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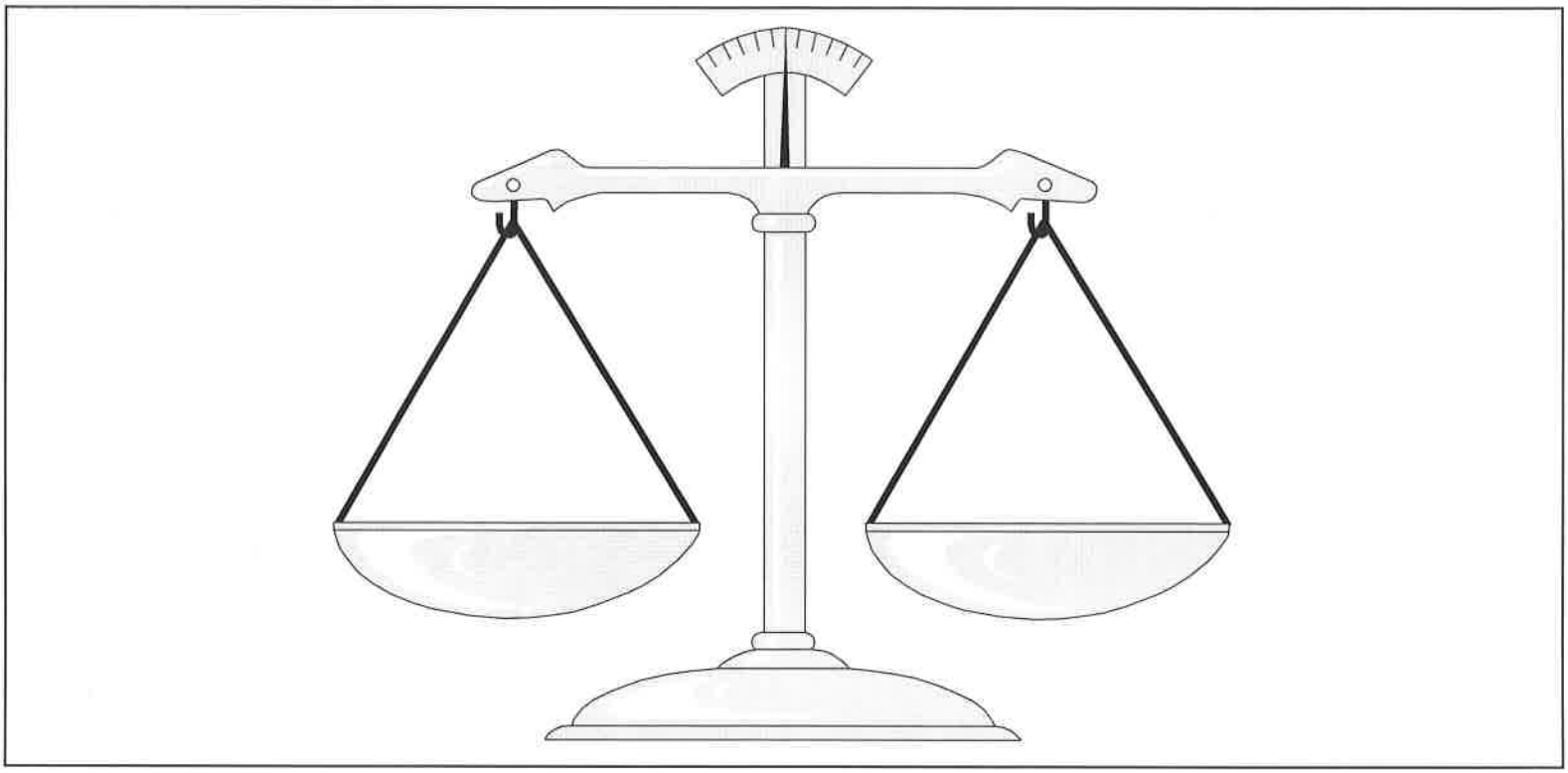

COMMISSION ON MARINE RESOURCES

COMMISSION MEETING

March19, 2013

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COMMISSION ON MARINE RESOURCES

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March 19, 2013

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TRANSCRIPT OF MEETING OF COMMISSION ON MARINE RESOURCES AT BOLTON STATE BUILDING, PUBLIC MEETING ROOM, 1141 BAYVIEW AVENUE, BILOXI, MISSISSIPPI, ON THE 19TH DAY OF MARCH 2013 COMMENCING AT 9:00 A.M. AND REPORTED BY NORMA JEAN LADNER SOROE, CERTIFIED SHORTHAND REPORTER.

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COMMISSION MEMBERS PRESENT:

DR. VERNON ASPER, Chairman
RICHARD GOLLOTT
SHELBY DRUMMOND
STEVE BOSARGE
JIMMY TAYLOR

ALSO PRESENT:

DANNY GUICE, Interim Director DMR
JOSEPH R. RUNNELS, ESQ., Asst. Attorney General
SANDY CHESNUT, ESQ., Asst. Attorney General

A. Call to Order

DR. ASPER: Good morning. I'd like to welcome everybody to the regular March meeting of the Mississippi Commission on Marine Resources. Always great to have everybody here.

B. Approval of Minutes

DR. ASPER: Were going to start today with the approval of the minutes. I believe we have minutes for two meetings, a regular meeting and a special meeting. Are there any changes or corrections to the minutes? Or is there a motion to approve them as distributed?

MR. DRUMMOND: So moved, Mr. Chairman.

MR. GOLLOTT: Second, Mr. Chairman.

DR. ASPER: Those in favor say aye.

C. Approval of Agenda

DR. ASPER: There is an agenda before us. I believe we have one change. Item H-3(c) is going to be removed.

And I'm not sure where it would show up on this session, but we plan to have a closed session for the purpose of considering the need to go into executive session at the very end of our meeting.

MR. GOLLOTT: So moved, Mr. Chairman.

DR. ASPER: Is there a second?

MR. DRUMMOND: Second, Mr. Chairman.

DR. ASPER: Any further changes or corrections? Those in favor say aye.

Just to let you know what that closed session is going to be for, we have one personnel item that we've got to deal with, but we also would like to announce that we did interview five candidates for the position of executive director yesterday. And of those five, we have made our comments and we will discuss that in closed session, and we will in that session decide on which three names of those five will be sent up to the governor.

So those names should be to the governor sometime this week. That's our plan, just to let you know that that's what the closed session is going to be about. We're not going to announce the names, any of them. So the only name that we intend for anybody ever to hear will be the one that the governor selects. And that will be announced by his office.

D. Public Comments

DR. ASPER: Okay. We have a period of public comments. I don't have any sheets from anybody wanting to talk. If anybody would like to make some comments? Okay. I don't want to shut anybody out.

E. Executive Director's Report

DR. ASPER: Executive director's report. Do you have anything today for us?

MR. GUICE: Not at this time.

F. Marine Patrol

DR. ASPER: Okay. Moving on to marine patrol.

2. Marine Patrol Report

MR. CHATAGNIER: Good morning, Mr. Chairman commissioners, Acting Director Guice, legal.

Not a lot of stuff on our agenda here as far as violations of marine patrol.

There is one I'd like to point out that was pretty significant, and that was Herman W. Rieux, better known as Rosamo. He was caught with 11 nondegradable gill nets. And I think there was roughly about 300 pounds of flounder. I've been here 26 or 27 years now, and I started chasing him when I got here. This man is 81 years old. And he only has one leg. And he can still outrun the best of them. I'm telling you, he's hard to catch. But the officers did a real good job of getting him. And that's 11 gill nets that we don't have to worry about laying across bayous all night long, taking our speckled trout and redfish and letting them go to waste.

MR. DRUMMOND: Chief, what was his nickname?

MR. CHATAGNIER: Rosamo.

MR. DRUMMOND: Where is he from?

MR. CHATAGNIER: Hancock County. He fishes a lot in Louisiana. He'll slip over there and violate the law and come back to Mississippi with the fish and vice versa.

We had two two fishing license citations, but they're still way down from where they are. I guess people finally getting the word. And only one nonresident fishing license.

Couple of cases of undersized redfish.

Boat and water safety is down.

One marine litter.

To be honest with you, it says hazard material under there. I'm not quite sure exactly what that was.

Had one fatality. Actually, there's two fatalities since we went ahead and made the recovery.

The outreach presentation, gave a presentation to 1600 kids at the Pascagoula High School safety day.

We didn't have any dive activity in February.

Our JEA patrols, they did 29, total of 454 for man hours, one federal action report, and two state citations were issued.

Any questions?

MR. TAYLOR: Tiny, the two kayakers that died, were they wearing life jackets?

MR. CHATAGNIER: Neither one were.

MR. TAYLOR: Okay. Do you know if -- they were out in the kayak, were they wading, or could you tell?

MR. CHATAGNIER: Nobody really knows what happened in this situation. They had life jackets. One of

them was strapped to the kayak.

We see this more and more every day that we check. There's more and more kayakers on this coast than there has been in years. And for some reason, these kayakers think they don't have to have a life jacket. And we've issued tickets. Matter of fact, this one particular boy, I warned him one time and made him go back to his truck and get his life jacket. He said he had one, but he had it in the truck.

MR. TAYLOR: Aren't they supposed to be wearing them when they're in a kayak? I mean, doesn't the law say they have to wear them when they're in a kayak?

MR. CHATAGNIER: They don't have to wear them. But it's still considered a vessel, and they have to have some type of wearable device. And you'll see a lot of people will wear them.

But we check people going out there in little rubber boats because they think it's a little-bitty small boat and they're only going to Deer Island, they're crossing a busy channel, that they don't have to have a life jacket. And a lot of them will be out at nighttime, they'll come in with no lights on. They're required to at least have a flashlight to let somebody see them when they're coming back.

MR. BOSARGE: What all are they required to have? I'm just curious. I mean, besides a life jacket and a flashlight, is there...

MR. CHATAGNIER: That's the only thing they're required to have. You don't have to have a fire extinguisher. There's no source of fire on there. And if there was, as long as you have a portable fuel tank, you're not required to have a fire extinguisher. If you can pick up the -- if you can pick the tank out of the boat and throw it overboard, you're not required to have a fire extinguisher.

MR. TAYLOR: Is there something that we could change to require -- Joe or Sandy -- to -- kayaker to wear a life jacket when he's in the thing? Is that something we can address?

MR. CHATAGNIER: The legislation gave the commission the authority to enforce and adopt rules and regulations below I-10 for boat and water safety. If you were to come up with a rule that required them like they did with jet skis that the whole time you're in the kayak you have to wear a life jacket. On a jet ski, you have have to wear the life jacket, but also the lanyard, kill switch, has to be attached to that life jacket or you so if you do fall off, the machine will stop and won't come back in a big circle and hit you in the head.

So, I mean, I think y'all have the authority to require somebody in that kayak has to have a life jacket on them the whole time they're paddling it.

MR. TAYLOR: Sandy, what do we have to do to do

that? Do we have to publish it and everything like we normally do?

MS. CHESNUT: Yes. It would have to go through the rules procedure.

MR. TAYLOR: Who would do that? Would y'all or would someone else in the department?

MS. CHESNUT: We can work with marine patrol on it.

MR. TAYLOR: Would you, please?

MS. CHESNUT: Yes.

MR. TAYLOR: Thank you.

DR. ASPER: What do the other states do?

MR. CHATAGNIER: Excuse me?

DR. ASPER: What do other coastal states do?

MR. CHATAGNIER: I'm not really sure. But just about every state adopts the federal rules and regulations when it comes to boat and water safety. So there are situations on certain size vessels, you got to have life jackets or wearable, you have to have a throwable device, the lights, sound producing device.

But most of the kayaks around here, they're under the length where you're required to have all that extra equipment.

But regardless what the other states do, I mean, it only make sense if you're out there, you flip over, the

thing gets away from you, and you're not that good of a swimmer, you're stuck. At least you got a life jacket on, you can bob up and down for a while.

MR. TAYLOR: Today, the life jackets, you've got these self-inflatable ones. I have one that when I get in my kayak I wear or when I'm wade fishing I wear it, you know. So they're not cumbersome and they're very inexpensive, too. They're not cumbersome like the old orange ones you see, you know, that commercial vessels use.

MR. CHATAGNIER: They've got vests that to wear if you watch any of these kayak things on TV, Wide World of Sports or the Olympics or any of it, they're all wearing helmets and vests when they're doing white water kayaking. I don't see the need to wear helmets down here. The roughest water we're going to get is when the wind picks up. But it's a whole lot different thing because they're going to -- and those rivers up there, they're going through rock jetties and stuff like that.

But kayak only makes sense to wear that life jacket when you're in it.

MR. DRUMMOND: Most kayaks are used in fresh water, huh, Chief?

MR. CHATAGNIER: Well, I guess you could have said that at one time, but now they've got clubs out here that they paddle out to Horn Island and Dauphin Island and Ship

Island. So you're liable to see them anywhere now.

MR. DRUMMOND: ...Fish & Wildlife policy on it that you could work with them on.

MR. CHATAGNIER: Well, they're like us. I don't think they have anything that requires them. They're with us on the jet skis and the other federal rules. I'm sure that they wouldn't have a problem going along with it.

DR. ASPER: Okay. Anything else? Thank you very much.

On to fisheries. Joe.

G. Marine Fisheries

MR. JEWELL: Good morning, commissioners, Mr. Guice, Sandy. Dale sends his regards. He's out representing the agency at a Gulf States meeting in Florida.

I want to mention a couple things before we get started on the agenda item.

First, the office of marine fisheries will be working closely with the administrative services office. We're going to establish a pilot program for the sale of commercial license at the Pass Christian check station this year. It will be between April 15 and May 31, sort of a public outreach program for our commercial fisheries. We want to make y'all aware of that.

And second, in our science seminar series last week, Tuesday, March 12, we had a seminar on Mississippi

artificial reefs. We had approximately 40 people in attendance at that meeting. It was held here in the Bolton Building. We had several items on the agenda. And we have an overview of the Mississippi artificial reef program, invasive species, red snapper aquaculture, and fishing Mississippi artificial reefs. It's pretty successful program. It's been a really good public outreach program on behalf of the agency and those entities that we coordinate with.

So that being said, we'll move right on to the agenda items.

Bill is out also attending a meeting representing our agency, so Rick Burris is going to give the derelict crab trap cleanup presentation.

3. Derelict Crab Trap Cleanup

MR. BURRIS: Good morning, commissioners, Mr. Guice, Ms. Chesnut.

Today, we want to give you an update on the 2013 Mississippi derelict crab trap roundup that was held last month.

The first slide is the state statute which grants the commission authority to establish a closed season on blue crabs, thus allowing the cleanup to take place.

Authority is also found in our Title 22 regulations, Part4, Chapter 8 closed season.

A derelict crab trap is defined as a lost trap,

lost traps, which are typically unbuoyed or unmarked and not actively fished. These traps can become lost through a variety of different avenues. High tides, storms, especially hurricanes are a big problem, entanglement with boats or fishing gear, such as shrimp trawls or oyster dredges, negligence in proper assembly, and theft is also a major problem. These guys that are stealing traps will pick them up where they were placed, and they'll run a long ways, take the crabs out, and then dump them over somewhere else, and the owner can't find them.

We pick them up first off because they are navigational hazards. If anybody has ever had a crab trap wrapped around your prop on your boat, you know how much of a pain that can be. But the main reason our major concern is ghost fishing. Once these traps are left alone, they continue to fish whether or not they have bait in them. And they'll catch crabs and finfish and even birds and mammals and diamondback terrapins. And once these animals get in there, they can't get out, and they become bait so they continue to fish, and so in order to protect our resources we like to get them out of the water.

And also, to prevent user group conflicts, these things are a major eyesore. They're marine debris, and nobody likes to look at them.

Here is a timeline of our 2013 crab trap

cleanup. Our last cleanup was held in January 2010. In October of 2012, we had a meting with the Mississippi Crab Task Force to decide the dates for this year's cleanup. Early January 2013, we notified all commercial and recreational crabbers by mail. We also solicited all our past volunteers by mail. We issued a press release and posted information on our website which I'll show you in a second. In February, we coordinated with Pascagoula, Ocean Springs, and Waveland in order to use their harbors. We also got with Sims Metal Management Systems, and they agreed to donate dumpsters at all our sites, as well as recycle all our crab traps that we picked up.

The cleanup started the 14th of February. And the crabbers had seven days to pick up all their traps. After those seven days, those traps were considered derelict and our volunteers could pick them up.

On the 18th and 19th, we held volunteer training sessions, basically just safety sessions for anybody who was willing to participate and if they had any questions they could ask us then. And it's cut off at the bottom, but the 21st through the 23rd of February was the three days that the volunteers could go pick up all the traps that they found in the water or on land. And on the 23rd, the last day, was the day they could bring them to us at those three sites.

This was on our website. It's pretty simple.

It just basically tells the dates of the cleanup, where they can bring them to, the times. And then the training session is right here. And also has a ways of contacting us. And it's also cut off at the bottom, but you can see our collaborators are Gulf Coast Research Lab. They've been instrumental in helping us over the years. And then Sims Metal Management Systems which I mentioned earlier.

This chart shows our Gulfwide cleanup effort through 2012. You will notice one of the most important things here that it started in 1999, and we were the first state in the Gulf to implement this program. And then other states picked up the pace in 2002.

And since 2012, we have removed -- you can't see it again, I'm sorry -- we've removed 78,000 traps Gulfwide.

This slide shows the Mississippi effort. Like I said, it started in 1999. You'll notice here in 2007, the most traps we've picked up in a single year was in that year, and coincidentally that was the first cleanup we had post-Katrina.

Also, we haven't had cleanups every year, certified cleanup. But us as a staff, fisheries staff, we continually go out looking for these traps year round. Sometimes we actually have efforts to just basically go out and look for these traps when we have good tides.

This year we picked up 281 traps making our total for Mississippi almost 19,000 traps.

By site, Ocean Springs had 145 traps brought in. Pascagoula had 105 traps, and Bayou Cadet had 37 traps. And we also gave out a prize to the individual who brought in the most traps at each site. In Ocean Springs, it was Mark Kopszywa. He had 60 traps. In Pascagoula, Wayne Rogers had 37 traps. And both those guys are commercial crabbers. And in Bayou Cadet, Ernie Zimmerman brought in eight traps.

This slide here shows a data card that we like for when people pick up traps, we like them to fill out for each trap they get. They can put ten different traps on there and put their name, where they're from, and the location they found the trap. They tell us whether it was on shore, in the water, if it had a float attached, it was usable or not, important information such as bycatch, whether it had crabs in it, diamondback terrapin, fish, or other animals, and whether they were dead or alive.

And all these cards go to GCRL, and they're compiling all this data for us as we speak.

We are very pleased with the outcome of this event. Even though we didn't remove as many traps as we have in earlier cleanups, we attribute that to the fact that there are actually less traps out there available to pick up thanks to earlier cleanups.

It was a very successful event, and we would like to thank all of our partners, Gulf Coast Research Lab,

Sims Metal Management, especially all our commercial and recreational crabbers and all our volunteers that signed up.

If y'all have any questions, I'm free to answer them.

MR. BOSARGE: It's a great effort. Really and truly, you can see the numbers going down. I know that there's not that many traps out there, and me myself when I'm out, I see very few. So good job.

MR. BURRIS: Thank you.

MR. DRUMMOND: I agree with that.

Stone crabs. Do you get that many stone crabs?

MR. BURRIS: They like to get in these derelict traps when they start getting oysters on it. Stone crabs around here hang around oyster beds a lot, and they like to get in those traps when the oysters start picking up on them.

MR. DRUMMOND: I didn't realize that many stone crabs were around in this area.

MR. BURRIS: I wouldn't say there's that many, but we've got a pretty good population.

MR. DRUMMOND: Thank you.

MR. BOSARGE: And I know Shelby is thinking about eating stone crabs. They're kind of small, Shelby, a lot of them.

MR. DRUMMOND: I wasn't talking to you, Steve. I was talking to Bill (sic).

DR. ASPER: Okay. Thanks a lot.
MR. JEWELL: If there are no more questions, that concludes marine fisheries.
DR. ASPER: Thanks, Joe.
H. Coastal Ecology
MR. BOYD: Good morning, Mr. Chairman, commissioners, Mr. Guice, Ms. Chesnut.
Coastal ecology has two action items for your consideration this morning. And Jennifer Wittmann will be our first presenter.
3. Bureau of Wetlands Permitting
a. Jackson County Board of Supervisors
MS. WITTMANN: Good morning. As Jan said, my name is Jennifer Wittmann. I'll be presenting coastal ecology's first action item on the agenda today.
It's a request for permit by the Jackson County Board of Supervisors located on the Lake Yazoo canal in Pascagoula. It's in the general use district, and Compton Engineering is the agent.
Project location is located by the yellow thumb tack. You can see Highway 90 and Market Street.
And this is a better zoomed-in picture showing the project area. There's public boat launch.
Few pictures from the site.
The applicant is seeking authorization to

maintenance dredge the Lake Yazoo canal. It's 2,200 feet in length and average of 60 feet in width. They'll be dredging to a depth of ten feet below mean low water. Approximately 40,000 cubic yards of material will be dredged and will be utilized at a beneficial use site.
This is a diagram showing the dredging area. You can see that this red line here and the red line here are the match lines. So this is headed out into the Mississippi Sound, and then this is the canal. This is back further past the boat launch.
The project serves a higher public purpose by restoring safe navigational depths and providing public access to the use of the waterways.
The project is allowable within the general use district.
Similar projects have been approved, and no precedent setting effects are anticipated.
There will be a temporary increase in turbidity and sedimentation during dredging operations, as well as a loss of benthic organisms. However, the conditions will not exceed DEQ's water quality guidelines.
The project should not have any adverse impact other than the loss of benthic organisms.
The activity will remain well away from the shoreline and will not affect the natural supply of sediments,

nutrients, temperature, salinity, water flow, or circulation.
Best management practices will be utilized during all phases of the dredging.
The applicant did explore the option of more extensive dredging impacts which would total approximately 60,000 cubic yards of material but reduced that to approximately 40,000 cubic yards in order to reduce the impacts to the system.
No offsite alternatives have been considered. This is a maintenance dredging project, and the same channel path will be followed. No new dredging areas.
Maintenance dredging does require a waterfront location.
The project will not change the location of the navigation channel and should not affect the natural scenic qualities.
Notification of the project appeared in the Sun Herald as required. No public comments were received.
DEQ is reviewing the project. Department of Archives & History has no reservations. Secretary of State's Office has stated that the project will not require a tidelands lease. And the Department of Wildlife, Fisheries & Parks has recommended best management practices and the dredging occur between May and September when Gulf sturgeon are least likely to be in the area.

Based on departmental review and evaluation, it has been determined that the project is consistent with the Mississippi Coastal Program and serves a higher public purpose by restoring safe navigational depths and providing public access to and use of the waterways.
Therefore, staff recommends approval of the project with the condition that dredging occur between May and September.
And I'd be happy to answer any questions. Also, Lisa Morrison with Compton Engineering is here if you have any questions for her.
MR. BOSARGE: I just have one.
Do you know where you're going to put the dredge spoils?
MS. WITTMANN: I've spoken with George Ramseur with the beneficial use group and MDMR. He said that Greenwood Island will be able to take all the material.
MR. BOSARGE: Good. Thank you.
MR. DRUMMOND: Jennifer, does the length of that dredging go all the way up into the lake up there?
MS. WITTMANN: It doesn't go all the way to the lake.
MR. DRUMMOND: I'm not sure how far it goes. I guess it's...
MS. WITTMANN: Basically going to start out in

the Sound and go up into the canal. And it will end approximately here.

MR. DRUMMOND: Okay. Thank you.

MS. WITTMANN: You're welcome.

DR. ASPER: Is there a motion?

MR. BOSARGE: I make a motion we accept staff's recommendations.

MR. DRUMMOND: I second the motion, Mr. Chairman.

DR. ASPER: Any further discussion? Those in favor say aye. Caries unanimously.

MS. WITTMANN: Thank you.

b. Jackson County Board of Supervisors

MR. CHRISTODOULOU: My name is Greg Christodoulou, and I have the final item for coastal ecology today.

It's a permit modification request by the Jackson County Board of Supervisors located in the Mississippi Sound adjacent to Lake Mars Road, Jackson County, general use district, and Seymour Engineering is the agent for the project.

Project location is here where the yellow thumb tack is marked. Just for reference, this is Highway 90 east-west, Highway 57 running north-south. Roughly right here is the dividing line between Ocean Springs on this side, Gautier on this side. The area in question is down here on the

Sound. It's in an unincorporated portion of Jackson County known as Gulf Park Estates.

Here is a closeup aerial of the area with the jetties, existing pier, and the boat launch.

The county is requesting to extend and reorient the existing east jetty and also perform dredging. The structures in question that they're asking for approval for are an extension of the eastern section of jetty approximately 265 feet in length, 30 feet in width, and it's going to be oriented at a 45 degree angle with the existing jetty.

Also, they are asking for six new single pile channel markers to mark the navigation channel.

Dredging for the new navigation channel realignment is 420 feet by 50 feet to a depth of five feet below mean low water. And that will be approximately 610 cubic yards of material. And while it doesn't meet the minimum amounts for the beneficial use, the county is planning on taking it to the Deer Island site.

Here is a diagram of the proposed project. In red, this is the new orientation of the jetty going in a 45 degree angle to the existing section. The area in purple will be the dredge area. And the yellow marked areas are where the locations of the new channel markers will be.

Some pictures at the site. This is looking south from the boat ramp area. You can see the jetties on

either side.

And this is a picture from the eastern jetty. So the new alignment would be roughly at a 45 degree angle to the end of the east jetty here.

The benefit of the project would include increased accessibility to the waters of the Sound for the public and restoration of navigable depths to the launch area.

The project is allowable in the G district.

Similar projects have been approved by the commission, and the proposed project is not expected to set a negative precedent.

Dredging would result in a temporary increase in turbidity and a temporary decrease in benthic organisms. Best management practices will be used to minimize these impacts.

The project will likely continue to cause accretion on the eastern side of the facility and erosion to the western side of the facility. These effects should not be increased by the additional jetty. And the applicant is in the process of developing a beneficial use plan to keep the sediment from accumulating on the eastern side and moving it to the west side to keep the sediment basically in the cycle that it normally goes to. The sediment cycle we have here is usually what they call longshore transport, and it runs from east to west.

The sediment does move from east to west. And

then the 45 degree leg that will be added on should reduce any onshore movement since most of the year round we have a southeasterly flow. That 45 degree dog leg should keep some of that material that would come up from the south and southeast from getting into the navigation channel.

No alternative sites were considered as this is an existing public access boat launch.

The site already has existing jetties, and the addition of another section to the eastern side should not affect the scenic qualities of the area.

Notification was placed in both the Sun Herald and the Mississippi Press as required. We did receive a comment from the adjacent property owner to the west with concerns about erosion his property has experienced since the jetties were constructed in '09.

The adjacent owner is not opposed to the project; however, he would like to make note that his land loss be documented by the department and that monitoring of his land continue to take place to ensure that additional erosion is documented if it occurs and that the property be designated a shoreline restoration site.

Other comments: DEQ is currently reviewing the project. Archives & History has no objections. Wildlife, Fisheries & Parks has recommended best management practices be implemented and that dredging operations be conducted between

May and September when Gulf sturgeon are less likely to be in the area. And the Secretary of State has said that the project will require a tidelands lease.

Staff's recommendation for the project is that the project should reduce the need for continued maintenance dredging and frequent maintenance dredging. It also provides safe navigational depths to the boating public. Therefore, staff recommends approval of the requested permit modification with the condition that the applicant establish a monitoring plan for the shoreline owned by the western adjacent property owner.

And in my talks with the applicant, with the agent for the county, that they don't have any problems doing any kind of monitoring for the adjacent property owner.

DR. ASPER: Are there any questions for Greg?

MR. CHRISTODOULOU: Also, we would like to add in the recommendation that the dredging does take place in those months that were listed by Wildlife, Fisheries & Parks, between May and September.

MR. GOLLOTT: Greg, is it possible that they could use some of the spoil material if it's of the grade that they could fill in this guy's property for him?

MR. CHRISTODOULOU: What the county has been in talks with us, we've had pre-application meetings about it, about taking any material that accumulates on the eastern side

of the jetty and side-casting it to the west.

And so there also may be a way that it can be done as a beneficial use site that DMR has, as well.

So that's something that's kind of in the works. If we were to do anything like that, we would have to come by y'all to get approval to do that, if there was an application that was put in for that.

MR. GOLLOTT: Mr. Chairman, I'd like to make a motion that we accept the staff's recommendation on this project.

DR. ASPER: Is there a second?

MR. BOSARGE: I'll second the motion.

DR. ASPER: Any further discussion? Those in favor say aye. Carries unanimously.

Greg, it may be my imagination, but it seems like quite a few years ago there was a project similar to this. This longshore transport sand is a real common problem, and it always seems like it's on the upstream side -- the downstream side.

Wasn't there a project that actually had a mechanical system for pumping sand from one place to the other on the inland basis? Maybe not here, but in a similar situation? I just have this vague recollection of that. And I remember I was thinking that will never work.

I was just curious if you have any knowledge on

that.

MR. CHRISTODOULOU: I've only been here since '06, and I don't recall any projects like that. There may be someone who was here prior to me that may have knowledge of a project like that.

DR. ASPER: It looked like a totally engineered solution to something which is not that complicated. But anyway, I'll see if I can find it.

Thanks.

I guess that's the end of coastal ecology.

MR. BOYD: Yes, sir.

DR. ASPER: Now we've got a financial report, couple other agenda items, financial report is next.

J. Administrative Services

MR. DOSTER: Good morning, commissioners, Mr. Guice, Ms. Chesnut.

Administrative services just has two no action items this morning. First on the agenda will be Kara Vesa with the financial report.

2. Financial Report

MS. VESA: Good morning. My name is Kara Vesa.

The budget report this morning is as of February 28, 2013, our budget of $6,152,176 remained the same from the previous month. We had spent $4,917,407 of our state budget, which left a remaining balance of $1,234,769 on February 28.

Tidelands budget for this year is obligated.

And I wanted to remind y'all that I have submitted that extra sheet in your packets for your review, and I'm available for questions if you have any.

DR. ASPER: Kara, the only comment I was going to make, just to let the public know that we do have these two sheets, and there's like a page and a quarter of projects listed. And what she's provided us with are total award amounts, the amount remaining as of the February meeting and the amount remaining in each one of these grants contracts as of right now.

And in case you're wondering what those balances are, these are mostly multi-year grants, so don't think that this is all received in one year. But out of all of these grants contracts right now, this is a wide variety of things, everything from habitat restoration to tidelands funds, you name it, there's $68 million remaining as of right now in these grants.

And that number goes up and down depending on when the money comes in and money goes out. So this is in a constant state of flux.

But we are being provided with a list of the contracts grants that the agency is working on. So if anything catches our attention, we will be sure to ask you about it.

I do appreciate receiving that.

MS. VESA: Thank you.

DR. ASPER: Anything else for Kara? Thank you.

3. MDMR Website Presentation

MS. DENZ: Good morning, commissioners and Mr. Guice and Ms. Chesnut. My name is Kimberly Denz, and I am with administrative services with the IT department here this morning to present an overview of a website analytics report that was sent to management team last month.

And each of you have a copy, so I'm not going to read it.

This is more for your information on how we can use that information that's in that report and how it can be -- how and why I did the report.

So in January 2012, we redesigned the website, and the majority of that redesign was based on analytics. The design decisions that were made, the navigation decisions that were made. We used Google analytics to collect information about the way our visitors interact with our website, and that information includes their location, whether they're new or returning, browser that they used, if they're on a mobile device, the content they like, how often they view a page, whether they use our site search, where they're coming from, and where they go to when they leave our site.

And it looks like this. We can see visitors. We can see traffic type, whether it's direct or referred,

mobile visits, pages, whether they're popular, how long people stay on the website and such.

So why do we do this? It's basically to understand how visitors navigate our site, whether they find the information useful, whether they don't, and how we can improve the service essentially.

And these are performance indicators that are pretty common for content websites and for websites like ours.

Whether visitors are able to find what they want, how long did it take them to find the information they want, does the right information exist on our site, and what's popular.

So in that report, this is just real brief, in that report are listed some quick stats about the number of unique visits we get, total page use our website gets, whether they're on a mobile device. And you'll notice, I found this real interesting, that 67 percent of our new visitors were from a mobile device.

And then what content is popular. As you might expect, people like the fishing information. They like to know where to fish, fishing licenses, that's recreational and commercial, and that looks like this. Marine fisheries received about 13 percent of page views, recreational fishing almost ten, commercial fishing four, information by agency about four percent, licensing three percent.

When people come to our website, 56 percent of them come from a search, whether that's Bing or Google, 30 percent directly, whether that's through a bookmark or an email or a link in an email, and 14 percent from referral sites.

Of those referred, of those 14 percent referral sites, three percent are social or from a QR code that our public affairs department publishes in the newsletter and cards and such.

And that looks like this.

So like I said, in January 2012 we had a redesign, and that also meant that we switched servers which changed our address. So what happened in 2012 is a lot of people searched for us by name. Before the switch, it was mostly like BMR or DMR, so I'm not sure what those searchers are resulting that people feel the need to search our entire agency title.

And then when they are on our website, this is what they're searching. Mississippi boat registration, jobs, employment, careers, jobs, shrimping, crabbing, shrimp season, crab season.

So back to those questions in the beginning, basically our performance indicators.

Are visitors able to find what they want? From what we can tell, they are. Typically when you have a high pages per visit or a high time on site, that means high

engagement. They're reading the information, they're interested. Only four percent used the site search feature, which means the navigation seems to be working. They don't have to search for much. And only 40 percent came and then left.

For government websites, for content websites like ours, that number, the baseline I guess, is 40 to 60 percent. So we're just doing okay.

How long does it take someone to find the information they want? After getting the search result, the average visitor viewed two more pages and stayed two more minutes. And only 17 percent used the search and then left. So that seems to mean that they're finding what they want fairly quickly and then looking at more information, staying on site.

The number that's troublesome is the 29 percent of searches resulting in yet another search. So that just means that a deeper look into those specific instances and finding out, you know, maybe we can coordinate content a little better for our users.

And does the right information exist on our website? And if not, what's missing? What this shows us is that what people are searching for, that's the most popular content. So the right information does exist. My question is: What about the rest of the stuff? You know, what about our

research projects? And what about support for seafood businesses and wetland permitting? And how can we more effectively inform visitors of the other things that we have to offer?

Finally, that last question: What's the most popular content, and what can this tell us? Obviously, visitors love to fish. Our visitors like viewing photos of our work. Our photo galleries rank among the top 50 in popular pages. And our publication pages rank among the top 100.

So ultimately, how can we use all of this to improve the delivery of our services to our customers?

This website report that you have is available on our website at dmr.ms.gov/stats, and visitors have the ability to subscribe to our news releases and our public notices, as well.

Do you have any questions?

MR. BOSARGE: I'm curious as to what's the number of repeat visitors, in other words, people that visited the website more than once?

MS. DENZ: I don't know what the number exactly is. I want to say that it's 43 percent. So of 50,000, 43 percent of 50,000.

MR. BOSARGE: That's good. That means that they're willing to come back and look some more.

MS. DENZ: Yeah. It actually is a pretty good

number. They say anything that's better than 60-40 is good. And ours runs, you know, close to that but above average.

MR. BOSARGE: Thank you.

MR. TAYLOR: One of the things that when I talk to people, and I go on the web to fishing sites, is pictures. And I haven't been on our website, so excuse me. But one of the websites I go on is RodNReel.com which is a fishing site out of Louisiana, and they have one in Mississippi, Texas, and Florida. But photographs of people catching fish.

And I don't know if there's a link to the charter industry or the something here to where you could maybe do a brag board or pictures of something where the fish people come in today and put the fish, you know, up on the website. It might draw more people to the website once it gets out.

If you go to, I forget how many hits RodNReed.com have, but people all over the United States and all over the world know about it.

But just a thought.

MS. DENZ: That's actually -- that's one of the things that we notice is a spike in whenever there's a fishing rodeo, a spike in checking the records, just to see, you know, like what, you know, oh, I need to get a fish that's this big or whatever.

Also, our artificial reef program, I do get pictures from them, pictures of the types of fish that you can

find in the inshore and the offshore reefs.

But, no. I mean, like I said, people do like the pictures.

MR. TAYLOR: Do you all have like a list of maybe fishing tournaments for Mississippi on it?

MS. DENZ: No.

MR. TAYLOR: That would be another suggestion that we could do some, you know, and I think it would spur people there, and just general events like when we have this thing in Pass Christian -- what is it? -- Share the Gulf, and I can't remember the name, but I've been to it a couple of times. But any stuff like that where you can -- people will go and look, especially tourists before they go somewhere. You know, they don't pick up magazines anywhere. They go to the net, where do I go eat, can I do this, can I go fish, or play golf or whatever.

So I think if you would add a couple of those things to the website and with pictures on all of them, you know, it would -- I think it would boost over time the use.

MS. DENZ: I think you're right. Thanks so much.

Is there anything else?

DR. ASPER: Okay. Thank you very much. I have actually visited the website quite a few times. And the new look is really an improvement.

I will make it a point to visit again and see if I can come up with any other suggestions. That's something we can all (inaudible). Thank you.

MS. DENZ: Thank you.

DR. ASPER: Now, there's an agenda item on the commission handbooks. Is that intended to be on there?

MS. CHESNUT: I think that just wasn't taken off from last time. That's a mistake.

DR. ASPER: Okay. I was wondering about that.

The only other thing that we have is the closed session. And for those of you who may have come in a little bit late, the purpose of this closed session will be to determine the need to go into executive session. And the purpose of that would be twofold. First, we have a personnel item to discuss. And the other one is that the five candidates that were selected during our special meeting last week, we interviewed all five of those candidates yesterday, and we will be meeting to discuss those interviews, discuss what we found, and select the final three names that will be sent to the governor. So we're hoping that those three names will be sent to the governor this week. So that will be the purpose of the closed session.

Is there a --

MR. GOLLOTT: Mr. Chairman, I'd like to make a motion to go into closed session to consider going into

executive session to consider applicants for executive director's position.

DR. ASPER: Is there a second to the motion?

MR. DRUMMOND: I second the motion, Mr. Chairman.

DR. ASPER: Further discussion? Those in favor say aye. We're now in closed session.

(Off the record 9:50 a.m.)

COMMISSION ON MARINE RESOURCES

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I, Norma Jean Ladner Soroe, Certified Shorthand Reporter, do hereby certify that to the best of my skill and ability I have reported the meeting of the Commission on Marine Resources and that the foregoing 37 pages constitute a true and correct transcription of said meeting held on the 19th day of March 2013.

I do further certify that my certificate annexed hereto applies only to the original and certified transcript. The undersigned assumes no responsibility for the accuracy of any reproduced copies not made under my control and direction.

Witness my signature this the 2nd day of April 2013.

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