COMMISSION ON MARINE RESOURCES
COMMISSION MEETING
Tuesday, February 20, 2018
9:00 a.m.
Bolton Building Auditorium
515 Haynsville Avenue
Biloxi, Mississippi 39530

Commission Members:
Steve Bosarge, Chairman
Ron Harmon, Vice Chairman
Richard Gollott
Mark Havard
Also Present:
Joe Spragins, Executive Director DNR
Sandy Chestnut, Esq., Assistant Attorney General

COMMISSIONER BOSARGE: Good morning everyone.
It looks like we’ve got a pretty lively crowd today. I
would like to welcome everybody to the February meeting of
the Commission on Marine Resources.
To start it all off, I would like to ask Ron
Harmon to lead us in the Pledge of Allegiance.
(Pledge of Allegiance was recited.)
COMMISSIONER BOSARGE: Next on the agenda is a
moment of silence to do whatever you may want to do, thank
the good people that protect us in this country, or
whatever it may be.
(Moment of silence observed.)
COMMISSIONER BOSARGE: Approval of the minutes.
Do we have a motion to approve the minutes, or
are there any changes to the minutes of the January
meeting?
COMMISSIONER HARMON: Mr. Chairman, I make a
motion that we approve the minutes.
COMMISSIONER BOSARGE: We have a motion.
Do we have a second?
COMMISSIONER HAVARD: I’ll second that motion.
COMMISSIONER BOSARGE: We have a motion and a
second.
All those in favor say aye.
(All in favor.)

COMMISSIONER GOLLOTT: Mr. Chairman, I would
like to make a modification to the agenda. I would like
to put Patrick Levine in other business.
COMMISSIONER BOSARGE: We have a motion.
Do we have a second?
COMMISSIONER HARMON: So seconded, Mr. Chairman.
COMMISSIONER BOSARGE: We have a motion and a
second.
All those in favor say aye.
(All in favor.)

COMMISSIONER BOSARGE: Opposed?
(None opposed.)
COMMISSIONER BOSARGE: Motion carries.
Approval of the agenda.
Do we have any changes, or modifications, to the
agenda?

COMMISSIONER BOSARGE: Shell Retention Bill, died in the Senate and it also died
in the House, and we can go over that.
What has happened there is they want to have a
meeting. They want to call a workshop with the
legislators and sit down and go over this and try to work
it out some more, and they promised me that they would do
everything in their power to do it next year.
Sorry we didn’t get that one through, but the
other one is still working.
That’s all I have.

COMMISSIONER BOSARGE: Which other one are you
referring to?

JOE SPRAGINS: The other bill is one to be able
to allow the permitting to give government agencies ten
years, rather than five years, to be able to help, like,
the ports. Whenever we do a permit for a port, they have
five years with a one-year extension, and we know it is
never going to be complete and they have to go through all
the paperwork.

COMMISSIONER BOSARGE: Thank you, Mr. Spragins.
Next is the Office of Marine Patrol, Chief
Davis.
Chief, we are going to have to see you go, my
friend. It seems like you just got here, but I’ve got to
say you kept us all in line and kept everybody straight.
You have done a great job.

KEITH DAVIS: Thank you.

COMMISSIONER ROSARGE: Thank you for your service, and I know where you're going you are going to have your hands full, but, if anybody can handle it, I know you can.

KEITH DAVIS: I certainly hope so, and I appreciate those words.

The report this month is pretty straightforward. There are a couple of things I do want to point out.

On page one, when Biloxi Bay was open, we did encounter one individual that was not of compliance by not having a MSU onboard. One sack of oysters had to be returned to sea.

On page three, one of you may wonder about the category of individuals caught. We were checking for wetlands violations and came upon an individual hunting for ducks. The individual did not have a hunting license and he did not have the proper stamps.

The last thing I want to mention is we did encounter one commercial fisherman in possession of eight spotted seatrout before the commercial season opened. The individual knew that he was wrong for having the fish onboard. When he noticed the officers, he had an expletive that indicated that he knew he was out of compliance.

Any other questions on the report?

(NO response.)

COMMISSIONER ROSARGE: Thank you, Chief.

KEITH DAVIS: Thank you.

JOE SPARGINS: Mr. Chairman, if I may?

COMMISSIONER ROSARGE: Yes, sir.

JOE SPARGINS: Chief Davis, thank you. We appreciate you, and we wish you the best of luck in the future.

KEITH DAVIS: Thank you, Director.

COMMISSIONER ROSARGE: Next will be Office of Marine Fisheries, Mr. Joe Jowell.

JOE JENELL: Thank you Commissioners. I would like to wish Chief Davis the best of luck in his new position. We certainly appreciated the time that he was here.

We have a pretty aggressive agenda this morning both in Marine Fisheries and overall for the agency.

First up for Marine Fisheries, I want to give our annual Marine Fisheries Year in Review. I'm going to try and move through this presentation relatively quickly. This is our normal end-of-the-year presentation, but, as you know, we accomplish a lot during the year in the Office of Marine Fisheries.

Of course, I'm the office Director. Traci Floyd and Mike Brainard are the Deputy Office Directors.

We have five bureaus. Artificial Reef is our first bureau. It is directed by Mr. Jimmy Sanders. One of their main functions is gillnet sampling. They sample all of our inshore reefs to do an assessment on viability and biological production. A total of thirty-six gillnet sets were done, and almost eight hundred fish were sampled, representing nineteen different species.

We did several deployment projects. One was in conjunction with the CCA at Cat Island. Two hundred and seven tons were deployed, creating four new sites. CCA provided twenty-five thousand dollars in matched funds. Artificial Reef Bureau provided seven thousand and the material deployed.

We also did some deployment projects on our fish havens. The first one was Lee Street Concrete Culvert Deployment. It occurred over three of our major reef fish havens, two, eight and thirteen, at eleven different sites, enhanced seven existing sites and created four new ones. About six hundred tons of material was used. Donated material. Three companies donated material to the Artificial Reef Bureau in 2017. Fifty-six loads were delivered; six hundred and sixty-three pieces of concrete material. This is a very nice use of concrete material that would otherwise be waste, disposed of, or broken up. They actually donate the time, equipment and personnel to bring the materials to our site, and then, we are just obligated to deploy it afterwards.

These are some of the outreach programs that the Artificial Reef Bureau participates in:

Capitol Day, Jackson Wildlife Expo, Biloxi Boat Show.

As with all other offices, we are tasked with keeping up-to-date training and compliance. They participated in Captain License. All of our major bureaus were in this Captain License.

I do want to point out that at this point in our office we have just over twenty certified U.S. Coast Guard trained Captain License and, first for our agency, we have a female Coast Guard Captain. We are very proud of that accomplishment.

Our Finfish Bureau is directed by Mr. Matt Hill. Two of our big programs are IJ and FAM. That's Interjurisdictional and Fisheries Assessment Management. These are given to us by Gulf States.

We completed ninety-six gillnet sets. We took water quality parameters. Thirty-two species totaling
three thousand fish were sampled. Approximately eight hundred otoliths were collected and processed from twelve different species. Recreational and Commercial Harvest Programs. Of course, our main recreational one is the MRIP Program. There are three modes of survey: shore, party/charter, and private/rental. A total of just over two thousand interviews were conducted through November of 2017. Trip Ticket Program is primarily our commercial data collection. We processed over forty-eight hundred scannable ticket trips, and fifty-two hundred electronically submitted trip tickets. We set a new record of just over ten thousand trip tickets for 2017. We have five hundred and eighty-two active fishermen and dealers. MRIP, our Reef Fish Project, is another one of our main primary programs. This program just over two thousand square miles of the Gulf of Mexico. We completed year two this year. We primarily focus on Red Snapper, but we do catch other species while out sampling. Survey focuses on artificial reefs, fish havens, oil and gas platforms, and rigs to reefs sites. One hundred and sixty-one total sites were sampled, in 2017. One hundred and fourteen fish were collected and are currently being processed.

Another one of our main programs is Tails n’ Scales Red Snapper. It’s a recreational program. For 2017, recreational had sixty days; for-hire forty-nine days. Total harvest was one hundred fifty-four thousand one hundred pounds. Number of fish harvested was just over twenty-seven thousand. The average weight was just over six pounds. The average length was just about twenty-two inches. Just over four thousand trips total. Effort was just over four anglers per vessel per trip, and harvest was about one-and-a-half fish per angler per trip. On our graph on the right-hand side of the slide, you will see that we do a comparison between the MRIP data and the Tails n’ Scales data. We feel like the Tails n’ Scales data is a lot more accurate representation of the recreational fisheries. I do want to point out Waves 5 and 6 are not yet computed for MRIP. Reef Fish Observer Program. We completed a total of nineteen trips. Ten vessels participated; six federal for-hire and four state for-hire. We interacted with a hundred and forty-two different anglers. Eight species were observed, and three hundred and fifty-five Red Snapper discs were observed. Red Drum Project. This is an acoustic telemetry tagging program. We have this established here in Biloxi Bay and Back Bay Biloxi.

We completed the acoustic array in Biloxi, and deployed over eighteen acoustic receivers within the project area. We tagged twenty-seven Red Drum with acoustic transmitters and dart tags. The goal is to have fifty Red Drum tagged by the end of March 2018. For our Red Drum Sampling Program, we collected a hundred and six supplementary samples of Red Drum. Biological data taken from these samples include length, weight, sex, otoliths and stomachs. Data will provide additional information on age and growth, age at maturity, and feeding habits of Red Drum along the Mississippi Coast.

Three hundred and twenty-five Red Drum stomachs were analyzed for contents, and three hundred and forty-eight Red Drum stomachs are currently being processed. Biological Sampling. Approximately six hundred and fifty otoliths were collected and processed for aging. Nine recreationally and commercially important species were collected.

This is a list of all the species that were collected (indicating slide). In 2017, over forty-five trips were conducted to obtain biological samples.

Assessments and Research Projects. Of course, our main assessment is through out Stock Assessment Panel. We completed two assessments. We did the annual update for 2017 of Spotted Seatrout, and we are currently in progress for Sheepshead which is scheduled to be presented before the commission next month, March.

We reviewed external stock assessments for the State of Louisiana for Striped Mullet. Our future stock assessment needs include Black Drum and the annual update for Spotted Seatrout. Research Projects. Trophic examination of Red Drum diets from different age classes. Drought impacts on estuarine fish communities which is a manuscript that is done by a lot of our staff headed up by Dr. Hickel. Menhaden Sampling Project. Just over twenty-one thousand scales were mounted and submitted to the laboratory for analysis. Additional Programs. We have our State Fishing Record Certifications. Seven new State conventional tackle records were processed and certified by the Marine Commission for six different species. We have our Monofilament Recycling Program. Currently Mississippi has forty-six recycling stations.
Sixteen in Jackson County, twenty-four in Harrison County and six in Hancock County.

Just over a hundred pounds of line has been recycled. That's about two hundred and forty-two miles of fishing line. Enough to reach from Biloxi to Tallahassee, Florida.

COMMISSIONER BOSARGE: That's amazing.

JOE JEWELL: It is a lot of material we have moved out of the environment.

Our next bureau is the Seafood Technology Bureau headed up by Ms. Ruth Posadas. As y'all know, this is one of our most important programs. It ensures the safety of the seafood consumed by the public.

This is an overview of our regulatory responsibilities (indicating slide).

We had just over forty-seven hundred regulatory inspections and technical assistance with the industry.

We passed our FDA FEER evaluation review.

We passed our FDA Vibrio Risk Management Plan.

We completed a hundred and twenty-two water samples, in 2017.

This is an overview of all of our Mississippi seafood dealers and processors (indicating slide).

As you can see, it kind of fluctuates for different conditions in the market. We had hurricane

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Katrina in 2005, the BP oil spill in 2010, and opening of the Bonnet Carre in 2011 (indicating slide).

For our oyster processors, we are nearing the levels that we were pre Katrina. The industry itself has evolved into one, or two, major processors with a lot of small non and pop facilities.

Post Harvest Processing.

We have two main types that occur, individually quick freezing and irradiation. We have three facilities that have the capability of doing this.

Vibrio Risk Management Control.

This is our ability to keep under control and monitoring of potential risks for Vibrio.

This is just a list of all the types of inspections and responsibilities that this bureau has to comply with those (indicating slide).

Public outreach, again, is another big part of ours. We have attended several major fairs and Celebrate the Gulf.

Shellfish Bureau is headed by Mr. Erik Broussard.

Licenses and harvest data.

If you will notice, the first two are Mississippi dredge and Mississippi tong. That's the darker blue and the red. They remained relatively stable until Katrina and the BP oil spill, and, then, our most significant drop in landings is when the opening of the Bonnet Carre occurred. We never really recovered from that. We remained around thirty-five, or forty, thousand sacks of oysters (indicating slide).

Bonnet Carre. The 2017 spring culch plant.

We did a hundred thousand culch plant of just over thirty-three thousand cubic yards over five hundred acres.

We have updated our restoration permit to include about twenty-four thousand acres over a ten-year period of our major commercial oyster reefs.

We did oyster reef cultivating. We just did over five hundred acres; Pass Christian, Long Beach, and Pass Marianne Reefs.

Our oyster relay activities. We relayed just over three thousand sacks of oyster reef material from Pascagoula Bay to Biloxi Bay.

We are also in the process of staging both oyster shell and limestone at our artificial reef staging site in Gulfport to start the 2018 culch plants in Biloxi Bay.

Growing Area Management.

We completed just over fifteen hundred focal coliform samples from shellfish growing waters.

We completed annual shoreline and sanitary surveys.

We identified actual, or potential, pollution sources.

We maintain growing area classification.

We do Phytoplankton Monitoring. We did forty-eight samples at four stations; two in Biloxi Bay and two in Pass Christian.

Our HAB Program.

We did nineteen samples for the presence of a jubilee fish kill that occurred in late July in Gulfport harbor and extended westward into Long Beach.

Our Oyster Reef Assessment Program.

The NOHPR completed just under five hundred dives, square meter dives, and eighty-one-minute dredge tows, and this is a list of all the major reefs that were analyzed during this process (indicating slide).

NOHPR/NMFS Culch Monitoring.

We did a hundred and ten square meter dives and thirty-one-minute dredge tows across all of the Western Mississippi Sound NMFS Culch Plant Sites.

There is a list of all the NMFS culch plant sites (indicating slide).

We had two major regulatory changes that occurred, in Title 32 Part 1. The first change impacted Chapter 18. What that

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essentially did was we had to split Biloxi way into north and south zones so that we could maintain harvest in the area.

Our second major regulatory change occurred in Chapter 7, and what this did was it banned the use of basket dredges.

Our research vessel, the Conservationist, is back up in action and doing good service for our agency in Marine Resources. It was christened on January 12th, 2017, by Governor Phil Bryant. It has done several relay activities and cultivation, and spat-on-shell deployments.

Future uses include planting of materials stored at the artificial reef staging site. We have acquired the hopper and graded the banks. Most of these improvements have already occurred.

Here are some of the major workshops and certifications that the bureau has been through (indicating slide).

One of our bigger ones was Mississippi’s turn to host the Gulf and South Atlantic States Shellfish Conference. We had well over a hundred attendees from almost all the Gulf states, our Federal and State partners. It was very successful on behalf of our agency.

This is just a list of other programs that the Shellfish Bureau engages in during the year (indicating slide).

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samples for the NOAA Project Monitoring and Assessment of Mississippi’s Interjurisdictional Marine Resources.

2017 Crab Season.

The landings January through November -- the December data is still preliminary -- is just under a million pounds with a dockside value of one point three million dollars.

One hundred and thirty-three derelict crab traps were removed this year. We began utilizing side scan sonar to locate and remove submerged traps.

As you know, our previous chairman of the Marine Commission that was a big issue for him and how we would initiate the program for a lot of these traps that were abandoned and continue to fish being removed.

To date, the program has removed just over twenty-one thousand derelict crab traps, since 1999.

I do want to say, at the American Fisheries Society, their meeting this month, the Department of Marine Resources and the Gulf Coast Research Laboratory won the joint State award for their derelict crab trap removal. It is a big honor for both our agency and Gulf Coast Research Laboratory.

Again, if you notice, on our blue crab landings, the landing data is trending up, but, unlike shrimp, the value of crab meat is also trending very high (indicating slide).

Recreational Blue Crab CPUE, Catch Per Unit Effort, Study.

Assess the catch per unit effort and sex composition of the recreational blue crab fishery in our major bay areas: Bay St. Louis, Biloxi Back Bay and Pascagoula River.

Compare catch rates of different trap designs and bycatch reduction devices.

NOAA Crab Trap Bycatch Reduction Program.

Some of the main accomplishments this year; we distributed almost six thousand Terrapin Excluder Devices to two hundred and twelve Mississippi resident commercial and recreational crab fishermen. We distributed just over fifty-five thousand Crab Trap Escape Kings to five hundred and twenty-seven Mississippi resident commercial and recreational crab fishermen.

Diamondback Terrapin Reporting System.

This is a system that we developed at the Shrimp and Crab Bureau. We have so far to date twenty-nine registered commercial crab fishermen. Approximately three hundred and fifty-five surveys were submitted, from October to December, and forty-six Terrapins have been observed.

This map shows sort of the concentration of the
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Terrapin, as reported by the fishermen participating in this program.

Licensed Live Bait Shrimp Dealers.

There are sixteen licensed live bait shrimp camps, eleven licensed live bait catcher boats, just over a million live shrimp sold through November of 2017, and almost nineteen thousand pounds of dead shrimp sold through November of 2017.

Sport Fish Restoration Projects.

The Mississippi Artificial Reef Program.

Assessment of Red Drum Stock in Mississippi Coastal Waters, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Coordination and Administration grant.

We had two that were administered with the Gulf Coast Research Lab. One is a Sport Fish Tag and Release, and one is the Mississippi Coastal Sport Fish Studies. Other Programs.

We monitor and maintain the hydrological monitoring stations. There are eleven of them. These are located on our website for people to use.

We have our Special Permits Program. Thirty-seven special research permits have been issued. These are mainly to universities and research organizations.

Four experimental gear permits, and one brood stock collection permit have been issued.

That completes the year in review for Marine Fisheries.

COMMISSIONER BOSARGE: I tell you what, that is amazing. That's a lot of good work, a lot of valuable information coming out of your group. Some of it I have been involved in, especially with the Crab Task Force.

Traci, a lot of good work.

I give you a big hand and your group on what you do. You give us the information we need to make management decisions. Thank you, from me.

JOE JEWELL: I appreciate that. I mainly give most of the credit to our staff. We have a lot of dedicated hardworking employees that work with both the commercial and recreational fisheries and do a very good job every day.

Next on the agenda for the Commission's consideration, the next three items are an overview of the Bonnet Carre Disaster Grant.

As the Commission is aware, this grant was awarded for the opening of the Bonnet Carre Spillway in 2011. There were two components of this. There was the disaster that occurred for the oyster industry and the disaster that occurred in the crab industry.

First up is Ms. Kristina Broussard. She is going to provide an overview of the disaster grant for oysters.

COMMISSIONER BOSARGE: I have one question before she starts. Mr. F. J. Eicke wanted to make a public comment.

F. J. EICKE: I will do it after all of the reviews.

COMMISSIONER BOSARGE: All right. Thank you.

KRISTINA BROUSSARD: Good morning. My name is Kristina Broussard. I'm with the Shellfish Bureau, and I'm going to present on the Bonnet Carre Fisheries Disaster Recovery Program for the Oyster and Blue Crab Fisheries.

For the Bonnet Carre Program, there are two jobs associated with this program. Job One is Oyster Restoration and Job Two is Crab Restoration.

I'm going to give you an update on the Oyster Restoration, Job One.

This job was funded at six million nine hundred and nineteen thousand dollars. Job One is thirty-nine percent complete. We have spent two million seven hundred and ten thousand dollars. We have sixty-one percent remaining at four million two hundred and eight thousand dollars.

Job One is divided into five categories, and I will go through each one of those.

The first one is Job Title 1.1, Mississippi Oyster Restoration and Resiliency Long Term Plan.

This job was funded at one hundred and fifty thousand dollars, and it is ninety-nine percent complete. We spent one hundred and forty-seven thousand dollars, and we have one percent remaining at two thousand dollars.

The goal of this project was to create the Governor's Oyster Restoration and Resiliency Council. They put together the final report, and the goal of this report was to prioritize and recommend actions that restore, enhance and sustain oyster resources in Mississippi.

The next one is Job Title 1.2, Commercial Shellfish Reef Cutch Plants.

This job was funded at four million one hundred and ten thousand dollars, and we have currently spent thirty percent of that, at a total of one million two hundred and nineteen thousand dollars. We have seventy percent remaining at two million eight hundred and ninety-one thousand dollars.

The goal of this project is to enhance existing Mississippi oyster reefs to provide increased fishing opportunities for local fishermen and small businesses, and also to replenish oyster habitat by depositing shell, or other suitable cutch material, providing clean

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substrate for oyster spat attachment. Just a side note on this, we do have one million dollars pending for two cultch plants for 2018. Next is Job Title I.3, Oyster Stewardship Program. This job was funded at three hundred thousand dollars, and we have currently spent seven percent of that, twenty-two thousand dollars. We have ninety-three percent remaining at two hundred and seventy-seven thousand dollars. The goal of this job is to create a program to better educate and promote the active involvement of oyster harvesters and the industry in harvest practices and other techniques that can be used to assist resource managers. Also, some of these funds will be used to provide replacement fishing gear to fishermen, with the intended purpose of reducing negative impacts to marine fisheries habitats. Next is Job Title I.4, Commercial Oyster Reef Substrate Mapping. This job was funded for two hundred and four thousand dollars, and it is one hundred percent complete. The goal of this job was to survey reef areas and potential cultivation and cultch plant sites to determine suitability for oyster reef restoration and/or enhancement work. Finally, we have Job Title I.5, Commercial Oyster Reef Cultivation and Relay Program. This job was funded for two million one hundred and fifty-four thousand dollars. It is currently fifty-two percent complete at one million one hundred and sixteen thousand dollars, with forty-eight percent remaining at one million thirty-seven thousand dollars. The goal of this job was to cultivate reefs, exposing covered shell and removing some of the encrusting materials and, also, to relay oysters from areas of greatest abundance to areas of greatest need. A good portion of this money was spent on the St. Joe relay, in January of 2018. We moved forty thousand sacks from St. Joe and, of that, twenty-four thousand eight hundred and sixty-five sacks were moved to Pass Christian Topping and Dredging Reefs, and fifteen thousand one hundred and seventy-eight sacks were moved to Shearwater Reef in Biloxi Bay. Now, I would like to introduce Erik Broussard who will give more details about this. This is a big job. ERIK BROUS SARD: Good morning Commissioners, Director Spragins, Ms. Chester. The Commission requested the staff look into a possible funding source for a potential work program back at the November Commission meeting. We have identified Job I.3 of the Mississippi Bonnet Carre Grant, Job I.5, Commercial Oyster Reef Cultivation and Relay Program. As Ms. Broussard just spoke about, the job was two point one million dollars. It is fifty-one percent complete. For the St. Joe relay, I spent about one point one million, and there is about forty-eight percent left, or a little over a million dollars. It would be a potential funding source with enough to sustain our work program. Staff's recommendation would be to relay oysters from the Pascagoula Causeway Reef and the West River Reef. The Commission, again, has expressed interest in moving oysters from a greater abundance to a lesser abundance, as well as direct the staff to move oysters from these reefs. It would accomplish the overall goals of the grant, as well as some of the goals of the commission. We would use commercial oyster fishermen that qualify for the Bonnet Carre Grant, which would be very similar to what the St. Joe relay looked like, except for the method of take would be tending, instead of dredging. We would use a contractor to transport relayed material on a barge to reefs in Biloxi Bay, or the Western Sound. The reason that we would recommend tending versus dredging is -- here you have a map of these two reefs, the Causeway Reef on the right and the West River Reef on the left -- those areas are very shallow and they are also small. If we had a large fleet -- there are over a hundred qualified fishermen for the Bonnet Carre Grant -- it would really condense fishing effort. With that many boats, if it were to get dredged, we would have a concern about the condensed fishing effort having a negative impact on those reefs. These are some of the last healthy reefs that are thriving currently in the State, and we feel like tonging would minimize the impact, as well as accomplish some of the overall goals. A couple of hurdles. As you see on the Causeway Reef, there is a thin black line that is currently the line between prohibited to the east, or right, of the line, and restricted to the left. We can move material from the left of the line to the west. We are actively in the process of upwardly classifying this area and moving the line so we would have access to the whole Pascagoula Causeway Reef. We have just sent off samples and pending those results, we will
know if we can move the line, or not.

Also, contracting is a timely process. It's not something we could probably get together in the next month, or so, which would put us closer to the warmer months which can really have an impact on the oyster, if we get into June and some of those months, and we would increase mortality and be counterproductive.

This is something we envision probably next fall, or winter.

With that being said, if this is something the Commission would want to move forward with, we could start the process now, so all these things would be addressed and things would be in place for next year.

Any questions?

COMMISSIONER RUSAGE: As far as myself, I believe we need to move forward with it. I'm glad to see there are some funds available for it. It sounds like you are gearing up towards using some fishermen, and it is structured in a way that it benefits everybody.

Richard, have you got any questions, or anything you would like to say?

COMMISSIONER GOLLOTT: I would like to see the price that you are proposing to pay the fishermen to do this and the time line.

September is the best month to do this. This is when they do it in Louisiana and have great success.

I would just like to see more of the details on this program that you are going to do.

One more question. That black line that you showed, what is the difference in two feet one way, or the other, on the prohibited and restricted?

If you can't answer that, now, we will wait until later, but I was just curious.

ERIK BROUSSARD: We are working on changing the line, and we can talk more about the area classification.

COMMISSIONER GOLLOTT: You are going to move the oysters to Biloxi bay, with tonging?

ERIK BROUSSARD: This is just to give everybody some ideas, or some options. We can discuss the details of how many sacks, price, where they go, as this progresses.

COMMISSIONER GOLLOTT: That's the kind of stuff I would like to sit down and talk about. Thank you.

JOE JEWELL: Commissioners, if y'all want us to proceed with the program as we have it, now, we need a vote for us to at least start progress on the program that we presented to y'all here today.

You just need to vote and tell us to progress with the recommendation that we made today.

COMMISSIONER GOLLOTT: Mr. Chairman, I would like to make a motion that we go forward with this program and explore the options that we would have for it.

COMMISSIONER RUSAGE: we have a motion.

DO WE HAVE A SECOND?

COMMISSIONER HARMON: So seconded, Mr. Chairman.

COMMISSIONER RUSAGE: we have a motion and a second.

All those in favor say aye.

(All in favor.)

COMMISSIONER RUSAGE: Opposed?

(None opposed.)

COMMISSIONER RUSAGE: Motion carries.

We do have one public comment on this that I would like to get to, Mr. Ryan Bradley.

JOE JEWELL: I just want to say what that means is that we will develop a program and have a lot more detail and present it.

COMMISSIONER RUSAGE: State your name, please.

RYAN BRADLEY: Good morning. My name is Ryan Bradley. I'm with the Mississippi Commercial Fisheries United.

I just want to say thank you for taking this vote today and advancing this forward. Commercial fishermen really need all the help they can get. Working with them on this relay would definitely give them a shot in the arm.

We would be happy to sit down in a workshop to discuss some of the details of this program, some of the procurement concerns. We've done some research into the requirements for that, and there may be some ways we can get around some of that stuff. We would be glad to look at it further.

Being that you already took the vote on this today, I'm not going to say much more, but, again, thank you for your vote. We appreciate it.

COMMISSIONER RUSAGE: Thank you, Mr. Bradley.

JOE JEWELL: I think we had one additional comment.

COMMISSIONER RUSAGE: I think so.

JOE JEWELL: Ms. Thao Vu, would you like to comment, now, or wait until later?

THAO VU: I have a number of comments. I'll wait until later.

JOE JEWELL: Ms. Vu says that she is going to wait until the presentation is finished.

Next is Marine Fisheries is the completion of the Bonnet Carre Job II, and Mr. Rick Burris will give that presentation.

RICK BURRIS: Good morning Mr. Chairman, Commissioners, Mr. Spragginis, Ms. Chestnut.
The previous two presentations were on the oyster side of the Honnet Carre Spillway Project. Now, we will focus on Job II, Crab Restoration.

Job II, the Crab Restoration Project, received one point five million dollars. Currently, we are fifty-seven percent complete, at eight hundred and fifty-nine thousand six hundred and forty-three dollars spent. The remaining is six hundred and forty-four thousand five hundred and sixty-six dollars.

There are five projects within this job.

The first one is Job II.1, Commercial and Recreational Blue Crab Catch-Per-Unit-Effort, or CPE. It is contracted with the Gulf Coast Research Lab. They have been implementing this program in the commercial sector, since 2007.

Job II.1 was budgeted five hundred and twenty-five thousand dollars. It is currently fifty-three percent complete, with two hundred and seventy-five thousand seven hundred and six dollars spent, and the remaining portion is two hundred and forty-nine thousand dollars.

What this job does is we are able to collect important catch-per-unit-effort data and size and sex characteristics of the commercial and the recreational blue crab fishery that we don’t normally capture in our landings, so it is very helpful. It is used in stock assessments across the Gulf. Like I said, we don’t normally capture this data.

The recreational data is basically one of a kind. We just started doing this. It was previously non-existent. It is very valuable in managing the crab fishery.

Job II.2, Predation on Juvenile Blue Crabs by Red Drum has a budget of one hundred and forty thousand two hundred and nineteen dollars. It is currently thirty-five percent complete; we spent forty-eight thousand dollars, and the remaining portion is ninety-one thousand dollars.

What this job does is it collects Red Drum from our existing fishery independent sampling and supplemental fishery dependent sampling, and analyzes stomach contents to determine how much of an impact this resurgent species is having on our juvenile blue crabs. We have seen a lack of juvenile blue crabs in our sampling for a long time, now, and the commercial adult catch as well.

This could be very valuable information to manage the fishery, as we move forward.

Job II.3, Blue Crab Life History, Recruitment and Habitat Needs.

This is also contracted to the Gulf Coast Research Lab. It was budgeted at three hundred and twelve thousand seven hundred and thirty dollars. It is currently sixty-two percent complete, and there is one hundred and twenty thousand dollars remaining.

This project provides the needed information on blue crab recruitment dynamics and will supply information on habitat requirements through expanded current sampling.

Job II.4, Shorelines Initiative to Enhance Crab Habitat.

This job is complete. We spent two hundred and fifty-six thousand eight hundred dollars.

If you remember, our 2016 crab cleanup was funded by this particular Job II.4. It was back in April of 2016, and a total of twenty-five hundred traps were brought in and recycled.

Job II.5, Crab Trap Bycatch Reduction Voluntary Program.

It was budgeted two hundred and sixty-nine thousand two hundred and sixty dollars. We are currently thirty-three percent complete, with one hundred and eighty-three thousand dollars remaining.

The funds are for our Terrapin Excluder Device Distribution Program, which we distributed six thousand Terrapin excluder devices to both our commercial and recreational crab fishermen.

Through this particular funding project, overall we have distributed nineteen thousand five hundred TEDs. Our Bycatch Reduction Device Distribution Program, or escape rings.

Since the Commission voted to make crab trap escape rings mandatory in all the traps, we started distributing these rings to our fishermen free of charge, and we have given out fifty-six thousand BRD45’s so far. It is very popular with the fishermen, especially since we enacted this regulation. They are very pleased that they are able to get that gear from us free of charge.

Also, this project funds a Diamondback Terrapin Reporting System. We presented it to the Commission last month.

With that, I will take any questions.

COMMISSIONER BOSSANGE: On some of the research projects, how much longer do they have?


COMMISSIONER BOSSANGE: There has been a bunch of work done with the crabs with escape rings. The diamondback terrapin, that app, that was amazing to me that that could come out of this group because I’m computer illiterate. I can’t see how that happened, but it happened and that’s good.

RICK BURRIS: We have some very capable people.
COMMISSIONER BOSARGE: I would say that.
Any further questions?

(No response.)

COMMISSIONER BOSARGE: Thank you, Steve.

JOE JEWELL: We do have some very talented people on our staff, but we did work in conjunction with our IT folks.

Next we have two regulatory changes that will be presented by Mr. Travis Williams and Mr. Jonathan Barr.

These are federal regulations that we are preparing changes in our State regulations to be consistent.

First is Mr. Travis Williams with King Mackeral.

COMMISSIONER BOSARGE: Mr. Ecke, you wanted to speak, now?

F. J. EICKE: I do.

COMMISSIONER BOSARGE: Could you hold on to your thoughts just for a minute?

TRAVIS WILLIAMS: Yes.

F. J. EICKE: Good morning Commissioners. My name is F. J. Eicke. I'm with CCA and, on the first point, I would indicate that there was a third partner in the reef enhancement, and that was a group that spun off from CCA called building Conservation Trust and they are a whole lot better at getting money than we are. That showed in that particular artificial reef.

What I'm making a statement about -- I'm here as an individual, but representing some CCA members who have expressed concerns about generally the oyster resource and how it is being managed, and what we are doing is we are talking in terms of the values that we have always had, CCA members for conservation and environmental concerns.

The point I want to make is that Marine Resources is really a larger thing than just oysters. It includes oysters, obviously, as a major component, but sometimes we lose sight of the total marine environment.

In the statement that I presented to you, which is similar to what I'm saying, there is a reference to an article, actually three articles, in the Press Register. It is great, and I think it makes some points that perhaps are applicable to Mississippi.

COMMISSIONER BOSARGE: Thank you, Mr. Eicke.

We've got a pretty good team working on oysters. We are going to listen to them closely.

Ms. Thao Vu.

JOE JEWELL: I think Ms. Vu wants to wait until after all of the Marine Fisheries presentations.

COMMISSIONER BOSARGE: All right.

TRAVIS WILLIAMS: Good morning Chairman, Commissioners, Director spragins, Ms. Chestnut.

This action item is a regulatory change to Title 22 Part 7 Chapter 8. It's a recreational bag limit change for King Mackeral.

Recently, NOAA announced a final rule implementing Amendment 26 to the Fishery Management Plan for Coastal Migratory Pelagic in the Gulf of Mexico, specifically for the Western zone, the Gulf of Mexico group.

This amendment increased the recreational bag to, perhaps, reduction in biomass of oysters to a less than critical level, but it does not sustain the resource and benefit the total marine environment.

A major portion of the number of members who have come to me are concerned about the eastern side of the coast, the Pascagoula watershed area and relay of oysters and whether this is going to deplete the resource to the point that it will not sustain what it has been and what it can be in the future.

You can take that into consideration as you will. You just did a vote to relay more. I don't know how that fits, but some of my members would be concerned about that.

We have spent tremendous funds on the oyster resource. We all know that, but we haven't gotten to the goal and we all know that the oyster population is susceptible to many factors attested to by the Bonnet Carre Spillway, but we all know about Katrina and what happened after it and any number of other events that we have had no control over and have had to react to.

AM I PASSED MY TIME?

COMMISSIONER BOSARGE: Yes.

F. J. EICKE: I'm almost finished. Give me another few seconds.

What we do is we urge the Commission to think clearly about this. I know you attempt to do that, and we put our faith in you to do that, but we have more stakeholders than just the oyster harvesters and the commercial oyster industry.

I would also ask you to read the article in the Press Register. It is great, and I think it makes some points that perhaps are applicable to Mississippi.

COMMISSIONER BOSARGE: Thank you, Mr. Eicke.
Limit from two fish to three fish per day. It also increased the commercial quota about a hundred and sixty thousand pounds.

We like to have our State and Federal regulations consistent for federally-managed species. This consistency reduces the concern recreational anglers may have regarding the different rules and regulations between State and Federal waters. It also removes any confusion that law enforcement may have as well.

For the record, the regulation will read as follows:

"Chapter 8 Section 100 Subsection 100.04, Recreational Bag, Possession and Size Limits. 100.04 Three (3) King Mackerel (Scomberomorus cavalla)."

What is required from the Commission is a motion for a Notice of Intent to amend Title 22 Part 7 Chapter 8 Section 100 Subsection 100.04, recreational bag limit for King Mackerel.

COMMISSIONER BOSARGE: I think King Mackerel is one of the few species that seem to be doing pretty well.

COMMISSIONER HAVARD: I have a question.

What do you guys recommend following the Federal recommendations?

TRAVIS WILLIAMS: Yes, we do.

As I mentioned, they are federally-managed species. Our Mississippi waters still govern out three nautical miles. We do recommend going with the Federal increase for management.

COMMISSIONER BOSARGE: Do we have a motion?

COMMISSIONER HARMON: Mr. Chairman, I make a motion for a Notice of Intent to amend Title 22 Part 7 Chapter 8 Section 100 Subsection 100.04, recreational bag limit for King Mackerel.

COMMISSIONER BOSARGE: We have a motion. Do we have a second?

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

COMMISSIONER BOSARGE: We have a motion and a second. Any further discussion?

(COMMISSIONER BOSARGE: All those in favor say aye. (All in favor.)

COMMISSIONER BOSARGE: Opposed?

(COMMISSIONER BOSARGE: Motion carries.)

JOE JEWELL: Our next presentation will be done by Mr. Jonathan Barr on the Gray Triggerfish.

JONATHAN BARR: Thank you, Joe.

Good morning Commissioners, Director Spruill, Ms. Chestnut.

As Joe and Travis mentioned, we like to stay up to date with the Federal regulations. With your permission, we would like update Title 22 Part 7 Chapter 8, recreational bag and size limit change for Gray Triggerfish.

This is the Fishery Bulletin we were given by NOAA highlighting the recreational change:

"The recreational bag limit will be one Gray Triggerfish per angler per day within the twenty reef fish aggregate bag limit."

The recreational minimum size limit will go up to fifteen inches from fourteen inches.

Chapter 8 Section 100 Subsection 100.14.01, recreational bag, possession and size limits.

We are adding the words "reef fish" to match the Federal wording to read:

"Twenty (20) reef fish aggregate."

Chapter 8 Section 100 Subsection 100.14.01, once again, are we not making anything out. We are just adding words to read:

"Gray Triggerfish (Balistes capriscus) - may possess one (1) within the twenty (20) reef fish aggregate."

Chapter 8 Section 100 Subsection 102.12. We are striking out fourteen and underlined is "fifteen (15)", to read:

"Gray Triggerfish fifteen (15) inches (fork length)."

Required is a motion for Notice of Intent to Amend Title 22 Part 7 Chapter 8 Section 100 Subsection 100.14.01 and Section 102 Subsection 102.12 for recreational bag and size limit for Gray Triggerfish.

COMMISSIONER BOSARGE: Any questions?

(NO RESPONSE)

COMMISSIONER BOSARGE: Do we have a motion?

COMMISSIONER HAVARD: Mr. Chairman, I'll make a motion for Notice of Intent to amend Title 22 Part 7 Chapter 8 Section 100 Subsection 100.14.01 for recreational bag and size limit change for Gray Triggerfish.

COMMISSIONER BOSARGE: We have a motion. Do we have a second?

COMMISSIONER HARMON: Mr. Chairman, I will go ahead and second that.

COMMISSIONER BOSARGE: We have a motion and a second.
All those in favor say aye.  
(All in favor.)

COMMISSIONER BOSARGE: Opposed?  
(No one opposed.)

COMMISSIONER BOSARGE: Motion carries.

JEO JEWELL: Thank you, Commissioners.

I think this is the point where MS. THAO VU 
would like to make her comments.

COMMISSIONER BOSARGE: Ms. Vu.

THAO VU: Good morning, Director, Commissioners.  

THAO VU: With the Mississippi Coalition for Vietnamese  
American Fishermen and Families.

Thank you to Mr. Jewell and the staff of the 
Marine Fisheries for giving an update, particularly 
for the Bonnet Carre Spillway Fund.

First of all, I need to reiterate how critically 
important healthy oysters are. It's a keystone species.

Not all species in the ecosystem are considered critical 
keystone species.

We do commend the Marine Fisheries Bureau, 
particularly Mr. Broussard and the staff, for proposing 
the oyster relay program. That has been a proven 
longstanding method of restoring oysters. Increasing 
oyster population, longstanding with our fishermen.

Many of our fishermen couldn't make it, but a 
group of them are back there, and they have been involved.

Even for years following Hurricane Katrina, that was 
highly successful and proven to work.

The concerns about relaying oysters from the 
Eastern Sound to over here are not warranted because it is 
a legitimate longstanding scientifically proven method of 
working.

Further, reefs need some cultivation. A lot of 
those reefs in the Eastern Sound have remained closed, 
dormant. We know they are sampling. We know they are 
monitoring activities, but it needs some occasional 
cultivation.

I do want to remind the Commissioners, the staff 
and the Director that most of the tigers in the State of 
Mississippi licensed -- we have a list of all commercial 
oyster fishermen, the dredgers and the tigers. Most of 
the tigers are not in state. They are from Alabama.

We should be doing our best to help our local 
fishermen. They are seriously financially struggling.

Last year was the worst year ever. Ten thousand sacks, or 
less. We cannot reach our million sack goal that was 
stated in the Governor's Oyster Council report. We can 
ever reach that, with ten thousand sacks, or less, or a 
little bit more by 2025.

Our local fishermen, they have the experience.

They know the waters. They are the ones who need the work 
and they have the small boats, very small skiff boats that 
are capable of doing some of the reef activities that are 
being proposed. In fact, some of them are sitting back 
there. They have these small boats.

We are willing to work with you, in terms of 
making sure there is adequate outreach to inform everyone 
who is qualified, any necessary training activities that 
may need to be taken through a workshop, or whatever we 
need to do, another public meeting. Thank you.

COMMISSIONER BOSARGE: Thank you, Ms. Vu.

JEO JEWELL: Do you have any comment?

JEO JEWELL: I was just going to say that 
completes our report, but I do want to address one of the 
concerns that Ms. Vu had.

As Mr. Broussard indicated in his presentation, 
only those Mississippi resident applicants that were 
licensed under a Bonnet Carre event would be eligible.

Tongers from other states are not eligible for 
this proposed program. I just want to make that clear.

If there are no other questions, that completes 
the Office of Marine Fisheries.

COMMISSIONER BOSARGE: That has been quite a 
presentation.

I would like to propose a ten-minute break. We

will take just a short break.

(CW meeting stands in recess.)

COMMISSIONER BOSARGE: I would like to call the 
meeting back to order.

Next on the agenda is Mr. Jan Boyd, Coastal 
Resources Management.

JAN BOYD: Good morning, Mr. Chairman. 

COMMISSIONER BOSARGE: Good morning. Mr Chairman. 

COMMISSIONER BOSARGE: Director Spraggins, Sandy.  

We have a very short presentation. Willa is 
going to give you an update of what we did last month.

COMMISSIONER BOSARGE: All right. Thank you. 

WILLA BRANTLEY: Good morning. Yes, very short, 
one slide. I just wanted to take you over our numbers of 
what we had come in. 

We had seventy-two new actions received. Most 
of those, over three-quarters of those are applications, 
but some are just requests to review projects and some of 
those are violations that got reported. We closed sixty 
items out this month.

These are typical numbers for this time of year. 
It's starting picking up, usually, after Mardi gras, so we 
will see more coming in than what we've gotten closed out 
because we had fewer come in last month.

If you have any questions about anything in particular we worked on, I will be glad to answer then.
COMMISSIONER BOSARGE: I don't have any questions. As long as we don't see any here, you are doing a great job.

WILL A BRANTLEY: We've got nothing this month and, so far, nothing next month, but we'll see.

COMMISSIONER BOSARGE: Thank you.

WILL A BRANTLEY: Thank you.

COMMISSIONER BOSARGE: Next will be Office of Coastal Restoration and Resilience, Mr. George Ransour.

GEORGE RANSOUR: Thank you. Good morning Commissioners, Director Spraggins, Sandy.

I know we don't get in here very often, but we have been working for a couple of months to get in to give you an update on restoration activity. Quite a lot has changed in the overall landscape of restoration in the last year.

Dr. Mickle has been good enough to help me work on some of the aspects, like, the financial sides and other things, which he is going to get up and give you a rundown on initially, and, then, I get to do the fun stuff after that.

Dr. Mickle.

PAUL NICKLE: Thank you, George.

Good morning Commissioners, Director Spraggins, Ms. Chestnut.

I will let George take over shortly, but, first, I requested this presentation to accomplish several goals this morning; to provide a brief to some of the new Commissioners on the BP Restoration Funding format, share the need for restoration of the Mississippi Sound, emphasize the importance of your role in this tremendous opportunity we have, and introduce the many agencies, organizations and people that are involved with this great endeavor.

The MDNR and Mississippi DEQ are the main State agencies most directly involved, and luckily we have a wonderful relationship with Mississippi DEQ.

I would like to introduce Chris Wells, Chief of Staff and my counterpart at the agency, DEQ, who has shown up here today, has driven down from Jackson to show his support on the subject matter and this great endeavor we are taking on.

Many of you already know a lot about this, but I do want to just do a broad overview of the funding streams that actually occurred, when the BP oil spill settlements come to fruition.

All of the monies that have come to the settlements have kind of come through three major streams of funding.

NORMA is Natural Resource Damage Assessment which is contributed to making the environment and the public whole by restoring, rehabilitating, replacing, or acquiring, the equivalent of natural resources, or services, injured by the oil spill.

NFWF, or National Fish Wildlife Foundation, is a foundation which takes the value of restoring and maintaining the ecological functions of landscape scale, coastal habitats, including the barrier islands, beaches, coastal marshes, and ensure the viability and resilience against existing and future threats.

It kind of gets confusing, but NFWF is to restore what has been damaged, and NORMA is to restore what has been damaged, but, also, to take on at liberty enhancing the viability and resilience against existing and future threats. There is a little bit more ability to do certain things with NFWF versus NORMA.

The last one is RESTORE that I'm sure you have heard a lot about, and that literally stands for Resources and Ecosystems Sustainability, Tourist Opportunities and Revived Economies, which is a very long and interesting acronym, but it actually gets very confusing.

When the funds came through the Clean Water Act penalties, twenty percent of those total funds were syphoned off in the Liability Trust Fund, and, then, the remaining eighty percent goes into the buckets which I'm sure you have heard of, in the five buckets of direct component, council selected restoration component, impact component, Gulf Ecosystems Restoration Science Program which goes pretty much directly to NOAA, and the Centers of Excellence Program which is our academic institutions in the State of Mississippi. Our universities get to do research and provide the information that this Commission needs to make the management decisions and to allow y'all to do your jobs as well.

With that, I will turn it back over to George, but, again, I just wanted to do a broad overview and provide information to y'all as needed. This is a long journey we are going to take, ten, fifteen, twenty years.

Snap decisions are definitely the thing we don't need to do. We need to move forward with as much information and science as we have to make these big impacts and to make sure the Mississippi Sound ends up where we can have viable sustainable populations of our Marine resources.

GEORGE RANSOUR: Thank you, Paul.

We prepared a pretty compact run through. It looked like it was going to be a pretty long meeting today, but I did want to emphasize that this is the start of a conversation and by no means a comprehensive recap of everything we see on the horizon.

The great question that I have had to answer a
number of times, talking about the country, is why is Mississippi engaged in restoration.

Most people probably realize that we are losing a lot of land, but we are actually second in overall rate of land loss behind Louisiana, approximately, over two hundred acres a year for as far back as we can measure, essentially.

If you take the 1950's, for example, and bring it forward to current time, that means we have lost about twelve thousand acres of coastal lands, a lot of it habitat that is critical for fisheries and that sort of thing, habitat reduction.

To put it in context, this red box out here in the Sound is what twelve thousand acres looks like, since 1950.

I also used the point down here in Hancock County as an example. We now know lately that there are places on that shoreline that are cutting back over fifty feet a year. There are certain areas in Mississippi where the pacing is certainly a concern, in terms of overall land loss. Land loss is a primary driver of our restoration programs (indicating slide).

I would like to say we have had tremendous ongoing success, really, since 2002, working with the Corps of Engineers, and, then, more recently with DEQ on the Beneficial Use Dredge Material Program which is now managed by the Coastal Resource Management Office under DEQ.

This program is nationally significant. We have done a fantastic job in figuring out how to use our dredge materials in a natural way to replace historic shorelines and footprints.

Round Island is probalby the biggest success, the outgrowth of that program so far. It is two hundred and twenty acres. A lot of you are familiar with it. The monitoring of that site has proven the stability and efficiency of this kind of effort and use of dredge materials.

This is a before-and-after Hurricane Nate image right here. It shows that basically this type of construction is very stable, even where it was built with dredge material that was put in less than eight months before Hurricane Nate and has not been vegetated, or anything like that (indicating slide).

I say that because we get a lot of feedback, concern about projects like this that they are going to get hit by a storm right after we build them and material is going to move out somewhere and cover an oyster reef, or other resource.

This survey one week ahead and one week after having some dredge issues. They started the first of the year. This is a four hundred and seventy million dollar project, two years in the running, if everything holds together with the dredge. They are going to move two hundred million cubic yards which is over four super domes full of material, and one important thing to note about this project is the Corps estimates the benefits from this project, in terms of improving protection for the mainland shore, Rilex, Gulfport and the other towns along our Coast, plus benefits to fisheries, will be about eighty million dollars a year.

Although this is a four hundred and seventy million dollar project, it has about a six-year payback.

As we look to the next step, how and who are we working with as we took down the road a little further.

Since 2013, since the Office of Costal Restoration and Resiliency came into existence, we have worked with all sorts of folks. I'm not going to try to list everybody, but I put a lot of the logos up here to give you an idea of the variety of the State and Federal Governments, the Institutions of higher learning, universities in all three states, Mississippi, Louisiana and Alabama.

Essentially, we have come to understand that we need to reassess the way we are looking at the estuary and
basically expand what I call the planning area to include all three states, and the acronym that developed out of those discussions is it is the Louisiana Mississippi Alabama Coastal System, or LMACS for short.

This is basically what it looks like. The primary estuary we are describing runs from Lake Bourgne all the way to Mobile Bay (indicating slide).

One of the really most important things, from my sort of geological perspective in looking at this system, is the barrier that creates it in the first place.

Starting with Biloxi Marsh down in Louisiana and running through the Gulf Islands Seashore and over to Dauphin Island in Alabama, this is the barrier that regulates salt water mixing with the fresh water coming in from the Coastal rivers and Lake Pontchartrain and Mobile Bay.

A very important thing about this barrier is that it is falling apart. This is just an initial way to look at the health of this barrier. We have mapped out how much open water essentially is in the barrier.

In 1850, there were no significant breaches until you got all the way out to Cat Island, and then, the total breaches, or passes in the barrier, totaled twenty-three miles.

In 2004, that was up to thirty miles.

Now, they have closed MRCO and they are working on closing Camille Cut, but right now as it stands about thirty-three miles of open water in that barrier, in other words about fifty percent more than was in 1850, ten miles more open water.

This is bound to have an affect on the primary mixing of salt and fresh water in the estuary and, also, it has an affect on how much energy reaches our shoreline on a day-to-day basis.

The goals for looking at this, we are realizing essentially, in all this interaction, Mississippi really needs to do -- I hate to call it a master plan because people immediately think, well, look at all the challenges that Louisiana has had doing theirs, but it is going to be a master plan nonetheless that is focused on Mississippi's needs and what we see going on in our specific situation.

One thing about our estuary is the marshes, Biloxi Marsh and the islands that define it, since they are deteriorating. We need to look at our ability to manage that because closing MRCO and closing Camille Cut have been fairly straight forward actions. MRCO is already yielding positive results, in terms of salinity.

There are a lot of things that can be done to this situation.

In the long run, if we engage in a comprehensive assessment and master planning effort, we can learn a lot more about this system and that will, among other things,

give us the ability to interact with Louisiana more effectively on their projects, some of which will very definitely affect us.

First of all, there is an enormous amount of information out there existing that has never been focused on, in regard to this comprehensive look at restoration.

We are going to have to get new data. We are going to have to do physical modeling to get a lot of this figured out.

Right now, just in the universities and institutions of higher learning, there is an enormous amount of data that we just need to get compiled and figure out if we can plug some of the gaps.

What is the Commission's role in all of this? Well, we need strategic input from you, we need input from your constituent groups, and we need support and feedback for plan and for permits and implementation of projects, when that comes to pass.

It seems to me the Commission meetings are a great opportunity for constituents to give feedback that can be incorporated in advance of developing projects to the point where we want to turn in a permit application, or something like that. This is a good early way to vet some of these things.

Again, I want to say that we are not looking at a situation where we would restore the Coast and the barriers to look like it did back in the heyday when we were sort of the world power for seafood.

We have the ability, we have an opportunity to recover a lot of the functions that gave us that dynamic fisheries environment.

I think, once we do some more comprehensive assessment and get a better handle on how the system is working, we can answer some questions about what we need to do.

I'm sure Paul may have some gaps to fill in that I have left, but the main gaps are in the barrier out there, right now.

Any questions?

COMMISSIONER ROSARO: I have a couple of questions.

Do you want to go ahead?

COMMISSIONER HAVARD: A quick question. You mentioned Bonnet Carre Spillway being opened in 2011 adding to all the additional rainfall that we had and eventually killing all of the oysters.

Do we have too much rainfall, now?

GEORGE RANSBEAN: Well, fresh water events and oyster die offs are a part of history. The main thing about this situation is that, with the barrier opening up.
the estuary is becoming too marine. We've got too much salt during critical times, especially during the summer. That interferes with the ability of the oyster population to deal with fresh water disasters like the Bonnet Carre, among other things.

Really, the only way to make something like the Bonnet Carre not have any affect in the estuary would be so open that you wouldn't have oysters in there to start with.

COMMISSIONER ROSANGE: Go back to that first slide just for a moment so I can clarify myself on one point.

When you were talking about the RESTORE and you broke down where the money was going, is this slide representative of all of the Gulf states, or is it representative of what is going to take place in Mississippi?

GEORGE RAMSEUR: Thank you for that. I should have clarified further.

This is just for Mississippi. This is the monies that filter down from the settlement for Mississippi, and it is split up this way. This is what we have to work with.

Now, there are regional NRDA's. There are open-ocean NRDA's. There are additional funds, but I want to take on what we can control, at some point.

COMMISSIONER ROSANGE: I just wanted to see if that was what was going to take place Gulf wide, or just in Mississippi.

I had another question. You were talking about Round Island.

Have we made any headway with acquiring the rest of Round Island?

GEORGE RAMSEUR: I don't know of anything specific on that recently. I do know that there, apparently, are a large number of heirs associated with that. I think there are about twenty acres left of private ownership.

It will be a complicated acquisition, a long-term type thing anyway, I think. Unless we get some sort of break that I don't foresee, it is probably a number of years down the road before that would come our way.

COMMISSIONER ROSANGE: What we're doing at Round Island, if I remember correctly, can't really be tied to the original island, until something like that transpires?

GEORGE RAMSEUR: Right.

Now, there is probably some chance of building to the southwest of there. We would have to look at that, but it would be a lot better to be able to go ahead and deal with the unified project.

Originally, it had sort of a boot-shaped footprint and, actually, we saw a map of 1717 that actually shows that boot shape, and, then, it kind of went to the more teardrop shape that is has after that.

COMMISSIONER ROSANGE: Are you going to put any vegetation on what we've done, now?

Are there any plans for that?

GEORGE RAMSEUR: I was contacted the end of last week, and they've got some planting plans in gear, but there is an awful lot of vegetation, particularly up on the barrier, on the berm, right now.

COMMISSIONER ROSANGE: I don't want to get too involved here with the loss of land for Mississippi.

Is the loss that we have in the barrier islands counted into that?

GEORGE RAMSEUR: Yes. That figure that I showed was actually just for Mississippi. We have really started looking at this three-state concept recently enough that trying to figure out how much has been lost out of the Biloxi Marsh is a really huge job.

This last slide, that's got a lot of stuff with just gaps in the barrier as a real thumbnail for looking at the health of this.

This is a 1778 map which is not that accurate laterally. I just put that up there to show kind of what sort of depth detail we had even back at that time.

The red here shows Biloxi Marsh extent in 1850, and the yellow is current. All that red that is showing essentially is land that has been lost in that system since 1850 (indicating slide).

COMMISSIONER ROSANGE: Some of this money that will come down over the years will be able to be used towards restoring some of these barrier islands?

GEORGE RAMSEUR: Well, hopefully some of it at some point, but essentially what we have to do at this point is get a better handle on what is going on. We've got real good data going back to 1850, so we can kind of look at how this barrier has performed, what kind of mixing has been going on, what the currents have been and, also, look at the changes, like, navigation channels, and how that has affected the overall salinity and the patterns and the variability in the Sound.

The other thing I forgot to mention was that Mississippi is really leading this out of the three states, and I would say that's because we have the most to gain, but, at the same time, we have the most to lose. Louisiana has several estuaries this size, Alabama can fall back on Mobile Bay to some extent, but we have a lot more coastal area that is just right here behind some skinny little sand islands.
Even though Biloxi Marsh is over the line, y'all have talked about Three Mile Pass in here before. The regulation it performs really controls a lot of our destiny.

COMMISSIONER ROSARGE: That was my reason for asking.

Do you know if any of that money can be used for restoring the islands?

As most people know, if they have been there, they are still fairly long, but they are getting very thin. They are not nearly as wide as they used to be.

GEORGE RAMSEUR: Right.

COMMISSIONER ROSARGE: Three Mile Island and Biloxi Marsh, Chandelier is the barrier island that protects that.

Is there any work being done over there that is not in our state?

Is Louisiana looking at anything on the east side of the river to work on Chandelier Island to try to help protect some of that?

GEORGE RAMSEUR: Well, the current master plan, the 2017 plan does not, as far as I know, have anything for Chandelier.

As a matter of fact, they had some barrier projects for Biloxi Marsh, in the 2012 plan, and those rolled off and, in my opinion, those would be very beneficial not just for the marsh, but the marsh provides a lot of basic day-to-day protection for Hancock County and St. Tammany Parish, as well as all the fishing resource.

That's the sort of thing where maybe with our own master plan tied with effort we can have a more robust conversation with Louisiana and say, why don't we look at putting these Biloxi Marsh barriers back in.

The way we draw this is just sort of the basic estuary, but Chandelier, if we go to modelling performance of this system, definitely has an affect on the overall system. We've got to have it on our radar.

COMMISSIONER ROSARGE: Louisiana has way more issues facing them than what we do, and it appears to be that the east side of the river is not a big concern to them, but it is us on this side.

GEORGE RAMSEUR: I think we can have a positive affect on their trajectory, and then, they have other projects. Like, the Pontchartrain barrier that may well affect us in the negative way, according to their numbers.

We need to have our own numbers to work with. Politically and intellectually, we need to do our own homework on that, and then, come back to the table with them and say, Pontchartrain barrier ends at the state line, right now. What would happen if you brought it all the way over to Bay St. Louis, just as a hypothetical, just to remind everybody that project is just a plus two feet. They looked at plus thirty feet at one point, but it is really interesting how that project is changing.

COMMISSIONER ROSARGE: Thank you, George.

GEORGE RAMSEUR: Thank you.

COMMISSIONER ROSARGE: Very interesting. A lot to look forward to in the future.

Office of Finance and Administration, Ms. Kacey Williams.

KACEY WILLIAMS: Good morning Commissioners,

Director Spraggins, Ms. Chestnut.

These are our financial results as of January 31st, 2018.

Our State Revenue was four point five million dollars. Our Total Agency Revenue was fifteen point seven million dollars.

Our State Net Income is a hundred and eighty-five thousand. Our Agency Net Income is five point four million dollars.

After seven months of fiscal year 2018, Operating Funds have seventy-eight point six percent budget remaining, and our Yields Trust Fund has eighty-three point four percent budget remaining.

COMMISSIONER ROSARGE: Thank you.

KACEY WILLIAMS: Thank you.

COMMISSIONER ROSARGE: Ms. Melissa.

MELISSA SCALLAN: Good morning Commissioners,

Director Spraggins, Ms. Chestnut.

The agency was mentioned thirty-one times in local, state and national media, since the October meeting.

The item that got the most attention last week was Keith Davis leaving us and going to Moss Point. We do wish him well in that new endeavor. He certainly does have his hands full, but I'm sure he will be up to the task.

Another item that got a lot of mention literally from Seattle to DC was our oyster dredge exchange program. We were mentioned in U.S. News and World Report for that program and popular in states that have oysters that look at the same kind of things that we do. That was a good positive thing for us.

As Director Spraggins mentioned, we did have our Capital Day event on Wednesday, February 7th, in Jackson. We had representatives from each office and we spoke to legislators, state employees and other visitors about the things that we do here at the agency. Joe Jemell had several people from Marine Fisheries to talk...
about their programs. We had Oyster Aquaculture, Tidelands, Seafood Marketing and Public Affairs.

We did some local events. Jennifer Frye with Coastal Resources Management represented the agency at the Pascagoula School District Super Saturday Wetland Animals event. That is something they do once a month. When they have a marine theme, the invite us to take part in that. We also had several employees who participated in career days. Sometimes it's science. Sometimes it's Marine Patrol.

As Joe mentioned earlier, the agency received the Fishery Conservation Award from the Mississippi Chapter of the American Fisheries Society for the Derelict Crab Trap Program, and Nick Burris accepted that award at the meeting in Oxford.

For Marine Patrol, so far they have held nine boat-and-water safety classes and certified a hundred and fifty-two students. Compared to last year at the same time, they had conducted ten classes and certified seventy-eight students. The numbers seem to be going up.

COMMISSIONER BOSARGE: Thank you.

MELODIA SCALLAN: Thank you.

COMMISSIONER BOSARGE: We have one other item under Other Business, and I think Mr. Joe is going to address that.

JOE SPRAGGINS: Yes, sir, Mr. Chairman.

As you remember, we had Hurricane Nate that hit here several months ago. In that, we had some damage and we had a lot of overtime that was paid.

What we are looking at is we have a public assistance program, now, through FEMA. FEMA is working with public assistance to give us back the funds that are authorized by the federal government to give back to the agency.

We had a lot of overtime, and they had advised us to use the overtime and pay it and not use it as comp time because FEMA is not allowed to give back compensation time, but they are allowed to pay back overtime.

We did that. We kept very good detail of what we were doing.

We also had a couple of items that were damaged in the storm around the waterfronts that we had to repair. We repaired them, and FEMA said turn in the items and we will look at it and see if it is eligible to be repaired.

We have an application and in the application we need to put an agent as basically representing the agency here. I would like to recommend that Lieutenant Patrick Levine be our representative for this, and I would like for the Commission to look at this, as a governing body, to be able to sign off and say that they appoint Patrick.

Patrick, come up to the podium, in case they have any questions for you, please.

COMMISSIONER BOSARGE: I guess my first question would be, is this what you want to do?

PATRICK LEVINE: Yes, sir.

One thing the Director did not say is we started this process in December of 2017, and we are well on our way to receive those funds from FEMA. One of the last steps in the process is to seek approval from the Commission.

You would think it would be on the front end, but they do it on the back end. We have been working that grant. We have spent a lot of time on it.

One of the things I have shared with Director Spraggins and I want to make sure I make a public comment that this staff of the Department of Marine Resources has just been a fantastic team to compile all the information needed for this grant.

COMMISSIONER BOSARGE: I am willing to take that task. I thank you for the opportunity.

COMMISSIONER BOSARGE: We just wanted to have a conversation with you to figure out just exactly what this was all about.

If you are willing to take on the task, I think we, as the Commission, are willing to give you the opportunity.

Do we have any more questions?

COMMISSIONER HAWARD: I would agree that Patrick is the right person for the job and is willing to take it on.

COMMISSIONER GOLLOTT: I made a motion that we give this job to Patrick Levine.

COMMISSIONER BOSARGE: We have a motion.

Do we have a second?

COMMISSIONER HARMON: So seconded, Mr. Chairman.

COMMISSIONER BOSARGE: We have a motion and a second.

Any further discussion?

(NO RESPONSE.)

COMMISSIONER BOSARGE: All those in favor say aye.

(ALL IN FAVOR.)

COMMISSIONER BOSARGE: Motion carries.

PATRICK LEVINE: Thank you, Commissioners.

COMMISSIONER BOSARGE: Any further public comments?

(NO RESPONSE.)

COMMISSIONER BOSARGE: Do I have a motion to
adjourn?

COMMISSIONER GULLOTT: I make the motion that we adjourn.

COMMISSIONER MARMON: So seconded, Mr. Chairman.

COMMISSIONER BOSARGE: All those in favor say aye.

(All in favor.)

COMMISSIONER BOSARGE: Meeting adjourned.

(Whereupon, at 10:55 o'clock, a.m., the February 20, 2018, meeting of the Commission on Marine Resources was concluded.)

Lucille Morgan, CSR 1251
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CERTIFICATE

I, Lucille Morgan, Certified Shorthand Reporter, do hereby certify that the above and foregoing is a true and correct transcript of the February 20, 2018, meeting 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.

February 20, 2018