

## STATE OF MISSISSIPPI

MISSISSIPPI ADVISORY COMMISSION ON MARINE RESOURCES

## COMMISSION MEETING

Tuesday, October 22, 2024, 9:00 a.m.,

Bolton Building Auditorium

1141 Bayview Avenue, Biloxi, Mississippi 39530

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**COMMISSION MEMBERS:**

Matthew Mayfield  
Jonathan McLendon  
Jason Osborne  
Cammack "Cam" Roberds

**ALSO PRESENT:**

Joe Spraggins  
Sandy Chesnut, Esquire  
Steven Eckert, Esquire

**REPORTED BY:**

Melissa Burdine-Rodolfich  
mburdine@sbmreporting.com

1 CAM ROBERDS:

2 Ladies and gentlemen, thank you for your  
3 attendance today for the Mississippi Advisory  
4 Commission on Marine Resources for October 22nd,  
5 2024.

6 I think I will lead us in the Pledge Of  
7 Allegiance.

8 (Pledge of Allegiance was recited.)

9 CAM ROBERDS:

10 Director, if you would like to lead us  
11 in a prayer.

12 JOE SPRAGGINS:

13 Yeah. And before we start today,  
14 obviously, we want to keep all the people in  
15 Florida, Georgia, North Carolina, South Carolina  
16 and even Virginia -- you know, we have got a lot  
17 of people that are hurting and a lot of people  
18 that have went through a lot of things that we  
19 have seen in the past. We know how it felt after  
20 Katrina and even with the smaller storms that  
21 we've had, but we just want to keep them in our  
22 prayers, you know.

23 If you ever get a chance and you can go  
24 help them or you can send money, do it, because,  
25 you know, they did it for us. And after Katrina,

1 they were just flooding in here, right and left,  
2 people from all over the United States of America  
3 to help us. So if there is a way that you can  
4 help and if you want to, you know, maybe go do  
5 something for them, we'd appreciate that.

6 (Moment of prayer.)

7 CAM ROBERDS:

8 Thank you, Director.

9 On to the minutes. September 16th  
10 approval of minutes, do we have any questions?

11 If there is no questions on the minutes,  
12 do we have a motion?

13 JONATHAN MCLENDON:

14 I'll make a motion we accept the  
15 minutes.

16 JASON OSBORNE:

17 I second.

18 CAM ROBERDS:

19 All those in favor?

20 (Unanimous vote.)

21 JOE SPRAGGINS:

22 If you could, please, do it on the mic  
23 so she can hear you.

24 CAM ROBERDS:

25 All right. Approval of the agenda, do

1 we have any questions on today's agenda?

2 If not, do we have a motion to approve?

3 JASON OSBORNE:

4 I make a motion to approve the agenda.

5 JONATHAN MCLENDON:

6 I'll second.

7 CAM ROBERDS:

8 All those in favor?

9 (Unanimous vote.)

10 CAM ROBERDS:

11 All right. Director, over to you.

12 JOE SPRAGGINS:

13 All right. Employment contracts.

14 Thomas Rogers was promoted and -- law enforcement  
15 officer II to corporal, and we have Tyler Foster,  
16 who was promoted to sergeant in Marine Patrol. So  
17 always good to be able to move our troops up, and  
18 obviously, you know, show them how much we  
19 appreciate them. So congratulations to both of  
20 them.

21 I don't think we have any procurements.

22 The agency update. One thing is, our  
23 next commission meeting is scheduled for Tuesday,  
24 the 19th. Is that okay with everybody? Any  
25 questions on that?

1 JASON OSBORNE:

2 (Shakes head negatively.)

3 JOE SPRAGGINS:

4 Okay. And I think that was -- I don't  
5 know if that's a -- is that the third Tuesday? Is  
6 that normal?

7 CRYSTAL MATTA:

8 Yes, it's normal.

9 JOE SPRAGGINS:

10 So it's a normal Tuesday, right? Okay.

11 All right. Update on Cruisin' the  
12 Coast. I tell you what, if you didn't go, you  
13 missed out on a great time. Cruisin' the Coast  
14 is -- you know, was huge again this year. We  
15 didn't quite reach the number of cars that we did  
16 last year, but I think we was within 100 or so of  
17 getting there. But, you know, when you have got  
18 10,000 cars that are registered and another  
19 5,000-plus that are not registered that are coming  
20 on the Coast Mississippi -- well, Mississippi  
21 seafood was everywhere, and I tell you what, it  
22 was a great thing for us to be able to be there.

23 And all the people at DMR that worked so  
24 hard to be out there every day, I appreciate every  
25 one of them because they stood there and talked

1 the Mississippi Seafood and they talked to the  
2 people that are coming here from all over the  
3 parts of the United States. And they talked to  
4 them about how much the Mississippi Seafood is,  
5 how great it is. Not the cost, but how great it  
6 is.

7 And one of the things that we're putting  
8 out, we're asking people to do this, if you go  
9 into a restaurant and you order seafood, is it  
10 Gulf-fresh. Now, if it's Alaskan king crab, no,  
11 it's not. Okay? But if it's shrimp, if it's  
12 oysters, if it's fish, you know, that are supposed  
13 to be in the Gulf of Mexico, is it Gulf-fresh?  
14 Ask the people that.

15 And, you know, the only way that we're  
16 going to keep our oystermen, shrimpers and  
17 crabbers and fishermen working is if we keep  
18 operating and we keep selling Gulf-fresh. And so  
19 if we can put Gulf-fresh out there, then that's  
20 what we need to do. We need to ask that question,  
21 is it Gulf-fresh. That's how we'll stop the  
22 restaurants from serving things that are not  
23 because if you don't buy it, they won't serve it  
24 anymore. They'll quit doing it and they'll move  
25 it to what we need.

1           So let's help our restaurants and let's  
2 help our fisherman and let's help everyone get  
3 together and let's help the industry to be able to  
4 move forward because that's what we need to do  
5 with Gulf-fresh.

6           And Gulf-fresh, I tell you what, if you  
7 can't tell the difference, you need to go back and  
8 look at it again because when I eat a Gulf-fresh  
9 shrimp or I eat something that's imported, I can  
10 tell you in the first bite. And the same thing  
11 with anything else that we do. So ask the people.  
12 When you go out, when you go to the restaurant,  
13 say, is it Gulf-fresh? No matter where you're at,  
14 is it Gulf-fresh?

15           All right. But anyway, we had a great  
16 time. That worked out. And that was 5 through 13  
17 October, and we're going to be the sponsor again  
18 next year, so get ready. We're not giving up.  
19 We're going to keep telling Gulf-fresh seafood  
20 until we can't tell it anymore.

21           All right. We also had the Gulf States  
22 Marine Fisheries Commission last week in Gulf  
23 Shores, and Rick and I and numerous others from  
24 the agency attended. We had some great response  
25 there. I think our fishery's in pretty good

1 shape.

2 And one of the things that we did, the  
3 menhaden. The menhaden was brought up, and the  
4 report from it came back that we're not overfished  
5 and we're not having a problem with it and we're  
6 not doing any damage by what we're doing. So that  
7 is great news for us because we have a big  
8 menhaden industry here on the Gulf Coast and we  
9 need to keep it operating. And so that is a great  
10 thing for us to hear that and to hear that report  
11 coming out that we're doing fine.

12 And I think that we're looking at some  
13 other things as to what we can do. You know, our  
14 agencies are all on the line doing basically the  
15 same thing. We want to make sure that -- one of  
16 the topics was talking about how do we do this --  
17 you know, we have shrimp and we have oysters and  
18 we have others and we're transporting them back  
19 and forth across state lines and how do we do it  
20 and how do we do it legally? And, you know, we've  
21 been doing it for years, and I think that's  
22 something that we have got to work with the  
23 legislature on and we've got to get the  
24 legislators in the different states all on the  
25 same sheet of music in what we're doing. And once



1 we do that, we will be okay and I think we can  
2 work it out. And I think the agencies are all  
3 looking to try to help each other the best that  
4 they possibly can on that.

5 But any questions on Gulf States?

6 (No response.)

7 JOE SPRAGGINS:

8 All right. We sponsored the collegiate  
9 golf tournament. I don't -- did Ole Miss win?  
10 They did win. All right. Good.

11 So we sponsored the tournament here  
12 doing the -- we didn't do anything but cook. We  
13 went out and cooked for them, and I tell you  
14 what -- we cooked the shrimp and oysters and other  
15 things for them. They paid for everything.

16 And we had a good time. The guys  
17 that -- worked hard at it. And I tell you one  
18 thing, it went over big-time because those kids  
19 were walking around there eating fresh shrimp and  
20 oysters and they was like, man, these are great.  
21 And the fish and all were fantastic, so it was a  
22 good deal to have that.

23 And I don't know, about -- at least 10  
24 or 12 colleges. I'm not sure exactly who all, but  
25 a lot of them from the Southeast. So that was

1 something that really brought us some good  
2 advertisement just being out there cooking.

3 And now they're asking us to help them  
4 on the PGA and I'm like, oh, Lord. They said,  
5 we'll buy everything. We just want y'all to cook.  
6 So they want us to go on the PGA Tour, I guess. I  
7 don't know what it is, but they're talking about  
8 that -- hey, you know, we'll buy everything. We  
9 just want y'all to cook for us, so we'll look at  
10 it and see what we can do.

11 Gulf of Mexico Alliance meeting is next  
12 week -- or this week rather. It's -- I will be  
13 leaving tomorrow, and we will be over in Gulf  
14 Shores for another day or so there. And then I  
15 leave from there and go to Jackson and meet with  
16 the Lieutenant Governor and others about what  
17 we're going to do with basically the Mississippi  
18 River and how we're going to address the Corps of  
19 Engineers and what we do with it, so I think that  
20 will be a good deal that we can try to put a plan  
21 together in Mississippi to be able to do so.

22 Veterans Day is coming up November 11th,  
23 and we will be closed that day. If you know a  
24 veteran, thank them and -- because there will be a  
25 lot of events and just stop by. If you ever get a

1 chance and you see one -- if you see them -- a lot  
2 of them, especially the Vietnam and the handful  
3 that are left in the Korean and World War II wear  
4 the hats. And if you see them wearing the hats or  
5 whatever or Desert Storm, Desert Shield, you know,  
6 the Gulf War, thank them because they've given a  
7 lot to us, so we appreciate everything that  
8 they've done. Thank them for what they do.

9 Well, if you didn't see that big roach  
10 out there -- y'all ever seen a 170-foot roach or  
11 whatever that thing is? It's a pretty good size.  
12 Well, we've got a roach and it's going to be made  
13 into an artificial reef thanks to Bay Pest  
14 Control, and we appreciate them being able to  
15 sponsor that and that will be going out here soon.  
16 Is it still sitting out at the harbor?

17 RALPH HUMPHREY:

18 It is.

19 JOE SPRAGGINS:

20 Yeah. So it's still down in Biloxi  
21 there, so you can go by and look at it if you want  
22 to. But, you know, that will be more that -- we  
23 talked about this the other day at Marine  
24 Fisheries, too, at the meeting and I was  
25 explaining to them there is not too many in the

1 world that have a roach for an artificial reef,  
2 but we're going to have one.

3 And that roach is going to go out there,  
4 and people are going to come not just to catch  
5 fish off of it, but there's going to be a lot of  
6 people that want to go diving and looking at it  
7 and taking pictures with it and doing different  
8 things. So just think about it; Mississippi has  
9 got a first in something else. And, you know, I  
10 guarantee there is enough roaches around here so  
11 we at least have an understanding of it. All  
12 right.

13 All right. Our oyster lease program,  
14 we're in the process right now of leasing  
15 80 percent of the bottoms on the oysters. That  
16 opened up in -- I think it was the 1st of October  
17 and it will close the 1st of December. And we  
18 will go into -- at that point and we will start  
19 processing each and every application to tell you  
20 where we're at, what we're going to do and who  
21 gets what piece of property that we're going to be  
22 able to lease.

23 I think this is going to be fantastic.  
24 I think it's going to be great for the State of  
25 Mississippi. It's something that's been needing

1 to be done for a long time. It just took a long  
2 time getting it through the legislators and things  
3 that we needed to do, but now that -- you know,  
4 we've got about 1,200 acres that's permitted.

5 We can't afford to do it, Number 1, and  
6 we don't have the personnel to do it to be able to  
7 maintain 12,000 acres of on-bottom oysters, so the  
8 best thing we can do is go out and lease out the  
9 majority of it to the people that are going out  
10 there that's going to work every day on it.

11 And I can tell you, if you invest your  
12 money in it, it's about 3- or \$4,000 an acre just  
13 to be able to maintain and cultch it and do what  
14 you need to do. So the people that are going out  
15 there and leasing 500 acres or 1,000 acres or 200  
16 acres or whatever the number is, they're putting a  
17 lot of investment into this. And so to put that  
18 investment in it, then it's going to bring out,  
19 hopefully, a return for them.

20 And that return is going to do two  
21 things. That return is going to bring in money to  
22 the State of Mississippi because we're going to  
23 have oysters that are out there that are being  
24 sold and processed, and, Number 2, it's going to  
25 feed our estuary because they're growing oysters.

1 That's going to feed our estuary and that's  
2 something that's fantastic and that's going to  
3 help in everything that we do. The fisheries and  
4 everything that we do, it will help, and so I  
5 think it's a great deal.

6 I look forward to being able to get it  
7 done. I'm sorry it's taken so long, but hopefully  
8 we will be able to get everybody their property  
9 awarded sometime before the first of the year,  
10 around the first of the year, and then that way  
11 they can start to cultch for the spring and be  
12 able to be -- start moving forward.

13 And so I think that -- any questions on  
14 the oyster lease program?

15 (No response.)

16 JOE SPRAGGINS:

17 It's going good right now. I don't know  
18 how many applications. I haven't asked, but, you  
19 know, the applications are coming in. And I think  
20 that we will have quite a few of them.

21 All right. Just wanted to make sure  
22 Ralph put it where it's supposed to be.

23 But anyway, no questions.

24 Bonnet Carré update, we're doing good.  
25 We're about to go out now with the second round.

1 And the second round and -- what we're looking at  
2 is some of our fishermen and women were not able  
3 to be able to get to the -- in the process of  
4 being able to apply the first time. And, you  
5 know, we realized that, especially some of them  
6 that stay out, you know, quite a few days at a  
7 time and they wasn't able to do it. And some of  
8 them -- and they asked us, is there any chance?

9 Well, we found that we had a little bit  
10 of extra money left that we could re-program, from  
11 one program to another, because that program had  
12 already been taken care of in another way. And so  
13 we went back and so we're going to go out now and  
14 we're going to re-advertise.

15 Has it hit the street yet?

16 TRACI FLOYD:

17 (Shakes head negatively.)

18 JOE SPRAGGINS:

19 We'll put out a public notice. It will  
20 hit the streets here shortly. Charmaine and them  
21 will put it out for us, so we'll get that out.  
22 But what it's going to be is basically for you to  
23 be able -- that if you're a commercial fisherman  
24 of any type or if you're a processor or if you're  
25 a charter boat or any of them that we have, what

1 we're going to do is we're going to basically say  
2 that if you did not apply in the first round and  
3 you want to -- you qualify because you have the  
4 trip tickets, you have the proper documentation to  
5 do it, then go qualify and let's see if we can't  
6 help everybody that we possibly can. We don't  
7 want to leave any fisherman out, anybody out in  
8 the industry.

9 And so if you're -- any of the  
10 processors, any of the dealers, anything, if you  
11 did not make it in the first round because you did  
12 not apply because of whatever reason, we're going  
13 to give you a chance to go back and so hopefully  
14 this will happen in the next few days that we will  
15 get it out and then we'll be able to get that  
16 process going. Any questions on that?

17 (No questions.)

18 JOE SPRAGGINS:

19 But I think that -- but as far as the  
20 money, you know, we've got 90 percent of the money  
21 out to all of the people. There's still one or  
22 two just outliers that we're looking at, and --  
23 but most of the fishermen have been given their  
24 funds. So, hopefully, we will get this thing  
25 under control and be able to give more money out,



1 and we're working on some other projects with it.

2 Traci, is there anything else I forgot  
3 on that?

4 TRACI FLOYD:

5 No.

6 JOE SPRAGGINS:

7 All right. Derelict vessels, we're  
8 still doing it. A total of 170 that we have now  
9 that have been reported. 134 of them have been  
10 removed. 36 are pending removal, and 12 are in  
11 the courts right now to be removed.

12 So we're -- I was talking to some of  
13 them at Gulf States the other day, and I can tell  
14 you right now that we're far, far, far above the  
15 other four states in the Gulf as far as what we're  
16 doing and how we're getting them removed.

17 And so, Steven, thank you. And Roy and  
18 the team, thank y'all for what you're doing.  
19 You're doing a great job. Steven just beats the  
20 Court up every day, you know, when he's in there,  
21 and -- but we're getting what we need and we're  
22 getting stuff removed and we're getting the waters  
23 cleaned up.

24 And that's going to be another thing  
25 that happens. Number 1 is, it cleans up the

1 waters. It takes a lot of stuff out of it. It  
2 takes the hazard out of it. It takes the issues  
3 away from it and it takes the beauty. And now, we  
4 still have the most -- it keeps our beautiful,  
5 pristine Coast and everything and our waterways  
6 looking better.

7 Other than that, public comments, if you  
8 have any, Crystal is up front here. Please let  
9 her know and we'll get them in.

10 And other than that, sir, I think  
11 that's -- the actions update, I need to go to it,  
12 so I'd like to have forgot you, Steven.

13 STEVEN ECKERT:

14 Thank you, Director. Good morning,  
15 Commissioners, Director.

16 Discussed at the September '24 meeting  
17 was the Commission recommended and the Director  
18 approved the following motions, which were to  
19 approve a Title 22 variance and consistency  
20 certification as requested by the NPS Gulf Islands  
21 National Seashore for the filling of Coastal  
22 wetlands for the road widening construction and  
23 other improvements along Park Road in the Stark  
24 Bayou area in Ocean Springs.

25 And that's all the actions update we

1 have for this morning.

2 JOE SPRAGGINS:

3 Okay. We don't need anything on it,  
4 right, Sandy? We're good.

5 SANDY CHESNUT:

6 Yeah, we're good.

7 JOE SPRAGGINS:

8 All right. Well, other than that, if  
9 you didn't get any of those great shrimp that we  
10 did during Cruisin' the Coast -- because they  
11 boiled them shrimp out there every day. And I  
12 tell you what, there was a line standing every  
13 time you turned around. They knew when the shrimp  
14 were being boiled and there was a line standing,  
15 waiting. So if you didn't get any, come out next  
16 year. We'll get you some.

17 And, sir, that's what I have for my  
18 report for today.

19 CAM ROBERDS:

20 Thank you. They made it really easy  
21 because I think they were peeled all except for  
22 the tails, so it was really nice.

23 JOE SPRAGGINS:

24 That's it. Deveined, peeled.

25 CAM ROBERDS:

1           Yeah. It took the work out of it so all  
2 you had to do was eat.

3           I had one quick question on the Gulf  
4 Fresh initiative. If -- is there any way that you  
5 can -- maybe there is something out there, any  
6 listing of like the actual retail or the  
7 restaurants that are selling the Gulf shrimp, like  
8 a list where somebody could actually look at on  
9 the website?

10 JOE SPRAGGINS:

11           You know, we've been working on that.  
12 Charmaine, did we come out with an actual list?

13 FRANCESCA LINTHICUM:

14           It's on the Mississippi Seafood website.

15 JOE SPRAGGINS:

16           It's on what?

17 FRANCESCA LINTHICUM:

18           The Mississippi Seafood website.

19 JOE SPRAGGINS:

20           It's on the Mississippi Seafood Website.

21 FRANCESCA LINTHICUM:

22           MSseafood.com.

23 CAM ROBERDS:

24           Oh, good.

25 JOE SPRAGGINS:

1 All right. Say that again. Come up  
2 here where we can hear it. One of you come up  
3 here and tell me what it is.

4 CHARMAINE SCHMERMUND:

5 It's on our website, MSseafood.com, and  
6 so there is a list of retailers and wholesalers  
7 and everything on there.

8 CAM ROBERDS:

9 That's fantastic. I know it's probably  
10 a never-ending evolution of adding and removing,  
11 but I think it's worth it to have it.

12 CHARMAINE SCHMERMUND:

13 We do get restaurants who reach out to  
14 us to let us know to put them on there. Not just  
15 restaurants but wholesalers and all that.

16 CAM ROBERDS:

17 That's great. Awesome.

18 JOE SPRAGGINS:

19 One of the things I would like to do --  
20 and we're going to work on this and I will get  
21 with them on it -- we're going to try to come up  
22 with some type of a sign or something that we can  
23 put out there that -- if people want to do it in  
24 their restaurants that says "We serve Gulf fresh."  
25 And, you know, I would like to do that. That

1 would be when you walk in, you see it, in other  
2 words.

3 CAM ROBERDS:

4 That's a great idea.

5 JOE SPRAGGINS:

6 So I think a lot of the restaurants will  
7 work with us on that. And if we buy the sign for  
8 them and everything else, that's fine, you know,  
9 because we can work out something for them, but  
10 we're going to work on something. That's at the  
11 beginning stages right now. Thank y'all.

12 CAM ROBERDS:

13 Thank you. All right. Appreciate that,  
14 Director.

15 Do we have any reports from the  
16 Commissioners?

17 JONATHAN MCLENDON:

18 I would like to say that I heard  
19 Lieutenant Payne is garnering some international  
20 acclaim for his boiled shrimp recipe he's been  
21 working on, so big shout-out to him.

22 And I just wanted to mention something  
23 that's in the news here. So at the Morgan City  
24 Shrimp and Petroleum Festival, they've got a  
25 company who has got a rapid DNA test, went around

1 and sampled all the vendors at the show. And I  
2 believe it's something to the effect of like  
3 75 percent of them are serving imported shrimp.

4 And then last night also got word that  
5 the Gulf Shores Shrimp Festival had four out of  
6 the five vendors serving imported shrimp with the  
7 lone exception being Rouses Supermarket, so -- and  
8 I just wanted to throw that out there, that, you  
9 know, they do have some companies that are making  
10 this rapid DNA test.

11 And I would certainly like to see if the  
12 Commission is sponsoring any festivals here in  
13 Mississippi that are requiring local seafood,  
14 maybe some preemptive testing or something like  
15 that so we don't end up in the news negatively  
16 like these folks.

17 JOE SPRAGGINS:

18 You know, Charmaine, the Biloxi Seafood  
19 Festival, we look at that in it, right? We ask  
20 people to -- does it not state something about  
21 fresh seafood?

22 CHARMAINE SCHMERMUND:

23 It is a requirement that it has to be  
24 Mississippi seafood.

25 JOE SPRAGGINS:

1           So that's one that we sponsor, and  
2           that's what they are trying to do. And, you know,  
3           obviously, you can ask it, but do you get it, you  
4           know, 100 percent, because somebody -- but when  
5           they come in and, you know, they're selling it,  
6           especially if they're fried or something like  
7           that, it's hard to, you know, really test it.

8           But I agree with you 100 percent.  
9           Anything that we sponsor, that -- we ask that it  
10          has to be Gulf-fresh. And anything -- if we buy  
11          food to be able to cook somewhere, we require the  
12          supplier to be Gulf-fresh. It has to be  
13          Gulf-fresh. We don't want anything -- and that's  
14          how we put it out, so, you know, maybe we can -- I  
15          don't know about DNA testing, but we can try it.

16         JONATHAN MCLENDON:

17                 Well, these are -- you know, it used to  
18                 be to where like if you had to sample the shrimp,  
19                 you had to send it off to a lab. You had to wait  
20                 a week or two for the results. But this company  
21                 seems to have them figured out, and I think  
22                 it's -- you get results in an hour right there at  
23                 the dinner table.

24         JOE SPRAGGINS:

25                 Something to look into.



1 JONATHAN MCLENDON:

2 Yep.

3 CAM ROBERDS:

4 That's a great idea. Great idea.

5 One last question.

6 Do we have any other reports,  
7 Commissioners? Anybody?

8 I was going to ask -- you had mentioned  
9 the menhaden report. Was that through the Gulf  
10 Coast Research Lab or who actually was preparing  
11 that?

12 JOE SPRAGGINS:

13 Rick, you -- who was actually -- Trevor?  
14 Which one of y'all?

15 RICK BURRIS:

16 So Trevor sits on the MAC, but there is  
17 a Menhaden Advisory Committee that's comprised of  
18 NOAA and the states in the actual industry. NOAA  
19 did a stock assessment based on the states'  
20 information and the industry information. They  
21 said that the stock is not overfished or undergone  
22 overfishing.

23 CAM ROBERDS:

24 Okay. And that's going to be -- they're  
25 going to put that out? Is it already --

1 RICK BURRIS:

2 It should -- is it -- it should already  
3 be out. Trevor?

4 JOE SPRAGGINS:

5 Come on, Trevor. You know all about it.  
6 That's a good thing for us.

7 CAM ROBERDS:

8 Yeah.

9 TREVOR MONCRIEF:

10 Yeah.

11 So it went to the -- from the MAC, so  
12 initial review of the assessment, it was approved.  
13 It went to the state federal committee, where it  
14 was approved. It should be on the publications  
15 website of Gulf States, if not now, very shortly.  
16 I think there is actually news articles going out  
17 that have been released about it, so it should be  
18 available on their website.

19 CAM ROBERDS:

20 Okay.

21 TREVOR MONCRIEF:

22 And it will be available on the SEDAR  
23 website as well, which is where all the federal  
24 assessments are kept.

25 JOE SPRAGGINS:

1           And, Trevor, from what I said a while  
2 ago on it, it's my understanding from listening to  
3 the report that it was definitely not overfished  
4 and that there was a -- can you give a little bit  
5 of a report on that for them?

6           TREVOR MONCRIEF:

7           Yeah. So these are done -- the menhaden  
8 assessments and the blue crab assessments are all  
9 done through what's called a GDAR process.

10          Simply, it's the Gulf Data Assessment Review,  
11 rather than the southeast, so it's comprised of  
12 our groups that have CIE reviewers, so independent  
13 reviewers, and it's comprised of the states'  
14 information.

15          So essentially, the track we've been  
16 seeing with menhaden is that harvest has remained  
17 relatively stable over the last decade because, as  
18 you understand, the fleet has gone through  
19 significant reduction over the last 30 years with  
20 closing of plants and decreases in boats and  
21 everything else like that. So it's really held to  
22 the capacity that the fishery has at the moment.

23          So landings have remained stable and the  
24 index of abundance, especially with the Louisiana  
25 with -- the Louisiana fishery independent

1 sampling, their net sampling has shown a steady  
2 increase of trajectory of the menhaden population  
3 over time.

4 So these assessments, every time they  
5 have been run, they've shown that essentially the  
6 stock is not overfished and not undergoing  
7 overfishing simply because it's one of the most  
8 productive and resilient stocks that are out  
9 there.

10 The new reproductive measures that were  
11 input into the assessment that were done by  
12 individuals at the Gulf Coast Research Laboratory  
13 basically show that the stocks fecundity was 10  
14 times the amount that was originally produced and  
15 that basically leads to a level of resilience in  
16 the stock where it just recuperates no matter  
17 what -- really, no matter what the harvest is, and  
18 that harvest is constrained at this point.

19 So, yeah, I mean, the stock is looking  
20 good and it always kind of has, so a very  
21 productive stock that we have here.

22 CAM ROBERDS:

23 Appreciate that. Thank you. Good  
24 information.

25 All right. Anybody have any more

1 questions on the menhaden reports?

2 (No response.)

3 Okay. Office of Marine Patrol, Chief  
4 Wilkerson.

5 KYLE WILKERSON:

6 Good morning. How's everybody doing?

7 Well, Commissioner McLendon, Jeffrey  
8 Payne is an asset to the cooking team, but Deputy  
9 Chief Gex is the cook.

10 JONATHAN MCLENDON:

11 I knew it had to do with some training  
12 up there somewhere.

13 KYLE WILKERSON:

14 All right. Well, I'm going to make it  
15 brief. The Marine Patrol report --

16 JOE SPRAGGINS:

17 He's public relations.

18 KYLE WILKERSON:

19 That's exactly right. Now, he has got a  
20 strong back too, now.

21 All right. So Labor Day falls into this  
22 report. Very, very normal Labor Day, nothing out  
23 of the ordinary. I mean, we did -- there were  
24 three injuries on jet skis. There was a -- we  
25 assisted George County Sheriff's Department on a

1 recovery of a young man that drowned on the river  
2 up there in Lucedale, and we stayed there two days  
3 helping them.

4 Other than that, nothing -- I mean,  
5 2,400 contacts that month, so we had a -- it was  
6 busy, but it was a calm month and I like to see  
7 that.

8 Any questions?

9 JOE SPRAGGINS:

10 No. I can just tell you thank y'all.  
11 You know, it's not just the Marine Patrol part of  
12 the team, but there is a lot -- they're a lot of  
13 it, but there's a lot of other people in the  
14 agency that help out with that, fisheries, in the  
15 cooking and other departments.

16 KYLE WILKERSON:

17 Yes.

18 JOE SPRAGGINS:

19 And so they do a great job. And I tell  
20 you what, those young kids the other day, somebody  
21 asked me, he said, sir, how do you cook that  
22 oyster that way? I said, don't ask me. I don't  
23 cook them, so -- but there's just something about  
24 that flavor that they put in that oyster and those  
25 shrimp that those kids, they were just, like, man.

1 KYLE WILKERSON:

2 Yeah. It's a process.

3 JOE SPRAGGINS:

4 So keep it up.

5 CAM ROBERDS:

6 Appreciate it. I know you guys are out  
7 there in all the elements. You know, it's cold,  
8 rain, sun, wind, so --

9 KYLE WILKERSON:

10 Always there.

11 CAM ROBERDS:

12 Yep. Appreciate that, guys.

13 KYLE WILKERSON:

14 All right.

15 CAM ROBERDS:

16 All right. It looks like we're moving  
17 on down to the Office of Finance and  
18 Administration, Ms. Brewer.

19 LESLIE BREWER:

20 Good morning, everyone. I'm presenting  
21 the financial statements for the end of September  
22 of 2024.

23 At the end of September, our state  
24 revenue was 3.6 million. Our agency revenue was  
25 5.3 million.

1 State net income was 2 million, and the  
2 agency net income overall was a negative  
3 1.8 million. We just got our Tidelands funding  
4 last week at 11 million, so that will flip around  
5 next quarter.

6 After three months of Fiscal Year 2025,  
7 the operating funds have 97.5 percent of the  
8 budget remaining, and Tidelands has 93.6 percent.

9 Does anybody have any questions?

10 JOE SPRAGGINS:

11 Matter of fact, aren't we going to --  
12 when are we supposed to receive our Tidelands  
13 check? They're going to -- big presentation.

14 LESLIE BREWER:

15 Last week. Oh, the check itself?

16 CRYSTAL MATTA:

17 That's next week.

18 CHARMAINE SCHMERMUND:

19 The 29th?

20 JOE SPRAGGINS:

21 Huh?

22 CHARMAINE SCHMERMUND:

23 The 29th.

24 CRYSTAL MATTA:

25 29th at 10:00.



1 JOE SPRAGGINS:

2 29th. Okay. So the Secretary of State  
3 will be here on the 29th to give us that check.  
4 We've already got the money, but they're going to  
5 give us a paper check.

6 CAM ROBERDS:

7 Good stuff. Thank you so much.

8 LESLIE BREWER:

9 Thanks.

10 CAM ROBERDS:

11 Any other questions?

12 (No response.)

13 CAM ROBERDS:

14 All right. Appreciate it.

15 All right. Down to public affairs,  
16 Ms. Charmaine.

17 CHARMAINE SCHMERMUND:

18 Good morning. The Mississippi  
19 Department of Marine Resources had 20 media  
20 mentions since the September MACMR meeting. News  
21 items included the certified fish records, a jet  
22 ski collision in Pass Christian and MDMR accepting  
23 proposals for on-bottom molluscan shellfish.

24 The Office of Marine Patrol took part in  
25 the Vancleave High School College and Career Fair

1 on September 18th, the Hook 'em for Heroes Fishing  
2 Rodeo in Pass Christian on September 21st, the  
3 Singing River Scout and Youth Fishing Rodeo in  
4 Moss Point on October 5th, Night Out Against Crime  
5 in Waveland on October 5th, North Bay Night Out in  
6 Biloxi on October 17th, the Westminster  
7 Presbyterian Church's Fall Festival on  
8 October 19th and the Long Beach Police  
9 Department's Night Out Against Crime on  
10 October 19th.

11 The Office of Coastal Resources  
12 Management and the Office of Coastal Restoration  
13 and Resiliency both participated in a hummingbird  
14 festival at the Pascagoula River Audubon Center on  
15 October 20th and 21st.

16 Jason Saucier gave a presentation at the  
17 GenSea Workforce Development Program at the USM  
18 Gulf Park campus on September 24th, and USM  
19 brought the GenSea high school teachers' field  
20 trip to the Bolton Building on October 11th. The  
21 Office of Coastal Resources Management, the Office  
22 of Marine Fisheries and Office of Marine Patrol  
23 each gave presentations, as well as providing a  
24 tour of one of the DMR labs. Daniel Taylor in the  
25 Shrimp and Crab Bureau participated in the Casting

1 Nets Program on October 16th.

2 The Finfish Bureau's team lead, Megan  
3 Fleming, presented the poster "Cyanotoxin Testing  
4 of Mississippi's Seafood During a Cyanobacteria  
5 Bloom" at the 2024 Mississippi Water Resources  
6 Conference in Flowood October 10th through the  
7 11th. And as of part of her work with the DMR  
8 Harmful Algal Bloom Team, she monitored water  
9 samples and seafood during the 2019 Bonnet Carré  
10 Spillway opening and shared her methods and  
11 experience on protocol and findings during that  
12 event.

13 During the Restore America's Estuaries  
14 2024 Coastal and Estuarian Summit in Arlington,  
15 Virginia, October 6th through the 9th, Shellfish  
16 Bureau team lead, Ellen Coffin, gave a  
17 presentation, "GIS-Based Approach to Oyster  
18 Resource Management and Disaster Response in  
19 Mississippi Sound," and the Shellfish Bureau  
20 Scientist, Katherine Glover presented, "Tracking  
21 the Natural Replenishment of Mississippi's Eastern  
22 Oyster Reefs After a Fisheries Disaster."  
23 Shellfish Bureau Director Jason Rider also  
24 participated in the summit.

25 The agency's cooking team, as well as

1 the volunteers -- as well as volunteers from  
2 various offices throughout the agency took part in  
3 the 28th annual Cruisin' the Coast. Mississippi  
4 Gulf-fresh Seafood program sponsored Cruisin' the  
5 Coast for the second year and served as presenting  
6 sponsor. During the week, the cooking team boiled  
7 over 1,000 pounds of shrimp and samples were  
8 handed out to attendees at Cruise Central located  
9 at Centennial Plaza in Gulfport. Samples were  
10 given out throughout the day of Monday, Tuesday  
11 and Thursday of Cruisin' the Coast. And to  
12 further promote Gulf-fresh seafood, the  
13 promotional booths were set up at each of the  
14 cities' Cruisin' events. Visors, koozies, fans,  
15 bags, recipe cards and informational materials  
16 were handed out to event attendees on Wednesday in  
17 Biloxi, Thursday in Bay St. Louis and Pascagoula  
18 and Friday in Ocean Springs.

19 And on October 18th, the agency's  
20 cooking team cooked for the Collegiate  
21 Invitational Golf Tournament at Fallen Oak, and  
22 the tournament was hosted by Mississippi State  
23 University, Ole Miss and Southern Miss, and  
24 colleges from across the nation competed in the  
25 four-day event. That's a lot.

1 JOE SPRAGGINS:

2 You know, I think we could have paid the  
3 salaries for the year if we could have sold them  
4 shrimp faced shirts.

5 CAM ROBERDS:

6 Yeah.

7 JOE SPRAGGINS:

8 Because I tell you, everybody in the  
9 world -- you know, our teams were all wearing  
10 them. They said "get shrimp faced." It's  
11 something that they came up with, the marketing  
12 team, years ago.

13 CHARMAINE SCHMERMUND:

14 Uh-huh.

15 JOE SPRAGGINS:

16 But everybody in the world, where can I  
17 get one of them shirts? Where can I get one of  
18 them shirts? You know, maybe we should start  
19 marketing them, but they worked out good. That --  
20 a lot of people enjoyed it, but the team worked  
21 hard. Thank y'all. We appreciate everything  
22 y'all did for that. I mean, every day -- we did,  
23 what, Pascagoula, Ocean Springs, Biloxi, three  
24 times in Gulfport and Bay St. Louis --

25 CHARMAINE SCHMERMUND:

1 Uh-huh.

2 JOE SPRAGGINS:

3 -- that we had teams set up, so that  
4 will tell you. That was across the Coast in a  
5 week's time.

6 CHARMAINE SCHMERMUND:

7 Yep.

8 JOE SPRAGGINS:

9 So there was a lot of people that got to  
10 see Gulf-fresh.

11 CAM ROBERDS:

12 Yeah. I think -- you know, looking at  
13 some pictures, it just jogged my memory from that  
14 week. I think it was Monday, I did -- I was going  
15 to tell Commissioner McLendon and Chief Wilkerson.  
16 I did see Jeffrey Payne, but he was driving around  
17 on a golf cart with the water, so I think he was  
18 the water boy. I think that was his role; is that  
19 correct?

20 JOE SPRAGGINS:

21 Call him the water boy?

22 CAM ROBERDS:

23 I just -- it just jogged my memory when  
24 I saw that so I had to mention that.

25 Thank you very much.

1 JOE SPRAGGINS:

2 It's a good thing Jeffrey is not here  
3 today. I don't know where he is at.

4 CAM ROBERDS:

5 Okay. On to Marine Fisheries, Oyster  
6 Reef Assessment, Jason Rider.

7 JASON RIDER:

8 Good morning, Commissioners and  
9 Director, Sandy and Steven. How y'all doing  
10 today?

11 I wanted to give a brief update on the  
12 Shellfish Bureau, some of the projects we're  
13 working on and then a proposal for y'all.

14 So to start with, I wanted to give an  
15 update on the cultch planting that we -- that was  
16 accomplished in 2024. We deployed approximately  
17 18,000 cubic yards of limestone over two  
18 state-owned reefs in June. The first one was Pass  
19 Christian. We did 34 acres, and we deployed the  
20 3,424 cubic yards of material.

21 The second one was in Pass Marianne  
22 state-owned reef, and it was 34. We did two sites  
23 in this one 34 acres and it was 4,395 cubic yards,  
24 and then 70 acres with just over 10,000 cubic  
25 yards.

1           What we're able to do this year on those  
2 reefs is -- in the last couple of years, we did  
3 reduce our footprint, as the Director mentioned  
4 earlier, to 20 percent of the permitted area. And  
5 what we can do and what we have been doing is  
6 identifying good bottom that we can target with  
7 these cultch plants that has limited resource, but  
8 may have resource next to it. So we can plant the  
9 bottom and then hope for spat settlement with  
10 that.

11           It's showing pretty good. We have  
12 sampled those areas that we deployed. We are  
13 seeing spat set on almost every piece of material  
14 we collected, and we expect that to continue to  
15 grow throughout this season. We deployed it in  
16 June, and to be honest, since then, the water  
17 quality conditions have been favorable and we  
18 haven't had too many issues environmentally, so we  
19 do expect to see a modest recruitment this year.  
20 We'll keep you posted on that.

21           The next update I wanted to do was the  
22 stock assessment, reef assessment and dredged  
23 toes. So to date, we have sampled 120 one-minute  
24 dredged toes across our state-owned reefs and  
25 we've done 288 square-meter samples with a total



1 of 576 samples.

2 As you can see on the maps, the orange  
3 is square meters and the blue triangles are  
4 dredged toes. We've covered a lot of area. We  
5 have a pretty good understanding of what's going  
6 on on our state-owned reefs in the Mississippi  
7 Sound.

8 What we're seeing is we're seeing modest  
9 recruitment. We've seen some increases since  
10 2019, and our oysters are coming back pretty  
11 consistently every year, year over year. But what  
12 we're seeing is that we are cultch-limited and we  
13 need somewhere for these oysters to attach to and  
14 that's what we're doing with our cultch plants.

15 We're optimistic about where the  
16 resource is going, but we want to be cautious and  
17 monitor it appropriately. So we like to see  
18 things and we like the trajectory of where we're  
19 at. We're still not where we need to be, but we  
20 are moving in the right direction with our reef  
21 assessments and our resource on the reefs.

22 Because of this, we wanted to propose a  
23 limited season in 2024, and what we're proposing  
24 is a -- 10 days in November. We're proposing  
25 November 13th through 26th and then 10 days in

1 December. As you can see, these correlate right  
2 before the holidays in both months and we're  
3 looking to get some oysters on the market locally  
4 for the public and for these harvesters that want  
5 to engage in the activities.

6 We are proposing all of -- all permitted  
7 areas in the Western Sound open for harvest, tongs  
8 and dredges, and then it would be 10 sacks per  
9 day, per boat. Now, understand, this is a limited  
10 season, so we wanted to -- we want to stress that  
11 we want to monitor what we're harvesting and do it  
12 appropriately, so that is our main goal, is to get  
13 some oysters on the market and then to monitor it  
14 and track it appropriately. It's been a couple of  
15 years since we've had a season, so we want to do  
16 it right this time.

17 And so with that, just some of the  
18 details, you would have to follow all regulations  
19 that are in part -- Title 22, Part 1. It's been a  
20 while since some of these harvesters had a  
21 license, so if they do want to get a license they  
22 need to take the harvester training course. We're  
23 offering various dates and times for that.

24 And we are going to do check stations.  
25 Right now, we're proposing Pass Christian and

1 Bayou Caddy. All the oysters will have to be  
2 tagged according to Title 22, Part 1 regulations,  
3 and all harvesters would be required to check in  
4 and out of these locations. So a standard oyster  
5 season as you have seen in the past, trying to  
6 keep it consistent so everybody gets back into the  
7 swing of things, understands what we expect out of  
8 them and then to provide some oysters on the  
9 market in Mississippi.

10 So I think that's all I have, Director.  
11 Does anybody have any questions or any comments?

12 JOE SPRAGGINS:

13 Yeah. Thank you, Jason.

14 Yeah, I realize, you know, it's a small  
15 harvest that we're looking at, but we've got to  
16 walk before we run. We've not had a harvest since  
17 2019, so this is something that we're being able  
18 to do it now.

19 We don't want to hurt the resource. We  
20 want to maintain the resource, and that's one of  
21 the things that we're looking at. I think that,  
22 you know, being able -- I know 10 sacks is not a  
23 whole lot, but at least it's some and it gives you  
24 an opportunity to be able to do that for 20 days  
25 and to be able to, you know, bring some oysters to

1 the level and bring them to the processors and,  
2 you know, to the dealers and be able to have some  
3 on the market. It will also help maybe during the  
4 holidays that we're doing it during this time to  
5 be able to have some on the market for them. I  
6 mean, everybody loves to have their oysters in  
7 South Mississippi and other places during those  
8 times.

9 I want to thank the team. Jason, Eric,  
10 everybody that's on the shellfish, stand up if  
11 you're on the shellfish team.

12 I want to give them a round of applause.

13 They have worked extremely hard and, you  
14 know, they have come back with every piece of  
15 information that I have asked for. They have come  
16 back and looked at it as hard as they could to  
17 find out what they could do. They've tried to,  
18 you know, look at each area as much as possible.  
19 They are working hard to move this forward.

20 And, you know, what we're talking about  
21 with the industry doing in the future once we  
22 lease these 80 percent, those 80 percent then are  
23 going to be run by the private individuals. We're  
24 still going to keep that 20 percent. We're still  
25 going to cultch as much as we can. We're still

1 going to put spat on shells as much as we can.  
2 We're going to -- you know, we're going to try to  
3 do whatever we can to keep building the resource.

4 And in that situation, that will not  
5 only help us, but it will help those people that  
6 are renting the bottoms, that are leasing the  
7 bottoms, that they can go ahead and we can give  
8 spat to them, too, because what we will be putting  
9 out will also be moving forward.

10 So I would ask the Commission if it  
11 would -- Sandy, I think I would be -- that the  
12 staff maybe would get a recommendation and I think  
13 it's on the board there. Jason you want to read  
14 it?

15 JASON RIDER:

16 Yeah, I can read it.

17 So the staff's recommendation to the  
18 Executive Director is that the agency open Area II  
19 A, Area I B, Area II B, Area II E, Area II F, Area  
20 II G, Area II H and Area II I in Western  
21 Mississippi Sound for a limited oyster season.  
22 The season will be open on November 13th for a  
23 period not to exceed 10 days and again on  
24 December 9th for a period not to exceed 10 days.  
25 The daily sack limit will be set at 10 sacks per

1 day, per vessel. And then all approved methods of  
2 harvesting, along with designated harvest areas,  
3 will be detailed in the official opening order  
4 issued by the MDMR.

5 CAM ROBERDS:

6 Thanks, Jason. I appreciate the  
7 information.

8 Did we have any questions on the staff's  
9 recommendation?

10 JOE SPRAGGINS:

11 The only thing I would like to, if we  
12 could, add one little line in there that it gives  
13 the Executive Director the authority, in case of  
14 weather and everything, to change the dates.

15 JASON RIDER:

16 So we discussed that and I think that  
17 will be in the opening order.

18 JOE SPRAGGINS:

19 It's in the opening order?

20 JASON RIDER:

21 Yes, sir.

22 JOE SPRAGGINS:

23 Okay. So we don't need it here?

24 JASON RIDER:

25 I don't believe so.

1 CAM ROBERDS:

2 Okay. Do we have a motion to approve  
3 the staff's recommendation for the limited oyster  
4 season?

5 JASON OSBORNE:

6 I make a motion.

7 JONATHAN MCLENDON:

8 I'll second.

9 CAM ROBERDS:

10 All those in favor?

11 (Unanimous vote.)

12 CAM ROBERDS:

13 Appreciate all your hard work to the  
14 whole team in Shellfish. Thank you, guys.

15 JASON RIDER:

16 All right. Thank y'all.

17 CAM ROBERDS:

18 Excited to know that we're actually able  
19 to open again after -- you know, since 2019. It's  
20 been five years, so that's great. Good news.

21 Next up. Ayesha Gray, the update on the  
22 NRDA project.

23 AYESHA GRAY:

24 Good morning, Commissioners, Director,  
25 Sandy and Steven.

1 Charmaine mentioned the Restore  
2 America's Estuaries Conference in Washington DC.  
3 Our stewardship coordinator, Dr. Jonathan  
4 Pitchford, attended that meeting, and this is the  
5 presentation he gave on the project, and so I  
6 thought you might be interested in seeing it  
7 closer.

8 So this is the Grand Bay land  
9 acquisition and habitat management project. It's  
10 funded through what we call NRDA, the Natural  
11 Resources Damages Assessments, which is part of  
12 the Deepwater Horizon Oil Spill money. So the  
13 primary goal is to restore wet pine savanna and  
14 pine flatwoods habitats and increase the diversity  
15 and abundance of native pine savanna and flatwood  
16 vegetation and increase habitat for wintering  
17 grassland birds at the -- you can see all of the  
18 partners in this project, including the TIG and  
19 the members of Restore and then also the DEQ, the  
20 Grand Bay NERR, the Mississippi Department of  
21 Marine Resources and Fish and Wildlife Service.  
22 This project has been happening for the last six  
23 years.

24 Next slide.

25 So this is an important project because



1 prior to European discovery, the Southeast was  
2 covered in wet pine savanna habitat and there are  
3 long-leaf pine forest and savannas, and there's  
4 very little of this habitat remaining. I mean,  
5 these are open areas, so they were very prone to  
6 development as people moved into this area. And  
7 what was lost was this great diversity of plants  
8 and animals that are in this really special  
9 habitat type.

10 Next slide.

11 So the -- as a lot of conservation in  
12 this area is already going on. So you have the  
13 National Wildlife Refuge that was established in  
14 1992 in the -- in this area of Mississippi right  
15 along the Alabama border, and also the Grand Bay  
16 National Estuarian Research Reserve is co-located  
17 there.

18 The reason for all this is because of  
19 the uplands to wetlands area here is the largest  
20 in the state of intact habitat, and so it's our  
21 best opportunity to not only care for the  
22 marshlands, which are really important for  
23 commercial fisheries, but also care for the upland  
24 connection of that habitat, and those two things  
25 work together.

1           So this is really -- the project area,  
2           the NRDA project is about 30,000 acres, and you  
3           can see, it's kind of nestled -- it's just in  
4           Mississippi, but you can see on the Alabama side,  
5           there's an additional 14,000 acres of habitat  
6           that's in conservation as part of the Grand Bay  
7           savanna complex.

8           Next slide.

9           So one of the parts of this project has  
10          been land acquisition, so there's been 1,600 acres  
11          of land has been acquired. These are parcels that  
12          have been acquired, and these parcels have been  
13          found to have some really rare plants in them, in  
14          addition to being really important for adding  
15          connectivity to the different management units  
16          that we're working on.

17          Next slide.

18          We're also doing really intensive  
19          monitoring, so you can see the green outlines show  
20          the different management unit and then in those,  
21          is each -- identify each of our long-term  
22          monitoring plots. And so our intention is that as  
23          we're restoring this landscape, that we're also  
24          doing detailed scientific monitoring so we can see  
25          how well or not well these procedures are working

1 to reach our objective.

2 Next slide.

3 So the types of activities that we do  
4 are, first, mastication or mulching, where we  
5 basically cut down the woody fuels using a  
6 gyro-trac, and what that does is it makes for less  
7 smoky fires when we were to burn and it also kind  
8 of just grounds up those fuels so that they decay  
9 faster.

10 And we have done about 300 acres -- more  
11 than 300 acres since 2018, and we have about 900  
12 acres planned to do this mastication work. Then,  
13 we'll go in -- as the plants come back, a lot of  
14 invasive weeds are coming back, so we'll use  
15 herbicide treatments in pretty limited areas, but  
16 across the 2,000 acres. So this is very targeted  
17 work where we're delineating specific patches of  
18 these invasive plants or doing a cut-and-paint  
19 kind of application technique and -- then on the  
20 trees and woody vegetation, and we'll do this  
21 across -- and we've been doing this throughout.

22 And then we apply prescribed fires to  
23 these areas, and so we have burned about 3,000  
24 acres since 2018. Some of those are repeated  
25 burns, so you can -- you know, it's not that we

1 burned the entire area. There has been several  
2 areas where we've had smaller parcels that have  
3 been burned repeatedly.

4 For monitoring, again, like I said,  
5 we're doing this detailed monitoring, looking at  
6 vegetation, birds and invasive species, and we  
7 want to do this so that we can understand how well  
8 our technique is working and if we need to make  
9 any adjustments in the middle, we will do that if  
10 we find that there's a technique that's working  
11 better.

12 So we're using for vegetation what's  
13 called a Clewell plot, and that's something that  
14 was developed by Andy Clewell working in the  
15 Sandhill Crane Refuge in the late '90s.

16 And, interestingly, we recently invited  
17 Andy Clewell to come and give a lunch and learn at  
18 the NERR. And so he's 90 years old now. And he  
19 went out in the field with our biologist and also  
20 gave a seminar for about 40 people at the NERR,  
21 and it was really a great opportunity for us to  
22 learn from one of the pioneers in this area.

23 And then we do a lot of work on birds.  
24 What we're aiming to do is that there's a lot of  
25 grassland birds that winter in these areas and

1 because the areas have become so limited, some of  
2 those bird populations have been affected. So we  
3 have certain species that we're targeting, like  
4 Henslow's Sparrow in the upper-right corner there.

5 Next slide.

6 So this is a little video. I think you  
7 can play it. So this is a burn at the goat farm  
8 that was last year.

9 Is it not playing? It's not playing.

10 So you can see that this was actually a  
11 pretty aggressive burn. It got up pretty hot in  
12 the tops of the trees there, but it was very  
13 successful and we had about 2- or 300 acres that  
14 were burned during this fire. And some of those  
15 trees, most of those trees would survive that, but  
16 even if they didn't, this is -- we're aiming  
17 towards a more grassland habitat, which is more  
18 open and has less trees.

19 These are mostly slash pine, and so what  
20 happens is that through those hot burns, sometimes  
21 the germination of the long-leaf pine and those  
22 trees start to come up and those are at a -- less  
23 dense across the savanna, so you get more open  
24 grassland, less trees and that's really what we're  
25 aiming for for these habitats.

1                   Next slide.

2                   So at this burn that you just looked at  
3 the picture of, this is the management unit and  
4 this is some of the pictures that were taken. So  
5 you can see one year before the burn how overgrown  
6 it was with woody vegetation, one week after the  
7 burn where it was quite, you know, charred. And  
8 then 13 weeks after the burn, you can see the  
9 grasses and forbs are coming up. And then about  
10 65 weeks after the burn, you can see that those  
11 grasses and forbs are getting higher and some of  
12 the more woody vegetation is moving in.

13                   So this is something -- these habitats  
14 are maintained by fire, so this prescribed burning  
15 is something that needs to reoccur on a two- to  
16 three-year time frame.

17                   Next slide.

18                   Part of this project, we did an  
19 ancillary that went as part of the Grand Bay NERR,  
20 so the Grand -- we have this project that used  
21 the -- we kind of leveraged the NRDA project with  
22 the NERR to do something that's unique and that --  
23 that we're quite proud of, is that as we were  
24 taking all these plant specimens and as we were  
25 looking at all these different areas, we took

1 specimen records and created an herbarium.

2 And so what we have are pressed  
3 specimens of these plants. There's 855 specimens  
4 across 567 species and we've done this just in the  
5 six years, and a lot of these very rare species.

6 And we have connected with SERNEC, which  
7 is Southeast Regional Network of Expertise and  
8 Collections. This is kind of a museum project  
9 with the National Science Foundation, and what it  
10 does is that we have these high resolution digital  
11 photos that are in this database so researchers  
12 from all over the country have access to this  
13 information and they can come and -- to the  
14 database, collect information and then, you know,  
15 kind of pique their interest in these habitats in  
16 Mississippi. And we've had quite a few calls from  
17 researchers as far away as New York that are  
18 interested in working in Mississippi on our plant  
19 species.

20 Next.

21 So these are some of the bird species  
22 that are really important that we're looking at --  
23 for out there, the Henslow's sparrow is one, and  
24 they've had pretty dramatic increases as this work  
25 has occurred. So in our surveys, we've detected

1 six of these in 2019, just one year after the  
2 project started. But this year, in 2024, we  
3 detected 23 of these birds.

4 And the swamp sparrow, we had similar  
5 increases, with 162 detected in 2019 and over 500  
6 in 2024.

7 We have also had quite a bit of interest  
8 in the Grand Bay NERR area because of this work by  
9 the Mississippi sandhill cranes. So the sandhill  
10 cranes are radio tagged, and so as they move  
11 around across the Coast, the biologists at Fish  
12 and Wildlife Service are -- know where they all  
13 are. They're all named. They know their  
14 partners, and so they've caught quite a few of  
15 them hanging out in Grand Bay after these burns  
16 and in these new, freshly opened up savannas, and  
17 so we think that's pretty great.

18 And so you can see down there some of  
19 the tracking for these birds and the places where  
20 they're hanging out, and then we were able to  
21 capture a few photos of them or this photo as  
22 well.

23 Next slide.

24 So this project, I think, overall has  
25 been a great success. A lot of habitat has been



1 restored because of it. We have areas that are in  
2 much better condition. It's been a dramatic  
3 change. It's been an absolute delight for me  
4 personally just to go there every day and see how  
5 the habitats are changing from when I arrived in  
6 2014.

7 And we've also leveraged a lot of this  
8 work with the NERR for outreach opportunities, so  
9 we've done a variety of outreach opportunities,  
10 including a teacher workshop that you have up  
11 there, kind of the second over on the top, where  
12 Jay McIlwain is talking about these procedures and  
13 a prescribed burning to a group of teachers so  
14 that they can learn about how these habitats are  
15 maintained and then share that with their  
16 classrooms.

17 In addition, we've had a lot of those  
18 students in field trips and talked with them about  
19 these rare plants, especially the carnivorous  
20 plants like the sundews and the pitcher plants and  
21 just all the special things that are here that  
22 really don't exist anywhere else.

23 I think it gives students quite a sense  
24 of place to understand the native habitats and I  
25 think in general that these open natural areas are

1 important for everyone, and I think they do  
2 something really special for people to -- just to  
3 be able to enjoy nature on this kind of scale, in  
4 addition to all of the other benefits that we get  
5 from -- for fisheries and everything else from  
6 these.

7 Do you have any questions?

8 CAM ROBERDS:

9 I was just going to say it's amazing how  
10 fast after a burn that that grass can come back in  
11 13 weeks, so you know you're laying something down  
12 that's doing something good.

13 AYESHA GRAY:

14 It's amazing. I mean, after it's been  
15 burned -- because I have seen this several times  
16 now, you know, kind of starting with a very large  
17 wildfire that we had in 2016 when a lot of area  
18 was burned. And just watching that, it's days,  
19 within days. Three days later, you can see all  
20 the little green spots coming up on the ground and  
21 it's just -- it's the wire grass that just comes  
22 up. And then it's that wire grass that comes up  
23 and folds over and that's what creates the little  
24 pocket of habitat that the Henslow's sparrow, for  
25 example, nests in and runs around in. That's

1 their place, so it's fantastic.

2 CAM ROBERDS:

3 That's great.

4 JOE SPRAGGINS:

5 Commissioner Osborne wants to know, did  
6 the guy live?

7 AYESHA GRAY:

8 What?

9 JOE SPRAGGINS:

10 Did the guy in the picture live, the one  
11 that got run over?

12 AYESHA GRAY:

13 Oh, yeah. The one that got flattened  
14 there? Yeah.

15 We have a program, too, where we'll --  
16 we do this with kids, you know. We've done it at  
17 My Two Boots, which is at Gautier Middle School.  
18 We'll take that fire gear, the boots and the pants  
19 and jacket and stuff and we'll kind of dress up a  
20 kid in it, you know. We're always looking to get  
21 new firefighters and kids interested in  
22 firefighting, and so it's a lot of fun for them to  
23 like put on the gear.

24 JOE SPRAGGINS:

25 If I could, though, I would like to

1       thank the team at the NERR.  Y'all do a great job,  
2       fantastic.

3       AYESHA GRAY:

4                     Thank you.

5       JOE SPRAGGINS:

6                     If you haven't been there, right on the  
7       Alabama line, you know, Franklin Creek exit,  
8       right?

9       AYESHA GRAY:

10                    Yep.

11       JOE SPRAGGINS:

12                    And just take it and go down there some  
13       time.  And, you know, you don't have to have a set  
14       appointment to stop by and say hello to them.

15       AYESHA GRAY:

16                    No.

17       JOE SPRAGGINS:

18                    They'd be glad to talk to you almost  
19       every day of the week and -- they're there and  
20       show you some of the things that's going on.  But  
21       I tell you, it's just a -- too well kept.  It  
22       needs to be brought out more.  Thank you.

23       AYESHA GRAY:

24                    Yep.  I agree.  Thank you.

25       CAM ROBERDS:

1 Any other questions for Ms. Ayesha? No.  
2 You guys are doing great work. Thank  
3 you very much.

4 Before we move on to the public  
5 comments, do we have any other business to add?

6 JOE SPRAGGINS:

7 Just one thing, you know, Laura Moncrief  
8 is sitting back there. She is about to leave us.  
9 Laura has been working with us for several years  
10 now and done a fantastic job, and her -- and  
11 you're not allowed to take Trevor with you.  
12 Trevor has to stay. Now, one of -- we can't --  
13 you know, losing one of you is bad enough. To  
14 lose both of you, that's not going to happen now.  
15 But we wish you the best of luck. She is going to  
16 Covington Engineering, but, you know, Lord, we're  
17 going to miss you.

18 LAURA MONCRIEF:

19 Thank you.

20 CAM ROBERDS:

21 Okay. First public comment that we have  
22 is Mr. Ralph Humphrey on the artificial reef.

23 You can come up and state your name and  
24 address, and I believe you have three minutes,  
25 Mr. Ralph.

1 RALPH HUMPHREY:

2 You bet.

3 Good morning, everyone. My name is  
4 Ralph Humphrey, and I'm the president of the  
5 Mississippi Gulf Fishing Banks.

6 And I want to thank the director  
7 bringing up the artificial reef that's down there  
8 on the beach right now. It's parked at the  
9 Schooner Pier for the Seafood Museum catercornered  
10 from Biloxi Yacht Club.

11 So -- and it's true that Bruno Milanese  
12 and Bay Pest Control contracted to build the  
13 cockroach itself, but I thought it was important  
14 to acknowledge the DMR's role, Artificial Reef,  
15 the Director in helping Gulf Fishing Banks obtain  
16 GOMESA funding. The GOMESA funding is what's  
17 actually going to deploy the reef itself. The  
18 cockroach was built by Bay Pest Control. The reef  
19 is being deployed because of GOMESA.

20 In addition, there is a couple of other  
21 projects that are on the line that, again, GOMESA  
22 helped fund. There is a shrimp boat. Ironically  
23 enough, it was part of the derelict vessels.  
24 We're going to deploy that one, and there is a  
25 couple of others that are coming up soon,

1 hopefully, before the end of the year.

2 But I wanted you to know that that  
3 artificial reef, that tugboat is every bit as big  
4 as the Omega Protein boats that were donated last  
5 year. In fact, they're tall -- it's taller. It's  
6 got a taller superstructure, so it's going to be a  
7 big artificial reef. And they have cut holes all  
8 through it. The engines are out, big holes in the  
9 sides, so it will be a good dive opportunity. And  
10 it's going to go in FH-13, so I just wanted to  
11 thank the Director for that.

12 Also, while I'm on it, I wanted to  
13 acknowledge your seafood team. It's more than --  
14 like you said, it's more than just the Law  
15 Enforcement guys. I saw Artificial Reef people.  
16 I saw Finfish and Oyster people. That was some of  
17 the best fried oysters and shrimp that I have  
18 eaten in my life, better than any seafood  
19 restaurant. I don't know what they did.

20 I saw Michael back there on the fryer.  
21 He wouldn't talk. He's kind of keeping it a  
22 secret, but it's unbelievable how good that fried  
23 seafood was. And anyways, I just wanted to  
24 acknowledge that too, so that's all I have got,  
25 unless you have any questions.

1 JOE SPRAGGINS:

2 Hey, we thank y'all for what you're  
3 doing. And you know, we deployed quite a few  
4 reefs here and I know that Travis and them are  
5 working on some other things and being able to put  
6 out the cones and the pyramids and then also being  
7 able to put out some, I guess, concrete culverts  
8 and stuff that we're doing. And I think we're  
9 about to rebuild a whole large section of Katrina  
10 Key.

11 RALPH HUMPHREY:

12 Yeah.

13 JOE SPRAGGINS:

14 And so, you know, artificial reefs are  
15 coming in there, so --

16 RALPH HUMPHREY:

17 Yeah. And I want to acknowledge the  
18 Artificial Reef Bureau. We have a really great  
19 working relationship with Travis and all his team  
20 and you as well. We appreciate the support that  
21 we've received. We couldn't do it without you, so  
22 there is a lot of good things going on in the Reef  
23 Bureau.

24 JOE SPRAGGINS:

25 Thank y'all.



1 RALPH HUMPHREY:

2 Thanks.

3 CAM ROBERDS:

4 Appreciate it, Ralph.

5 The next public comment we had is  
6 concerning Round Island and sea trout,  
7 Mr. Sheldon.

8 If you don't mind coming up and giving  
9 us your full name and address and you will have  
10 three minutes.

11 RON SHELDON:

12 Ron Sheldon and lifelong resident of  
13 Pascagoula, Mississippi.

14 I would like to ask permission from  
15 Mr. Spraggins. Before I get started, I will be as  
16 brief as possible, but I know there is no way  
17 today I can get through and -- got to start all  
18 over again.

19 CAM ROBERDS:

20 We heard you.

21 JOE SPRAGGINS:

22 No, you're all right.

23 RON SHELDON:

24 Anyway, I would like to ask permission  
25 to go over three minutes. I have two different

1 subject matters, so --

2 JOE SPRAGGINS:

3 Chairman, that's up to him.

4 CAM ROBERDS:

5 I approve 100 percent if everybody is in  
6 for sure. Sea trout is an important subject.

7 RON SHELDON:

8 Thank you.

9 Well, one of the things I would like to  
10 talk to you about is Round Island. I have been  
11 here several times talking about it before, and I  
12 am concerned that there is not any sense of  
13 urgency that I am seeing. I've been going out to  
14 Round Island for over -- almost 60 years now. And  
15 especially over the last few years, the scouring  
16 and the erosion of Round Island is accelerating.  
17 I'm no expert, but I do have the experience.

18 And I spoke to several people here in  
19 the group over the past year there. Where are we  
20 at, is -- my question is, on the permitting? As I  
21 understand, by the time we go through the sturgeon  
22 surveys and everything else, we're realistically  
23 looking at probably five years down the road  
24 before any restoration can happen whatsoever.

25 To me, in my opinion -- and that's

1 strictly an opinion -- the sturgeon is going to be  
2 a big holdup from what I understand. To me, it's  
3 almost -- you're doing the same thing over and  
4 over again. I know for a fact sturgeon surveys  
5 were done when they built the new impound area  
6 there at Singing River Island. The more recent  
7 one that was done at the south end of Greenwood  
8 Island, there was a sturgeon survey there. And,  
9 of course, whenever they built what I call the  
10 Round Island Annex, obviously, there was a survey  
11 done there as well.

12 And it is my guess that if you would  
13 look at those surveys, you could probably change  
14 the location and change the date and it wouldn't  
15 be a lot different, so that's going to be, what I  
16 understand, two and a half years of holding up the  
17 permitting process.

18 I'm here to tell you today, if it takes  
19 us five years before we begin restoration of Round  
20 Island, something to do there, at the rate it's  
21 eroding today and scouring today, you're not going  
22 to have very much left to save.

23 The old-growth trees, the live oak trees  
24 that are on Round Island, many that were over --  
25 I'm sure over 100 years old are laying out in the

1 water on the west side of the island. And the  
2 present rate, especially this year -- this year,  
3 this calendar since spring, the -- what I'm going  
4 to call the southeast side of Round Island is  
5 eroding extremely quick.

6 I'm being conservative here when I tell  
7 you some areas of that island in the last six  
8 months on that side of the island have lost over  
9 20 foot of shoreline.

10 I was out there a week ago today. We  
11 had a pretty stout east wind. I have got some  
12 photographs. I couldn't get it to transfer where  
13 I needed it on my thumb drive. The silt that --  
14 that east wind -- and it wasn't a real extreme  
15 tide, but the silt that was pouring across the  
16 south end of that island went for miles, heading  
17 west out through the Mississippi Sound. It was  
18 thick. It was heavy, and it wasn't a terribly  
19 rough day, but it was evidence of how much that  
20 island is being scoured. If it takes another five  
21 years, the thing we're trying to save the most  
22 that I would like to see saved the most for the  
23 future generations aren't going to exist.

24 Over the last couple of years that I  
25 have been out, the birds that are starting to use

1 that island is remarkable. This year, hundreds,  
2 hundreds of -- what do they call them -- the  
3 cattle-egrets, the white smaller egrets there.  
4 There has been a pair of egrets, great blue  
5 herons -- excuse me, great blue herons I have been  
6 watching out there for several years. You know, I  
7 have given them the nickname Gertrude and  
8 Heathcliff.

9 Now, I don't know how many of you know  
10 who Gertrude and Heathcliff was, but you would  
11 have to be over about 50 years old to know that  
12 was Red Skelton.

13 But I have been watching these birds.  
14 The roseate spoonbill, broadbills whatever they --  
15 the fake-looking flamingos, this year there was at  
16 least a dozen of those that were staying on that  
17 island for many, many months. It's a beautiful  
18 island and we're losing a treasure there.

19 I'm not too sure -- I would like to know  
20 that -- if anyone from this Commission or others  
21 that would be responsible for the seeing to the  
22 permit -- is anyone actually going to that island  
23 and looking for themselves? Instead of taking my  
24 word for it -- and I'm trying to describe it the  
25 best I can -- is anyone going to that island,

1 periodically, every three months because it's  
2 happening quick?

3 CAM ROBERDS:

4 I think we're about a minute and 30  
5 over.

6 JOE SPRAGGINS:

7 That's okay.

8 But, Jennifer, we are going, right?  
9 Answer his question.

10 JENNIFER WITTMANN:

11 Yes, sir. We do regularly visit Round  
12 Island, and we also do quarterly aerial surveys  
13 over all the Coastal preserves and we do go over  
14 Round Island at that point in time.

15 Now, just for the Commission's  
16 information, the privately-owned portions of Round  
17 Island were acquired by the State in 2021. The  
18 MOA with the City of Pascagoula so that we could  
19 have management authority that they own, that they  
20 could not sell to the state wasn't finalized until  
21 March of 2023.

22 So we have been in preliminary  
23 discussions with DEQ and the other resource  
24 agencies about the expansion of Round Island, and  
25 we are hopeful that that permit -- that permit

1 application will be submitted in the first half of  
2 2025, so we're not far enough off from it. It  
3 has -- it is something that we're all really well  
4 aware of.

5 When we're talking about different  
6 funding streams, we're talking about funding  
7 streams that are not singular to the DMR or DEQ,  
8 but they're having to go through some of these  
9 outside entities. There is just a process to go  
10 through that we have to do that.

11 Now, we do have the Corps project  
12 manager that works on the DMR projects and so when  
13 that comes in, you know, that will be one of the  
14 projects that that -- that is assigned to that  
15 specific project manager that knows about all the  
16 projects that we currently have going and is very  
17 intimately aware of how necessary it is to get the  
18 project approved as quickly as possible.

19 But the sturgeon studies are going to be  
20 required from National Marine Fishery Survey.  
21 It's not a Corps requirement, so it's not  
22 something that, you know, we can ask that the  
23 Corps not look at.

24 Now, if National Marine Fisheries wants  
25 to look at studies from the Greenwood Island

1 expansion or the Deer Island expansion or  
2 something like that and use as supplemental  
3 information, that's definitely something that they  
4 can do, but it is -- that's their requirement.  
5 It's part of what the Corps has to do with their  
6 permitting process. Just like we send our  
7 applications to state resource agencies, the Corps  
8 sends them to our federal resource agencies.

9 CAM ROBERDS:

10 Thank you.

11 JENNIFER WITTMANN:

12 Does that make sense?

13 CAM ROBERDS:

14 It sounds like the things are moving in  
15 the right direction.

16 RON SHELDON:

17 That's why I'm here. I'm just wanting  
18 to make sure that everyone understands how there  
19 is a sense of urgency about that.

20 CAM ROBERDS:

21 Yeah, we appreciate it.

22 RON SHELDON:

23 And I'd like couple of minutes with you  
24 after the meeting. I have got a photograph I'd  
25 like to show you.



1 All right. Moving along. Thank you.

2 CAM ROBERDS:

3 We've got about 30 more seconds,  
4 Mr. Sheldon, 30 or 45 more seconds.

5 RON SHELDON:

6 I've got a new subject.

7 CAM ROBERDS:

8 We'll give you another minute. Will  
9 that be okay?

10 RON SHELDON:

11 I will do the best I can. All right.  
12 Let's talk about speckled trout.

13 All right. First, I would like to say,  
14 the last time I was here -- I don't remember who  
15 said it. They pointed out after I made my  
16 presentation that they were avid speckled trout  
17 fishermen. Well, I'm here to tell you today, I am  
18 an avid speckled trout fisherman.

19 The numbers have been dwindling. Some  
20 of my friends that I fish with or fish around  
21 routinely are many of the names that you know.  
22 One of them is Don Coulter. Y'all have used Don  
23 Coulter in the past for tagging redfish.

24 Don Coulter and I are both good  
25 fishermen. We use identical baits. Don Coulter

1 will outfish me two to one when we're fishing in  
2 the same area and the same bait. And when Don  
3 Coulter is not catching trout on the east side of  
4 the Mississippi, the numbers are dwindling. The  
5 sizes are becoming less.

6 I do have a question about the  
7 commercial hook and line licenses. We have 129  
8 that were issued in Jackson County last year.  
9 Apparently these licenses cost \$100 apiece. If  
10 they're selling -- what I would like to know, if  
11 these people are selling those fish to a  
12 wholesaler, do y'all get a report of how many  
13 pounds and who's selling them?

14 JOE SPRAGGINS:

15 Yeah. Rick, you want to address that  
16 real quick?

17 RICK BURRIS:

18 Yes, sir. We get a report and we  
19 actually make it public as far as the quantity  
20 that's been sold. So we have a quota, that's  
21 50,000 pounds, and so we keep up with that. And  
22 it's actually on our website.

23 The last I looked, we were at about  
24 31,000 pounds of that 50,000. And in order to  
25 sell spotted sea trout, you have to have a spotted

1 sea trout endorsement, too, so we know exactly who  
2 is catching those fish and selling them.

3 JOE SPRAGGINS:

4 And we are also in the fisheries  
5 department -- you know, it's been brought up to us  
6 a couple of times by the Commission of the  
7 situation as to the endorsement that you have to  
8 have, and we're re-looking at the endorsement to  
9 decide if there is something we need to change on  
10 it or not because we're not catching our quota  
11 right now and we would like to catch our quota to  
12 be sold in the market. So we are looking at that,  
13 and the team is looking very hard and trying to  
14 make sure we do it the right way.

15 RON SHELDON:

16 Thank you. To me, it would seem like  
17 the quota has been too high because we haven't  
18 reached it in years or either our surveys that --  
19 our numbers that are there.

20 Let me say this. I do not have anything  
21 against the commercial fishermen. I'm probably  
22 one of the few sports fishermen, recreational  
23 sports fisherman that's ever put a letter to the  
24 editor in the *Sun Herald* in support of the  
25 menhaden, the fisheries. That's not real popular

1 with my friends. They blame every time they don't  
2 fish, it's menhaden. It's menhaden. It's pogy  
3 fisherman. We all know that's a bunch of bunk,  
4 and those are hardworking people up there  
5 providing a product each and every one of us use  
6 every day.

7 I have two photographs -- and I need  
8 time for this -- I would like to share with you.  
9 This was a photograph that was taken last spring.  
10 It took me quite a while to get ahold of it. It  
11 is a resident of Pascagoula. I have blacked out  
12 their faces there. I can tell you that all three  
13 men that are fishing in that boat do have  
14 commercial licenses. There's 92 fish there. That  
15 is in the springtime. Rumors circulating around  
16 town -- and I stress rumors -- that these fish  
17 were caught at the grass beds at Petit Bois.

18 I know for a fact -- I have been out  
19 there all my life -- there are no grass beds that  
20 extend one mile beyond Petit Bois. So if they're  
21 catching these fish, they're selling them  
22 commercially inside that one-mile limit, what are  
23 we doing to regulate that? These people were  
24 bragging they had many trips like that, this  
25 week -- or that particular week.

1 JOE SPRAGGINS:

2 Rick, tell me if I'm right. Petit Bois,  
3 that's run by the National Parks? That's not  
4 our -- that's not us? That's National Parks that  
5 does that; is that right?

6 RICK BURRIS:

7 Well, I think that's an enforcement  
8 question, but, yeah, there's a one-mile boundary  
9 within the Gulf Islands National Seashore and they  
10 do have jurisdiction in that.

11 KYLE WILKERSON:

12 It's inside one mile, yes, one mile  
13 around Petit Bois.

14 JOE SPRAGGINS:

15 And, Kyle, we don't have control over  
16 that, right? That's being enforced by them?

17 KYLE WILKERSON:

18 No, we can.

19 JOE SPRAGGINS:

20 So that's a federal enforcement?

21 KYLE WILKERSON:

22 It's the Parks' issue.

23 JOE SPRAGGINS:

24 And so for us to be able to say whether  
25 or not it's -- they're catching legal there, Kyle,

1 help me. Is there something I'm missing here?

2 KYLE WILKERSON:

3 Well, I mean, if they're fishing inside  
4 that one-mile perimeter, that's going to be a  
5 Parks' issue. That's going to be a federal  
6 government issue. But once we get outside of  
7 that, then we get them.

8 JOE SPRAGGINS:

9 Okay. But I'm sure our marine patrol  
10 officers are looking at everything that we can  
11 with it, but our hands are tied to a point under  
12 that as to whether or not they're inside the one  
13 mile.

14 KYLE WILKERSON:

15 If they're inside that one mile  
16 commercial fishing, that's an issue. We will work  
17 with the Parks Service and see if we can --

18 RON SHELDON:

19 Y'all can work together?

20 KYLE WILKERSON:

21 Yes.

22 JOE SPRAGGINS:

23 Okay.

24 RON SHELDON:

25 Thank you. One last photograph and this

1 is what -- I have been very fortunate. I retired  
2 at an early age. I've been retired now over  
3 15 years. This is my grandson.

4 At the time, that was probably about  
5 five or six years ago. Very first wade fishing  
6 trip, I took him to Round Island. And let me tell  
7 you what, we hadn't been there five minutes, he  
8 hooked up with that fish right there, tossed his  
9 brand new Zebco I had bought him into the water  
10 and leaped like he had been shot out of a cannon  
11 to come up and come up with that fish. And that's  
12 what I'm trying to protect.

13 I have caught thousands of speckled  
14 trout. I release way more than I ever keep. You  
15 know, I'm out there for the sportsmen. I love the  
16 nature. I've learned to appreciate the birds and  
17 everything out on Round Island, gardenias in the  
18 summertime. But anyway, that's what I'm trying to  
19 protect.

20 I've had a blessed life. I've lived the  
21 dream fishing and growing up here on the  
22 Mississippi Gulf Coast, but I'm trying to protect  
23 what's out there for the future generation. Thank  
24 you.

25 CAM ROBERDS:

1                   I understand your passion, Mr. Sheldon,  
2                   for sure. Thank you.

3                   RON SHELDON:

4                   Yep.

5                   JOE SPRAGGINS:

6                   And if I could, one of my old buddies  
7                   from the military, he lives over in Alabama. But  
8                   I was with him the other day and we were talking.  
9                   He was coming over here to go fishing and he comes  
10                  to that area that you're talking about and Horn  
11                  Island and that area and all. And he comes over  
12                  and he talks about how great the fishing is in  
13                  Mississippi.

14                  And he does -- you know, he's not one  
15                  that keeps a whole lot of fish either. I mean,  
16                  you know, he likes to catch them and he does it on  
17                  a fly rod. And I mean, he just loves to catch the  
18                  redfish and the speckled trout and all, but  
19                  talking about how plentiful they are in the  
20                  certain times of the year there. So it is good to  
21                  know that we have the resource and it's good to  
22                  know that resource is beautiful out there.

23                  And we are doing everything. I promise  
24                  you. That team -- the team that works on this for  
25                  the DMR is working hard every day to manage that



1 resource the best that we can possibly do, to make  
2 sure that we are taking care of it and that we can  
3 have it so that grandson -- that young man can be  
4 there and his grandson can have -- be able to  
5 catch that fish too.

6 RON SHELDON:

7 He's not that skinny anymore and he  
8 actually has a mouth full of teeth.

9 JOE SPRAGGINS:

10 Yep. Otherwise, Rodie Armes ain't going  
11 to be able to --

12 CAM ROBERDS:

13 Right.

14 All right. If don't we have any other  
15 questions or comments on that, then, I guess I  
16 will ask if somebody has a motion that we can  
17 close?

18 JONATHAN MCLENDON:

19 I will make the motion to adjourn.

20 JASON OSBORNE:

21 I make a second.

22 CAM ROBERDS:

23 All those in favor?

24 (Unanimous vote.)

25 (Meeting concluded at 10:17 a.m.)

**CERTIFICATE OF COURT REPORTER**

1  
2 I, MELISSA BURDINE-RODOLFICH, Court Reporter  
3 and Notary Public, in and for the County of  
4 Harrison, State of Mississippi, hereby certify that  
5 the foregoing pages, and including this page,  
6 contain a true and correct copy of my stenotype  
7 notes and/or electronic tape recording of the  
8 public meeting, as taken by me at the time and  
9 place heretofore stated, to the best of my skill  
10 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 12th  
16 day of November 2024.

17  
18 /s/ Melissa Burdine-Rodolfich

19  
20 — Melissa Burdine-Rodolfich  
My Commission Expires 4/03/2