COMMISSION ON MARINE RESOURCES

WORK SESSION

Tuesday, September 30, 2016
9:00 a.m.
Bolton State Building Auditorium
1141 Bayview Avenue
Biloxi, Mississippi 39530

Commission Members:

Richard Gollott, Chairman

Steve Bosarge, Vice Chairman

Mark Havard

Ron Harmon

Also Present:

Jamie M. Miller, Executive Director DMR
Faye James, Esq., Assistant Attorney General

COMMISSIONER GOLLOTT: I would like to welcome everyone to workshop. The first thing is we need to do is call the meeting to order, and, then, say the Pledge of Allegiance.

Jamie will lead us.

(Whereupon, the Pledge of Allegiance was recited.)

COMMISSIONER GOLLOTT: We need approval of the agenda, or modification.

COMMISSIONER HAVARD: Chairman, I'll make a motion we approve the agenda.

COMMISSIONER GOLLOTT: We have a motion.

Do we have a second?

COMMISSIONER HARMON: I'll second that, Mr. Chairman.

COMMISSIONER GOLLOTT: We have a motion and a second.

All those in favor say aye.

(All in favor.)

COMMISSIONER GOLLOTT: Opposed?

(None opposed.)

COMMISSIONER GOLLOTT: Motion carries.

First thing on the agenda is Mr. Joe Jewell.

JOE JEWELL: Good morning Commissioners.

This morning for your consideration we have two

items on the agenda.

Spotted Seatrout Stock Assessment Options and Outcomes, Matt Hill, the Bureau Director for the Finfish, and Dr. Paul Mickle, the Deputy Director, will be presenting that PowerPoint presentation.

Then, we are going to have an update on the Conservationist, and I will be giving that presentation for your consideration.

First up on the agenda is Mr. Matt Hill.

MATT HILL: Good morning Commissioners, Director Miller, Ms. James.

I'm glad we could participate in this workshop today together. I will begin with a brief presentation on the Spotted Seatrout Assessment options and outcomes. We will, then, go into the MDMR recommendations. We will also be willing to discuss anything the CMR will like to, and will answer any scenario questions as CMR requests.

Hopefully, today, the staff's goal is that the CMR can identify some preferred options for us to continue to look at, before the October CMR meeting.

Going to get right into it today. The recommendations that the staff is putting forward is we are all in agreement that we must decrease fishing mortality. Currently, we are at F rate, or fishing mortality rate of greater than one point eight.

To make a significant impact in this area, harvest must be reduced by fifty percent. This means we would need to get this number down to somewhere in the point seven range, point six five, point seven range, point eight. If you do a three-year average, it comes out to be a few different rates, however, the consensus is that we need to reduce the harvest in half.

After thorough review of all management options and model outputs, an increase in minimum size limit from thirteen inches to fifteen inches is the only option that produced results which are indicative of a stock that is rebuilding and rebuilding in the time frame of three to five years that the CMR set forth.

That is our first recommendation is to raise the minimum size limit to fifteen inches for three years, with a status quo bag limit of fifteen fish per person.

We will, then, conduct updates each year of rebuilding and, after this three-year period, a full stock assessment will be performed by the stock assessment panel to determine the SPR of the Spotted Seatrout population.

At that time, if the conservation management goal of twenty percent has been reached, we will then present the CMR with management options to either continue to raise the SPR, if need be, if it has not reached the target, or to stabilize the SPR at the twenty percent

target that has been set.

We do want to point out that we are currently -- I believe CMR has seen this slide at least twice already. The slide on the left is the fishing mortality over the years, beginning in 1993, and it goes through 2014. The slide on the right is the SPR value.

If you notice, we are currently at the highest fishing mortality and the lowest SPR rate that we have ever seen.

We have also seen this slide several times. I would like to focus on the slide on the left-hand side. With the target set by the Commission of the twenty percent SPR, that would result in a fishing mortality of point seven three.

You can see the yields. Yield is what can be harvested. As you can see, beginning in 2016, you would be able to harvest a hundred and eighty-three metric tons to reach this target, and, as of 2020, you would be able to harvest two hundred and forty-two metric tons.

I would like to point out that we are currently harvesting greater than five hundred metric tons which is more than double any value which is located anywhere on this table.

With this being said, here are some of the management options that we did look at. Of course, status

quo for commercial and recreational, the minimum size changes, seasonal closures for recreational and commercial, per person bag limits and recreational quotas. These are all highlighted in yellow as these are the ones that were able to be modeled. The model could handle these types of scenarios.

We also looked at vessel bag limits, size limit slots, gear restrictions and area closures, just with some generalized data that we had. However, these types of management options are not able to be modeled, and I believe Joe sent the Commission a pretty detailed email explaining this and why we could and could not model some of these and some of the outputs that came from this.

Before we get into the questions, I will say that these recommendations are strictly based on the model outputs and the strongest statement that I believe we have made so far, and I will turn this over to Paul here shortly for some questions on exactly how the model outputs were derived.

The recommendation of going from thirteen to fifteen inches within the time period, the model actually put out that statement that this is the only management option that is indicative of a stock that is rebuilding and will rebuild in a time frame of three to five years which the CMR set forth. The model actually put out that

statement with the actual output that it had.

If we are going to continue to establish a target of twenty percent SPR, at some point we will have to realize that we are in a rebuilding stock, and we will have to put in place management options, or we will recommend putting in management options that are indicative of a rebuilding stock and, currently, this is the only option that we see that is indicative of a rebuilding stock.

That is the conclusion of the presentation. Like I said, it would be brief, however, we have several slides that y'all have seen many previous times and Paul and I will be glad to field any questions at this time.

COMMISSIONER GOLLOTT: Thank you, Matt.

Any questions?

COMMISSIONER BOSARGE: Yes, sir. I would like to look at just a little bit of your modeling and how you came to some of our conclusions.

Do you have that in slide format, basically, what Joe sent us?

PAUL MICKLE: Yes, sir. Our recommendations that Matt just made, we have the model outputs that came to that.

COMMISSIONER BOSARGE: Joe, do you have what you sent us that we could put up on the screen?

JOE JEWELL: I have actually here in print what I sent to you, but we have the model slides and the outputs here in slide format.

Is there one particular one you would like me to pull up?

COMMISSIONER BOSARGE: Yes. This is the one I want to look at, where we go from modeling and you gave us the model changes from thirteen to fourteen, and, then, thirteen to fifteen.

JOE JEWELL: Thirteen to fourteen is going to give you essentially -- what it does it will provide for you an SPR that sort of stays static and the yield will drop. It will taper off.

Fifteen will actually increase the stock.

COMMISSIONER BOSARGE: And I agree that's what I want to look at. I want to look at, when you went to fifteen, the assumptions you made in that model.

By that I mean, you had no way of putting in fishing mortality, or attributing any changes in fishing mortality.

In other words, you are using the base year of, I think, an average of three years, the last three years as your fishing mortality.

PAUL MICKLE: When you go from thirteen to fourteen inches, you are harvesting that fourteen to

fifteen inches that is in the fishery and can be harvested. That fishing mortality is added on top of the thirteen to fifteen.

It's the same scenario. Just like you said, the assumptions are the same. You stated that correctly.

COMMISSIONER BOSARGE: That's what I'm saying. The assumptions are the same. The fishing mortality is not going to be the same.

PAUL MICKLE: The fishing mortality level is different between thirteen and fourteen and thirteen and fifteen.

When you go from thirteen to fifteen, you are creating a percentage of the population that is reproductively capable and it is protected from fishing mortality.

COMMISSIONER BOSARGE: But it's not protected from fishing mortality. In other words, through discarding mortality.

My concern is, if we do what you want to do and all we do is change to fifteen, how long is it going to take before anybody can catch a fifteen inch fish?

MATT HILL: We believe that it will take some time for somebody to catch a fifteen inch fish and maybe catch a substantial number of fifteen inch fish. However, not just looking at the model data, looking at the

generalized data, we have come to the conclusion, or the staff of DMR has come to the conclusion that the good outweighs the bad. There will be normal mortality. There will be several fish less than fifteen inches --

COMMISSIONER BOSARGE: (Interposing) My point is, Matt, it is affecting how your model runs. In other words, the same thing as -- can you look at the slide Joe gave us where it showed each year and the pounds that were caught each year?

I don't have it, unless I pull it up on my phone.

PAUL MICKLE: I have it right here, Commissioner. Just give me one second.

This is the slide of just raw landings, from 1981 up to this year. What the model says happened in 2008 is that the size change from fourteen to thirteen inches would have worked, in 2008.

Fishing mortality is so high, now, that thirteen inches doesn't work anymore, but the model does support that decision in 2008. It worked, but the fishing level in 2008 is lower. We are fishing at such a level, now, it is not sustainable.

The harvest from 2008 on is off the chart. This last year, 2015-2016, is so high. It's the highest, by far, ever reported, and the year is not even over yet.

This is a preliminary number of an incomplete year, and it is the highest ever reported.

COMMISSIONER BOSARGE: That's my point, and my point is, by saying that all we are going to do is raise the size limit to fifteen inches and this is going to fix it, this will fix it, once we get it to that point. It will fix it and it will be there, but, I think, to get to that point, your model is making some assumptions that, in my opinion, aren't correct, and you are assuming that these fifteen inch fish, that the first year and second year, that the discard mortality, or the natural mortality will be the same. It won't. It is going to be much higher.

PAUL MICKLE: It is.

COMMISSIONER BOSARGE: Just like at the last meeting, when the gentleman got up and he said he had caught between four and five hundred Spotted Seatrout that were under thirteen inches, but what he presented to us, basically, said discard mortality was eleven point five percent. That's one fishery.

My point being you are making a lot of assumptions in your model, and, if you look at what Joe presented to us, basically, your model is working off of you saying that we are only going to harvest X pounds of fish each year.

I think, with this model, it was two hundred and something thousand kilograms.

Is that correct?

PAUL MICKLE: Indirectly.

COMMISSIONER BOSARGE: My point is, each year when you did your modeling, you used the same exact amount of pounds every year, that that is what the catch was going to be every year.

PAUL MICKLE: It's hindsight. It measures the catch of each year, the previous year. It's not setting a catch through the whole model, one catch. It's looking at the previous year catch, and, then, assuming biomass from that catch, then, assuming the reproductive capabilities of what is left out there each year, and, then, it assumes what the next year will be, in the future.

COMMISSIONER BOSARGE: That's what I'm saying. There are a lot of assumptions there.

PAUL MICKLE: There are a lot of assumptions. I agree with you completely. There are assumptions that are made.

COMMISSIONER BOSARGE: In my opinion, your assumptions could go either way.

Back in '95, when speckled trout was a hot issue, there were a lot of decisions made that were made not based on the best science. We managed to make it

through that.

Now, we're at a point where we need -- we are over fished and undergoing over fishing. If this was the commercial fishery, we would have shut this down a long time ago, but we're not.

My point is we are at a turning point here. We don't need to just chip at this. We need to make sure that we get this right.

PAUL MICKLE: I agree, Commissioner Bosarge. I agree with everything you said. The model gets you about sixty percent to where you want to make a decision. The rest is experience and understanding the fishery, understanding the user groups in the fishery.

In past history management that I've been involved with in Florida, they went up to fifteen inches and it worked. With the snook issues back in the nineties when snook was in complete free fall worse than this, they took some drastic management measures through SPR. They had to protect the spawning population in the Gulf side, and it worked.

COMMISSIONER BOSARGE: I guess my point is that there is also some experience out there that says, for instance, on the east coast red snapper, they shut the fishery down because the bycatch of red snapper was more than the quota would have been, discard morality.

In your model -- in other words, if we leave this open and everybody still goes out to their same favorite speckled trout hole and sits there and tries to catch that legal fish, are we doing the resource a favor here?

In other words, my point is I think personally that a seasonal closure, especially right here at first, however long it takes to get from a thirteen inch fish to a fifteen inch fish, will do more good than anything other thing we are going to do.

You recommendations are to leave the bag limit at fifteen fish. I don't see where we're making much headway here, in all honesty. We need to have the mind set of the fishermen, okay, the season is closed on speckled trout. I'm not going to that trout hole. I'm going over here maybe where I can get some red fish, or sheep head, or triple tail, or whatever else, and, sure, I may have a bycatch of speckled trout, but I'm not going out leaving the dock saying, well, I'm going to go catch four hundred of these son of a guns and see if I can get me one fifteen inches.

That is my thought, and I think, if you look at modeling a little closer you will see that these things haven't been put into your model, and you make a lot of assumptions that we will rebuild the fishery, without

looking into things that are most likely going to happen that you can't put in your model.

MATT HILL: All predictive models, Commissioner Bosarge, these are forecasting models. We are trying to predict into the future, so there are assumptions that have to be made in all predictive models. All we can do is make the best assumptions, from the historical data that we currently have. The historical data that we have shows that a stable fishery at a certain rate of fishing which --

COMMISSIONER BOSARGE: (Interposing) How do you intend to control that rate of fishing?

Do you see what I'm saying?

MATT HILL: Our first recommendation up here is to decrease fishing. However we do it, we must decrease fishing. That is the only thing we can control, whether it's by raising the minimum size limit, a seasonal closure, a recreational quota, an area closure, or any combination of that.

That's why we put that bullet first. We understand that this is just the staff's recommendation on how to do it in the time frame that was laid out. However, there are many other options that we do have to look at, as long as they all decrease fishing mortality by at least fifty percent.

The elephant in the room -- we'll just talk about it now -- is we got the Louisiana stock assessment. We did get them to release their stock assessment. They have roughly a ten point nine SPR. After thoroughly looking at that stock assessment, I tend to agree that they have an argument that they can survive at that rate. However, what I was more interested in was their fishing mortality rate. Their fishing mortality was point seven three which is half of what ours is, now.

In simple terms, what that means is we are currently fishing our stock in Mississippi twice as hard as what Louisiana is fishing their stock in Louisiana. That's why they have boldly come out and said that they can support a ten percent SPR.

Without digging into it too much further -- we just haven't had the time -- I understand where they are coming from, but they didn't focus as much on the SPR. They focused on the F rate, and I'm leaning toward that direction, now, as they have a stable fishing mortality of point seven three.

If we get to our table -- we didn't make this up -- it just happens to be at twenty percent SPR Our F rate is point seven three. We would be right in line with Louisiana at these yields, whether we set a quota and the quota would be what can be harvested, or whether we made

some regulation changes that would be significant enough to decrease the harvest to these rates.

COMMISSIONER BOSARGE: Matt, we can't compare ourselves with Louisiana.

MATT HILL: We cannot.

COMMISSIONER BOSARGE: We are two totally different states. Louisiana has got an estuary that we can only dream of, but, then, what they don't have is the development that close to the fish. They've got a lot of marsh area that you can't put pilings, or bulkheads.

Maybe we could compare ourselves a little more to Alabama and maybe some in Texas, but not Louisiana.

MATT HILL: My point is that once your F rate is over one, that means that you are taking out more fish of the stock than the spawning stock biomass can replace, and we are well over one. We are approaching two, at the moment.

They are under one, so that is why they can make the statement and they can factually make the statement that over fishing is not occurring in their state and it is not being over fished.

We cannot make that statement. It has nothing to do with SPR, at this moment. The first goal is to get the fishing mortality rate below one. Until we get that below one, we are not even close, whatever the management

goal must be. Right now, even if we cut our harvest in half, whatever regulation is put in place to cut our harvest in half, if we cut it to two hundred and fifty metric tons right now, we would only achieve an eighteen percent SPR. We would not achieve the twenty percent SPR.

COMMISSIONER BOSARGE: Right and, here again, when you talk about the model, you are talking about cut our production in half. We are dancing all around the fact that basically we are modeling and we are trying to manage to a quota. The only system that truly works is a quota.

Paul, that's what your model showed. When your model said we are only going to produce this many fish for each year, that's modeling under a quota, with no means to --

PAUL MICKLE: (Interposing) Restrict harvest.

COMMISSIONER BOSARGE: That's right. We are dancing all around the problem. The problem is we've got too many hooks in the water. That's the whole problem. We are dancing all the way around it.

PAUL MICKLE: I understand what you're getting at. I really enjoy the conversation because we are starting to approach the third options. I can tell which options you are starting to prefer. Unrestricted harvest is something that is on the model.

COMMISSIONER BOSARGE: Look at it from my perspective. My perspective is I represent the commercial fishermen. The management changes we make here affect my end of the industry, also. Right now, we can't catch any fish. Jim made the statement the other day, there are no big fish. So the management decisions we make here affect my industry because my guys want to catch fish, too.

The recreational fisherman is out there to enjoy himself. The commercial fisherman is out there to feed a family.

Even though we may do a fifteen inch fish and, yes, in three to five years, we'll look at it and see if it worked, these guys, they need to feed their families.

My point is I think we should look at, yes, fifteen inches. That's a no-brainer, in my opinion, but, at the same time, this thing needs a jump start and some type of a seasonal closure, at least until these fish can reach fifteen inches. Maybe during the spawning, a month or two or something, to give these fish a chance to grow up just a little bit without people steady hammering them.

JOE JEWELL: Steve, I want to ask a question.

Are you asking for just an outright seasonal closure, like, one during spawning season, or one when they are up in the deep water holes during the wintertime, or are you asking for a closure based on quota?

COMMISSIONER BOSARGE: Well, that's why I asked for the workshop. I hate to do it in a public forum. I was hoping we could, but I know we can't, so here we are.

I'm not asking for anything. I'm just asking for you guys that have the knowledge to look at this in a little bit more realistic fashion.

MATT HILL: And I think, Commissioner Bosarge, you and I had -- I don't recall if it was on record, of in public, or if we just had a sidebar after the meeting, but we had this conversation about quotas, and we had a conversation that the model did show that quotas -- and it is on there -- will work. Once you set your F rate, that they will work. However, I do believe that we also talked about our agency and our staff, we just currently -- we can't put that in place.

COMMISSIONER BOSARGE: I understand that completely, Matt. My problem is if we are going to harvest at a level of two hundred metric tons and that's what our model is built on and next year there are no triple tail and for some reason red fish changes and everybody says, the only thing left to do is to go catch speckled trout, we've got no way to stop that effort. We've got no way to slow it down. The only thing we can do is let them pick at them and pick at them and pick at them and pick at them.

MATT HILL: And I agree that we need to continue to develop all the tools that we can to manage not just this fishery, but all the fisheries, but that particular tool is not in our tool box yet. We will continue to develop that, and I think we're on the right path, with the system that we have, now. We just have to -- it's a much larger universe that we have to deal with, when you are dealing with trout fishermen, or inshore fishermen in general.

The quota system absolutely will work. It works in the commercial fishery.

COMMISSIONER BOSARGE: And I'm not saying that we need a quota system, but, if you look at your model and what you're inputting into that model, you are under a quota system. What you're modeling is a quota system. You are not modeling fifteen inch fish. You are modeling under a quota. We are only going to catch this many fish. We are only going to do this, this year.

MATT HILL: You're correct.

COMMISSIONER BOSARGE: You've got no way of knowing what is going to happen.

MATT HILL: The model is pumping out what can be harvested which is a quota. We understand that, at this time, we cannot put a quota in place because we have no way of realtime tracking it and closing it on a timely

basis.

What we are looking at is what regulations can we put in place that we believe will lower the harvest levels to these acceptable rates, and, at this time, we believe raising it to fifteen inches will lower it to these acceptable rates.

However, in the future, if we are able to do those side-by-side, have a quota system and have something else, we would be able to understand if the quota system worked, or if the fifteen inch size limit, or fourteen inch size limit worked. We keep getting hung up on fifteen. That's our recommendation.

We're not stuck on anything here. This is a workshop. We're here to listen, but you are one hundred percent correct in saying that when we model this, we are basically modeling this to show what a quota would look like.

COMMISSIONER BOSARGE: There are also some calculations in there I don't know if they are correct. If we go to a fifteen inch fish, that's a much larger fish. We're doing fish for fish, not pound for pound.

You see what I'm saying?

PAUL MICKLE: Just real quick. The model is based on reproductive potential. There are lots and lots of fifteen inch fish. There are lots and lots of fourteen

inch fish. There's a little bit less fifteen inch fish, sixteen inch fish, seventeen inch fish.

Those thirteen, fourteen and fifteen inch fish are so reproductively capable because there are so many of them. It's not pound for pound. It's reproductive potential by number is what the model does.

COMMISSIONER BOSARGE: You do your modeling by pounds.

PAUL MICKLE: We do the yield streams by pounds so we can understand what SPR targets we hit.

You are right. There is a discrepancy there between yield and reproductive potential which is SPR.

COMMISSIONER BOSARGE: The other thing we really need to look at and talk about is SPR. Right now, we're talking about our target SPR.

Where is our threshold?

There needs to be two numbers here. There needs to be a threshold set and a target set. In my opinion, the threshold should be twenty percent. The target should be something more than twenty percent (indicating document).

Do you follow what I'm saying?

In other words, at what point when the fishery gets to the threshold do regulations kick in?

We would like to manage at this point.

In other words, you don't ever want to manage to one number. You want to manage to where this is where, at least, we needed to go.

PAUL MICKLE: A window.

COMMISSIONER BOSARGE: This is where we want to try to aim for.

PAUL MICKLE: Like I said, the math gets you most of the way there, and, then, the decisions which you are potentially going to make are trying to reach these targets, or these windows of SPR.

What Dr. Lucas is whispering in my ear about is that we are going to do updates each year to see how the SPR is going. We don't even know what direction it will go, with the decision that CMR makes.

The updates that we will do next year will give us an idea about in what direction the fishery is headed and at what speed, what increasing rate of SPR. You can actually get into the slopes of increasing SPR, the slopes of decreasing SPR, when things could get really bad, or really good. That's what updates can possibly do. It's a work in progress.

COMMISSIONER BOSARGE: I know. Just look at it from my side. It's time and money. In other words, it may not be that critical for the recreational fishermen, but for the commercial fishermen, it's pretty critical.

I see us this year. How could we possibly meet our quota, even if it's only fifty thousand pounds. Those fish aren't there.

MATT HILL: That is correct, Commissioner Bosarge, and that is why we -- the CMR requested a three to five year time frame. We have actually internally adopted a three-year time frame. What we are asking is for whatever we do, let's give it at least three years. Whatever we decide, however we are going to decrease the fishing mortality, whatever strategy we decide to take, to have a three-year time period.

I look at it as three years of suffering, or twenty years of suffering. We can let this go on and continue to go on, and it will not benefit the recreational fishermen, nor the commercial fishermen. As long as I see the numbers where they are not meeting their quota, it is hurting them also.

They are a big part of this, and I hear from them on a daily basis. I talk to four, or five, of them, and we are also looking at it from their side, too, but it is that the population doesn't understand commercial and recreational. It is one population, so we are trying to manage it as one population for both of the user groups.

Like I said, we can have three years of suffering, or twenty years of suffering, and that's how we

are looking at this. If we take baby steps, it is going to take a while. If we made some pretty significant changes and some that you have brought up, if we set a -- it's too late, now -- two hundred and seventeen metric ton quota in 2017, we will have done something.

COMMISSIONER BOSARGE: Now, you've got the treble on the hook. I don't think that we can put all that in place in that amount of time.

MATT HILL: That is correct.

COMMISSIONER BOSARGE: This group up here, all of us need to hear this argument. In other words, there is a lot more at stake here than just whether or not what user group gets what. We are here to manage the fishery, not the people.

MATT HILL: Ten years ago we never thought we would be at a census program in our state to count red snapper, and we are there, now.

The way I look at it, now, is you brought up a valid point, and it is just going to take us time to get the logistics in place, and it still may not be the right road to go down, but, at least, we will have that tool in the tool box to try.

COMMISSIONER BOSARGE: Red snapper and most of our state fisheries are open entry fisheries. There are no restraints, other than size limits and bag limits.

There is no restraint on effort, and, as the time has gone on, it has shown us that effort is continuing to increase, but what scares me more than anything else is efficiency is increasing at the same pace, if not more.

At some point in time in the near future, there are going to be some changes that are going to be made that people aren't going to like. Resource can only handle so much.

MATT HILL: That is correct.

COMMISSIONER BOSARGE: We need to be thinking a little further ahead as to what may be it. In other words, I know we're not trying to do this to a quota, but your model is looking at a quota, but you also have to, in that model in my opinion, make some assumptions that catch per unit effort and everything will basically stay the same. In reality, we are doing this and you assume the fishing mortality is not going to change over the course of the next five years, and, in my opinion, yes, it will.

I like what your model is doing, but I think it may be a little bit of a -- in other words, it could go either way. I think we will increase it, but I think we are going to increase it at such a slow pace that it is not going to make a lot of difference.

Do we want to wait three to five years to find this out, or do we want to go ahead and do some simple

things that I think are simple things.

If you look at the commercial side of it, there are a lot of things that have been done on their side.

I don't see where a two-month, or a three-month, or whatever, season closure is going to kill anybody right now, but, in my opinion, it would make a hell of a bunch of difference in what they are going to end up with at the end of that first year.

COMMISSIONER GOLLOTT: Excuse me, Mr. Bosarge.

Will you yield the floor, now, and let some other Commissioner say something?

COMMISSIONER BOSARGE: Yes, sir.

COMMISSIONER GOLLOTT: Does somebody else want to speak to this?

Ron, have you got anything?

COMMISSIONER HARMON: No, sir.

COMMISSIONER GOLLOTT: Mark?

COMMISSIONER HAVARD: No, sir.

COMMISSIONER GOLLOTT: Let me ask you a couple of questions here, and I want to compromise here. We don't want to cut off fishing. I don't want to shut the season down. We have a lot of recreational day camps and all involved in this, and we've got to come up with some kind of compromise here.

The fact is ten percent of the fishermen catch

ninety percent of the trout. I've heard that all my life.

Do you have any opinion on that?

PAUL MICKLE: I do. There is some truth to that statement, but that ten percent is getting bigger every year. The whole universe is getting bigger. Ten percent may be three thousand fishermen, now. In five years, ten percent of the universe of fishing anglers might be five thousand. Harvest is just continuing to go up. Everyone is getting better at it. Efficiency is going up. Fishermen are getting into the fishery. They are getting good at it quicker than they used to.

COMMISSIONER GOLLOTT: Where I was going with this, if we lowered the bag limit by five fish, it would be ten per day, that would be lowering thirty-three percent on the ten percent of the fishermen that catch most of the fish.

The model says thirteen to fourteen inch fish doesn't make any difference. The average person catches six fish. That's what y'all have told us. If we raised it to fifteen inches and gave them two fish thirteen inches, that would be cutting sixty-six percent on the people catching small fish, and it would still keep the fishery going.

Do you have anything to say about what you think on two thirteen inch fish?

Instead of six fish, they would only catch two fish. If you raise it to fifteen inches, you might as well close the season. You're not going to catch any that big. The good fishermen might catch a few fish. The average person is not going to catch any fish.

Can you speak to that, Paul?

PAUL MICKLE: Yes. The model can't assume what the bag limit will be for each person. I'll give you my personal recommendation, after I give the math recommendation.

The way that the model works it can't predict what your catch is going to be each time you go. There is no way it can predict how many undersize fish you are going to encounter. I can't give you a mathematical response on those harvest restrictions that you say may occur in that scenario.

What possibly could occur is that you are giving allowance of two undersize fish per person, so you are allowing some undersize fish to be removed from the fishery that have reproductive potential and not being protected, and the ability for law enforcement to handle undersize allowances, we have gone through in the past.

In the late eighties and nineties, we had undersize allowances, if you remember, and law enforcement had such a hard time with the law enforcement side of it

that we got rid of it. They had a lot of trouble with it.

If they want to share any information about that?

COMMISSIONER GOLLOTT: Chief Davis, or Rusty, would y'all like to comment on that, please, for us, being able to enforce two undersize fish?

RUSTY PITTMAN: I can tell you that back in '95, Mr. Chairman, when it went up, back up to fourteen, before that we were having an increase on citations of over the limit of undersize, where they could keep between twelve and fourteen inch fish. They didn't read in there about the five fish. They figured they could just keep anywhere between twelve and fourteen.

Once the word got out that there was a five fish undersize limit, when we came up -- and I'm not saying everybody was doing this, but when we came up on fishermen, we would notice fish floating and, when you looked at them, they were always twelve and thirteen inch fish. Well, when you looked in the ice chest, they had fourteen inch fish and above which we believe they were culling.

In other words, they would get their five between twelve and fourteen, and all of a sudden they would start catching the nicer trout. Well, they just started throwing the ones they kept. That made us think

we were against the undersize.

It was really hard. You couldn't prove that they did it on purpose. If you asked them, they got gut hooked and, if you pulled the fish up, you could tell.

Some of the stories that came back to us from fishermen was that they were on purpose pushing the bait down in and pulling it out.

We had a hard time on that with the between size, twelve to fourteen inches.

COMMISSIONER GOLLOTT: Thank you, Rusty.

Any more questions for Rusty, or anything?

COMMISSIONER HAVARD: I think concessions are great, when we have a healthy fishery, but our goal is, right now, to leave as many spawning fish in the water to spawn as we can. When we get our fishery up to a healthy level, at that point, there are concessions that need to be considered, whether the focus is recreational fishing, or whatever the case might be, but, the bottom line is we've got to have as many spawning fish kept in the water as we possibly can, right now. We have got to get things back to a healthy level.

When we do, we will talk about concessions, but, as of right now, our fishery is not healthy.

COMMISSIONER GOLLOTT: Do you have an opinion on what we should do, now, or do you want to think about it a

minute?

COMMISSIONER HAVARD: We set an SPR. So we have set a goal. We want to achieve our goal in three to five years. We need to do whatever measures it is going to take to allow us to get to that goal, and the science says fifteen inch fish is the route that we need to take, the first step in reaching our SPR.

Bag limits, it doesn't say that is going to make a big change. I do think that the more spawning fish, the big fish that we keep in the water should make a change, but the science does not necessarily say that. We have asked these guys, the whole team to go out there and find us answers that will allow us to reach our SPR and they have provided them.

Are they always a hundred percent correct?

I don't know, but I think we need to take what science says and what the general public is saying and make some decisions, and live with whatever decisions we make.

They are going to monitor every year to make sure we are heading in the right direction.

MATT HILL: Commission, if I may, I just opened up what I wanted to read previously. I'm just going to paraphrase it, but we did run the thirty-three percent reduction from fifteen to ten, and it did have a minimal

impact.

However, basically, it says continued harvest yields at this rate cannot be attained and still allow the population to be projected for the five-year duration. Target yields in the simulation are not attained, in order to make the five-year projection. The maximum yields for each year are displayed and their corresponding low percent SPR.

Basically, what that is saying that we would still be taking out more fish from the population than the spawning stock is able to produce, even at the thirty-three percent reduction of the bag limit.

I will go on record saying that it can't hurt, but it is just showing us that it still will not get us there. I mean, it's obvious. If you are going to lower the bag limit, it is obvious at some point that you are going to leave more fish in the water, but it's just not going to do enough to get us to where we think we should be.

COMMISSIONER GOLLOTT: Paul, you said you were going to give us your recommendation?

PAUL MICKLE: Yes, I'm going to go ahead and give it. I may get in a little bit of trouble.

COMMISSIONER GOLLOTT: Remember, WLOX is here.

PAUL MICKLE: No problem. I would like to say

that I like to lean on the math and I like to lean on my experience, and I know you do, too.

I would like to make the recommendation just as it says here, fifteen inches for three years, or my other recommendation is possibly a combo. I call this the haymaker, going up to fifteen inches for three years, or do a combo, do a couple of other options, go fourteen inches and add another option that we discussed on top of it.

It sounds like, from Commissioner Bosarge, he brought up combos right in the beginning, before I even did, and it sounds like Chairman Gollott, you do as well. I think the compromise statement you made is the same thing. Maybe options of fourteen inches, adding on another option on top of that has the reproductive potential to allow that to occur.

Of course, we will do SPR updates each year to monitor what is going on, and the Commission can change anything at anytime. You have that power to do so.

My suggestion, my recommendation to you is take a swing at it, whatever swing combo haymaker it is, and see what happens. That is my recommendation.

COMMISSIONER GOLLOTT: What combo are you recommending, though?

PAUL MICKLE: Fourteen inches definitely is the

left, and I say bring in the right with possibly a seasonal closure showed a little bit of promise in the model. The bag limits, if it has any promise, it's got to be a major reduction in bag limit, below the six that is the average catch of an angler out there, and those are probably the next ranking options.

I firmly believe that fifteen inches alone will let you reach your twenty percent target. I have a lot of faith in my math. Fifteen inches will get you to twenty percent in three years.

I said on record before that there are some really good year classes coming in. We have a great opportunity to protect these fish and get SPR up very quickly.

If we don't do anything, we are going to fish them out. We are going to have a yield increase, and, then, it is going to be gone and the reproductive potential is removed.

COMMISSIONER GOLLOTT: Let me make this very clear. I think I'm understanding you.

If we go to fifteen inches and don't touch anything else, in three years we should meet our goal of twenty percent SPR?

PAUL MICKLE: That's what the math says. That's what the model states.

MATT HILL: That is the consensus among all the staff.

PAUL MICKLE: After three years, we've got the fishery back. The target is reached. Potentially could do any change that the Commission so feels.

COMMISSIONER GOLLOTT: Where should we be in one year, if we go to fifteen inches?

PAUL MICKLE: That is difficult to estimate. I do see a very strong inclination that SPR will increase. Because of the year classes that are coming through and the protection that you can create from that size change, SPR would increase, and that is correcting the ship. Right now, we are decreasing it, and that would potentially right the ship and start to bring things back up.

MATT HILL: We want to be completely transparent with the Commission. This is why it starts in 2015. The terminal year for the stock assessment we just conducted was 2014. We are nearing the end of 2016. In 2014, we ended up with an SPR of ten point three. I'm not going to say more than likely. I'm going to say it is less than ten point three, right now, due to some of the highest fishing mortality that we have ever seen, the highest effort that we have ever seen.

Definitely, when we present that chart, I want

to caution y'all that anything we do probably will not be in effect until the beginning of 2017. The resource will not see any changes in 2017. The next update will have 2015 and 2016 in it, and, then, there will more than likely be a drop in SPR.

I just wanted to prepare the Commission for that so they will not be alarmed, but we just do not have the data currently available to run that assessment for those two years yet.

We do have it for 2015. We just received it, and we are currently running it and we were pretty close to having it for this meeting.

I know Commissioner Bosarge understands how slow some of the data gets through NOAA. A lot of this data, we have to request from NOAA. It has to be finalized. We do not like to use preliminary data.

Right here at this percent SPR on the right, it stops in 2014. I would like to caution that in 2015 and 2016, it will more than likely be less than ten point two because any regulations that are enacted would not be enacted until 2017. I want to have that on record.

Right now, our back-of-the-envelope estimate is that we are somewhere around eight point eight. We have dropped from ten point two to eight point eight in a two-year time period.

COMMISSIONER GOLLOTT: Let me ask you.

If you could get the data on Louisiana from the mouth of the Mississippi River to the State line and put that in your model, what would it say?

Do you have any idea?

MATT HILL: We would not have any idea about how the SPR would look. However, I did have a lengthy conversation with Dr. Robert Leaf. He's in the audience today. He is confident that the fishing mortality rate would probably vary substantially, just due to the data from the split right there. They are right now at point seven three fishing mortality. There is a lot that would go into that. We just don't know.

We would have to physically get that data. I'm not sure they are willing to give that data up to us currently, but we could work with them and try to see what it is. They use the exact same model as we use.

COMMISSIONER GOLLOTT: They use the same model?

MATT HILL: They use the exact same model.

COMMISSIONER GOLLOTT: Let me ask you this.

Gulfport, Pass Christian, Bay St. Louis all fish the Louisiana marsh. They fish Mississippi and Louisiana.

Are you pretty confident that you've got the data just from Mississippi, or is some of this data being mixed up?

MATT HILL: We had this conversation at length, when we began the stock assessment. We know that that happens. However, there is no way in the current system and we have brought these concerns up to NOAA several years in a row. It is extremely difficult for us to parse that data out. Being up front and transparent with the Commission, I will say that those fish are mixed in because they are landed in Mississippi.

It's just like snapper, if the snapper is landed in the state, or shrimp. Whatever state it is landed in that is the state that gets the credit for those fish. Yes, those fish are being counted in Mississippi, and we have no way of separating that data out currently.

COMMISSIONER GOLLOTT: Thank you.

Anybody else?

COMMISSIONER HAVARD: The charter boat community has offered to give up the Captain's limits as well as the deck hand limits for speckled trout. That's them doing their part to help increase the SPR. I think that that needs to be considered. That is potentially thirty fish per boat that could be left in the water. It's not going to hurt anything. If that's what they want to sacrifice and give up, I think we ought to listen to them.

COMMISSIONER GOLLOTT: Who, in the charter boat industry, has done that?

COMMISSIONER HAVARD: I'm not saying anybody has done it. They have offered it.

COMMISSIONER GOLLOTT: Who has offered it?

COMMISSIONER HAVARD: Through the CCA. They have meetings with these captains.

JOE JEWELL: Commissioners, at the last Commission meeting, Clarence Seymour who is the chairman of the charter boat for hire task force came before the Commission and presented a resolution, and that was one of the items that was mentioned in that resolution. The task force that represents the charter for hire came forward and said that they would support that. If the Commission moves forward with some sort of recommendation, they would absolutely support the captain and crew not taking the bag limit per person per day.

MATT HILL: I do want to point out that was a unanimous vote from the task force to put that in place, with any other recommendations that were put forth.

COMMISSIONER GOLLOTT: At this time, I think I will call about a ten-minute break.

(Whereupon, a short recess was taken.)

COMMISSIONER GOLLOTT: I would like to bring this meeting back to order.

Before we get off of this subject, do we have anyone that would like to speak to it, public comments?

DON ABRAMS: I'm Don Abrams from Ocean Springs, and, as I told Commissioner Bosarge, I fish for trout a lot. I catch a lot of trout and I eat a lot of trout.

I also support the historic Ocean Springs Saltwater Fly Fishing Club, the HOSSFLY. We've got about forty-five members, now, and speckled trout is their number one fish.

I really appreciate the opportunity to sit in on this meeting and hear the exchange between the Commission and the scientists. I think this is good stuff.

We do have a significant problem, and it is getting worse. Our members know that. The people I talk to that are not members that still fish know that we've got an issue, and we really encourage you folks to take bold decisive action right away.

I see a couple of no-brainer options here. I think the science is very clear that going to a fifteen inch minimum limit is the absolute right thing to do. Two fifteen inch fish weigh as much as three thirteen inch fish. We are not really talking about penalizing anglers much, but I think that's a no-brainer.

If the charter boat captains and mates are willing to give up their daily allowance, I think we need to take that and put it in the mix. It does two things. It keeps more spawning fish in the water and it lets the

public know that we've got an issue and we need to make sacrifices to make it work.

If these men that go out and make their living catching fish are willing to give up their daily limit, then, we had better not complain about having to go from thirteen to fifteen, or anything else the Commission decides.

I think we've got two really solid things on the table. We, the members of HOSSFLY, will support you tooth and nail, if you up the limit to fifteen inches. We will argue with anybody that argues with it.

Most of our members have been fishing to fourteen inches anyway. We've got a lot of people that like to say they fish to Florida limits, fifteen or sixteen to twenty inch slot. We don't keep the bigger fish. They don't taste that good anyway.

I would suggest, rather than a seasonal closure, shutting things down entirely for a portion of the year. That does bad things to the charter fishing industry and the tourism industry and the people that just like to get out on the water. Catching fish isn't everything, but, if you tell me I can't get on the water and catch speckled trout, that is going to rub a lot of people the wrong way.

As an alternative, when I think about my own experience, I catch the most trout in the wintertime when

they are all bunched up. You find a little hole, an oyster bar, or something, where they are bunched up. I've been out at times where every cast you catch a fish, and they are bigger fish in the wintertime and those bigger fish are all females.

If you need to think about a closure for part of the season, I suggest that you might consider a wintertime closure, or a wintertime reduction in the bag limit. Catching fifteen fourteen or fifteen inch fish in May, June, July takes a certain spawning capacity out of the resource. Catching fifteen of those fish in the wintertime, when they are fifteen to twenty-two inch fish which are much bigger, that takes a hugely greater amount of reproductive capacity out of the system.

If you cut us back to ten fish, during the winter, November through February, or whatever the scientists that understand these fish's life cycles say, if you cut us back to ten, or twelve, in the wintertime, you are not affecting many people so you are not going to get many complaints. Everybody else is sitting on the sofa watching football, or going deer hunting, when the avid fishermen are out, but you do a lot to protect that spawnable resource.

I recognize that the model can't model that, but I think it would be a good thing to do.

The other thing, allowing undersize fish, whether it's letting children catch them, or letting people catch two, or three, fish a day, we all know what is going to happen. The first thirteen inch fish goes on the stringer, and, if the fish are biting, you're not going to go home. You keep fishing. You catch a sixteen inch fish. That thirteen inch fish gets ripped off the stringer and thrown in the water. I hate to say it, but people behave that way.

Any loophole you put into the regulations that allow people to have a legal small fish on the boat is going to be abused.

The other thing that is not part of the regulations, but I would like to just toss on the table is the whole enforcement side. The regulations can only do so much. Unfortunately, we've got a lot of people who fish that don't pay much attention to the regulations.

I love red fishing out of a kayak. Last November, I put my boat in the water down off east beach, went out and fished, caught my three red fish and came back, and, at the point in the marsh where I put my boat in, there were twenty-three red fish carcases there where somebody had done a sloppy job of fileting. Twenty-three fish. Two of them were legal. The rest were undersized.

There were two guys fishing on the dock down

there, or the remains of the dock. I suspect they are the ones that did it.

There are a lot of people that do that, and they continue doing it because oftentimes they can get away with it. I would really like to see DMR put a little emphasis on enforcement.

I'm not suggesting that you guys are doing a bad job, not at all, but, if you could punch it up a bit and maybe get a couple of high profile cases out there where people were obviously abusing the limit. The guy that comes in with thirty speckled trout that are ten to twelve inches, write him a huge ticket and confiscate his boat, and we could really put a dent into that bad behavior that is also hurting us.

Again, I really appreciate the opportunity to be here, and, if there is anything we can do to help out with this, we are eager to do it. Thank you.

COMMISSIONER GOLLOTT: Thank you.

Mr. Eicke, do you want to say something?

You know the rules, that you've got to fill out a paper and send it up here.

F. J. EICKE: I know, and I was about to say that I did not because I didn't know if this would be part of what would be allowed.

The other thing I want to say is what is being

proposed is essentially in line with what we proposed in our position statement, that was to return to at least fourteen and, precisely we said that for hire, if the model chose and dictates. I think the model chose and dictates. Consider a reduction in bag limit. That's what y'all are doing. If that will work and if the staff analysis indicates there might be some benefit.

We commented on the charter captains, and I was just elated to find that they had passed that resolution in the charter boat task force. We are all in this together and they are willing to do their part.

What we said was make no provision for undersize fish in the plan, until the target SPR is firmly established, and that's what I would continue to put before the Commission, and the other one that we said was also make no season closures for Spotted Seatrout until the SPR is reached.

The three to five year prediction that you are getting from the staff seems to be strong enough that it needs to really be followed.

The final thing I would say is one of the things that I have thought that we have lacked in the past, DMR as a whole, is really publicizing some things that involve citations. I realize there are problems with that because people are getting cited and they may go before the -- I

guess they go before the lowest level of the judicial system, Justice Courts, and we don't know whether they are actually guilty, or not, but we also don't know the outcomes of those cases.

I can remember in the past, things that have been publicized, catching red snapper and being known. We need to publicize more of this so the public knows that things are happening and that there are things you cannot do, and, then, of course, we might look at some things we publicize on the positive way, as well, that people are doing certain things and that's good.

Publicity out of the DMR, to me, needs to be upped because that's a way of advising the public that we are finding these kinds of things.

Some years ago, I went up to the third floor, I guess it was, and was handed, at that time, the paper books from CMR meetings, and I went through those things, particularly the Marine enforcement division records, and I actually recorded what was going on month-to-month because those records are in there and y'all receive them, and it was amazing to me who was doing it. This happened to be after the hurricane a couple of years, and they were finding abusers regularly; undersized trout, undersized red fish, over the limit, you name it. It was in there.

That perhaps needs to be made public on a

regular basis through the Commission. I know Captain Davis and Rusty Pittman get up here and talk about what the citations are, but I would like to see that put out in number form, what we are citing, so that people are aware of that as part of what goes out to the public after a meeting, after y'all see this data and, essentially, approve it, or they are presenting it to you. The public needs to know that there are rules and there are regulations and they are there for a purpose.

COMMISSIONER GOLLOTT: Mr. Eicke, you did say final a while ago.

F. J. EICKE: One last comment. I think that would add to the idea that there is and needs to be a better idea about conservation in this state. I don't know if any other states are better than us, but we need to think more about why we're doing something and why we have regulations, and it's there for a reason, and this is it right now that we are talking about.

Thank you very much.

COMMISSIONER GOLLOTT: Mr. Eicke, one thing.

You said the CCA is recommending fourteen inches.

So you would be adamantly opposed to fifteen inches?

F. J. EICKE: No, I would not. We were

recommending, at that time, at least back to fourteen, but we didn't know what we know now. From what Paul and Matt and Joe have been presenting, we know that, now.

To me, as was said previously by Don Abrams, it seems like a no-brainer to go to fifteen, at least on a short term basis, until we get back to where we need to be.

COMMISSIONER GOLLOTT: That's what the Commission is trying to tell you. We know more now than we did before.

F. J. EICKE: Yes, and that's why, when we presented the position statement, it was not do this. It was these are things that we obviously see as needed, and, then, we'll go from there.

COMMISSIONER GOLLOTT: Thank you, sir.

F. J. EICKE: Thank y'all.

COMMISSIONER GOLLOTT: With that, we will conclude the speckled trout part of this thing, and we will get an update about the Conservationist and talk about oysters from Mr. Joe Jewell.

JOE JEWELL: Thank you, Chairman Gollott. I'm going to try and be brief.

This is a photograph of the Conservationist. It was taken about a month ago. The Conservationist has actually undergone dramatic changes and updates even from

then.

The original contract was issue to Bay Marine July the 14th of last year. There have been three additional PO's that have updated that contract. One was the forward helm and the mast and boom.

There used to be a large main mast on the Conservationist. We have redesigned it, now, for this overhead canopy system, but you will also notice, now, that the winches are overhead. It's sort of redesigned to make it more efficient, and it also is a safer design for the vessel.

We also had second PO's for the winches, the wash-down pump, the awning and the handrail.

You see that the handrail goes all the way up forward to the Conservationist. This also was a safety feature and a Coast Guard update requirement for the vessel.

Then, the third and final PO was for the wheel house, the actual cabin on the vessel which is about to be completed shortly.

These photographs were taken last week, early last week. Actually, there have been a lot of changes and significant updates, since then. The console inside the cabin has actually been installed. You can see the paneling and the woodwork, in the forward part of the

cabin has been installed. The banner on the back of the Conservationist is sort of that old 1970 style. The original portion of the vessel has been painted on.

The current status. The engines and the generators have been installed. The fuel, the hydraulics, the water tanks have been installed. The topside and the bottom paint has been completed. The overhead winches and canopy system that we saw in the original photograph, that all has been completed. The wash-down monitors, or the water cannons, have been installed.

The wheel house is in progress. The actual restroom inside the wheel house and the console have been installed, and the cabinetry and the benches are in process. They are being constructed, right now.

These old boats like this, everything has to be handmade. There are no standardized measurements inside the boat at all.

Future plans for the Conservationist. We will use it to cultivate. Our emphasis primarily is in the Western Sound, but we are going to engage in other activities in the Eastern part of the Mississippi Sound, including Biloxi Bay primarily.

We are going to engage in relay activities. We are going to deploy shellfish and artificial reefs.

We plan to use it as a check station.

Originally, it was used as a check station. Twenty-something years ago, when I first started here, it was used as a check station in Bayou Caddy.

We will use it for other operations, like, Coastal Cleanup.

Marine Patrol has used it in the past and will continue to use it as a command center.

Then, of course, we are going to use it as a floating laboratory. We have used it in the past for several different types of operations.

With that being said, I will take any questions.

COMMISSIONER BOSARGE: Just a couple.

With what transpired with the sinking that started this, the bulkheads, the bulkhead between the engine room and the pump room, it has been closed up?

JOE JEWELL: That has been installed, correct.

COMMISSIONER BOSARGE: I'm kind of ashamed to ask this question because I should have been over there and looked at it.

What type pump system was put back on it?

Before it was a pump system that was driven off the PTO on the motor. The pump was in one compartment. The motor in another compartment.

Do you know what they have, now?

JOE JEWELL: Let me call Eric Broussard. Eric

Broussard is the project manager for the Conservationist. It has gone through a complete design.

Eric, do you want to answer the question?

COMMISSIONER BOSARGE: We'll put you in the hot spot.

ERIC BROUSSARD: Sure. It's changed over from the PTO system to an electric system run off the generator, and the pump and the monitor and the wash-down pipes have all been moved forward of the forward bulkhead.

COMMISSIONER BOSARGE: So they are isolated in their own compartment?

ERIC BROUSSARD: Exactly.

COMMISSIONER BOSARGE: My point being, in other words, by doing this, now, we have almost fixed it to where the problem we had before can't happen again.

ERIC BROUSSARD: We definitely updated. The pipe system and everything has been updated as well to stainless flex instead of exhaust material.

COMMISSIONER BOSARGE: It looks good.

JOE JEWELL: We want to invite the Commission to come down anytime that y'all would like to come down.

I know a couple of the Commissioners have come down, during the process, and visited.

It is getting very close. We are within a few weeks of actually relaunching the vessel.

Anytime any of the Commissioners would like to come down and visit, we would certainly invite y'all to come down. Let us know, and we will come tour the boat. It is a very nice vessel.

COMMISSIONER GOLLOTT: What have you got planned for this thing, since we've had a lot of devastation in the Western Sound?

Are there any plans for relaying out of closed areas to help kick start the areas that have gotten devastated?

JOE JEWELL: Well, our biggest plans, right now, for the vessel, when it becomes available, is to refurbish and replenish the Biloxi Bay area. That is where we need to concentrate a lot of the activities initially.

But, certainly, the Western end of the Mississippi Sound is where you get the biggest bang for the buck because that's where the largest reef areas are located.

We are about to open the season, so we are concentrating a lot of our efforts, right now, on opening the check stations and monitoring the regulatory portions of the 2016-2017 oyster season.

COMMISSIONER GOLLOTT: You know I would like to see some relaying going on, as quick as that thing gets in the water.

JOE JEWELL: Well, absolutely.

COMMISSIONER GOLLOTT: In order to help the fishermen make a living this year.

JOE JEWELL: Sure.

COMMISSIONER GOLLOTT: I would like to say that I would like to see us separate the tonging and the dredgers this year on the sack limits because I think the tongers are going to a lot better, especially in the Bay, as far as our quotas.

Think about that for the next meeting and ways of relaying some of these oysters in closed areas so the tongers can harvest them this year, and, then, you use the cull material to build reefs in the Bay.

Is there a way for y'all to separate your landings from your tongers and your dredgers, the amount of sacks that are coming in?

JOE JEWELL: Oh, yes. Absolutely.

You mean, monitor them as they come in?

COMMISSIONER GOLLOTT: Yes.

JOE JEWELL: Yes. Absolutely.

COMMISSIONER GOLLOTT: What was caught last year tonging verus dredging?

JOE JEWELL: Absolutely. We have our trip ticket program where we monitor those and we are able to tell the Commission within a day, or two, how many were

harvested from each component, whether it be tonging, or dredging.

COMMISSIONER GOLLOTT: Could I ask y'all to please have that data at our next meeting so we can look at it?

JOE JEWELL: Absolutely.

COMMISSIONER GOLLOTT: Anyone else?

COMMISSIONER BOSARGE: Paul, would you be willing to work with me just a little bit on your model and try to look at some of the unknown assumptions?

PAUL MICKLE: Yes, sir.

COMMISSIONER BOSARGE: And see if we can't tweak on this just a little bit to get what I feel may be a little bit more of an accurate picture?

PAUL MICKLE: Absolutely.

COMMISSIONER BOSARGE: Thank you.

COMMISSIONER GOLLOTT: Do we have any more business to come before this Commission?

(No response.)

COMMISSIONER GOLLOTT: If not, I would ask for a motion to adjourn.

COMMISSIONER BOSARGE: So moved, Mr. Chairman.

COMMISSIONER GOLLOTT: We have a motion.

Do we have a second?

COMMISSIONER HARMON: So seconded, Mr. Chairman.

COMMISSIONER GOLLOTT: We have a motion and a second.

All those in favor say aye.

(All in favor.)

COMMISSIONER GOLLOTT: Opposed?

(None opposed.)

COMMISSIONER GOLLOTT: Motion carries.

(Whereupon, at 10:35 o'clock, a.m., the September 30, 2016, workshop meeting of the Commission on Marine Resources was concluded.)

C E R T I F I C A T E

I, Lucille Morgan, Certified Shorthand Reporter, do hereby certify that the above and foregoing is a true and correct transcript of the work session of the Commission on Marine Resources, as taken by me at the time and place heretofore stated in the aforementioned matter in shorthand, with electronic verification, and later reduced to typewritten form to the best of my skill and ability; and, further, that I am not a relative, employee, or agent, of any of the parties thereto, nor financially interested in the cause.

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COURT REPORTER