gulf
9 States Marine and Fisheries Commission, we were
10 able to develop a small trawl and seine program
11 that now spans across the state in all three
12 counties. And the goal of that is to start being
13 able to development an independent index of
14 recruitment or even a juvenile index of abundance
15 so that we can see when these impacts come from
16 the various events. We can pick up that
17 recruitment the year after, not wait until we see
18 the adult population and backcast what those
19 recruits might be in the past.

20 So in summary, the pattern observed in
21 the SPR in this assessment is overall positive,
22 but we will continue to examine that index of
23 abundance in the coming years. The current
24 20 percent SPR target will likely continue to
25 maintain or increase the spotted seatrout

1 population at current harvest and effort levels.

2 The peer review was positive with
3 multiple constructive comments on how to approve
4 our data compilation and assessment model. I
5 mean, there are states that have been running this
6 model longer than we have and there's always
7 different things to learn, different inputs to be
8 able to throw in there.

9 Staff would recommended status quo for
10 the fishery as the impacts from the recent years'
11 events, Bonnet Carre, large amounts of freshwater,
12 everything else must continue to be evaluated.

13 So we're actually going to be talking
14 with Dr. Leaf here pretty soon, trying to compile
15 that new index for the coming year once we get all
16 the data finished and QA/QC to see kind of where
17 we're at for this year.

18 So overall good news, but we're going to
19 try to keep an eye on it. With that, I will take
20 any questions.

21 RONNIE DANIELS:

22 You know, the only one that pops to
23 mind -- and I like the size limit where it's at,
24 but I know a lot of people are going to be asking
25 the question with this latest assessment. Are we

1 looking at moving the size limit?

2 TREVOR MONCRIEF:

3 So given that we're above our
4 management, dropping the size limit or increasing
5 the size limit?

6 RONNIE DANIELS:

7 Dropping it.

8 TREVOR MONCRIEF:

9 I have heard it from both sides, right?
10 As a fisheries manager, you hear the complaints
11 from both sides. I'm only catching 14-inch fish
12 or, you know, I would like to see a slot limit in
13 place or anything else like that.

14 I think given what we've observed in the
15 fishery, especially with that drop in the index of
16 abundance, it's a little too early to start making
17 that call. Even though we are above that
18 management target, it would be best if we see a
19 continued positive trend in this fishery,
20 especially in the index. If we see that over a
21 few years, then that discussion could be had right
22 here in this room, and I think that's the best way
23 to go about it. But for right now, I think it's
24 best we keep right where we're at and try to see
25 where this fishery is going to go after those

1 impacts in '19 and '20.

2 RONNIE DANIELS:

3 I like it. Thank you.

4 CAM ROBERDS:

5 Quick question, Trevor. The way I'm
6 reading this, we actually had a slot drop, about
7 half a tenth in the last assessment in the last
8 year.

9 TREVOR MONCRIEF:

10 In the SPR?

11 CAM ROBERDS:

12 In the SPR percentages.

13 TREVOR MONCRIEF:

14 So that's one of the things we have
15 presented on in past presentations of the
16 assessment. You know, the terminal year when it
17 comes to these is always a little bit tricky.
18 Sometimes you will see this huge jump. Sometimes
19 you'll see a big drop, and that's one of the
20 reasons why we presented the five-year average of
21 SPR, that long-term trend of what you observe.
22 And that's really what we look at across the board
23 in the index of abundance, too, is we want to look
24 at the trends over time, and looking at those
25 multi-year averages alleviate some of those

1 small-scale impacts that you might see.

2 CAM ROBERDS:

3 Got ya. Understood.

4 JOE SPRAGGINS:

5 If I can, too, a couple of things. All
6 right. Number 1, Louisiana, I think, just voted
7 to change theirs and I'm not sure if it's 13 inch
8 or 13 and a half, but -- I keep getting
9 conflicting information, but I think that's what
10 they're working on cutting. And they're cutting
11 from 25 to 15, so that's going to be -- they see a
12 need to change some things also.

13 I think what Trevor and them are doing
14 is a great idea of being able to -- let's get a
15 couple more years of this and let's see the data.
16 If it keeps going up, then we can readdress and do
17 what we need to do. And the idea is those 14-inch
18 fish are breeding fish, right?

19 TREVOR MONCRIEF:

20 Uh-huh.

21 JOE SPRAGGINS:

22 So that helps our stock assessment.

23 The other thing we did, we met with --
24 over at GCRL the other day and -- we had a
25 stakeholders meeting with Gulf -- with USM and us

1 talking about what we can do with speckled trout.
2 And one of the things that have come up as a
3 possibility that -- we're losing the amount of --
4 in other words, in the bay areas, they're not
5 catching the ones that they used to catch. And
6 what's going on with that?

7 And one of the issues that we were
8 looking at, obviously the Bonnet Carre had some
9 effect because a lot of those little fish and
10 everything else feed off of the oysters and the
11 estuary around it. Well, that's not there until
12 we get it rebuilt, so that's an issue.

13 So what we're looking at is -- and
14 Trevor, you or Matt can probably talk about this,
15 but we're looking at putting in -- basically
16 growing some speckled trout. We're already doing
17 it. I think we've released 150,000 this year,
18 fingerling types, in the two bays. We're looking
19 at doing more than that, probably close to double
20 that, is that right, next year, is what we're
21 looking at --

22 TREVOR MONCRIEF:

23 Yes.

24 JOE SPRAGGINS:

25 -- in the fingerling size? And then out

1 of that, we're looking at trying to grow -- we're
2 trying to hold back like 15,000 of the fingerlings
3 and try to grow about 1,500 of them around
4 eight inches and turn them loose at that size
5 then, and that takes about 10 months, I think is
6 what it is, for that to grow that out.

7 But we met with USM and they can grow
8 some at the same time, so we might be able to, if
9 I can afford, if it's not too expensive to be able
10 to put 3,000-plus in the water next year, you
11 know, of the ones about eight inches long or
12 something like that.

13 The idea is to try to put something in
14 there that -- and see what it takes and then we
15 can -- not necessarily tag the fish, but we can
16 mark the fish in certain ways to where we can be
17 able to tell whether or not that -- these fish,
18 what's helping.

19 Trevor, you got anything on that?

20 TREVOR MONCRIEF:

21 Yes. So I'll remark on the thought
22 process to grow them out to a larger size. It's
23 got -- it's kind of twofold. One, you curb the
24 large-scale mortality of throwing a small fish
25 into a new environment so you keep them in and

1 raise them to a larger size to try to, you know,
2 alleviate some of that mortality when you release
3 them.

4 The second one is that those fish will
5 be large enough, like the Director had -- like the
6 Director said, to be able to have an external tag,
7 whether that be, you know, a visible implant
8 elastomer, dart tag, fin clip, all of them we've
9 kind of talked about. But the goal is to, you
10 know, have large enough fish where we can tag and
11 the anglers can visibly see whether that fish was
12 raised in a hatchery or whether it's a wild fish
13 and they can report their catch back to us so we
14 have some measure of success of the fish that are
15 going in and they're contributing to the adult
16 stock in the fishery as a whole.

17 RONNIE DANIELS:

18 So you said holding back 15,000 to
19 hopefully raise 1,500. Is there that much of a
20 mortality rate whenever you're trying to grow
21 them?

22 JOE SPRAGGINS:

23 Yeah. They eat each other pretty quick.

24 TREVOR MONCRIEF:

25 Yeah. They eat each other. There's a

1 lot of switches in feeding and everything else.
2 I'm not a hatchery guy, by any means, but, yes,
3 there is a lot of work when it comes down to it.
4 And I think a lot of fish die to make a few fish.

5 JOE SPRAGGINS:

6 I know Matt -- is Matt back there? You
7 know, Matt has been working at the hatchery a lot
8 on stuff for that, so he might can tell us some of
9 it.

10 MATT HILL:

11 Yeah. Everything that Trevor said is,
12 you know, pretty much correct. I mean, I don't
13 really have a lot to add, you know. But there is
14 quite a bit of mortality, so we're -- we just
15 released nine that were about in the 12 -- 11- to
16 12-inch range. We put the acoustic tags in them,
17 so we've been watching those fish. And we're
18 pretty confident that six of them are still alive
19 and tracking around and we're getting pings off of
20 them.

21 So now we have currently about 49 or
22 50 -- it was 50. I think it's 49 now that are
23 approaching the 11- to 12-inch range. So it's
24 kind of an experiment. We're just growing them
25 out, kind of seeing how much it's going to cost, I

1 mean, how much time this is actually going to
2 take.

3 But from the literature and from Michael
4 at the hatchery, our hatchery manager, I mean,
5 there will be -- to roughly get that 1,500 fish,
6 you're going to have to start out with about
7 15,000. That's his best guess right now, but I
8 mean, we can hope for better, but the mortality
9 thing is a huge issue with spotted seatrout.

10 RONNIE DANIELS:

11 That's always a talk and a concern.
12 Where are y'all releasing them at?

13 MATT HILL:

14 These nine, we just released right here
15 behind the research lab because we have an array
16 set. But the -- we had two releases of 75,000
17 apiece. One of them was in Hancock County at
18 the -- is it Cedar Point boat launch. And then we
19 did one over in Jackson County, and I'm not quite
20 sure exactly where they put those. But it was
21 75,000 apiece on the release, so we're trying to
22 do east and west every time we do it and that will
23 be our goal next year. We're going to start
24 out -- we did have a fairly productive meeting
25 with the research lab and their staff on kind of

1 how to proceed from here. They have a few fish
2 that are available right now that we're talking to
3 them and we're going to go look at and -- but
4 we're just going to try to go in a different
5 direction.

6 We have never been able to track any
7 kind of return. So we can keep saying that we put
8 150,000 in or 200,000 or half a million or
9 whatever, but we don't have a way for any type of
10 return. So what we're trying to do is get some
11 type of return on these fish, I mean, just to see
12 if they are contributing to the overall
13 population.

14 And right now, our belief or our theory
15 is we should grow them out to a larger size so we
16 can track them and we can mark them so we'll know
17 what's going on. The fingerlings, there is just
18 nothing we can do, except just keep dumping them
19 in the water.

20 RONNIE DANIELS:

21 Yeah.

22 JOE SPRAGGINS:

23 One other thing we're also doing is
24 working with GCRL to be able to do the flounder
25 and to do some grow-out. Matt, you got just a

1 second on that?

2 MATT HILL:

3 Yeah. We've got -- probably going to go
4 sometime in the next few weeks. We've set up
5 three tanks at the Lyman Fish Hatchery. They have
6 some broodstock flounder over in Alabama that
7 they're looking to get rid of. So what we're
8 going to do is we're going to set these three
9 tanks up for them working closely with the
10 Research Lab, but we're going to procure those
11 flounder. I think it's around -- I want to say
12 it's 45 and put 15 in each tank and see what it
13 takes.

14 It's -- the hatchery or raising of
15 flounder is a daunting task. It is quite
16 difficult from what they tell me. And like what
17 Trevor said, I'm the same. I'm not a hatchery
18 person. I'm trying to learn, but Michael and the
19 guys at Research Lab say it's going to be tough.

20 But our thought process is we've kind of
21 written the book on spouted seatrout. We can put
22 it up on the shelf. If we need it, we can get it
23 back down and we can start raising them again if
24 needed. And we're going to continue to raise them
25 on an annual basis because it's -- we -- it's a

1 cookbook for it now so it's fairly easy for us to
2 do.

3 But we need -- there are other species
4 out there that do have a need and we need to start
5 trying to write the book for these other species
6 for the future. So our next one is going to be
7 flounder and we're going to see what we can do for
8 that.

9 JOE SPRAGGINS:

10 Thank you.

11 Do y'all need to make a motion, Sandy?
12 Staff had recommended a status quo. Do they need
13 to make a motion to accept that?

14 SANDY CHESNUT:

15 I don't think so. If there is no
16 changes, we're good.

17 JOE SPRAGGINS:

18 Okay.

19 RONNIE DANIELS:

20 All right. Thank y'all.

21 TREVOR MONCRIEF:

22 Got me for one more.

23 No Rodie. Like you said, he might have
24 a class project, something, you know. I'm sure he
25 will double it next month.

1 RONNIE DANIELS:

2 Send us two next month.

3 TREVOR MONCRIEF:

4 So we have an all tackle fishing record.

5 It's dog snapper, which is something we don't see

6 very often, Lutjanus jocu. Old record was 15

7 pounds. The new record is 24 pounds, 2.4 ounces.

8 The angler was Mr. Mark Kleinpeter.

9 That is a picture of the fish, and there
10 is the angler with the fish.

11 I just need a motion to adopt the new
12 state record.

13 JOE SPRAGGINS:

14 That's spearfishing, right?

15 TREVOR MONCRIEF:

16 Uh-huh.

17 RONNIE DANIELS:

18 All tackle record, I'll make a motion to
19 approve.

20 CAM ROBERDS:

21 I'll second.

22 RONNIE DANIELS:

23 All in favor?

24 CAM ROBERDS:

25 Aye.

1 JONATHAN McLENDON:

2 Aye.

3 RONNIE DANIELS:

4 Aye.

5 All right. Do we have any other
6 business today? No public comments.

7 JOE SPRAGGINS:

8 None that I have. And just to tell you,
9 though, Mark is a retired colonel in the United
10 States Air Force.

11 RONNIE DANIELS:

12 Oh, well, that's great.

13 No other business. No public comments.

14 Do I have a motion to adjourn?

15 CAM ROBERDS:

16 I'll make a motion.

17 JONATHAN McLENDON:

18 Second.

19 RONNIE DANIELS:

20 All in favor?

21 CAM ROBERDS:

22 Aye.

23 JONATHAN McLENDON:

24 Aye.

25 RONNIE DANIELS:

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Thank you, everybody.
(Meeting concluded at 10:01 a.m.)

CERTIFICATE OF COURT REPORTER

1
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 _____
19
20 Melissa Burdine-Rodolfich
21 My Commission Expires 4/28/24
22
23
24
25