

## STATE OF MISSISSIPPI

MISSISSIPPI ADVISORY COMMISSION ON MARINE RESOURCES

## COMMISSION MEETING

Tuesday, July 16, 2024, 9:00 a.m.,

Bolton Building Auditorium

1141 Bayview Avenue, Biloxi, Mississippi 39530

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**COMMISSION MEMBERS:**

Ronnie Daniels  
Matthew Mayfield  
Jonathan McLendon  
Cammack "Cam" Roberds

**ALSO PRESENT:**

Joe Spraggins  
Steven Eckert, Esquire

**REPORTED BY:**

Melissa Burdine-Rodolfich  
mburdine@sbmreporting.com

1 RONNIE DANIELS:

2 Morning, ladies and gentlemen. Welcome  
3 to the July 16th MACMR meeting. We're going to  
4 commence the meeting at this time.

5 I would like to ask Commissioner  
6 McLendon to lead us in the Pledge of Allegiance.

7 (Pledge of Allegiance.)

8 RONNIE DANIELS:

9 Thank you. Got a big day today. We're  
10 filling a vacant spot that's been vacant for a  
11 while. Before we get to that, I'm going to ask  
12 Joe to lead us in the prayer.

13 JOE SPRAGGINS:

14 Okay. Before we go to prayer, you know,  
15 I want to -- obviously, what happened in our  
16 country last weekend, we'd like for everyone to  
17 take a moment of silence to think about that.  
18 Think about Corey Comperatore who gave his life  
19 because he was there as an innocent victim just  
20 standing there, was there trying to save his  
21 family whenever he heard the gunshots. He went to  
22 save his family, and so we want to -- I just want  
23 to have his family in our prayers today and the  
24 two that was injured and also our former president  
25 of the United States who was injured. And just

1 know that it was God's will that he is alive for  
2 us today, and it's God's will that the others are  
3 alive, and let's don't forget to give him the  
4 praise and not us. So let's go to the Lord in  
5 prayer.

6 (Moment of prayer.)

7 RONNIE DANIELS:

8 All right. Thank you, Joe.

9 All right. At this time, we're going to  
10 bring up our new commissioners, Matthew Mayfield,  
11 for the oath of office.

12 JOE SPRAGGINS:

13 Matthew, will you come down front, and  
14 his family, if y'all would like to come with him.

15 (Oath of office administered.)

16 RONNIE DANIELS:

17 Next up, approval of the minutes. Do we  
18 have any discussion on the minutes from July 18th,  
19 2024?

20 (No response.)

21 RONNIE DANIELS:

22 Do we have a motion to approve?

23 CAM ROBERDS:

24 I'll make a motion to approve the  
25 minutes.

1 JONATHAN McLENDON:

2 I'll second.

3 RONNIE DANIELS:

4 All in favor?

5 (Unanimous vote.)

6 RONNIE DANIELS:

7 All right. Approval of the agenda for  
8 today as written, do we have any discussion on  
9 that?

10 (No response.)

11 RONNIE DANIELS:

12 Do we have a motion to approve?

13 JONATHAN McLENDON:

14 I will make a motion.

15 RONNIE DANIELS:

16 I will second it.

17 All in favor?

18 (Unanimous vote.)

19 RONNIE DANIELS:

20 Mr. Joe, turn it over to you.

21 JOE SPRAGGINS:

22 All right. Well, first off, welcome,  
23 Matthew, to the commission. And for the ones that  
24 don't know, Matthew owns a company called Eagle  
25 Point Oysters, and, you know, it's one of the

1 first ones that started when we did the off-bottom  
2 and started doing off-bottom, the oysters and all.  
3 And he has been in this business and been a great  
4 asset to the state, so we appreciate it.

5 I know you have been involved in  
6 fisheries most of your life, and as I heard it --  
7 I talked to your wife awhile ago. She said this  
8 is something that, I guess, was a lifelong dream.  
9 Well, we're proud to make that dream come true,  
10 because he's going to be a great asset to the  
11 state of Mississippi. It's going -- we're going  
12 to note your ability about oysters and understand  
13 what we can do, and I know that you'll bring a lot  
14 to this table about what we're going to be able to  
15 do in the future with oysters. And we thank you  
16 so much.

17 So anything you would like to say?  
18 Thank you so much for being a part of it.

19 MATTHEW MAYFIELD:

20 I want to say thank you so much for the  
21 kind words, General. I'm really looking forward  
22 to it.

23 JOE SPRAGGINS:

24 Well, we're really looking forward to  
25 having you, and I tell you what -- and we're proud

1 to have a full commission finally, you know, and  
2 so -- thank you, Governor Reeves, for appointing  
3 Matthew to this and we appreciate it very much.

4 All right. Let's see. We've got -- if  
5 you have any public comments, TJ is in the back,  
6 so make sure you see TJ and get with him if you  
7 have any public comments.

8 All right. We do have one thing. The  
9 August meeting is Tuesday, you know, the 20th, I  
10 think it is, and we need to look at the  
11 possibility of changing that. We have Gulf  
12 Council here on the Gulf Coast.

13 And for the ones that don't know, Jason  
14 Osborne, also one of our commissioners, is not  
15 here today, and has now been appointed to the Gulf  
16 Council, so he is one of three representatives for  
17 the state of Mississippi on the Gulf Council and  
18 so we're glad to have him there.

19 So me and Jason both will be out and  
20 we'd like to look at a possibility and ask the  
21 question, could we look at the 13th or the 27th of  
22 August, which -- either one of those dates? Would  
23 either one work?

24 RONNIE DANIELS:

25 27th would work.

1 JOE SPRAGGINS:

2 All right. 27th. Anybody else?

3 MATTHEW MAYFIELD:

4 Works for me.

5 JOE SPRAGGINS:

6 27th work?

7 CAM ROBERDS:

8 27th works.

9 JONATHAN McLENDON:

10 I'm good either one.

11 JOE SPRAGGINS:

12 Why don't we look, then, at the  
13 possibility of changing it to the 27th at 9:00  
14 a.m.?

15 RONNIE DANIELS:

16 Do we need to make a motion for that?

17 CRYSTAL MATTA:

18 Yes.

19 JOE SPRAGGINS:

20 I guess we do.

21 STEPHEN ECKERT:

22 Probably be the best idea.

23 RONNIE DANIELS:

24 I would like to make a motion to  
25 reschedule the August 20th CMR meeting to

1 August 27th.

2 CAM ROBERDS:

3 I'll second it.

4 RONNIE DANIELS:

5 All in favor?

6 (Unanimous vote.)

7 RONNIE DANIELS:

8 All right. Mr. Joe, that's done.

9 JOE SPRAGGINS:

10 All right. And then we -- the Gulf  
11 Council meeting we just had in Houston 24 through  
12 27 June went pretty well. We are talking more  
13 about what we're going to be able to do with --  
14 especially with the snapper season in the future.  
15 We're working hard to be able to get our MS Creel  
16 working, and we're working to get the test with  
17 it.

18 And Alabama is doing the Alabama Creel,  
19 you know, to marry up to Louisiana Creel, so we  
20 will have three states in the Gulf working exactly  
21 the same way. Hopefully, this will change what  
22 we'll be able to do in the near future as far as  
23 our number of oysters -- I mean, excuse me, number  
24 of snapper that we will be allowed to catch. And  
25 that's something that we have had to go through



1 the process with, but it's working very good. And  
2 hopefully that will work out.

3 We did have appointments to our SSC, and  
4 Trevor was re-appointed as one of our  
5 representatives and so we're glad to have him.  
6 And Dr. Paul Mickle also was re-appointed, and I'm  
7 not sure. I think it was one more. I can't  
8 remember who it was, but we have three of them, I  
9 think, that are appointed to the SSC for the  
10 state, so we're very glad to have them.

11 All right. Neshoba County, we have got  
12 the -- you know if you haven't ever been to  
13 Neshoba County, the Neshoba County Fair comes up  
14 every year at the absolute hottest time of the  
15 year. If the temperature is below 100, you've  
16 done something good, and -- but I will tell you  
17 what -- on top of that, it's all the hot air  
18 that's going on around there.

19 But anyway, we do have a thing every  
20 year. We have been working and having -- we call  
21 it a Red Clay and Sand Mixer and it's put on by  
22 the Gulf Coast and we have it on a Wednesday  
23 night, which is -- we'll have it at one of the  
24 cabins and it's right by The Square. We -- DMR  
25 does the cooking of shrimp and oysters and some

1 fish and then the others bring in some, you know,  
2 other sides to go with it.

3 Last year, we had over 600 people. We  
4 started this thing three, four years ago with  
5 about 30 people and now we're up to over 600. So  
6 if you're in Neshoba County on the 31st day of  
7 July, make sure you have got shorts on, but, you  
8 know, come on over to the thing. It starts about  
9 6:00 at night, 5:30, 6:00, and it will be a great  
10 thing to have.

11 It's a way for us to sell our seafood.  
12 Gulf seafood is what the whole thing is about, how  
13 great Gulf seafood is, and what better to do than  
14 take it up to Neshoba and so that all the other  
15 people coming from around the state can be able to  
16 see it and see how great it is. So if you're up  
17 there, please come by.

18 Shrimp season update, you know, we --  
19 this year, we're at one point -- as of the end of  
20 June, we're at 1.7 million pounds of shrimp that's  
21 landed and at about \$2.2 million. That's about a  
22 \$1.30, \$1.29 a pound. Obviously, very low.  
23 Better than last year because -- but -- we had a  
24 lower number this year, but at 2.75 million pounds  
25 landed last year, but only 3.3 million and \$1.20,

1 so it went up a little.

2 But the problem is that we still have --  
3 not having the landings and it's not the fact that  
4 the shrimp aren't there. There is plenty of  
5 shrimp. It's just we just don't have the  
6 shrimpers to go out there. And the reason they're  
7 not going out there is one thing and that's  
8 because when you're paying \$5 a gallon for diesel  
9 fuel and going out and coming back and getting  
10 \$1.30 a pound, you're hardly making enough money  
11 to make the trip worth it.

12 So we -- people last year -- well, in  
13 the late -- say, 2007, 2008 time frame, we had  
14 over 750 boats that went out the first day of  
15 shrimp season. This year, we had 47. That tells  
16 you what the industry is going. The industry is  
17 going just like this, and it's for two to three  
18 reasons. Number 1, it's price. Jonathan can tell  
19 you more than anything about it, being a  
20 processor, but the price of what it is, and the  
21 other is our imports. We have got to do something  
22 to stop the imports. The imports are coming in to  
23 America. When they're coming in, they're selling  
24 them for hardly anything and it's killing the  
25 industry. And it's not just the shrimp industry.

1 It's killing other industries, too, so we need to  
2 look at that.

3 If you get a chance to talk to your  
4 congressman, your senator, the Governor or anybody  
5 else, please express how important it is that we  
6 do something with the imports and put a tariff on  
7 them, put something on them to change it, because  
8 when our shrimpers cannot go out and make a  
9 living -- and there's plenty of the greatest Gulf  
10 shrimp in the world right here -- there is a  
11 problem. We need to look at it, and we need to  
12 try to help work and fix it. Okay?

13 As far as the snapper season, well, it's  
14 closed right now, and I don't foresee it  
15 re-opening. You know, we opened up Memorial Day  
16 weekend. We had 64,000 -- a little over  
17 64,000 pounds is what our allocation was and right  
18 now, we're in the 60s, you know, the -- 60- to a  
19 little plus -- over 60,000 pounds has been caught.  
20 This is about a third of what we should be  
21 catching, so, you know, the problem is, it's  
22 something that we're working. That what MS Creel  
23 is going to change, and we're going to be able to,  
24 in the future, get that up to at least 120-,  
25 150,000 pounds, something to make it back to where

1 it should be at.

2 So we'll see what happens, but, you  
3 know, it's -- we wound up getting through the  
4 holiday weekend, the Fourth of July, but that's  
5 it, and I don't foresee us opening anymore because  
6 we don't want to go over. We went over last year  
7 and had to pay it back, so we don't want to go  
8 over it again, and we want to make sure that we do  
9 what we need to do there.

10 Let's see. What else do I got here?

11 Bonnet Carré update, you saw it. We  
12 just went out with a press release about the  
13 shrimp processors and where we have money in it  
14 for the 2019 Bonnet Carré to be able to give money  
15 back to the shrimp processors. And this is  
16 something that -- to help them to go out and be  
17 able to put new technology and upgrade their  
18 equipment and upgrade the things that need to be  
19 done. And this is what's happening in Louisiana  
20 and it's happening here now, and so we'll be able  
21 to do it. And what they do is they go out and be  
22 able to -- I think a half a million dollars. Is  
23 that the number that we're working on or is there  
24 a number set as to how much people can spend?

25 RICK BURRIS:

1           So we've got -- there's, I think, about  
2   3 and a half million dollars in the total grant  
3   and we're going to evaluate to see, you know, how  
4   many applications we get and then kind of go from  
5   there.

6           And it is -- just a point of  
7   clarification, it's for the seafood processors,  
8   not just shrimp processors.

9   JOE SPRAGGINS:

10           Huh?

11   RICK BURRIS:

12           It's -- this grant is for all seafood  
13   processors.

14   JOE SPRAGGINS:

15           Right. All seafood processors, not just  
16   shrimp, yeah. It will be for any of the  
17   processors that are seafood, and this is so they  
18   can update their equipment and update their  
19   operation and be able to do it a better way and be  
20   able to help them stay in business, so hopefully,  
21   that will work out.

22           Let's see. We've got an update on  
23   the -- excuse me, derelict vessels. 157 derelict  
24   vessels have been reported, 122 have been removed,  
25   35 are pending removal and five are -- excuse me,

1 three are in court order right now, so that's  
2 looking pretty good.

3 We're still -- we're far above the other  
4 parts of the Gulf Coast, and we're using that  
5 \$1.6 million that was given to us by the federal  
6 government to do this. So that's in the grant  
7 that we would be able -- was able to get and  
8 that's working fantastic.

9 Let's see what else I've got here.  
10 We're also -- Commercial Safety -- Vessel Safety  
11 Program is also part of the Bonnet Carré, and NOAA  
12 approved it on the 1st of -- so it will start the  
13 1st of September 2019.

14 And then all the appeals finalized for  
15 the fishermen payout has been done. We have done  
16 all the appeals, and, you know, we went in -- we  
17 did the very first phase of it to where we gave --  
18 if you were a shrimper, you got \$7,500. If you  
19 were an oysterman, you got \$15,000, and we were  
20 able to do that.

21 And then they went back and then we  
22 started working on the loss up to 108,000 and some  
23 few dollars per person -- or company, so now we're  
24 able to pay all that. We have worked all the  
25 appeals and everything else so we're being able to

1 pay them all out. And that is fantastic.

2 And we're looking at it as a possibility  
3 of where we'll have a Round 2. And before that,  
4 what we're talking on the Round 2 of that is that  
5 we may have some money left over that we did -- we  
6 were not -- that we had to allocate to be spent in  
7 another form for the Bonnet Carré, but was done  
8 in -- through GOMESA and so we're able to take  
9 that money, re-allocate it. And so we're going  
10 back now and looking at the ones that had --  
11 especially the commercial fisherman that did not  
12 get in the first round for whatever reason.  
13 Either they were out fishing and did not realize  
14 it or they were -- for some reason did not get  
15 there, so we're going to give them a chance to be  
16 able to look at it. So hopefully, we might be  
17 able to make them whole, too, up to a certain  
18 point so that's a great deal.

19 And we also have the movement on 2020.  
20 We got \$3 million from the federal government to  
21 be able to do another round for 2020, and that's  
22 for shrimp and oysters only, but we will be --  
23 shrimp and oyster fishermen only will be able to  
24 do a 2020 round, so we will be working on that  
25 too.



1           So hopefully, we'll be able to get some  
2 money in these fishermen's hands and keep them in  
3 business because I tell you what, if we don't,  
4 we're going to lose them all, you know, and we  
5 definitely don't want to do that. All right.

6           Let's see. Action updates?

7       STEPHEN ECKERT:

8           Yes, sir. For actions updates,  
9 discussed at the June 22nd meeting, the Commission  
10 recommended and the Director approved the  
11 following motions: First, there was a motion to  
12 recommend the final adoption of changes to Title  
13 22, Part 1, rules and regulations for molluscan  
14 shellfish-related activities to conform with the  
15 requirements of Senate Bill 2648 and House Bill  
16 1007.

17           Second, we had a motion to recommend the  
18 following state saltwater fish records: These  
19 being all tackle for, one, a golden tilefish,  
20 23 pounds, 3.2 ounces caught by Mr. Nathan  
21 Bosarge; and, second, a permit, 11 pounds,  
22 11.2 ounces caught by Mark Kleinpeter.

23           And that concludes our actions update.

24       JOE SPRAGGINS:

25           Okay. And one other thing is -- any

1 questions on the actions updates?

2 (No response.)

3 JOE SPRAGGINS:

4 Okay. Changes to Title 22, Part 1,  
5 updated regulations on the on-bottom leasing and  
6 shellfish tagging will go into effect Tuesday --  
7 Thursday, the -- July 18th; is that right?

8 RICK BURRIS:

9 (Nodding head affirmatively.)

10 JOE SPRAGGINS:

11 So it will go into effect Thursday,  
12 July 18th. So we'll be able to start now, and  
13 we're in the process of finding -- finalizing how  
14 we're going to be able to do the leases and  
15 hopefully, sometime in August, we will be able to  
16 go out with a notice to the public to be able to  
17 start going ahead and putting applications in to  
18 do leases for the -- on-bottom for the oysters,  
19 which is going to be a great deal. We've been  
20 fighting this battle for a couple of years now  
21 and, thank goodness, we've got it finally figured  
22 out, so hopefully, we will be able to get that  
23 done.

24 I think that's everything I have. If  
25 something comes up, I will bring it up later,

1 Commissioner, but that's my report. Thank you.

2 RONNIE DANIELS:

3 Sounds good, General.

4 JOE SPRAGGINS:

5 I do have one other thing. Sorry about  
6 that. It wasn't on here.

7 We will -- we officially were supposed  
8 to do it this Thursday, but it's now been  
9 canceled. It will be in August, but DMR will now  
10 be a part of Wildlife Fisheries Foundation. And  
11 it will be the Department of Wildlife Fisheries  
12 and Parks and Marine Resources Foundation, so we  
13 will be our own -- be a part of a foundation. And  
14 we will be able now for people who would like to  
15 donate things to be able to donate, you know,  
16 money to an organization to help the marine  
17 fisheries and the Gulf of Mexico and us to be able  
18 to do things like scholarships for kids to go into  
19 marine biology and to be able to do fishing  
20 tournaments for the youth and underprivileged and  
21 also maybe a Governor's fishing tournament and  
22 all. But it will be tax free now so you can  
23 donate. So it will be something that we will work  
24 it out, but we will sign that. It will probably  
25 go in effect in August instead of this month.

1 Sorry about that.

2 RONNIE DANIELS:

3 All right.

4 JOE SPRAGGINS:

5 I am done now.

6 RONNIE DANIELS:

7 All right. Any of our commissioners  
8 have anything to report today?

9 Joe, whenever you were just talking  
10 about the problems with shrimpers, it jogged my  
11 memory about something we talked about, something  
12 I brought up a year or two ago, and maybe it would  
13 be beneficial to look back into this again. I  
14 know some of our legislators looked at it.

15 Whenever we're talking about our  
16 commercial fishermen, obviously, imports is always  
17 a big issue that's brought up, but just the cost  
18 of being able to get out there. One of the things  
19 I brought up a year or two ago was road tax on  
20 fuel that's being burned in boats, and we started  
21 looking at ways to bypass that or get around that.  
22 You know, we're paying taxes that are meant for  
23 vehicles on fuel that's being burned through boats  
24 on the water that never even get on land.

25 So maybe if we get our legislators to

1 look at that with us again, find a way to where at  
2 least these guys get some of a -- some of a break  
3 on their fuel cost on something that I don't think  
4 they should be paying anyhow.

5 JOE SPRAGGINS:

6 Yeah, it makes good sense. And you know  
7 what, my fault for not carrying that further  
8 because I should have, but I will definitely look  
9 at that.

10 RONNIE DANIELS:

11 Well, you know, it would benefit the  
12 charter fishermen and every aspect of commercial  
13 fishermen, whether it be crabbers, oysters,  
14 shrimp, anything.

15 JOE SPRAGGINS:

16 Yeah. I mean, if nothing else, we could  
17 put it at the docks where they --

18 RONNIE DANIELS:

19 Dockside or another option would be some  
20 type of reimbursement program to where they could  
21 save their receipts, have an affidavit that every  
22 bit of that fuel was burned through a boat that  
23 they do trailer and they could submit that to the  
24 state quarterly or once a month and get a  
25 reimbursement on that road tax that they're not

1 burning this fuel on the roads.

2 JOE SPRAGGINS:

3 Okay. Well, I will definitely check  
4 into that.

5 RONNIE DANIELS:

6 All right.

7 JOE SPRAGGINS:

8 And I will get with the legislators and  
9 see what we can -- look into that.

10 RONNIE DANIELS:

11 Thank you.

12 All right. Next up, Office of Marine  
13 Patrol, Chief Wilkerson.

14 KYLE WILKERSON:

15 Good morning Commissioners, Legal,  
16 Director. Commissioner Mayfield, good to have  
17 you.

18 MATTHEW MAYFIELD:

19 Thank you.

20 KYLE WILKERSON:

21 Well, looking at the June report, we  
22 were compliance-wise with compliance checks, we're  
23 at 10.8 percent. People are doing -- are doing  
24 real well. They're complying with Tails and  
25 Scales. We've written a few Tails and Scales

1 citations, confiscated a few red snapper. As of  
2 this month, when it went -- when it closed, we  
3 were at 95 percent compliance rate with everybody  
4 playing right out there, so it was a good -- it  
5 was a good season.

6 This particular report, there is a few  
7 citations that stick out, illegal possession of  
8 oysters, possession of untagged oysters and  
9 harvested oysters in prohibited waters. That was  
10 all harvested illegally at the Clermont Harbor in  
11 Bayou Caddy. They were in possession of that and  
12 they were written citations for it.

13 We're looking at 2,900 stops for June,  
14 which is really good, really high. Everybody is  
15 complying. Everybody is playing right with that  
16 out there. We had one other commercial harbor --  
17 excuse me, commercial activity north of the CSX  
18 bridge, which is a no-no. Somebody crabbing up  
19 there with too many crab pots.

20 Other than that, everything looks pretty  
21 normal. If you have any questions, please ask.

22 JOE SPRAGGINS:

23 I do, you know, thank y'all. Thank the  
24 officers, each and every one of them. I don't  
25 think that I can remember a holiday weekend

1 without a tragedy.

2 KYLE WILKERSON:

3 It's been a while, yes, sir.

4 JOE SPRAGGINS:

5 And you had this -- it was Fourth of  
6 July weekend. No boating accidents that caused  
7 death. And, I mean, there was a few accidents and  
8 there was some other things that went on, but no  
9 one died because of it, so that says a lot for  
10 what y'all are doing out there every day and we  
11 thank you so much for it.

12 KYLE WILKERSON:

13 Thank you. We are hard workers.

14 RONNIE DANIELS:

15 Thank you, Chief. Y'all keep up the  
16 good work.

17 KYLE WILKERSON:

18 Thank you, sir.

19 RONNIE DANIELS:

20 All right. Next up is going to be  
21 Coastal Resources Management, Laura Moncrief.

22 LAURA MONCRIEF:

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

25 So today I'm going to be presenting just



1 an update on our Coastal Preserves Bureau. Sorry.  
2 My first time. Bear with me.

3 So just an update of our Coastal  
4 Preserves Bureau and what we have accomplished  
5 since the last update, which I believe was in  
6 2022.

7 So the Bureau is made up of three  
8 programs. We have Coastal preserves, invasive  
9 species and beneficial use program. And it  
10 operates under myself, as the bureau director, and  
11 five ENRS employees, with our main goal being to  
12 manage 16 of the 20 designated Coastal preserve  
13 sites within our three Coastal counties.

14 Now, there's been 83,000 acres  
15 designated as critical Coastal habitat. As you  
16 can see, it's kind of blurred, but it's outlined  
17 in blue. And of that 83,000 acres, the state  
18 currently holds titles to almost 46,000 of which  
19 we manage. And since 2022, the state has actually  
20 acquired an additional 2,900 acres, so we're  
21 steadily growing.

22 Where most of our active management  
23 actually occurs is within 33 units within those 16  
24 Coastal preserve areas, which is about  
25 approximately 5,000 acres. Now, to put that into

1 perspective, of those 33, it's 5,000, but when  
2 we're having to go to a site multiple times a  
3 year, my team is covering, over, you know, 20,000  
4 acres on an annual basis. And those activities  
5 can range from prescribed burnings, planting to  
6 thinning, invasive species monitoring and  
7 eradication, public access on our Coastal preserve  
8 areas for our local community on top of tourists,  
9 in addition to beneficial use.

10 So since 2022, we have actually  
11 conducted prescribed burns at -- on 342 acres, and  
12 we have also conducted thinning operations on  
13 25 acres.

14 In terms of invasive species, just on  
15 the terrestrial side, we have actually treated  
16 almost 1,600 acres. And we're also responsible  
17 for monitoring our Coastal waterways, so when it  
18 comes to our aquatic vegetation what we conduct  
19 in-house, our team is covering about 120 miles  
20 annually. We do utilize contractors for some of  
21 our efforts, specifically with our apple snails  
22 and wild hog eradication, but we have remained  
23 diligent in our efforts in maintaining those  
24 populations.

25 Now, with the range of activities, you

1 know, our main goal here is -- you know, to  
2 essentially get, you know, something like you see  
3 in these pictures is through effective management  
4 strategies of our Mississippi Coastal ecosystems,  
5 so we try to do our best on, you know, our  
6 conservation, preservation and restoration of  
7 these resources.

8 One thing that actually has been  
9 essential in our efforts, specifically with our  
10 invasive species management, is the utilizing of  
11 our QuickCapture app, so through this app, we're  
12 actually able to get detailed information of sites  
13 that we are treating and/or surveying. So from  
14 there, we're able to extrapolate the level of  
15 treatment that's being -- taking place at each  
16 site and being able to address, you know,  
17 questions as far as, are we seeing population  
18 increase in size? Decrease? Are they remaining  
19 the same? And from there, we can determine how  
20 effective our methodologies are. We can also --  
21 so we're also utilizing this app with our  
22 contractors as well, so -- just to further our  
23 dataset so it actually is utilized with the apple  
24 snail survey as well.

25 I'm sorry. It's a little grayed out.

1 Let me see if I can get it to go back. There you  
2 go.

3 One of our other primary goals is public  
4 access, so what we've actually been trying to do  
5 within the last few years is go through and update  
6 our sites, so we have been putting out new plant  
7 markers, installing new trail signs, new kiosks,  
8 as you can see below with our new Eric Clark unit,  
9 outlooks here at Hellmers.

10 And at each site, we're also responsible  
11 for trail maintenance, so since 2022, it's been  
12 conducted at eight units, so -- which is about  
13 30 miles of trails. Again, to kind of put that  
14 into perspective of what my team is having to  
15 cover, when you're having to go out to a site  
16 multiple times a year, these guys are having to  
17 cover over 75 miles annually.

18 And most recently, we have been able to  
19 do road repair at that -- the bottom middle  
20 picture at our Delisle unit.

21 Also, moving forward, we are planning to  
22 partner up with the Grand Bay NERR and conduct  
23 educational nature trail surveys or nature trail  
24 walks for our local public, just to essentially  
25 bring more light into our Coastal preserve areas

1 and also in the process of updating our website,  
2 creating more interactive -- interactive way to,  
3 you know, gain information for our public so  
4 whenever they get to a kiosk if there's a QR code,  
5 they can easily pull it up on their phone, see  
6 what the trails are, the level of difficulty,  
7 local flora and fauna that they'll be able to see  
8 at the site. So that's something we're actually  
9 in the process of working on right now.

10 In terms of our beneficial use program,  
11 so its main goal is to restore and create tidal  
12 marsh habitat in all associated habitats as well.  
13 To date, the program has restored approximately  
14 350 acres with the most recent being our Greenwood  
15 Island expansion with 250 acres -- or 230 acres,  
16 sorry, of expansion.

17 We also have multiple concurrent  
18 projects and all of them are listed, but just to  
19 highlight a few: One, being our Apollo Flight  
20 service that we conduct monthly just to get better  
21 footage of our invasive species treatment and our  
22 beneficial use active sites.

23 We've also partnered with forest service  
24 in seed collection of slash pine for nursery  
25 stock, on top of research. We also help in

1 monitoring efforts with Audubon for shorebird  
2 surveys on Deer Island, and we have also partnered  
3 with multiple contracting companies who have been  
4 extremely instrumental in the eradication and at  
5 least controlling populations of invasive species.

6 And like with many offices, we all have  
7 our challenges. With ours, unfortunately, one of  
8 the primary ones being invasive species.

9 Mississippi holds that prime habitat, you know,  
10 for just -- for invasives to actually just  
11 flourish. Also, these species don't know how to  
12 take a break on weekends or holidays, so it's a  
13 constant uphill battle for us.

14 Also, with mother nature, you know, we  
15 do get hit periodically with some bad inclement  
16 weather, hazardous storms where we're constantly  
17 not able to access sites or having to deal with  
18 debris removal.

19 And one of my favorites, when our local  
20 public decides they want to put in the effort to  
21 use our Coastal preserve areas as a trash dumping  
22 site. Rather than just putting forth that same  
23 effort and dumping in the appropriate dumping  
24 sites, they would rather use Coastal preserve, so  
25 that's always fun.

1           But everything I have covered here today  
2 and this morning, like I said, I can't take any  
3 credit for. It's all from my team. These guys  
4 are extremely hardworking. All of them are out in  
5 the field right now. I also wanted to highlight  
6 past employees who have been instrumental in the  
7 program and what we've been able to accomplish.  
8 And then more recently, at the bottom right is  
9 our -- or sorry -- bottom left, our two summer  
10 interns who've played a part and a huge  
11 contribution to the bureau and what we've been  
12 able to accomplish.

13           With that, I will take any questions.

14 CAM ROBERDS:

15           I was going to ask on the apple  
16 snails -- I remember last year when it came up --  
17 are we better off now than we were a year ago with  
18 all that you guys are doing to control the  
19 population?

20 LAURA MONCRIEF:

21           I will say that we're better off in our  
22 monitoring efforts. I will say that. Like, being  
23 able to utilize QuickCapture more, I think we have  
24 a better handle on what we're doing.

25           I will say that as far as whether the

1 population is truly in decline, you know, that's a  
2 little bit harder to answer because of the scale  
3 at which they're at. But I will say the -- you  
4 know, being able to utilize multiple contracting  
5 companies ourself and the QuickCapture app, it's  
6 been way more diligent than I feel it has in the  
7 past.

8 CAM ROBERDS:

9 We appreciate everything you guys are  
10 doing out there for sure.

11 LAURA MONCRIEF:

12 Yeah, thank you. Thank y'all.

13 RONNIE DANIELS:

14 Thank you.

15 JOE SPRAGGINS:

16 I just would like to also thank Jennifer  
17 and her team because they're doing a great job,  
18 you know. There is a lot of things out there that  
19 are invasive to what's happening in the Gulf Coast  
20 and it's brought in from different things and  
21 different ways. And a lot of it comes in off the  
22 different ships and everything else that come into  
23 here, but they are fighting it.

24 You remember salvinia back a couple of  
25 years ago and how much we were fighting salvinia



1 down here on the Gulf Coast? They pretty much  
2 have taken care of that. It's close. They've  
3 really cut down a lot of it, and I tell you, I'm  
4 not getting reports every day of, I can't get my  
5 boat out of my boathouse so, you know. There is a  
6 lot of things that are happening there that's just  
7 something that every day you have to fight a  
8 battle with it.

9 And also to restore all the areas that  
10 they're restoring, they're trying very hard to  
11 restore. And Jennifer also sits on the permit  
12 board for the DEQ, so she represents us for that,  
13 so we have a good team working there. So thank  
14 y'all, all of you, for what you're doing.

15 All right.

16 RONNIE DANIELS:

17 All right. Next up is going to be  
18 Finance and Administration, Ms. Leslie Brewer.

19 LESLIE BREWER:

20 Good morning, everyone. Welcome.

21 I'm presenting the financials for the  
22 end of June, which is actually our fiscal year  
23 end.

24 At the end of June, our state revenue  
25 was 6.8 million. Our agency revenue,

1 80.2 million.

2 State net income, a negative 802,000 and  
3 agency net income of 38.4 million. We do have a  
4 negative in that state column, but that's because  
5 we don't get our appropriations transferred till  
6 usually September. I'm not sure why it works that  
7 way.

8 And after 12 months, we have  
9 82.7 percent of our budget remaining in operations  
10 and our Tidelands is at 42 percent.

11 Does anybody have any questions?

12 RONNIE DANIELS:

13 Any questions? You got all that, didn't  
14 you, Cam?

15 CAM ROBERDS:

16 Every time.

17 RONNIE DANIELS:

18 Thank you.

19 LESLIE BREWER:

20 Thanks.

21 RONNIE DANIELS:

22 Next up is going to be Public Affairs,  
23 Ms. Charmaine.

24 CHARMAINE SCHMERMUND:

25 Good morning, Commissioners, Director

1 Legal. Welcome, Commissioner Mayfield.

2 This Mississippi Department of Marine  
3 Resources had 18 media mentions since the June  
4 MACMR meeting. News items included MDMR's free  
5 HACCP class being offered, the grant program for  
6 certified seafood processors, boater safety and  
7 red snapper season closing.

8 The Office of Marine Patrol took part in  
9 Adventures on the Water at the Margaret Sherry  
10 Library in Biloxi on June 19th and the Stay Safe  
11 and Play Event at Point Cadet Plaza on June 30th,  
12 along with staff from the Grand Bay NERR.

13 The Lyman Hatchery hosted two visits  
14 from Ocean Springs summer camps who toured the  
15 hatchery on July 2nd, and we'll be having our  
16 second tour this afternoon.

17 The Office of Marine Fisheries also  
18 hosted a marine conservation class tour at the  
19 Bolton Building on July 9th.

20 A Pearl River Community College  
21 hydrography instructor introduced students,  
22 observed and assisted with MDMR field work on  
23 July 15th by operating the sound velocity profiler  
24 while on board an MDMR vessel during the monthly  
25 trial sampling to learn about how MDMR conducts

1 this routine sampling.

2 The Mississippi Deep Sea Fishing Rodeo  
3 was held July 4th through the 7th, and the agency  
4 was on hand each day at the fishing rodeo  
5 distributing our rules and regulations  
6 publication, fish ruler stickers, fish posters and  
7 other informational pieces to the public.

8 RONNIE DANIELS:

9 Busy month.

10 JOE SPRAGGINS:

11 Hey, we took one of them sharks out,  
12 too, at the fishing rodeo. What was it,  
13 600-something pounds?

14 CHARMAINE SCHMERMUND:

15 I can't remember.

16 JOE SPRAGGINS:

17 It was a big shark. One of them  
18 sharks -- one of them biting sharks is out. It  
19 was a tiger shark, I think, and -- but -- so we've  
20 got one of them off there. Caught at Cat Island.

21 RONNIE DANIELS:

22 Wow.

23 Thank you, Charmaine.

24 All right. Marine Fisheries, this one  
25 is always fun. We've got some new state records.

1 Trevor.

2 TREVOR MONCRIEF:

3 Yeah. We have got two for you with a  
4 lot more coming next month as well. A lot of them  
5 weighed in after the deadline.

6 So both all tackle records today. First  
7 one is gray snapper. The old record was  
8 15 pounds, 7.79 ounces. This new record is 15  
9 pounds, 14.4 ounces. Mr. Joseph Rizzuto, picture  
10 of the fish. There's a picture of Joseph with the  
11 fish. That is quite the specimen.

12 Next one is the Atlantic creolefish.  
13 You don't see too many of these. Old record was  
14 one pound, 8.69 ounces. The new record is  
15 one pound, 9.6 ounces. Mr. Sean Cook, there is  
16 the picture of that fish, and there is Mr. Cook  
17 with the fish.

18 And all we need is a motion to recommend  
19 adoption of the new records.

20 RONNIE DANIELS:

21 I've never even heard of a creolefish.

22 TREVOR MONCRIEF:

23 Don't catch them on a hook and line very  
24 often. They're down there, just not in the same  
25 numbers as everything else.

1 RONNIE DANIELS:

2 That's pretty cool.

3 Do we have a motion to approve the new  
4 state records?

5 JONATHAN McLENDON:

6 I'll make the motion.

7 CAM ROBERDS:

8 I'll second.

9 RONNIE DANIELS:

10 All in favor?

11 (Unanimous vote.)

12 RONNIE DANIELS:

13 Congratulations to these guys that  
14 caught them.

15 CAM ROBERDS:

16 Do any of our commissioners have any  
17 other business today?

18 (No response.)

19 RONNIE DANIELS:

20 All right. Public comments, it looks  
21 like we only have one. It's going to be Mr. Greg  
22 Cenac talking about the roach.

23 GREG CENAC:

24 Yes. I think we have some pictures that  
25 will --

1 RONNIE DANIELS:

2 Did we get that loaded?

3 GREG CENAC:

4 And the last time I was here, one of the  
5 councilmen -- I won't tell you who, but Ronnie --  
6 asked what a roach was, so we're going to show you  
7 what a roach is.

8 There is the roach, and this is the  
9 largest cockroach in the world.

10 It just went away. It must have  
11 scurried away real quick.

12 We're building it and we're going to be  
13 moving it over to Biloxi Beach and parking it at  
14 the Seafood Museum for about a week and then  
15 we'll -- until the cars start having too many  
16 wrecks. You know, look here, Esther, you know,  
17 and, boom, hit them.

18 So we will have some little fundraisers  
19 on the back for Biloxi, but we're on the  
20 Mississippi Fishing Banks.

21 So here's Will Ladner. He was  
22 interviewing for WLOX. We're hoping to get maybe  
23 Ocean Springs to shoot it with fireworks and  
24 everything else. We'll have a big thing going  
25 across the Bay. We're going to try to move it in

1 about two weeks on a weekend, so I don't know if  
2 you may need some extra support to protect the  
3 cities on the cockroach's move, so -- all right.  
4 Just to let y'all know.

5 And we have some other stuff coming up.  
6 We're going to put this out to just make sure  
7 everybody is protected.

8 JOE SPRAGGINS:

9 Yeah. When they deploy that -- when is  
10 the deployment?

11 GREG CENAC:

12 Will.

13 WILL LADNER:

14 It will be -- surely more than that  
15 30 days out. We're going to give enough time to  
16 where everybody can get whatever publicity they  
17 want out of it.

18 JOE SPRAGGINS:

19 Are we calling that Cockroach Reef?  
20 Cockroach Reef, right?

21 GREG CENAC:

22 Yeah. But it's on a -- it's actually  
23 very large. I mean, that's a 120-foot tugboat?

24 WILL LADNER:

25 Yes.



1 GREG CENAC:

2 So it's 54 feet long. It's a world's  
3 record, and we're going to try to do that, so --  
4 but we're also doing -- it's a long story. We  
5 went out to the private sector. A lot of the DMRs  
6 fund a lot of these deployments, and so now we  
7 went out to the private sector to raise more money  
8 to the Fishing Banks to build reefs.

9 And we have some other stuff up our  
10 sleeves, you'll find, as we're also building some  
11 little reefs closer in, too.

12 JOE SPRAGGINS:

13 Well, Bay Pest Control, I think is the  
14 one --

15 GREG CENAC:

16 Yes, sir. Right there, Bay Pest Control  
17 contributed quite a large amount of money to have  
18 it built and commissioned.

19 And I can't divulge other people right  
20 now that are interested, but there's going to  
21 become fun things. We're trying to hopefully  
22 build an offshore park like they have in Florida.  
23 I know the artificial reefs here is talking about  
24 doing, that maybe an art park or something, but  
25 that's down the ways.

1           So can you imagine diving on this  
2 because it's going to be sitting up out of murk  
3 level, people come down, the divers, ahh, a  
4 cockroach, but it's going to be a lot fun. So --  
5 JOE SPRAGGINS:

6           They're going to think it was an  
7 ancestor of a cockroach, you know, back in the  
8 dinosaur days.

9           All right. Thank you very much.

10 RONNIE DANIELS:

11           I love it. That's really cool.

12 JOE SPRAGGINS:

13           Yeah. Well, I don't think anybody else  
14 has one.

15 CAM ROBERDS:

16           That's got to be the first.

17 RONNIE DANIELS:

18           And now I know what a cockroach is.

19           All right. No other public comments.

20 All right, y'all. Good meeting today.

21           Do we have a motion to adjourn?

22 CAM ROBERDS:

23           I'll make a motion to adjourn.

24 RONNIE DANIELS:

25           I will second that.

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All in favor?

(Unanimous vote.)

(Meeting adjourned at 9:47 a.m.)

**CERTIFICATE OF 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 16th  
16 day of August 2024.

17  
18 /s/ Melissa Burdine-Rodolfich

19  
20 Melissa Burdine-Rodolfich  
21 My Commission Expires 4/03/28  
22  
23  
24  
25