

STATE OF MISSISSIPPI

MISSISSIPPI ADVISORY COMMISSION ON MARINE RESOURCES

COMMISSION MEETING

Tuesday, November 21, 2023, 9:00 a.m.

Bolton Building Auditorium

1141 Bayview Avenue, Biloxi, Mississippi 39530

COMMISSION MEMBERS:

Jonathan McLendon
Jason Osborne
Cammack "Cam" Roberds

ALSO PRESENT:

Joe Spraggins, Director
Sandy Chesnut, Esquire
Steven Eckert, Esquire

REPORTED BY:

Melissa Burdine-Rodolfich
mburdine@sbmreporting.com

1 CAM ROBERDS:

2 We want to welcome everybody to the
3 Mississippi Advisory Commission on Marine
4 Resources, Tuesday November 21st, 2023.

5 I'm going to ask chairman -- or
6 Commissioner McLendon if he would lead us in the
7 pledge.

8 (Pledge of Allegiance.)

9 CAM ROBERDS:

10 Thank you, Commissioner.

11 Mr. Joe, you want to lead us in a
12 prayer?

13 JOE SPRAGGINS:

14 Yeah. I just want to, before we start
15 and do the prayer, just tell everybody to please
16 keep our country in your heart and in your
17 prayers. You know, we're going through some tough
18 times in America. And we're lucky enough to have
19 our governor back for four years, so we appreciate
20 that, Lord, and thank you so much for that.

21 But we also want to think of the people
22 over in Israel and Gaza and that area and, you
23 know, we just need to keep them in our prayers and
24 keep everybody understanding that there is a lot
25 of things going on in this world that's not right

1 here in Gulfport and Biloxi, Mississippi but other
2 places.

3 So if we could, let's go to the Lord in
4 prayer.

5 (Moment of prayer.)

6 CAM ROBERDS:

7 Thank you, sir.

8 Do we have any questions on the
9 October 17th minutes?

10 If not, do we have a -- or I will make a
11 motion to approve the minutes.

12 JASON OSBORNE:

13 Second.

14 CAM ROBERDS:

15 All those in favor?

16 JASON OSBORNE:

17 Aye.

18 JONATHAN MCLENDON:

19 Aye.

20 CAM ROBERDS:

21 Aye.

22 Do we have any questions on the agenda?

23 If not, I would like to make a motion to
24 approve the agenda.

25 JASON OSBORNE:

1 Second.

2 CAM ROBERDS:

3 All those in favor?

4 Aye.

5 JASON OSBORNE:

6 Aye.

7 JONATHAN MCLENDON:

8 Aye.

9 CAM ROBERDS:

10 All right. Joe.

11 JOE SPRAGGINS:

12 Okay. We will go through this report
13 and try to get through it as quick as possible
14 here.

15 The employment contracts and updates,
16 procurement updates, can you put that up? All
17 right. Thomas Butera -- I'm going to mispronounce
18 it somehow or another, but anyway, Office of
19 Coastal Resources Management Wetlands Bureau, and
20 then Anthony Stringfellow is an ENRS II with
21 Office of Marine Fisheries, so two hires, new
22 hires.

23 Next.

24 And we have no report -- no contracts,
25 so we're good with that, and no procurement

1 update.

2 All right. If you have public comment,
3 I'd ask you to please see TJ in the back, and TJ
4 has got it. He'll be able to get you a form to be
5 able to get it up here to us, if he could.

6 Let's see. 2019 Bonnet Carré, we're
7 going to do agency update. Right now, we have --
8 the charter boat fishermen have all been filed and
9 we're trying to get them paid and we're -- 50 or
10 72. We're 50 or 72?

11 LESLIE BREWER:

12 Seventy-two.

13 JOE SPRAGGINS:

14 Seventy-two. Have we got them all?

15 LESLIE BREWER:

16 Yeah.

17 JOE SPRAGGINS:

18 Oh, we're 100 percent?

19 LESLIE BREWER:

20 Well, we're waiting on a few checks, but
21 yes.

22 JOE SPRAGGINS:

23 But hopefully we get those out shortly.
24 As far as -- if you saw, we went out and also had
25 the commercial fishermen, and if you were an

1 oyster fisherman, then you had a check. The
2 initial check was \$15,000, and then if you were
3 another type commercial fisherman, but not
4 oysters, it was 7,500.

5 The reason for that, for everybody to
6 understand, is the oyster fishermen are still
7 suffering. They still have not had an oystering
8 season since 2018, and so we felt that they
9 definitely needed an initial payment to help them
10 get back.

11 And what we're looking at, after that,
12 everybody else was 7,500. But the point will also
13 be that if you had a loss up to \$108,000, I think
14 it is, 108 and some few change, anything up to
15 that \$108,000 that you would have lost in that one
16 year of 2019, you're going to get made whole on it
17 if you got all the paperwork and everything else.
18 So that will come in Phase 2 of this in which
19 they're working on now.

20 Right now, we're just trying to get the
21 initial payments out. I have signed a bunch of
22 them this week, and I know that they are going
23 out, the ones we have got the agreements signed
24 with the fishermen, so hopefully we will get them
25 to them in the next couple of weeks and they'll be

1 able to get that initial payment out. Then we'll
2 start working on what we call the second phase on
3 that.

4 So if everything goes the way that we've
5 looked at it, we will be -- about 95 percent of
6 the people will get made whole, and that's pretty
7 good. I tell you what, anytime that you can take
8 a disaster and get 95 percent of the people made
9 whole for one year, that is pretty good in what
10 they did.

11 And how you get made whole, obviously we
12 had 2014 to 2019, is whenever -- the disaster we
13 was looking at, so anything -- if you had trip
14 tickets and you turned them in from 2014 to 2019,
15 and then we were able to take those trip tickets
16 and we was able to figure out what an average for
17 the year would be, and that's what you would be
18 getting paid as if you would have worked the whole
19 year of 2019. That's what our goal is. That's
20 our goal, is to get everybody 100 percent to that
21 point.

22 We're not going to get everybody. Some
23 of your larger fishermen, especially the
24 shrimpers, the large shrimpers, they are not going
25 to be able to make whole because obviously they do

1 a lot more than \$100,000 a year, but the other
2 thing is they were also able to go to other areas
3 and shrimp. They could go to Florida. They could
4 go over in the Alabama area and all and they could
5 do other shrimping, so they did not get shut down
6 like the other ones.

7 The small shrimpers here in the Bay, you
8 know, that went inside the Sound and that area,
9 they didn't have anything, so -- and the crabbers,
10 the finfish, the oysters obviously didn't have
11 anything for 2019. It was a total wipeout, so
12 we're trying to make this as fair as we possibly
13 can and hopefully everything will come out.

14 And then what we're also looking at, we
15 were able to do another disaster for 2020 and it's
16 about \$3 million. Is that right, Rick?

17 RICK BURRIS:

18 Yes.

19 JOE SPRAGGINS:

20 Yeah, about \$3 million, and so we will
21 be able to use that as soon as we get it approved
22 by the Secretary of Commerce. We're waiting on
23 it now. And once it's approved by the Secretary
24 of Commerce, we will be able to put that into --
25 and add to the -- what we're doing now. It was

1 around \$6 million that we were able to put out for
2 the fishermen this time, so we'll be able to put
3 another 3 million into that pot and hopefully that
4 will help.

5 So we're trying to -- also the
6 processors -- well, the dealers, we're doing
7 theirs at around 12,000-something, I think is what
8 it was. We had 31 of them, and that process is
9 going through.

10 And then we had the off-bottom oyster
11 fishermen which also got wiped out. That was
12 going to be their first year basically, you know,
13 I mean, their first good year, and they get wiped
14 out, so around 18,000 for them. And then we
15 also -- bait fishermen are getting around \$18,000.
16 And that's all coming together and it should
17 happen in a short time. And hopefully in the next
18 few weeks we will get those paid off.

19 Are there any questions on that,
20 Commissioners?

21 (No response.)

22 JOE SPRAGGINS:

23 Rick, did I leave anything out, Traci?

24 TRACI FLOYD:

25 It's all good.

1 JOE SPRAGGINS:

2 Okay. All right. So anyway, hopefully
3 we will get that.

4 Now, one of the things that we're also
5 doing, we're working with the processors -- I
6 mean, the -- yeah, the processors and we're going
7 to be able to give y'all -- them some funds to be
8 able to update their equipment because that was
9 one of the things that we put in the process to be
10 able to do that, so they can update their
11 equipment. And we need to do that and help them
12 get their equipment updated so they can move
13 forward and not be behind the power curve that the
14 other states have done.

15 We're working hard. Anything we can --
16 we're trying to do some education with it. We're
17 doing some training with it. We're trying to --
18 and just I want you to know, the State was allowed
19 to take around 18 to 20 percent and we did not
20 take it. We took a minimum of 10 percent to be
21 able to manage this, and that was -- even though
22 we could have taken double that, so I want you to
23 know that the State is trying to give as much of
24 it as they can to give back to the people that
25 need the money. And that's what we're working on

1 as hard as we possibly can. So if no questions on
2 that, we will move on.

3 Senator Tommy Gollott, Lord have mercy,
4 50-something years that he was up in Jackson with
5 us, and we're going to have the honor today to do
6 a dedication for him. It's at the boat ramp at
7 Bayview and Lee Street. And if you know the
8 island out here, we used to call it -- it had
9 about 15 names in its lifetime, but I think Big
10 Island was the last one, I think they called it,
11 and we're going to name it the Gollott Island now,
12 so Gollott is going to have his own island out
13 here.

14 And then if you noticed on the Point out
15 there where we put the breakwater and all, we're
16 going to name that Godfather Point. And in case
17 you didn't understand that, he was the godfather
18 and, you know, especially in the Senate and the
19 House up there, so it's going to be an honor.

20 If you can make it today, it's at 3:00.
21 We would love for you to come. It's just an honor
22 to honor a man that has put so much -- he is the
23 reason DMR is DMR. He is the instrument behind
24 it, the one that made DMR a separate agency from
25 Wildlife, so we owe him a lot. And the man has

1 put a lot in it for us and we appreciate him, and
2 it's just an honor to be able to do that. So if
3 you come today, we'd appreciate you coming out
4 there because I know he would love to see you too.

5 We have got a holiday closure. We will
6 be closed Thursday and Friday of this week, and
7 then we will also be closed on the Monday of
8 Christmas and Tuesday after Christmas, and then we
9 will be closed on January 1st. So the governor is
10 giving them a couple extra days in there, so we
11 thank him for that and we appreciate it. So if
12 you got to do business with us, try to work it out
13 before -- around that, and we'll be glad to help
14 you any way we can.

15 Our next commission meeting is scheduled
16 for Tuesday, December 19th. Is there any problem
17 with any of y'all on that?

18 CAM ROBERDS:

19 No.

20 JOE SPRAGGINS:

21 All right. So we will just leave that
22 as it is.

23 Update on derelict vessels, we have 129
24 derelict vessel cases that have been reported
25 since we started tracking. Eighty-two of them

1 have been removed, 47 are pending removal right
2 now and we have got five that are in the court.
3 So Floyd and them are doing a great job over
4 there, so everything seems to be working out with
5 the derelict vessels.

6 That's pretty much it on the agency
7 update. Is there anything, any questions on
8 anything else?

9 If not, then we'll go to actions updates
10 from the prior meeting.

11 STEVEN ECKERT:

12 Discussed at the October 2023 meeting,
13 the Commission recommended and the Director
14 approved the following motion: It was a motion to
15 approve a variance and permit requested by the
16 Jackson County Board of Supervisors for a variance
17 and permit, requesting authorization to dredge an
18 unnamed tributary to Bayou Porteaux, near Solano
19 Circle in Jackson County.

20 Approval of the permit is contingent
21 upon the use of turbidity curtains when a 10-foot
22 buffer cannot be maintained between the dredging
23 area and the submerged aquatic vegetation, and
24 dredged material is made available for a
25 beneficial use through MDMR's Beneficial Use of

1 Dredged Material Program.

2 And that's it for the actions update.

3 JOE SPRAGGINS:

4 All right. Any questions,

5 Commissioners?

6 All right. If not, then that's all I
7 have, sir. Thank you.

8 CAM ROBERDS:

9 Thank you, Joe. I know the commercial
10 fishermen and the for-hire guys have to be happy
11 about getting those funds to help them through
12 that tough, tough deal, so I know everybody --
13 they all have to appreciate that.

14 Do we have any commissioners' reports
15 today, gentlemen?

16 JASON OSBORNE:

17 I don't really have a report, but I just
18 want to amend the prayer that was given and wish
19 the best to you and your family with the passing
20 of your mother this last Sunday. That's pretty
21 hard.

22 JOE SPRAGGINS:

23 Thank you. She was 96 years old and
24 lived a great life. And she was ready to go long
25 before we was ready for her to go. And as my

1 sister told me, she found her Sunday morning and
2 she was laying across the bed with a smile across
3 her face, so that means that she died happily.

4 Thank you.

5 CAM ROBERDS:

6 You're absolutely in our prayers for
7 sure.

8 Chief Wilkerson, Marine Patrol report.

9 KYLE WILKERSON:

10 Good morning. What about this rain we
11 just received? That's a blessing in its ownself.

12 JOE SPRAGGINS:

13 Wasn't it?

14 KYLE WILKERSON:

15 Director, Marine Patrol would like to
16 wish our condolences towards you and your family,
17 okay, for the loss.

18 JOE SPRAGGINS:

19 Thank you.

20 KYLE WILKERSON:

21 October looks like it was, once again, a
22 busy, busy month as Marine Patrol has done a
23 phenomenal job looking at the stats on all they
24 have done. Checking 2,300-some-odd individuals
25 out there. Several citations were written.

1 Nothing just major jumps out at me. If you have
2 the report itself and you have any questions, I
3 would entertain them.

4 CAM ROBERDS:

5 I think we're good, sir.

6 KYLE WILKERSON:

7 Awesome.

8 CAM ROBERDS:

9 Thank you for your hard work.

10 Appreciate it.

11 KYLE WILKERSON:

12 Once again, thank you.

13 CAM ROBERDS:

14 Office of Coastal Resources Management,
15 no presentation this month.

16 Restoration and Resiliency, no
17 presentation.

18 We will move on to Office of Finance and
19 Administration monthly report, Leslie Brewer.

20 LESLIE BREWER:

21 Good morning, everybody. I will be
22 presenting the financials for the month of
23 October 2023.

24 At the end of month, state revenue was
25 3.7 million. Agency revenue was 17.3 million.

1 State net income was 1.6 million, and
2 agency net income was 8.9 million.

3 After four months, our operating funds
4 were at 96.6 for budget, and 87.8 for Tidelands.
5 Pretty normal.

6 Y'all have any questions?

7 JOE SPRAGGINS:

8 And I forgot to mention, we did get that
9 \$11 million Tidelands check, too, so that was very
10 good.

11 LESLIE BREWER:

12 Yes, we did.

13 CAM ROBERDS:

14 Very nice.

15 All right. We have a Tidelands Trust
16 fund update, Sonja.

17 SONJA SLATER:

18 Good morning, Commissioners, Director,
19 Legal.

20 I'm just giving you an update on our
21 activities with Tidelands applications for FY25.
22 We have already accepted all the applications.
23 They've been submitted for -- to be put in a book
24 and they will go to the legislators in January for
25 approval.

1 We received 86 applications, for a total
2 of \$36 million requested from public access and
3 managed projects. For public access, there was
4 28 million, and for managed projects, there was
5 8.6 million requested. And as you can see and
6 from what the Director said earlier, that's way
7 more than what we got. In 2024, we got
8 11.4 million, so we don't get -- we get way have
9 more requests than we have funds for.

10 In our FY24 awards that are now awarded
11 since we have the money in house, we were awarding
12 6.1 million. Hancock County got 1.2 of that.
13 Harrison County got 2.4 of that, and Jackson
14 County got 1.6 of it, with 833,000 going to
15 miscellaneous projects.

16 For the FY24 managed projects, we
17 received 3.9 for managed projects and 1.3 for the
18 bond payment. Of the managed projects, we have
19 not yet funded 1 million of it. That's still
20 waiting to be funded. DMR has funded 2.7 million
21 for DMR, and we have made our bond payment. And
22 we have one miscellaneous project for 200,000.

23 This is our FY26 Tidelands application
24 cycle. It's the same cycle every year, just
25 changes the years, but the months and everything

1 stay the same. We will be accepting applications
2 for the FY26 Tidelands cycle starting May 31st and
3 ending July 31st. We do this every year.

4 Y'all have any questions?

5 (No response.)

6 SONJA SLATER:

7 Thank y'all for your time.

8 JONATHAN MCLENDON:

9 Thank you.

10 CAM ROBERDS:

11 Appreciate you.

12 Ms. Charmaine with Public Affairs.

13 CHARMAINE SCHMERMUND:

14 Good morning.

15 The Mississippi Department of Marine
16 Resources had nine media mentions since the
17 October MACMR meeting. News items included the
18 Eric Clark Coastal Preserve dedication, the 2019
19 Mississippi Bonnet Carré Spillway Fisheries
20 Disaster Recovery Program payout, and Director
21 Spraggins interviewed for an episode of the Brown
22 Water Banter podcast.

23 The office of Marine Patrol took part in
24 career day events for West Harrison High School,
25 Woolmarket Elementary School, Stone County High

1 School, Holy Trinity Catholic School, St. Patrick
2 High School and at the Katie Booth Community
3 Center. Additional events included Westminster
4 Presbyterian Church's fall festival, Long Beach
5 Police Department's Night Out Against Crime and
6 the Biloxi Police Department Community Festival
7 Against Crime at Point Cadet.

8 Marine Patrol, the Shellfish Bureau's
9 Harrison Pittmann and Will Larsen and Seafood
10 Technology's Jillianne Craft and Raul Anzola took
11 part in St. Martin North Elementary School's fall
12 festival on October 27th. Each department
13 provided an educational activity for students to
14 learn more about boat and water safety, shellfish
15 and seafood technology.

16 Seafood Technology Bureau's Jillianne
17 took part in Boofest on October 21st, which was
18 held at the Institute for Marine Mammal Studies.
19 Finfish Bureau's Eric Gigli gave a presentation to
20 the professional skills at GCRL on November 13th.

21 And Marine Patrol and the Artificial
22 Reef Bureau took part in Pathways 2 Possibilities
23 last week on November 15th and 16th. Marine
24 Patrol was stationed in the law and public safety
25 pathway, and the Artificial Reef Bureau had their

1 booth in the marine science pathway. The two-day
2 event had thousands of students participate from
3 throughout the southern part of the state.

4 CAM ROBERDS:

5 All right. Thank you, Ms. Charmaine.

6 On to Office of Marine Fisheries, looks
7 like the first one involves the crab trap removal
8 program, Jason.

9 JASON SAUCIER:

10 Good morning, Commissioners.

11 I'm presenting to you today a proposal
12 from staff to conduct a derelict crab trap removal
13 program in early 2024.

14 So just to take a look at the history of
15 the program, MDMR started this program back in
16 1999. That kind of gives you a summary by year or
17 by group of years there at the beginning. The
18 first public cleanup was conducted in 2003.
19 That's what we're proposing in 2024.

20 In the past decade or so, we have had a
21 cleanup every two to three years on average. We
22 don't typically see -- do public cleanups more
23 often than that just because there is not
24 necessarily a need based on what we're seeing out
25 in the environment.

1 And to date, we have collected over
2 22,000 pots in -- out of state waters. We
3 recovered that much gear from the water.

4 So this was our most recent cleanup.
5 Back in 2021, we did a cleanup in late January,
6 and the green area there that you're seeing along
7 the mainland shoreline up to a half mile off was
8 closed for that cleanup, as well as all the bays
9 and Pascagoula River system. So this is more than
10 likely what we will propose to do for the 2024
11 cleanup, is to close those inshore waters.

12 So just to look at historical cleanups a
13 little bit closer, these are the dates from
14 previous cleanups. Like I said, the last one we
15 had was in January. You typically have cleanups
16 in the winter months of February, January. We
17 have had a couple of late spring cleanups, but
18 generally, we have proposed these in January,
19 February, March, in an effort to accommodate the
20 fishery as best possible and to take advantage of
21 low tides.

22 State statute mandates that for crab
23 trap closures for the purpose of removal of
24 abandoned traps that we close waters no less than
25 10 days and no more than 30. Any trap remaining

1 after the seventh day of the closure is considered
2 abandoned and can be removed by the general public
3 based on statute.

4 The closure dates that we'll propose
5 this year will be based on stakeholder feedback.
6 We're working on postcards right now to send out
7 to all license holders, that will go out either
8 tomorrow or Monday, that will survey the license
9 holders to see what dates work best for them and
10 to solicit participation, volunteer participation
11 from the fishery.

12 And so what we will do, once we set the
13 date, there will be a couple of notices that go
14 out and we'll do some other methods for getting
15 the word out about the closure. But we typically
16 plan the dates also based on weekends. We try to
17 set the date so that it occurs, the cleanup occurs
18 on Friday, Saturday, Sunday, and we try to
19 schedule around other big events. One big event
20 we typically have is Mardi Gras, so we try to work
21 around that so we get as many volunteers as we can
22 to the event. And then we look at tides. We try
23 to plan around a low tide being in the morning,
24 typically a higher range tidal cycle is what we're
25 looking for so that the pots are exposed so

1 volunteers can see them.

2 And then this is a couple of examples of
3 what we have done in the past. 2021, we put out a
4 news release. We sent out two notices by
5 postcard, notifying all the license holders of the
6 closure.

7 Like I said before, we're going to
8 propose this within one half mile of the mainland
9 shoreline for 10 days, which is the minimum, and
10 those dates will be set at a later time based on
11 the feedback from the fishery. It will occur
12 between January 1st and March 31st.

13 Crab fishermen will be allowed the first
14 seven days of that closure, as is mentioned in the
15 statute, as the time period for them to get the
16 gear out of the water and on the -- at the end of
17 the seventh day, then those pots are considered
18 abandoned.

19 Volunteers will have three days on the
20 back end of that 10-day closure to do cleanup.
21 And then like I said, all crab fishermen will be
22 notified ahead of time. We'll do the postcard
23 mail-outs. We'll do a legal notice in the paper,
24 press release and social media posts.

25 We'll have dropoff locations in each

1 county. Historically, those have been at Bayou
2 Caddy, Ocean Springs Harbor and Pascagoula Point
3 Park, and tentatively we'll stay with those same
4 sites. We, in the past, have gotten roll-off
5 dumpsters donated by a local scrap metal recycler
6 and all of the pots that are recovered during the
7 cleanup are recycled.

8 So -- and then our recommendation is for
9 the Executive Director to establish a crab trap
10 closure in public waters for the purpose of
11 conducting a derelict crab trap cleanup for
12 10 days in 2024. Closure area dates will be based
13 on stakeholder feedback.

14 And I will take any questions.

15 JASON OSBORNE:

16 How do you work with volunteers or what
17 kind of volunteers are you looking for? Do you
18 provide boats for them to go out or --

19 JASON SAUCIER:

20 So we don't provide boats. Typically,
21 it's -- anybody from the public is welcome to join
22 us. We do solicit groups to join us. We send it
23 out to Mississippi Master Naturalist Group.
24 Coastal Cleanup, their listserv volunteers. We'll
25 send it to them. We don't have designated vessels

1 to get them out on the water. We just don't have
2 the staff and the resources to do that over the
3 whole Coastal area. But it can be fishermen. It
4 can be members of the general public. What we
5 typically see is they'll bring their own vessel
6 and go out or they'll do work just on the mainland
7 shoreline.

8 JASON OSBORNE:

9 Because I know that -- well, at least my
10 son, St. Stanislaus and their marine science
11 department, have you thought about reaching out to
12 some of those schools that maybe have some
13 programs like that and then maybe they can get
14 community service hours?

15 JASON SAUCIER:

16 I think that would be a great idea. I
17 don't know that we've done -- directed
18 solicitation of the schools, but we can certainly
19 look into that, particularly marine biology
20 programs.

21 JASON OSBORNE:

22 Because I know they're all -- all those
23 kids are searching for those hours. If they
24 got -- got to go out on a boat -- now they would
25 have to find a boat.

1 JASON SAUCIER:

2 Yeah. So we will set up a way for
3 volunteers to register ahead of time and that's
4 part of the post cards that we'll send out. If
5 the fishermen want to register, we'll get e-mail
6 and a phone number from them. But we can
7 certainly, at those dropoff locations, come up
8 with a way if we need to sign off on service
9 hours, community service hours, we will get that
10 approved through the school ahead of time. So if
11 there is an interest from a group to do that,
12 certainly, I think we can accommodate that.

13 JASON OSBORNE:

14 If you send me an e-mail and then I can
15 forward it on to St. Stanislaus and maybe she
16 might be able to connect in the girls' school
17 there.

18 JASON SAUCIER:

19 Uh-huh. Yeah. Once we set those dates,
20 we'll produce a flyer for volunteers that we will
21 put out on Facebook and I can put that in the
22 e-mail, too, and we can figure out who to contact
23 at each of the other schools, local schools.

24 JASON OSBORNE:

25 Perfect.

1 CAM ROBERDS:

2 That's a great idea. Mine are searching
3 for those hours as well, so keep me in the loop on
4 that. I can shoot it to my kid's school as well.

5 JASON SAUCIER:

6 Okay. Yeah. That will hopefully, you
7 know, boost our participation in general, which
8 we're always looking to do, for volunteers,
9 increase those numbers.

10 CAM ROBERDS:

11 Any questions?

12 (No response.)

13 CAM ROBERDS:

14 Thank you, sir. Appreciate it.

15 JASON OSBORNE:

16 Do we need to vote on it or no?

17 CAM ROBERDS:

18 Yeah. Is that a -- do we need to make a
19 motion to vote on it?

20 SANDY CHESNUT:

21 You can. It sounds like everyone is in
22 favor of it, so we can make a motion to go along
23 with staff's recommendation.

24 CAM ROBERDS:

25 Do I have a motion to go along with the

1 staff's recommendation?

2 JONATHAN MCLENDON:

3 I will make a motion.

4 JASON OSBORNE:

5 Second.

6 CAM ROBERDS:

7 All those in favor?

8 Aye.

9 JONATHAN MCLENDON:

10 Aye.

11 JASON OSBORNE:

12 Aye.

13 CAM ROBERDS:

14 All right. Trevor, what you got for us,
15 brother?

16 TREVOR MONCRIEF:

17 We have got a good one today.

18 CAM ROBERDS:

19 All right.

20 TREVOR MONCRIEF:

21 And I hate that we had to do it on a
22 holiday, but we'll see what happens here.

23 All right. So as y'all are all aware,
24 that we've talked about for a long time, we have
25 had some problems on recreational landings on the

1 MRIP side of things, so this proposal today is the
2 first in a chain of changes that we're trying to
3 make in order to right this ship a little bit.

4 So we're attempting to establish an
5 offshore landing permit. For those of you that
6 know and for those members of the public that
7 aren't aware, currently the recreational landings
8 are derived using MRIP FES. It's essentially
9 address-based and divides effort into licensed and
10 unlicensed, matched and unmatched frames that are
11 combined to be able to get an overall harvest
12 estimate.

13 It's got multiple limitations, so the
14 first one is it's only as good as the data inputs
15 that go into it, so, you know, the licensing
16 database, the address database is matching
17 everyone moving across to different places, when
18 they're renting. Everything else like that is all
19 factored with this one, and it's inflexible to
20 change.

21 So essentially, the biggest problem we
22 have here is that we have stratification of effort
23 is basically based on what our staff sees at the
24 dock. So if we get four offshore trips out of 10
25 trips that we observe, 40 percent of the effort

1 goes to the offshore groups and it's multiplied by
2 the entire license frame and all the MIs that are
3 unmatched which leads to these overinflated
4 estimates, so we're trying to fix that with this
5 program here.

6 Management need, as y'all are aware,
7 removals are one of the most important variables
8 in understanding our regulatory effectiveness when
9 we make changes, our anglers' success and trends
10 in our fisheries overtime when it comes to angler
11 success and recreational harvest estimates scale
12 productivity in assessments.

13 So the quotas that you see, the ACLs
14 that are placed on federal fisheries, the biomass
15 estimates for spotted seatrout when they come out,
16 the recreational removals are what scales all of
17 that, so basically the stock is directly
18 correlated to the amount of removals it can take,
19 so we see a lot of fluctuation when it comes to
20 FES.

21 The primary goal today, we want to
22 create a universe of offshore anglers to aid in
23 the estimation of effort and harvest of offshore
24 and federally-managed species that are pertinent
25 to Mississippi, so this isn't just red snapper.

1 This is the bulk of the federal species that are
2 being landed that we observe, greater amberjack,
3 gray triggerfish, cobia, all those things that
4 exist in that offshore realm that we really don't
5 have a good handle on at the moment.

6 And there's currently states that are
7 employing similar efforts to this. As y'all are
8 aware, Louisiana already has an offshore landing
9 permit. Florida has SRFS, and Alabama recently
10 put in the reef fish designation. And Alabama,
11 our state and Louisiana are trying to move in --
12 basically in lockstep in this and all do it the
13 same way, to the best of our ability, to create a
14 more regional approach to the whole thing.

15 So this isn't just a permit to be a
16 permit. We just don't want it to exist. Right?
17 It's for direct use, so we want to implement
18 essentially a pilot of the recreational survey
19 that exists in Louisiana of LA Creel and call it
20 MS Creel.

21 Those effort estimates are derived from
22 call-outs and e-mails directly to the license
23 frame, so it's not random address based. It's not
24 the entire population that's been designated.
25 You're calling the license frame, getting the

1 effort estimates, and then you're adding in a
2 proportion of non-compliance to basically increase
3 the volume of the estimate to where you think it
4 should be and it's not being derived separately.

5 This pilot is planned to begin in
6 January 2024. We've been working hard. We went
7 and visited with LDWF staff, went over the
8 program, us, Alabama, Gulf States. We have
9 contracted the same company that Louisiana
10 currently uses to be able to implement this thing,
11 just trying to move along the best way we can.

12 And really, it's for the scheduling of
13 implementation as early as 2025. We really want
14 to move forward. It's a big burden to take on,
15 but we're just trying to get this thing forward
16 because we've been stuck in this place for well on
17 a decade and we're trying to get to a solution.

18 Some important next steps when it comes
19 to this is stakeholder engagement and awareness,
20 so essentially making them aware of the program,
21 aware of the license and how the program is going
22 to move forward and why it's better than what
23 we're currently doing.

24 Planned comparisons and analyses, so
25 comparing our estimates that are derived directly,

1 to MRIP, determine any differences, where those
2 differences lie and how we might be able to adjust
3 what's been observed to be able to get this last
4 one, which is transition the entire recreation
5 time series for all species. So not just going in
6 and applying some base proportional change to the
7 entire time series back to 1980, actually going
8 through, doing our due diligence and checking
9 every single annual estimate for every species and
10 where one stands out and doesn't make sense,
11 taking an average across the board and really
12 rectifying the entire time series, which is an
13 effort that has not been taken in all the
14 calibrations that have been happening with MRIP.

15 So I'm going to read the language, and
16 it's a long paragraph. Just bear with me. I'm
17 going to read it all into the record. So this is
18 going to be in Title 22, Part 9, Chapter 8,
19 Recreational Reporting Requirements. This is the
20 same place where Tails and Scales reporting
21 requirements are housed.

22 Rule 8.4, Recreational Offshore Landing
23 Permit: Any person, except those persons
24 currently exempt from purchasing a recreational
25 fishing license, processing any one of the below

1 fish species or species groups on board a vessel
2 taken from within or outside of Mississippi
3 territorial waters shall be required to have
4 obtained and have in their immediate possession a
5 recreational offshore landing permit. Any person
6 on a trip aboard a charter vessel, who pays a fee
7 for that trip, is not required to have this
8 permit, but the permit is required for the owner
9 of the licensed charter vessel.

10 Permits may be obtained at no cost from
11 the Department, or authorized method, by persons
12 who hold any valid license authorizing the taking
13 and possessing of saltwater species of fish.

14 Permit shall be valid for the duration of the
15 calendar year in which they were purchased,
16 regardless of the duration of the valid
17 recreational fishing license.

18 Required species are as listed. Reef
19 fish species: Any species of snapper, excluding
20 mangrove snapper, harvested within a line formed
21 by the Intercoastal Waterway, any species of
22 amberjack, any species of grouper or hind, gray
23 triggerfish and for Coastal pelagics, just cobia.

24 Two things to note in this language, the
25 first one, calendar year from which they are

1 purchased. So that offshore permit terminates on
2 December 31st so we have an annual running of the
3 amount of participants that are in the offshore
4 fisheries. It's mainly for ease, simplicity,
5 keeps everything straightforward where we're not
6 overlapping or anything else like that and have to
7 figure out cutoff dates.

8 The second one, that mangrove snapper
9 requirement, the reason that one is in there is
10 because we have a substantial fishery for
11 mangroves inside the Intercoastal Waterways,
12 especially in Jackson County. And if we required
13 this for every snapper species that include a
14 mangrove, then we'd have a lot of shore fishermen,
15 small boat fishermen and everybody else that has
16 those licenses and just increase the burden across
17 the board and we kind of negate the attempt of
18 what we're trying to move forward with here.

19 I guess -- so the last thing is just a
20 notice to move forward, but I will save that and
21 answer any questions that y'all might have on this
22 and take any public comment if there is any.

23 JASON OSBORNE:

24 Is there a fine associated with not
25 having the permit?

1 TREVOR MONCRIEF:

2 So we have had meetings with Marine
3 Patrol on this, and we're going to approach it the
4 same way we did with Tails and Scales. Right?
5 The goal of this is to provide an overall benefit
6 to our fishermen and a benefit to the fleet
7 overall.

8 Now, there is a balance to be had on its
9 effectiveness in terms of compliance and
10 everything else, but the first year is mainly
11 informational, you know, basically warn them, let
12 them know the program, let them know why it
13 exists.

14 The next year, you step into a smaller
15 scale fine or anything like that, and then the
16 third year, kind of like how we did with Tails and
17 Scales, that's when it began some more rigorous
18 implementation of, you know, we have informed, we
19 have made y'all aware, we have introduced the
20 program, now it's going to be more strictly
21 enforced to be able to get that compliance
22 estimate more exact and up as high as we can.

23 CAM ROBERDS:

24 Will this be something that will be
25 available when we go online and purchase a fishing

1 license, just have like another option that will
2 make it simple?

3 TREVOR MONCRIEF:

4 So no, but I have a reason for it.
5 Similar approaches were taken by Florida, right,
6 and there is little bit of a divergence here. You
7 can either have a permit and charge for it and
8 that negates, you know, oversubscription that you
9 may have, in which folks, you know, see a monetary
10 fee and won't do it.

11 If you line it up right behind the
12 license, it's no different than the HIP permit for
13 folks who are going hunting. Right? You get your
14 license. You have got a check box. You check it,
15 which means every single person that may have the
16 possibility of even thinking about going out and
17 catching a reef fish or cobia in a given year is
18 going to click that box and likely leads to
19 oversubscription, overinflation of that offshore
20 universe.

21 The goal here is to not charge any fee
22 and have it housed in a different area than our
23 license, essentially on our website where they go
24 to us. They call our staff if they have problems,
25 everything else like that. They're in direct

1 contact with the department, and that's how they
2 get it.

3 And that's how Louisiana has conducted
4 it, and it seems to do well with the
5 oversubscription problem.

6 CAM ROBERDS:

7 So the oversubscription, I get it, so
8 you're making every effort to make sure it's a
9 realistic number?

10 TREVOR MONCRIEF:

11 Yeah, while not trying to burden the
12 anglers too much on it.

13 CAM ROBERDS:

14 Right. And that's -- the way I'm
15 seeing, so for like a recreational guy, it's
16 just -- regardless of the species, it's one permit
17 for me for the year. Right? I mean, it covers
18 the entire group of reef fish?

19 TREVOR MONCRIEF:

20 Uh-huh.

21 CAM ROBERDS:

22 Okay.

23 TREVOR MONCRIEF:

24 And really, what it does is it
25 constrains that effort. And folks with more, you

1 know, avidity, more avid anglers, it kind of
2 constrains that effort to that universe alone and
3 doesn't expand it across the entire license
4 universe. It really keeps it to that group where
5 it should be. And Louisiana has had a lot of
6 success.

7 JOE SPRAGGINS:

8 One of the things, too, first off, we're
9 not paying for this MS Creel. That's being paid
10 for by the federal government. They have a grant
11 that they're giving us, so it's also something
12 that they're looking for. NMFS is looking for it.
13 They really want us to do it. Andy Strelcheck is
14 all on board with it to help us to do this. We
15 all think that this would be a great way.

16 Alabama is doing the same thing.
17 Alabama is falling in line with this, so it will
18 be Alabama, Mississippi and Louisiana doing this
19 model that we're talking about.

20 Our goal is to do that model for one
21 year, and that's next year, starting January and
22 do it, you know, all the way through the year.
23 And once we do that, then we're going to try to
24 push for implementation of that to be able to
25 start in 2025. And that's the best possible --

1 that we could possibly do, but it's a good chance
2 that we could get some of it worked out and at
3 least get it done, because we've got three or four
4 months, you know, when 2025 starts before we have
5 to really start reef fishing with -- especially
6 the snapper. And so hopefully it will change our
7 allocation to what we're looking at for snapper.

8 And I think this is the best way that we
9 can do it to work with NOAA and to be able to say
10 they're going to use their MRIP and then we're
11 going to use this. It's worked great for
12 Louisiana. If you see right now, they're at four
13 fish a day and still can't catch them all.

14 CAM ROBERDS:

15 And they're actually -- Louisiana is
16 using this, so NOAA is accepting this?

17 JOE SPRAGGINS:

18 Right. Right.

19 CAM ROBERDS:

20 Perfect.

21 TREVOR MONCRIEF:

22 Yep.

23 JOE SPRAGGINS:

24 And NOAA accepted one-year data with
25 them.

1 TREVOR MONCRIEF:

2 Yes.

3 JOE SPRAGGINS:

4 So that's how we're saying one-year
5 data, rather than three or four years' data. So
6 we've got the precedence on a lot of things, and
7 they're willing to work with us.

8 The other thing is if you're over 65,
9 saltwater, you still have to have a permit. All
10 right? Now, you know, if you are over 65 and --
11 wildlife management, you don't have to have
12 anything. You don't even have to have a license.
13 And as far as saltwater, you have to have a
14 one-time license, which costs, what, \$8 and
15 something like that, but that license is good for
16 a lifetime.

17 But you still have to update this permit
18 every year, and the reason for that is why -- just
19 what Trevor said. We have got to use -- because
20 we go a year -- year-to-year calendar year when we
21 look at this and we start managing it across the
22 Coast. And so other states do the same thing, so
23 that way we will be in line and so what we catch
24 from January to the end of December that year will
25 be in that allocation and that's what we'll work

1 off of.

2 And I know it's a little bit extra for
3 people to do, but I think it can really work out
4 for us overall, and the State of Mississippi will
5 come out a lot better with it. And I appreciate
6 Trevor and that team and all working hard on all
7 of this.

8 CAM ROBERDS:

9 Appreciate it, guys. Y'all have any
10 other questions?

11 JONATHAN MCLENDON:

12 Yeah. And you feel, Trevor, that this
13 gives us closer to the data that's going to tie up
14 to your Tails and Scales data?

15 TREVOR MONCRIEF:

16 Yes. So that's kind of the direction we
17 see it going. I think the Director made a good
18 point. Right? This isn't us straying away or,
19 you know, completely going in our own direction,
20 but it is allowing us to get more into the
21 driver's seat and work with the states that are
22 beside us to come up with a program that seems to
23 be successful and deliver timely estimates like it
24 does in Louisiana. So yeah, I would think that
25 when we get the results back from here, it should

1 tie in pretty well to what we're observing in
2 Tails and Scales.

3 JONATHAN MCLENDON:

4 And I think for like the recreational
5 guys, like from their data perspective, like if we
6 sit around and do nothing while these other states
7 continue to tighten up their data, then our
8 snapper allocation is going to continue to be
9 reduced.

10 TREVOR MONCRIEF:

11 Right. If we don't take the efforts to
12 really rectify that time series and find some, you
13 know, common ground between what is being
14 conducted on the federal side and what we're
15 doing, at the end of the day, it's not really
16 going to make much of a difference because those
17 time series are always going to be calibrated to
18 the common currency, which is MRIP.

19 So at the end of the day, our hope is
20 that we're going to find additional evidence
21 outside of Tails and Scales that will allow us to
22 actually go back and look at that time series on
23 the recreational side and fix it where we can.
24 That's not year-to-year changes all the time.
25 It's not, you know -- to me, it's not that much of

1 a monumental effort. Right?

2 Us, as fisheries managers, you know,
3 fishermen, you can look at the time series and
4 know when you have got a blip that's out of place.
5 You know it's not reasonable. Right? Sheepshead
6 estimate of 800,000 pounds in 2014 or whatever it
7 was, it's just -- those stick out to fisheries
8 managers. And I think taking the opportunity to
9 kind of smooth those things over will go a long
10 way to not only federal management but also our
11 state side as well.

12 CAM ROBERDS:

13 I think everybody is pumped to see what
14 this -- what the outcome is because I feel
15 like it's -- you know, you guys are getting us to
16 a realistic mark there that NOAA will accept and,
17 I mean, that's going to be great, so I appreciate
18 it. Thanks, Trevor.

19 Any other questions?

20 (No response.)

21 CAM ROBERDS:

22 So I guess we need a motion to recommend
23 the intent for the offshore landing permit. Do we
24 have a motion?

25 JONATHAN MCLENDON:

1 I will make it.

2 JASON OSBORNE:

3 I'll second it.

4 CAM ROBERDS:

5 All those in favor?

6 Aye.

7 JONATHAN MCLENDON:

8 Aye.

9 JASON OSBORNE:

10 Aye.

11 CAM ROBERDS:

12 Opposed?

13 (None opposed.)

14 CAM ROBERDS:

15 Thank you, Trevor.

16 TREVOR MONCRIEF:

17 You got me for one more.

18 CAM ROBERDS:

19 Oh, you have got another one? Okay.

20 There you go.

21 TREVOR MONCRIEF:

22 State fishing records, so it won't be

23 nearly as bad as what we just went through.

24 All right. So we've got conventional

25 tackle records. First, it's a Florida Pompano.

1 Old record was four pounds, 15.8 ounces. This new
2 record is five pounds, .64 ounces. The angler is
3 Stefanson Smith. There is a picture of the fish.
4 There is a picture of Mr. Smith with that fish.

5 Next one is one we haven't seen. It's
6 an Irish Pompano. It's a new record, 5.9 ounces,
7 Cecily O'Brien. Here's a picture of that fish,
8 and there's a picture of Ms. Cecily with that
9 fish.

10 So all we need is a motion to adopt
11 those new state records.

12 JASON OSBORNE:

13 So moved.

14 CAM ROBERDS:

15 Wow.

16 TREVOR MONCRIEF:

17 That's a peculiar one.

18 CAM ROBERDS:

19 Yeah, that's something else there.

20 Do we have a motion?

21 JASON OSBORNE:

22 Motion.

23 CAM ROBERDS:

24 I will second.

25 All those in favor?

1 JONATHAN MCLENDON:

2 Aye.

3 JASON OSBORNE:

4 Aye.

5 CAM ROBERDS:

6 Aye.

7 Thank you, Trevor.

8 All right. Ayesha Gray.

9 AYESHA GRAY:

10 Hi. Good morning, Commissioners,
11 Director.

12 I'm here to invite y'all to the annual
13 Star Party at the Grand Bay National Estuarine
14 Research Reserve, the Grand Bay NERR. This is --
15 we do this every year. This is our open house,
16 and we have all kind of family fun that goes on at
17 the NERR on this evening. It's on December 9th,
18 and there is hayrides. There is stargazing. It's
19 set up at the time of the Geminid meteor shower,
20 and so we take folks out on a hayride to the end
21 of the road at Bayou Heron so they can check out
22 the stars. We have some experts in stargazing and
23 telescopes out there.

24 We also have lots of crafts. We take
25 owl walks out the back. A lot of times we have

1 called up screech owls and had them actually fly
2 over the crowd, and so that's really nice. We do
3 cookies, soup and Santa pictures. So a lot of fun
4 goes on there, and we want to make sure that
5 everyone knows that we're doing that coming up.

6 And one of the things I also wanted to
7 share is just some of the fun pictures over the
8 years that we have gotten at this Star Party. And
9 so it's really rewarding for me and for our staff
10 to realize that we have lots of families that make
11 this Star Party their family tradition, and we
12 have seen lots of kids and families grow up on our
13 couch at the Star Party.

14 And so these are just some examples of
15 some of the kids that have grown up on our couch.
16 And so it's a lot of fun to have these families
17 come year after year to hang out with us and to
18 enjoy this event, and that includes some of our
19 families that are there at the -- NERR employees
20 as well. And this doesn't even show everyone. I
21 have tons and ton of pictures like this.

22 So we would like to invite you on
23 December 9th. It's from 5:00 to 9:00 p.m. It's
24 an open house. No registration or anything. Just
25 come on over and enjoy the evening with us.

1 JASON OSBORNE:

2 Is that Director Spraggins as the Santa
3 or is that --

4 AYESHA GRAY:

5 Actually, Director Spraggins, we are
6 looking for a Santa.

7 JOE SPRAGGINS:

8 You know, I think Patrick looks like a
9 good one.

10 AYESHA GRAY:

11 So yeah, if anybody would like to be
12 Santa this year, please get in contact with me.
13 All right.

14 CAM ROBERDS:

15 We appreciate it. There is a lot of
16 smiles going on in those pictures for sure, so
17 lots of good times.

18 AYESHA GRAY:

19 Yeah. It's a lot of fun. It's really
20 nice to see people really include that in their
21 family tradition. And it's something I talk a lot
22 about as one of the things that the NERR, we --
23 you know, our aim is to work on what we do in
24 terms of research and education and service to our
25 community, but we want to be a place that people

1 really value and they come to and we see that
2 happening with this party.

3 JOE SPRAGGINS:

4 You know, the more I look at it, Trevor
5 has got the beard.

6 TREVOR MONCRIEF:

7 Nope. Nope. I'm Kris Kringle.

8 JOE SPRAGGINS:

9 All right. Also, you know, thank you,
10 Dr. Gray for coming out here today. And, you
11 know, we don't get enough information with her.
12 She does a lot over there, I mean, a huge amount
13 of work over there day after day. And we're lucky
14 to have Dr. Gray and her team, and we're also
15 lucky to have a NERR in our state because there is
16 not one everywhere and this is something that
17 we're able to use. And it's funded. It's funded
18 at 70 percent by the federal government and we
19 fund it 30 percent out of Tidelands, so it's a
20 great deal for us to be able to have that.

21 If you ever get a chance, stop by and
22 see it. I mean, you know, there is numerous
23 things that they do every year and this is just
24 one of them, but there is numerous events that
25 happens year round over there. And if you ever

1 just want to just take a chance as a commissioner
2 and go look at it, just let Dr. Gray know. She'd
3 be glad to show you the whole area, and it's a
4 thing that, I think, you would be impressed with
5 what you see. And we appreciate it.

6 AYESHA GRAY:

7 Absolutely.

8 JONATHAN MCLENDON:

9 Thank you.

10 AYESHA GRAY:

11 Yep. You're welcome.

12 CAM ROBERDS:

13 We're down to other business. Does
14 anybody have any other business to mention?

15 If not, then do we have any public
16 comments?

17 JOE SPRAGGINS:

18 I saw none.

19 CAM ROBERDS:

20 No public comments.

21 Well, we appreciate everybody for coming
22 out. I hope everybody has a very nice
23 Thanksgiving with family, and I guess I will make
24 the motion to close the commissioner meeting.

25 JONATHAN MCLENDON:

1 Second.

2 JASON OSBORNE:

3 Second.

4 CAM ROBERDS:

5 All those in favor?

6 Aye.

7 JONATHAN MCLENDON:

8 Aye.

9 JASON OSBORNE:

10 Aye.

11 (Meeting adjourned at 9:55 a.m.)

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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 public meeting witness, as taken by me at the time
9 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 _____, 2023

17
18 /s/ Melissa Burdine-Rodolfich

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