COMMISSION ON MARINE RESOURCES

COMMISSION MEETING

Tuesday, February 21, 2017
10:00 a.m.
Grand Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve
6005 Bayou Heron Road
Moss Point, Mississippi 39562

Commission Members:

Richard Gollott, Chairman

Steve Bosarge, Vice Chairman

Mark Havard

Ron Harmon

Jolynne Trapani

Also Present:

Jamie M. Miller, Executive Director DMR
Sandy Chestnut, Esq., Assistant Attorney General

COMMISSIONER GOLLOTT: I would like to call this meeting to order.

First thing on the agenda is the Pledge of Allegiance. We will ask Steve Bosarge to lead us in the pledge.

(Whereupon, the Pledge of Allegiance was recited.)

COMMISSIONER GOLLOTT: Next we have approval of the minutes as written.

Do we have any modifications?

(No response.)

COMMISSIONER GOLLOTT: No modifications.

Can I get a motion to approve the minutes?

COMMISSIONER BOSARGE: So moved, Mr. Chairman.

COMMISSIONER GOLLOTT: We have a motion to approve them as written.

All in favor say aye.

(All in favor.)

COMMISSIONER GOLLOTT: Opposed?

(None opposed.)

COMMISSIONER GOLLOTT: Motion carries.

Next we have approval of the agenda, and I think we have some modifications.

First of all, I would like to put extending the tonging reef in the western end of the Sound on the

agenda.

COMMISSIONER HAVARD: Mr. Chairman, I would like to say no to that. I would like to give more time to do research to see if that is feasible and ask the staff what their thoughts are, as far as from a resource standpoint.

Do we have the resource out there to extend the season?

I read a report that they only got three sacks the last time.

COMMISSIONER GOLLOTT: Well, all I'm doing is making a motion to put it on the agenda so we can discuss it, and I made the motion.

Can I get a second to put it on the agenda?

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

COMMISSIONER GOLLOTT: We have a motion and a second.

All those in favor say aye.

(Commissioner Bosarge, Commissioner Gollott, Commissioner Harmon, Commissioner Trapani in favor.)

COMMISSIONER GOLLOTT: Opposed?

(Commissioner Havard opposed.)

COMMISSIONER GOLLOTT: Motion carries. It's on the agenda.

COMMISSIONER BOSARGE: Mr. Chairman, I've also

got one change to the agenda, if we could. If we could move G before F -- in other words, G would come after E -- I think it would help.

We've got a bunch of folks in here and some issues that may take some time, and I think this may speed things up just a little bit for us.

COMMISSIONER GOLLOTT: Okay.

You made the motion, Steve. I'll second it.

All those in favor say aye.

(All in favor.)

COMMISSIONER GOLLOTT: Opposed?

(None opposed.)

COMMISSIONER GOLLOTT: With no one opposed, the motion carries.

Now, do we have a motion to approve the agenda as modified?

COMMISSIONER HARMON: Mr. Chairman, I make a motion that we approve the amended agenda.

COMMISSIONER BOSARGE: I'll second that motion.

COMMISSIONER GOLLOTT: We have a motion and a second.

All those in favor say aye.

(All in favor.)

COMMISSIONER GOLLOTT: Opposed?

(None opposed.)

COMMISSIONER GOLLOTT: Motion carries.

COMMISSIONER GOLLOTT: Next we have the Executive Director's report.

JAMIE MILLER: No report, Chairman.

COMMISSIONER GOLLOTT: Next we have Marine Patrol, Keith Davis.

RUSTY PITTMAN: Good morning Mr. Chairman, Commissioners, Director Miller, Ms. Chestnut.

I just have a couple of items I do want to mention on the report. The first one is under "Crab Violation". As y'all know, yesterday, Louisiana closed their commercial crab season which borders our waters, and we have partnered with Louisiana Department of Wildlife, Fisheries and Parks. We are going to help keep watch to see if we have an influx of commercial fishermen from Louisiana coming over into our waters. We have a moratorium on licenses.

We have partnered with them and, right now, we are working really good in combination with them. We have a couple of cases already with their help.

The last thing I would like to mention is about the Spotted Seatrout regulation that went into effect on January the 16th. So far we've had three citations written for undersized Spotted Seatrout.

One person had nineteen, and he was cited for

over the limit and undersized, eleven-and-a-half to fourteen inches.

I believe we made one last week that is not on this report.

That's all I have on the report.

COMMISSIONER GOLLOTT: Thank you, sir. Appreciate it.

RUSTY PITTMAN: Yes, sir.

COMMISSIONER GOLLOTT: Next we have G, Office of Coastal Resources Management.

JAN BOYD: Good morning Mr. Chairman, Commissioners, Director Miller, Sandy.

We have two action items for your consideration this morning, and Greg Christodoulou will be our first presenter.

GREG CHRISTODOULOU: Good morning. My name is Greg Christodoulou, and I will be presenting the first item on the agenda for Coastal Resources this morning, and that item is a request for a permit by Lighthouse Marina, LLC.

It is located on a canal, or inlet, of the Pascagoula River, Pascagoula, Jackson County. It's in the General Use District.

The project consists of a twenty slip marina, and it is going to have associated floating bait shop,

restaurant and ship store.

List of the impacts are on the screen: eleven finger piers, twenty-feet-by-four-feet which are pile supported, two access ramps for connecting the barge to the mainland, enclosed restaurant and ship store barge, an enclosed bait shop barge, an enclosed kitchen and storage barge, and an L-shaped floating mainline pier. The finger piers will be demarcating the slips in the marina.

You can see, on the aerial, it is just north of 90 on the broad area. If you go to the zoomed-in, it is just north of the Highway 90 Bridge going into Pascagoula.

Here is a drawing of the proposed project, consisting of the marina piers there on the left side of the screen, and, then, in the shaded area are the different barges that make up the project, and there is going to be a parking lot on the uplands on the project.

Here are some pictures of the site itself looking back toward the Pascagoula River, and, then, back toward the tail end and across the way, there is a restaurant under construction on the opposite side of the waterway, as well.

Decision factors. The project will provide additional docking space for the boating public. It will also increase the local tax base.

The applicant has requested a use plan change

from a General Use District to a Commercial Fishing and Recreational Marinas Use District, and the applicant has used Chapter 8, Section 2, Part I.E.2.b.i, as justification for the variance.

The location of the project. There will be more impacts associated with other sites and a higher financial outlay occurred.

The impacts are very minor in nature.

No significant conflict with surrounding uses as the area is zoned Commercially Waterfront by the City.

Now, the project would set a precedent by allowing non-water dependent industries such as a restaurant and bait shop to be placed in enclosed floating structures, but these activities are in support of the marina, which is water dependent. We have, also, in the past, long ago authorized casino barges for the gaming industry, before that rule was changed after Katrina.

The project will shade approximately six thousand two hundred and twenty square feet of unvegetated waterbottoms. There is no proposed dredging, filling, or shoreline protection proposed for the project.

There will be a slight increase in noise levels in the immediate area, and, then, of course, with the marina, you will have some fuel and oil discharges with the increased vessel traffic.

The project will include public slips, bait and tackle sales, shop store, restaurant, kayak, paddle board and boat rentals.

Best management practices will be utilized and the wastewater systems for the restaurant and marina will be connected to the City of Pascagoula's sewer system and the marina will not allow live aboards.

Additional sites were considered on the East Pascagoula River, but, again, as previously stated, they would have required more impacts and were not financially feasible.

A marina does require a waterfront location. A ship store, restaurant and bait shop does not necessarily require a waterfront location.

Natural scenic qualities. The project is located almost below the bridge on Highway 90. It is within the MDOT right-of-way. There is already a restaurant that is under construction in the uplands, on the opposite side of the waterway. The construction of a marina and associated facilities should not have an impact on natural scenic qualities.

The project was run on public notice in both the Sun Herald and Mississippi Press.

We received no public comments. However, the adjacent property owner opposes the project and he had

several comments which I will go through.

Basically, he is saying the applicant's corporation has been dissolved, the MDOT permit for placing structures in right-of-way is expired, waterway is manmade and ownership of waterbottoms is questionable, the applicant has no ownership, or legal interest in the property, scaled drawing should be provided, concerns about tropical systems, assurances that proper insurance coverages will be obtained and concerns with discharges of wastewater from the marina.

Applicant has responded to those comments. He has reinstated the corporation, the land records of the adjacent owner shows that he does not have one hundred percent use of the slip and does not own the slip, the land that the marina is actually on was sold to MDOT for the bridge, a scaled drawing has since been submitted, the subject of the storms and proper insurances are in the agreement with the City of Pascagoula and DEQ will determine about the discharges.

Agency comments.

DEQ is reviewing the project.

Archives and History has no objections.

Tidelands lease will be required, pending the findings of a boundary determination, since there is a question of whether the waterbottoms are State owned, or

privately owned.

Wildlife, Fisheries and Parks recommends best management practices be properly utilized.

Based on staff review, the staff recommends to the Commission approval of the permit and use-plan change contingent on water quality certification from DEQ and that the applicant receive all required local, state and federal authorizations that go along with this project.

Any questions?

COMMISSIONER GOLLOTT: I think we have somebody that wants to comment, a Susie Metier.

Would you come to the podium and state your name, please?

SUSIE MESTAYER: I'm Susie Mestayer. Thank you for having me here. I appreciate it.

I'm here representing my father, Charles Graham, who is sick in bed with the flu.

Some of this information is new to me, and I'm glad to see some of it, but I did want to just respond to Mr. Linton's latest responses about his slip ownership.

We have owned an interest in that property since 1955 and that is -- well, actually, we sold a portion of that to MDOT and we own the remaining east end and north side of the property.

Our deeds do say that we own the waterbottom.

It is an excavated slip, and we are having a boundary determination made by the State of Mississippi, by the Secretary of State. Pending that, we could possibly be owning part of this project, without actually having an interest in this project, or rather him on our property in some form, or fashion.

That is our concern. We are concerned how this project may affect the remaining development of our property -- I've got notes here -- and we don't have a clear understanding of -- it is a narrow slip -- boats coming in and out.

We do especially want to have ownership clarified and, depending on that, we want to develop the remaining part of that property and we will be excited to have something like this in the area, but, as the owners, we feel we should have an interest in what happens there.

Mr. Linton is not an owner of anything there. We have owned this since 1955 and we should be addressed in this matter.

COMMISSIONER GOLLOTT: Susie, are you for it, or against it?

SUSIE METIER: We are definitely against it, at this time. We are hoping we are successful with our boundary determination which we think will make a major change to this project.

COMMISSIONER GOLLOTT: Sandy, what do we have to say in this?

Do we have to worry about the legal aspects of this, or what is our position?

SANDY CHESTNUT: The permit does not convey any property rights. However, since we know there is a pending dispute, we could make the permit contingent on resolving those property issues before the project goes forward, or we can table it.

I guess the applicant is probably here and he can also speak, if he has anything he would like to say.

Probably, either table it, or make the permit contingent on all the property issues being resolved before any construction actually takes place.

COMMISSIONER BOSARGE: I guess I have a question.

How would them owning the waterbottoms affect the permit?

I know, with the State, you have to get a tidelands lease because the waterbottoms belong to the State.

SANDY CHESTNUT: That would all have to be done through the Secretary of State's office.

COMMISSIONER BOSARGE: I'm talking about, if it is determined that they own the waterbottoms?

SUSIE METIER: Then, it's a private slip.

SANDY CHESTNUT: If it's residential, then, there is no tidelands lease. I don't think. I hate to speak on behalf of the Secretary of State's office, but, if they do some commercial activities there one day, then, they might have to get a tidelands lease for that, but that would all have to go through the Secretary of State's office, just depending on how they determine the property ownership falls.

COMMISSIONER BOSARGE: Maybe I need to clarify it.

If they determine that the waterbottoms are owned by the Mestayers and Mr. Graham, them, what happens?

SANDY CHESTNUT: The property owners would have to work that out between them. Whoever owns that property has the right to say what happens on that property. They would have to work out a lease between the property owners, and, then, between the Secretary of State's office as well.

Does that answer your question?

COMMISSIONER BOSARGE: Yes.

COMMISSIONER GOLLOTT: Sandy, which way would help the applicants, or do we want to hear from the applicant?

Is he here, or are they here?

BRUCE LINTON: Yes.

COMMISSIONER GOLLOTT: Would you come up to the podium and speak to us?

BRUCE LINTON: Good morning. I'm Bruce Linton.

On the issue of the waterbottoms, we actually did submit paperwork to Greg from back in the fifties and the deed.

This case actually went to the Mississippi Supreme Court and the Grahams lost, and they actually attached onto the deed that there is no hundred percent ownership of the waterbottom, that that slip does have riparian rights for both property owners.

Like I say, we have submitted that paperwork and it is in our file.

COMMISSIONER BOSARGE: Bruce, prior to the State obtaining that property that was on the south side of that slip, who owned that property, then?

BRUCE LINTON: Actually, the Gautiers owned that property, and, then, there was another -- there was someone back before them that owned that property, and the Grahams own the north side and the Gautiers own the south side.

COMMISSIONER BOSARGE: All right.

BRUCE LINTON: Actually, back before the current bridge was there, there actually used to be a restaurant

there. I think it was there until around '95, or '96, and they had the same riparian rights, and they had boat slips and everything.

As a matter of fact, I tried to get a copy of their permit, but, back then, Fish and Wildlife, I believe, handled that, but they didn't keep records back that far.

SANDY CHESTNUT: If I could state just to make sure that we are clear, any permit that we grant would not convey any property rights.

The Commission, that is not their jurisdiction, to determine property rights.

They both have their arguments, but they are going to have to work that out between the property owners in the courts.

We could go forth with the permit, if we feel like it meets the criteria, and make it contingent on those property issues being resolved in the courts, and, then, proof of that comes to us before any construction takes place.

COMMISSIONER GOLLOTT: No matter what we do, it won't affect any court cases, or anything like that?

SANDY CHESTNUT: No. We do not convey property rights at all with this permit, and that will be stated in the permit.

COMMISSIONER GOLLOTT: Steve wants to make a motion?

COMMISSIONER BOSARGE: Susie wants to talk some more.

COMMISSIONER GOLLOTT: Okay.

SUSIE METIER: I just wanted to say that there was a court case, yes, and it did not give the property owner to the south side of the slip the right to use the existing piers that were there, and it even gives dimensions as to how far out and how long it can be.

There were existing piers there. The original owner who dug the slip, by the way, sold the property to the Warrens. There was a long pier where they tied up the ships and it went out twenty feet and it was three hundred feet long. I don't know. Something like that.

The Warrens purchased to the water's edge. They did not want to purchase any waterbottom. The deed says they purchased to the water's edge, but they have the right to use the piers out twenty feet, or thirty feet. I forget what it says, but it's in the court case, and up and down, and they could tie up boats there. There was no conveyance of the waterbottom, or slip; strictly the right of use. That is correct.

We are hoping that our boundary determination is successful and that we know what we have and we can go

forward.

COMMISSIONER BOSARGE: We hope that you guys can get together and figure it out. We would like to see the development happen. It looks like another good spot for folks to go there in Pascagoula.

I'll make a motion that we accept the staff's recommendations, contingent upon the boundary determination.

At such time, DMR will be notified of that?

SANDY CHESTNUT: That no construction take place, until the boundary dispute has been resolved.

COMMISSIONER BOSARGE: Correct.

COMMISSIONER GOLLOTT: We have a motion.

Do we have a second?

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

COMMISSIONER GOLLOTT: We have a motion and a second.

All those in favor say aye.

(All in favor.)

COMMISSIONER GOLLOTT: Opposed?

(None opposed.)

COMMISSIONER GOLLOTT: Motion carries.

Next, please.

KRISTYN McGUIRE: My name is Kristyn McGuire,

and I am presenting a request for permit extension by Hall-Lily Harbor, LLC.

The location is on Old Fort Bayou at 8812 Dixie Street in Ocean Springs. It is in the General Use District, and the agent is Culpepper and Associates.

The applicant is requesting a two-year extension to the permit.

They were previously permitted for a boardwalk, two access piers, a multi-family docking area with twelve residential boat slips, six finger piers, the removal of bulkhead, the excavation of approximately one thousand eight hundred and twenty-seven cubic yards, and the construction of a new bulkhead.

This is the basic project layout. The proposed boardwalk is there, the docking area is there and the bulkhead is there (indicating diagram).

This is the project location (indicating aerial view).

April 15th, 2011, a permit application was submitted to DMR.

On March 13th, 2012, the Commission approved the permit application.

On February 2nd, 2017, DMR received a request for a two-year extension to the permit.

The staff of the Department of Marine Resources

has conducted a thorough evaluation and recommends approval of the two-year extension request.

Any questions?

COMMISSIONER GOLLOTT: We have no questions.

Do we have a motion?

COMMISSIONER BOSARGE: I'll make a motion we accept the staff's recommendations.

COMMISSIONER GOLLOTT: We have a motion.

Do we have a second?

COMMISSIONER TRAPANI: I'll second it.

COMMISSIONER GOLLOTT: We have a motion and a second.

All those in favor say aye.

(All in favor.)

COMMISSIONER GOLLOTT: Opposed?

(None opposed.)

COMMISSIONER GOLLOTT: Thank you.

KRISTYN McGUIRE: Thank you.

COMMISSIONER GOLLOTT: Now, we go back to the Joe show.

JAMIE MILLER: Before we start our Marine Fisheries report, I would like to ask all our staff that don't have items coming up on the agenda if y'all would make some room for some of our audience members that are still standing.

COMMISSIONER GOLLOTT: You folks can come sit down, now, if you want to, please.

Okay, Joe.

JOE JEWELL: Good morning Commissioners.

Commissioners, we have a pretty intensive agenda this morning. I would like to request the Commission's permission to table Item F1 to the March agenda, if y'all are agreeable.

This is our annual program review. It's forty-plus slides. I know y'all are rapped with attention to hear that. We have a couple of new Commissioners, but we have a pretty intensive agenda and we have added an item for tonging in the western Sound.

With your permission and approval, we would like to table that.

COMMISSIONER BOSARGE: Is it going to take a long time, Joe?

There are lot of folks in the audience that, I think, need to see that.

JOE JEWELL: We can do that, if you would like. I absolutely can go through it.

COMMISSIONER GOLLOTT: Let's get on with it.

COMMISSIONER BOSARGE: We have a lot of fishermen that need to see what we do every day, and that's a good example of it.

JOE JEWELL: It's a lot of information.

COMMISSIONER BOSARGE: It's a lot of information, yes.

JOE JEWELL: I think it would be beneficial, particularly, because we have a couple of new Commissioners and the Commissioners that have been here for a while understand the importance and like to hear that program reviews and all the things that we do in Fisheries.

First up is Item F1 which is our annual program review.

As you know, I'm the Office Director. We have two deputies because the office is so big and so multi faceted, Ms. Traci Floyd and Mr. Mike Brainard.

Our first bureau is the Artificial Reef Bureau, directed by Mr. Jimmy Sanders.

The program completed thirty-six gill net sets on the inshore artificial reefs and a total of just over eighteen hundred fish were sampled, representing thirty different species.

They oversee the Coastal Impact Assistance Program. They deployed juvenile reef habitat on these three reefs areas, FH-13, 14 and 3.

The inshore reef signs, these are the signs that make the public aware of where these reefs are. They

remarked twenty-two of them, updated the signs.

Next is the Side Scan program. This is a program in conjunction with artificial reefs. There are seven inshore artificial reefs.

The NRDA Mapping Project. There were eleven Mississippi oyster cultch plants. This is part of the early restoration project for side scan where we deployed cultch material.

The NFWF Project, you are probably familiar with. I talked to several of y'all about these. As part of that project, we side scanned twenty-two high resolution offshore reef sites. Those are available on our website for review.

You can see, from the presentation there, they are extremely high resolution. This particular image is of the Menhaden boat that was donated as part of our artificial reef site.

COMMISSIONER BOSARGE: Tell us what NFWF stands for, Joe.

JOE JEWELL: It's the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, and NRDA is the Natural Resource Damage Assessment.

Next up is our donated material that is stored at our staging site in Gulfport. Six companies have donated material to the Artificial Reef Fund. Ninety-

seven loads were delivered, and just over eleven hundred pieces of concrete material was donated to this program.

It is a great program for the fishermen, both recreational and commercial.

Our Outreach-Training Program for the Artificial Reef participated in multiple events; the boat show, Capital Day and Artificial Reef workshop.

They also participate in technical training to help boost the technical knowledge of our staff; GIS, R statistical training and fish reproduction training at Gulf Coast Research Laboratory.

Next up is our Finfish Bureau directed by Mr. Matt Hill and our Deputy Director Dr. Paul Mickle.

One of the major programs is the IJ/FAM Sampling. They completed ninety-six gillnet sets. Thirty-nine species totaling just over eighteen hundred fish were sampled. Approximately six hundred otoliths were collected and processed from eleven different species.

As y'all know, otoliths are the ear bone in fish. They provide age of the fish sort of like the rings do in a tree.

The Red Drum Project is another big project that the Finfish Bureau oversees. They collected just over a hundred and sixty stomachs, otoliths and DNA samples from

IJ sampling.

Sixty-two Red Drum were collected through the independent DMR sampling.

Fifty-nine Red Drum were collected from charter boats and other dependent sampling methods.

One hundred and seventy-seven Red Drum stomachs were analyzed for contents, and three hundred and seventy-five Red Drum stomachs are currently being processed. That is a new record for the Finfish Bureau and we have increased our data base for the Red Drum project.

For new sampling, this project is going to be evolved into a new project. We are working in conjunction with GCRL to obtain tissue samples and gonad samples. The gonad samples are sent to GCRL for reproductive research.

The grant will be revised to include proposed changes for 2017.

These are the projects that the public is most familiar with, our Biological Sampling, MRIP Sampling and our Trip Ticket Program.

Biological Sampling. Approximately four hundred and fifty otoliths were collected and processed for aging. Eight recreational and commercially important species were targeted. Those are listed there (indicating slide).

Over thirty trips were conducted to obtain biological samples.

MRIP Program. We started with our most popular and most familiar with the public. That's where our surveyors go out and interact with the public and get information directly from boat ramps, launches, piers, and 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 2016.

Our Trip Ticket Program. These are where we collect data through our commercial component. Over three thousand scannable trip tickets and over six thousand electronically submitted trip tickets have been processed, from over five hundred and seventy-eight active fishermen and dealers.

That six thousand electronically submitted is a new record for our agency.

Next is our NFWF Reef Fish Project. As I mentioned earlier, previously, we had no fishery-independent data available on our reefs just off the Mississippi shoreline.

This project surveys habitats, including artificial reefs, gas and oil rigs and natural bottoms.

Benthic mapping was completed in 2015, and the first year of the fish and water sampling was completed in 2016.

There were a hundred and sixty-one total site

sampled in 2016. That's a current record for our agency. All these fish are currently being processed and we are working on submittal of the year one report, and we are submitting project proposals to extend this project.

Our Management Research program. We have a Stock Assessment Panel. We are giving a more formal presentation on that just after this one.

We have completed our first peer reviewed stock assessment on the Spotted Seatrout.

Our internal DMR Stock Assessment Panel has reviewed, in conjunction with GCRL, external stock assessments for other states, Louisiana Striped Mullet and Louisiana Spotted Seatrout.

Future stock assessments will include Spotted Seatrout, Sheepshead and Black Drum.

We presented projects currently on the drought impacts on estuarine fish communities, atrophic examination of Red Drum diets from different age classes, and we are working on Harmful Algal Bloom predictive modeling from physiochemical conditions.

We are also working on the preliminary data for the Tails n' Scales Red Snapper reporting results for the 2016 season. These are all adjusted data reports.

The total harvest is just over a hundred thousand pounds of Red Snapper. The number of fish

harvested is over sixteen thousand. The average weight was just over six pounds. The average length was just over twenty-one inches. Trips completed were over three thousand. Effort by anglers was three point six eight anglers per vessel per trip. The harvested fish was just over one point four fish per angler per trip.

Other programs that are conducted by the Finfish Bureau include a total of ten State records that were processed and certified. Nine conventional tackle and one fly-fishing tackle were certified by the Marine Commission in 2016.

We also conduct a Monofilament Recycling Program that you may be familiar with. These are the tubes that are at all of our public piers and boat launches. There are sixteen tubes in Jackson County, twenty-four tubes in Harrison County and six tubes in Hancock County.

More than seventy-five tubes of line have been recycled. That is also a new record for our agency.

The Seafood Technology Bureau is directed by Ms. Ruth Posadas and Deputy Director, Mr. Jeff Davis.

Our Regulatory Program includes technical inspections and regulatory inspections. We did just over forty-five hundred this past year in 2016. That is a new record for our agency.

FDA Program. Our peer review and evaluation, we

passed with no nonconformities.

Our Risk Management Program passed with no nonconformities.

Our 2016 Bi-Annual Water Sampling. We did just over ninety-four sampling of water by our seafood processors.

Mississippi Certified Seafood Dealers. These are the licensed dealers. As you can see, we are just about average where we normally are (indicating graph).

I put out on the side there, a list of the breakdown for the thirty-eight oyster dealers so you can see some components within it because it looks like we have a whole lot of oyster processors when, in fact, most of them are shell stock shippers and re-shippers (indicating graph).

They also conduct the Education, Training and Research Program. They actively conducted twenty-eight Dealer Education courses. They conducted three Regulatory/HACCP/SCP Training workshops. One research paper was assisted with. They did six Vibrio training and workshops.

Next is what y'all may be familiar with, the Mandatory NSSP Harvester-Dealer Training. These are split up as to how they have been conducted from 2014 through 2016. This is a program that we outreach to our dealers-

processors. It is also required of harvesters.

This program has switched from a two-year certification process to a five-year certification process. It has been very beneficial to our dealers and processors.

This is our HACCP training which we have gone through from 2013 through 2016. Again, we have reached our Mississippi residents and, also, non-residents that buy licenses and participate in the Mississippi industry (indicating graph).

We also have a Technical Assistance Program. Some of the things that were handled with this program; we updated Title 22 Part 13 for the regulatory aquaculture program, inspected thirty HACCP plans, validated some of the HACCP plans at our oyster facilities, investigated two Vibrio illnesses, did a regulatory survey of cooling and freezing facilities, and we did two research wage and salary surveys.

Finally, the Public Outreach Program. We participated in several of these. Two notable ones were the Jackson County Fair and Celebrate the Gulf.

The next bureau is the Shellfish Bureau directed by Mr. Scott Gordon. Mr. Erik Broussard is the Deputy Director of this bureau.

These are our oyster landings from 1998 through

2016 (indicating graph).

There are a couple of things I want to point out. You will notice, in 2006, which was the Katrina year and, following that, we had some major cultch plants and relay programs, and we substantially recovered from that, but, then, we had the opening of the Bonnet Carre and you can see that in 2011 and that really had a major impact on us and we have been struggling to recover from that.

These are the commercial oyster licenses for resident and non-resident. We have been relatively stable over the past few years (indicating graph).

We conduct the Water Sampling and Sanitary Shoreline Survey. They collected just over twenty-six hundred water samples which is a new record for our agency. They conduct annual shoreline and sanitary surveys. They identify and document actual, or potential, pollution sources. They maintain growing area classification. They monitor conditional growing area parameters. They operate our meteorological stations.

We also have the Phytoplankton Monitoring Program, and we caught about half of the algal bloom. Sixty-eight water samples were collected and analyzed in house. We began routine sampling of Area V, Biloxi Bay, and, as you know, we historically opened that area for harvest. We investigated seven possible harmful algal

blooms in 2016, and none of these blooms caused a fisheries closure.

We conduct our annual square meter dives. This past year we conducted about five hundred and twenty-six.

As you may recall, between 2015 and 2016, that total was just over a thousand square meter dives were conducted in those two years, and both of those were records for our agency.

We also conduct one-minute dredge tows. A total of one hundred and eighty-one one-minute dredge tows were conducted in 2016. Again, that was a historic record for our agency.

This is the Biloxi Bay growing waters reclassification. I do want to note this is a historic event for our agency. In 2016, we were able to open the Biloxi Bay area. To date, we have been able to harvest just over forty-six hundred sacks from Biloxi Bay (indicating map).

Oyster Harvester Education Program. This is a harvester component of the mandatory ISSC and NSSP Program.

The Shellfish staff has conducted just over ten of these classes and has issued sixty-three certificates of completion.

Again, this is a program that also started out

as with a two-year certification process and has been extended to five years.

Other programs that the Shellfish Bureau conducts:

We did Dermo sampling. We did a cull study. We conduct public hearings. The Conservationist has been successfully returned to service this past January. We have weather stations that we monitor and update. We conducted a brood stock collection for an oyster hatchery. We did a remote spat set for oysters and we are going to participate in an oyster gardening project.

Next up is the Shrimp and Crab Bureau that is directed by Mr. Rick Burris. Deputy Director is Mr. Bill Richardson.

The shrimp season, as you know, January 1st, it closed north of the ICW, the Intracoastal Waterway. May 15th, all Mississippi waters closed. June 6th, the shrimp season is opened. That's when it was opened in 2016.

We have actually started our preliminary sampling for the 2017 season.

October 20th, we opened waters in Biloxi channel between Beacons 18 and 26.

Landings data from January through November was just over seven million pounds, with dockside value of just over fifteen million dollars. That is one of our

most important economic values to our industry.

Trawl sampling. Approximately three hundred and eighty-one trawl samples were collected, in 2016, with shrimp population assessment and monitoring, monitoring and assessment of Mississippi's Interjurisdictional Marine Resources, and the sampling for the 2016 opening of the Bonnet Carre Spillway.

2016 Crab Season. The landings from January through November were just over six hundred and forty-eight thousand pounds with a dockside value of eight hundred and nine thousand.

As you may recall, early in the season, we started getting reports of slow harvest, but last year was a particularly good year for us. As you see on the landings data, in March, we were starting to see an increase in landings data which is a good sign for us.

Of course, there have been a lot of questions about the Louisiana closure because they are concerned about their landings data, but we are doing really well in Mississippi.

Just over two thousand five hundred derelict crab traps have been removed by Mississippi Commercial Crab Fishermen in our program, and overall we have removed just over twenty-one thousand derelict crab traps from our Coastal waters, and, then, recycled through our program

which is a historic State record for our seafood industry.

We were the first program in the Gulf that started this, and it has been a very successful program and we are very proud of it.

MDMR Crab Trap Bycatch Reduction Program. The TEDs program has been around for a while. As you know, the Commission voted for the crab trap escape ring, in Title 22 Part 4. That became effective in August of 2016, and we reached out to both the commercial and recreational fishermen providing them free crab trap rings and, to date, we have distributed just over twenty-seven thousand free rings for the fishermen. Those are mandatory.

The Terrapin Excluder Services are voluntary, and we have issued out almost four thousand of those to the fishermen.

Live Bait Shrimp Camps. This is administered under the Shrimp and Crab Bureau. We have fifteen licensed live bait shrimp camps. We have eleven licensed live bait catcher boats. All bait camps are inspected annually. Just over one million five hundred live shrimp have been sold through November of last year. Just over eighteen thousand pounds of dead shrimp were sold through November of 2016.

Shrimp and Crab Bureau is also responsible for administering our US Fish and Wildlife, USFWS, Sport Fish

Restoration Projects. We have six of them; the Mississippi Artificial Reef Program, Sport Fish Tag and Release program, Mississippi Coastal Sport Fish Studies, Assessment of Red Drum stock in Mississippi Coastal Waters and USFWS coordination and administration.

Other programs that the Shrimp and Crab Bureau administers are the real time hydrological monitoring stations. There are eleven of these. These can be found on the MDMR web page.

The bureau also administers the Special Permits Program. We have issued forty of those, in 2016, and three experimental gear permits.

That concludes the 2016 overview of the Office of Marine Fisheries.

COMMISSIONER GOLLOTT: Joe, am I understanding right that you want the Commission to come up with something for you all to do in your spare time?

JOE JEWELL: We would appreciate that.

Next up for the Commission's consideration -- well, first I want to acknowledge the members of this panel. This is a pretty important panel. It has achieved a couple of historic milestones for the State of Mississippi here on the Gulf Coast. Actually, starting this panel for our State was a big achievement. That was really under the direction of Mr. Matt Hill and Dr. Read

Hendon.

In the early part of this, if y'all will remember, our Mike Buchanan also had a huge role in this. I don't take a lot of credit because I had a very minor role in that.

The current members of that panel, the DMR members are myself, Mr. Matt Hill and Dr. Paul Mickle. The members from GCRL are Dr. Read Hendon, Dr. Robert Leaf and Ms. Jill Hendon.

I want to speak to the Commission and give you sort of an update of where we are and where we would like to, and elicit the Commission's input.

In April of 2015, there was a discussion with the Commission. Mr. Matt Hill, Dr. Robert Leaf and Dr. Read Hendon had a discussion with the Commission, and they sort of prioritized this list; Spotted Seatrout, Red Drum, Sheepshead, Black Drum and Southern Flounder. Now, at that time, it was not funded and subsequently we did receive funding.

The Red Drum was not a full stock assessment. It was an escapement rate and increased commercial quota.

Then, in May of 2016, I came before the Commission and gave an update. Of course, we prioritized Spotted Seatrout and that is going to remain our number one priority. We have already stated to the Commission

and the Commission has requested that we provide annual updates. Spotted Seatrout are going to remain our number one priority for the next three to four years.

Then, the Commission also directed us to prioritize Sheepshead. As you may recall, several fishermen had come before the Commission and requested updated stock assessments on Sheepshead. In order for the Commission to consider that, we had to have some information available for the Commission. We are in the process of providing a stock assessment for Sheepshead.

Then, at the meeting, you had mentioned Black Drum and Red Drum. We are meeting quarterly, the panel, after the Commission meetings, and this past quarter we met, we reviewed the minutes of the Commission meetings from both of those, and we received the prior authorization of these two presentations that were given to the Commission, and we prioritized them with this list (indicating document).

I would like the Commission to review that real quickly, and, then, make a motion and direct us that is where you want to go.

I want the Commission to understand that aside from the first two, maybe three, it is pretty flexible. Y'all have the ability to prioritize this, or add, or prioritize the list for us.

COMMISSIONER GOLLOTT: Joe, a question.

Why would you put Red Drum so far down on the list?

I would think it would be right under Speckled Trout.

JOE JEWELL: Well, on Black Drum, we are already starting to accumulate the data base and the data for that.

Red Drum, as you may recall, we did have an escapement rate done on that, and it's just the way it is located in the list, but the Commission can put Red Drum forward, if the Commission chooses. This is very flexible, and we work with the Commission to do this.

COMMISSIONER BOSARGE: Well, with Red Drum, there is a pretty good management regime in place, now, or a management plan.

JOE JEWELL: There is.

COMMISSIONER BOSARGE: Me looking at the list -- and I know you and I had this conversation -- the species I see that really needs looking at more than anything else is Southern Flounder. That seems to be the species that may be in the most peril, I guess you would say, or decreasing.

JOE JEWELL: The conversation that we had at the Stock Assessment Panel about flounder is all the other

species you see up there on that list, we have quite a lot of data accumulated from both independent and dependent data.

The issue with flounder is because it's a bottom dweller and it moves in and out of the estuarine system at specific times of the season, we don't have a lot of accumulated data and that if we prioritize, or re-prioritize the Southern Flounder, we thought that we would put it last on our list to allow us to start adopting any coordinated and targeted way to accumulate more data into the system.

Right now, as it is, we don't have enough data to complete, or initiate, a stock assessment.

COMMISSIONER BOSARGE: Yes, but we need to start gathering some information.

JOE JEWELL: It's on the list, and we have had that conversation.

COMMISSIONER BOSARGE: All right.

JOE JEWELL: If the Commission agrees with that list, we need a motion.

COMMISSIONER GOLLOTT: I'll make the motion that we accept the staff's list on its priorities.

COMMISSIONER BOSARGE: And I will second the motion.

COMMISSIONER GOLLOTT: We have a motion and a

second.

All those in favor say aye.

(All in favor.)

COMMISSIONER GOLLOTT: Opposed?

(None opposed.)

COMMISSIONER GOLLOTT: Motion carries.

JOE JEWELL: Next up on the agenda for consideration is Title 22 Part 9 by Mr. Matt Hill and, once he completes that, we will move into the main section of the Oyster Management Program and the consideration that the Commission put on the agenda.

MATT HILL: I will try not to take a bunch of time on this, but, before I do get started, I would like to thank some of our commercial fishermen that we consider historical commercial fishermen for attending this meeting. It's nice to see some of the faces in the audience taking an interest in some of the things that we do. We have been working very closely with them, and I would just like to express my gratitude for them being here today and trying to help us out and get through a few issues that we are having.

That being said, the presentation I'm going to give is on Title 22 Part 9. It's our Rules and Regulations for Statistical Reporting and Confidentiality of Statistical Data for Marine Fisheries in the State of

Mississippi.

The issue we are having here is in Mississippi Code 49-15-28. We allow commercial fishermen to ship their own catch. They can ship it across state lines. They can pretty much do whatever they would like to within the State, without having a dealer's license. We will consider them a wholesale dealer. The Code always supercedes our regulations.

In Chapter 5 of our regulations in Section 100, what we would like to do is clarify that a licensed commercial fishermen may only sell to a seafood dealer-processor. A validly licensed commercial fishermen may sell only their catch to a consumer -- we would like to strike out the words "within the state" which would allow them to take their catch only out of the State, if they have in their possession a fresh product permit obtained from the MDMR. A secondary fresh product permit may be obtained from the MDMR for a commercial fishermen's spouse, or family member, that will allow them to sell their catch to consumers while the commercial fisherman continues to fish. There will be no fee for this permit.

What we are doing here is we are clarifying that they can only transport their catch out of State and we would like to stroke out the words "within the State" which would allow them to transport their catch out of

state without the dealer's license.

This one is a little lengthy so we're not going to get into it all. I just want to explain the changes that we would like to make in this, or we are proposing today.

Each seafood dealer/processor is hereby required to complete Mississippi trip tickets provided by the MDMR. Commercial fishermen who sell their catch to individuals, other than a Mississippi dealer/processor, or transport their catch out of State, are hereby required to complete Mississippi trip tickets provided by the MDMR and be in possession of a fresh product permit.

This would mean, once they transport their catch out of State, a ticket is filled out in another state, but we do not have the availability, or the means, to get that ticket from Alabama, or Louisiana. We need those landings to start counting in the State of Mississippi.

What we are proposing is that the fishermen, before they transport their catch out of State, fill out a trip ticket.

The completed trip ticket is only required for the initial point of sale of the seafood product.

We would like to strike out this sentence, "Commercial fishermen who sell their catch to anyone other than a Mississippi licensed dealer/processor, or transport

their catch out of State, are required to purchase and possess a Dealer/Processor License and are required to comply with all regulations governing Mississippi dealers/processors."

The reason for this is this is in direct conflict with the Code that I read earlier. State statute does not require a dealer's license to be purchased for a fisherman to transport their catch out of state.

This sentence in Chapter 06, Section 100, requires this process. So this is not enforceable.

"All trip tickets shall be returned to the MDMR, or electrically submitted, on or before the 10th of each month for actual transactions from every commercial fisherman during the preceding month."

COMMISSIONER GOLLOTT: Matt, a commercial fisherman can fill out this trip ticket after he takes it across the State line.

Right?

MATT HILL: Yes.

COMMISSIONER GOLLOTT: They don't have to do it before that?

MATT HILL: That is correct.

COMMISSIONER GOLLOTT: Okay.

MATT HILL: Our issue is when a fisherman takes it and, say, they take it to a dealer in Alabama, right

now, we have no way of forcing them, or requiring, them --

COMMISSIONER GOLLOTT: (Interposing) I understand that. I just want to make sure the fishermen didn't have to fill out the trip ticket prior to leaving the State.

MATT HILL: No, because they don't know what the price is going to be and they don't know what the sale is going to be. They would need the dealer to sign off on a ticket, but this would require them to fill out a ticket and provide it back to the State of Mississippi, and it would help the fishermen. They would not be required, under our regulation, to buy that hundred dollar dealer's license anymore.

COMMISSIONER GOLLOTT: Glad to see you straighten that out.

COMMISSIONER BOSARGE: Yes.

COMMISSIONER GOLLOTT: Do we have a motion?

COMMISSIONER BOSARGE: Yes. I make a motion to proceed with Notice of Intent to amend Title 22 Part 9.

COMMISSIONER GOLLOTT: Do we have a second?

COMMISSIONER HARMON: So seconded, Mr. Chairman.

COMMISSIONER GOLLOTT: We have a motion and a second.

All those in favor say aye.

(All in favor.)

COMMISSIONER GOLLOTT: Opposed?

(None opposed.)

COMMISSIONER GOLLOTT: Motion carries. Thank you.

JOE JEWELL: Thank you, Commissioners.

I think up next for consideration, the Commission added to the agenda a motion to consider extending the tonging season for two weeks.

Is that correct?

COMMISSIONER GOLLOTT: That's correct.

JOE JEWELL: I think you wanted to have some discussion, first?

JAMIE MILLER: You've got two more items, Joe.

Do you want to go through the next two items?

JOE JEWELL: We can do that.

COMMISSIONER GOLLOTT: Well, I mean, we're here. Let's go ahead and do what Joe brought up, the extension of the oyster season.

JOE JEWELL: I was unsure how y'all wanted to accomplish that, just sticking it on the agenda, if you wanted me to go through the agenda items and take that up afterwards, or before?

I just need some direction from the Commission.

COMMISSIONER BOSARGE: I would like to go through the agenda items and pick it up at the end, if we

could.

COMMISSIONER GOLLOTT: That's okay with me. Go ahead.

JOE JEWELL: The next agenda item is Item F4, Managing Oyster Areas with Quota.

Before I take that up, the Commission asked that I present an oyster plan before the Commission. Several of y'all have reached out to me and spoken to me and asked that I present to you what the Shellfish Bureau and the Office of Marine Fisheries' plan is for the upcoming season.

I'm reluctant to call it a management plan because some of the suggestions that have been given to me focus on the harvest.

I have listened to the Commission about some of the ideas that have been conveyed to me, and what I would like to do is give you some of the ideas, incorporating the Commission's ideas and some of the activities that the staff has planned for this upcoming year, and, then, seek input from the Commission.

The first thing I want to point out is that we don't actually have the Corps permit for the shellfish areas that we are talking about. We are one step closer. We have received a consistency letter from NOAA, the National Marine Fisheries Service. That letter has been

forwarded on to the Mobile District Corps of Engineers for consideration. We are very close to receiving the permit that will allow us to engage in the cultch and relaying activities.

First up is cultch planting. I do want to note for the Commission that we went out on bid for an eight hundred thousand dollar cultch plant. The bids for it have been opened. We are anticipating anywhere from twenty to twenty-five cubic yards of the material will be deployed on bottoms in the western Sound.

Later, Mr. Erik Broussard will present to you a presentation that will show areas that we propose to put those.

COMMISSIONER GOLLOTT: How many cubic yards, Joe?

JOE JEWELL: Somewhere between twenty and twenty-five thousand cubic yards.

COMMISSIONER GOLLOTT: You said "twenty-five". You scared me.

COMMISSIONER BOSARGE: Yes. I was going to say it's pretty pricey, Joe.

JOE JEWELL: One of the things I wanted to point out is the Commission has requested and we have listened to -- we have actually had some dealers' and processors' and fishermen's input -- is if we go to a larger size, or

consider going to a larger size, and we did that. We switched from a number fifty-seven to a number four.

As you know, we have heard y'all talk about that, and wanted to incorporate that, at least on this shell plant, to test that theory and see how that works.

We have switched to a larger size material to see how that works for this shell plant.

I do want to update the Commission on some of our activities that we plan for the Pascagoula and Biloxi Bay.

Mr. Broussard has been working with Mr. Sanders in the Artificial Reef Program. As you can see from our update, we have modified the staging site. It is in the Gulfport Industrial Canal. We have modified that staging site and built a bulkhead and we plan, in the future, to dredge that area so that the Conservationist can pull right up to the canal there at the staging site.

We are currently accepting quotes for a hopper conveyor system so we can mount it there on that bulkhead and load it directly onto the Conservationist. There is actually some material on site and we plan to start those operations immediately, once the hopper conveyor system has been purchased.

There are also plans in the making to secure some additional materials so that we can continuously

plant the Biloxi Bay and potentially Pascagoula.

Our relay activities. We have had this discussion with the Commission, and we have had workshops and discussed this. I just want to be very candid with the Commission.

There is only really one reef that is large enough to sustain relay activity, and that's the Pascagoula Causeway.

The last relay that occurred, we moved just about ten thousand sacks. We are estimating that there are probably about seventy thousand sacks on the reef. This was from our 2015 assessment on the reef. We did not assess the reef last year because, as you saw from the presentation, our activities were concentrated, at the Commission's direction, in the western Sound, to do a more thorough assessment over there, but we do plan to be back in Pascagoula this year.

If we are going to look at relay activities, I sort of thought of the three options the Commission can consider, or should consider.

Option one would be relay for harvest, and that's to take a certain percentage of the Pascagoula Reef and relay it. The most efficient place to relay it to would be Biloxi Bay. That's one consideration.

Option two is to relay for management. If we

start moving cultch material into Biloxi Bay and cultch planting there, the management plan that we think is very effective is to take some material from the Pascagoula Causeway Reef and seed those areas that we have cultch planted in Biloxi Bay.

Then, option three is potentially a relay for depuration, and that's a consideration for either Pascagoula Causeway, or Graveline. That has been mentioned by both the Commission and the staff, and those facilities are located at Gulf Coast Research Laboratory.

If we are to do any of those activities, we really need to be focused on what our overall goal will be.

Then, next up is depuration. I previously discussed a little bit about that. We do have the potential to conduct depuration activities at the Gulf Coast Research Laboratory in their Cedar Point facility. My understanding is that they are initially in the process of conducting a test, a validation survey of how that technology will be validated by the FDA, in their NSSP guidelines.

That technology is certainly doable, has been done and certainly is transferable, once it has been validated.

Then, the staff finally is recommending using

the Conservationist to cultivate reefs where necessary, during the time frame that is most effective.

That is sort of our Harvest Plan.

Then, again, the Commission, we met in December of 2016, and we had some lengthy discussion about management options, about what specific management plans, or criteria, are available to the DMR staff and available to the Marine Commission.

We had some lengthy discussions and I was asked to come and present those in a more formal way before the Commission.

Of course, first up is always status quo, and that option went before the Commission as the way we managed in the past. As you saw on the landings data graph, we managed our reefs for a decade, or more, several decades by simply pressure. We would evaluate pressure from our trip ticket data and, once it started dropping at a significant level, thirty or forty percent, we decided that we would close the reefs because we were reaching unsustainable pressure, and that worked for us for decades because we had a manageable resource and we had a tremendous amount of resource.

The pros of that are it works, when you have a lot of resource.

The cons are that when you don't have a lot of

resource, it's not an effective management tool.

The next consideration, or the next management option is the quota system, and that is something the Commission has used for the past couple of years. That system is simply doing an assessment through our square meter grid sampling and our one-meter dredge tows, and getting a pretty good idea of how much marketable size oysters are out on the reefs in either one or two ways, establishing a quota for the overall area, or the reefs in the western Sound, or potentially establishing a quota for individual areas like Area I, or Area II, or you could even be more specific and do it by reef.

The pros of this are it allows for harvest and management based on the population, health and quantity of oysters in a specific area.

The cons are the area, once it has reached that quota, could close suddenly and unexpectedly cut off the season for the fishermen.

The next consideration that is available and that we discussed is the shell budget model and this is based on no net loss on oyster reef. That is simply doing an assessment of the reef, determining oyster growth, mortality, the cultch loss rate which allows the model to calculate outputs that include estimating sustainable harvest and reef loss, or gains.

The pros are it provides a highly accurate estimate of the amount of oysters and shell that can be sustainable harvest from the oyster reef, while maintaining no net loss of cultch.

The cons are the model output can only provide an estimate to maintain the reef at its current condition. If you have a reef in poor condition with very low marketable size oysters, it is only going to estimate at that level. It is not going to help you do a sustained level of increase. That's the negative parts of a shell budget.

Then, finally, available to the Commission is the stock assessment model, or the stock assessment management model.

The stock assessment pros are it identifies oyster numbers within a population providing the size class. It is very similar to the Spotted Seatrout Stock Assessment where you are given assessment of the overall abundance of the oysters that are out there and determine what portion of that you are willing to take to keep that population sustainable. It's sort of like your SPR that the Commission adopted as the benchmark.

Once the stock assessment is done, we've got something very similar for an oyster, what is the bottom level of resource that you would be willing to leave out

there at a sustainable level.

Those are some of the management options that the Commission requested that we have a little bit more discussion on and the plan and strategy that the department and our office has available for them.

Before we have a little bit of discussion, one of the things that at least a couple of the Commissioners have asked about and had concerns about is the overall plan that the Department of Marine Resources, the Office of Marine Fisheries has and do we plan to incorporate the Governor's Oyster Council's recommendations into our overall philosophy for sustainability, or increasing the oyster production.

As you know, the Governor established the Oyster Council by Executive Order. The Governor felt so strongly about the condition the oyster resource was in, at that time, and about increasing and sustaining those resources that he gave an executive order.

Also, all of the Commissioners that were on the Commission at that time, participated in this oyster council. That includes Commissioner Bosarge, Commissioner Harmon and Commissioner Gollott and a lot of the staff, a lot of the senior staff with the DMR also was on that council, including myself, serving in that capacity to try to get together and provide the best knowledge,

information, science and data that was available to help recover the oyster industry and the oyster resource. The goal of that council was to produce one million sacks of oysters by the year 2025.

You have asked me. At least two of y'all have asked me, what were some of the very specific recommendations that apply to this philosophy that we have adopted over the past couple of years.

I went back yesterday. I remembered a few of them, but I wanted to be able to say into the record exactly what they were. I'm going to read a couple of them.

To develop a management plan strategy based on the implemental recommendations contained in this report.

The first thing was that they said we have taken the time, all of us. We met for months compiling this report. If we are going to do this and make this recommendation, it is important for us to actually follow the recommendation.

Next, to open and close specific reef areas, based on projections that leave sufficient biomass for a sustainable, or increased, fisheries in the following year.

To continue to sample annually, with a focus on developing a stock assessment, or model that can be

utilized for a sustainable harvest.

Those are the specific things that you have asked me to look at for the Commission to consider.

Are there any questions?

COMMISSIONER GOLLOTT: Yes, sir.

Can we go back to your three relaying options?

JOE JEWELL: Sure.

COMMISSIONER GOLLOTT: I say that number one and number three are the same. The only difference is one and two.

Do you plant shells, relay oysters on top of them and let them sit there for three years until the smaller oysters can get big enough to open this reef, or do you relay and let your fishermen go in there and harvest the marketable oysters and leave the small oysters there?

To me, those are your only two options and, to me, you are risking losing the larger oysters where, if you relay fifteen hundred barrels of oysters, put them on an area, and you let them go in there and harvest the legal size oysters, the smaller oysters, you have cultivated them and you are bringing them along for the following year.

That is a surefire way of giving the fishermen a chance to make a living and not gambling that these larger

oysters are going to live on down the road.

JOE JEWELL: That is an absolute consideration. Absolutely.

COMMISSIONER GOLLOTT: Okay.

JOE JEWELL: The picture that we considered, when the staff met, was where are we going? What is the long-term picture?

You are absolutely correct. These are absolute considerations that we can make. The fisheries is in a relatively rebuilding state and, in a rebuilding state, you have to consider what is in the future is more important that what we're doing, right now.

COMMISSIONER GOLLOTT: Now, wait a minute. The law says we will relay out of closed areas and put them in the areas where the fishermen can harvest them, and I'm not sure what section of the law that is.

COMMISSIONER BOSARGE: I think we all agree on relaying oysters. I think maybe where we disagree is what we do with them after we relay them.

COMMISSIONER GOLLOTT: That's correct.

COMMISSIONER BOSARGE: To me, right now, we are in a rebuilding stage of the oyster resources and we really don't have a set management plan on what we are going to do and what we're not going to do.

I guess a disagreement amongst us is with your

options of what we do with the oysters that we relay and now that we are in the building stage, we shouldn't consider harvest. We should consider rebuilding. Put these oysters out and put cultch plants out, and we hope that by scattering these oysters out will help to rebuild the reefs, and, then, we look at what we can harvest in the coming year.

COMMISSIONER GOLLOTT: But it won't be in the coming year. It will be three years until that oyster reef is opened. I mean, you are putting the fishermen on hold for three years. That's doesn't make sense to me.

Where is your science?

JOE JEWELL: Now, the Commission doesn't have to take one option. You can consider multiple options and this can be multi pronged.

I wouldn't go so much getting caught on the option that you have to consider one thing and that's it.

The one thing that I want to caution the Commission on is that the Pascagoula Reef, right now currently, is the most sustainable reef in the State of Mississippi, and this is the reef where we have to be most applicable in our approach, too.

COMMISSIONER GOLLOTT: I think we have agreed that if we take a thousand barrels of oysters out of Pascagoula, we will put that many shells back because it

is probably one of the most prolific areas for oyster catch and spat and stuff like that.

We are not talking about depleting the Pascagoula Reef. We are talking about taking them off and replacing it with shell material.

JOE JEWELL: I don't want to talk in terms of barrels. Let's talk in terms of sacks.

If we estimate seventy thousand sacks there --

COMMISSIONER GOLLOTT: (Interposing) Is that two hundred and ten thousand sacks?

JOE JEWELL: You are talking in terms of barrels.

We are talking straight sacks. We are saying there are about seventy thousand marketable size sacks.

COMMISSIONER GOLLOTT: What do you think is there overall?

JOE JEWELL: Including the sub-market size in sacks?

COMMISSIONER GOLLOTT: Yes.

JOE JEWELL: Well, I would clearly say there is over a hundred thousand sacks.

COMMISSIONER GOLLOTT: Do you think it's a hundred and forty, or a hundred and fifty?

JOE JEWELL: I don't know about that. We would have to look at the data.

COMMISSIONER GOLLOTT: I think before we can do anything, we really need a good assessment of that thing so we can have the correct data and we can sit down and formulate a plan on what to do.

JOE JEWELL: The data we are talking about is the data that occurred in 2015. It's not that antiquated, but the more recent the data is the more accurate the decision the Commission makes.

COMMISSIONER GOLLOTT: We have got to take care of these fishermen, too. We can't just close it all down and say we're going to harvest it in three years and let it sit there. That's silly to me.

JOE JEWELL: I made this statement before, too. I think that --

COMMISSIONER BOSARGE: (Interposing) I don't know where you're coming up with the three years. I don't understand that.

COMMISSIONER GOLLOTT: Well, it takes about three years for an oyster to get three inches.

JOE JEWELL: I think what Commissioner Gollott is saying is true, and we do plan to take a lot of cultch material and start planting Biloxi Bay because we do see that as a alternate site for when areas in the western Sound are closed down, and we do try to expand that area and make it as large and available site as possible, but,

to do that, we are going to cultch plant in those areas.

What we would like to do, rather than wait for nature to have its way, we would like to transport, or relay, some of the material from Pascagoula Reef and seed those areas.

Now, once you seed them, it takes anywhere from two to three years for marketable size oysters to reach the harvest level. That's what Commission Gollott is trying to say which I don't see as an issue because planning today what is going to happen in the future is a wise thing. If you wait just now to just relay what is happening naturally by nature, I don't think it is the wisest approach to what is going to happen in Biloxi Bay.

I think that we should take a more active approach in Biloxi Bay and try and make it as marketable a resource as possible in the future.

Now, the issue about Pascagoula Reef, again, if we take large amounts percentagewise off of that reef, if we seed that reef, that takes resource and funding to do that, but it will also take two, or three, years for that to grow back. Those are considerations for the Commission absolutely.

COMMISSIONER BOSARGE: Joe, the relay that will be done from Pascagoula -- I'm sure there will be some sort of a relay -- all of those oysters won't be used to

put for cultch plants.

In other words, I guess in my mind I see, yes, we will put cultch plants in places and seed them with oysters from Pascagoula possibly, but that won't be all we do with the oysters from Pascagoula.

Correct?

I mean, what I see that you put up on the slide, there are a lot of areas that we are talking about possibly putting oysters.

JOE JEWELL: Yes, there are.

COMMISSIONER BOSARGE: And you will put oysters on natural bottom that hasn't been planted.

Correct?

JOE JEWELL: No. We're not proposing to put oysters in areas that have not been previously planted.

COMMISSIONER BOSARGE: But that you don't plant this year. I guess what I'm saying is at some point some of these oysters are getting ready to be put on a natural bottom where, in the coming year, if we can finally adopt some type of a management plan, there will be areas that will be open where these oysters have been put for these fishermen to work.

JOE JEWELL: Yes. That certainly is an option.

COMMISSIONER HAVARD: I think the first thing we need to do is adopt a management plan. Until we get a

plan in place and we stick with this plan, we are just talking about scenarios, what we would like to do, but we've got to get a plan in place and get it adopted and stick to it.

COMMISSIONER BOSARGE: I agree with Commissioner Havard. I feel like the first step in this is for us to agree with a management strategy on how we are going to manage the fishery. I think you've given some options.

The one option that seems to make the most sense is the quota system, but we have to do it quota by area, instead of like we did last year where it was quota for the whole fishery where we took one reef and, basically, everybody worked one reef and we took the total quota off of one spot.

JOE JEWELL: Two things. I want to be very candid with the Commission. As y'all recall at our workshop, I think we were being very open and frank with each other.

All of these management options that I have given to the Commission, we discussed at the December meeting. They all have their pros and cons, and I think I discussed a few of those, but, realistically, the condition of the reef and the low resource available off those reefs, the options available to you are very narrow. They are very limited, and, if you were to implement

specific ones, the results of them are going to be very narrow and very limited.

For instance, if you adopted status quo, the way we managed the reefs for decades, the results from that is going to be minimal and the impacts of harvesting that way substantial.

We are in recovery and the ability to recover from that and implement the Governor's Oyster Council Management Plan and recommendations would be negligible. We can essentially say that's not a consideration.

Then, you are left with three; the quota system, the budget model and the stock assessment.

The budget model is not really effective because it's labor intensive and it only assesses the condition of the reef as it is, now. I think we all agree that the condition of the reef, now, is not productive.

Again, we are in a rebuilding stage, not in a maintenance portion of it, and the ability for the shell budget model to be an effective tool for the Commission is very limited.

A stock assessment model, we all have had some experience with stock assessment models. We have considered Spotted Seatrout. We have done presentations of that model for over a year, and the Commission did its due diligence, and it took quite some while and quite some

work to come up with a standard base to work with for the Spotted Seatrout, and you had a much better condition index when you started on Spotted Seatrout than there are with shellfish, and we are continuing to harvest.

I would state that utilization of the stock assessment model is going to be very limited and the results from it is going to be very limited in what we gain from it.

I would agree, at this point, the quota system that the Commission has adopted over the past few years is probably going to be your only option, at this point.

You certainly can adopt these other two, or combinations of them, and see how they work, but, right now, the most effective tool, under the conditions and the resource that we have, is the quota system.

COMMISSIONER GOLLOTT: I agree with you, but the only thing -- I'm going to make a statement here. The only way you are going to get yourself out of a rebuilding stage and get the three hundred thousand, or a million sacks that we want, is cultch material. There is no way you can regulate your way to prosperity here.

One good cultch material set in the western Sound will kick us back, or one good cultch material set in Pascagoula where it has historically produced a lot of oysters. They produce so many oysters down there they get

ranky. You can't catch them. They need to be spread out.

I was talking to an oyster dealer in eastern Louisiana and that's what he was doing, moving some oysters from one area to another on his own private leases to give them more room to grow and make them grow faster.

Cultch material is key here and keeping the fishermen occupied and busy and letting them make a living until we can get there is the next key thing.

JOE JEWELL: I would agree with that, but remember that with relay activity, you don't get one for one. If you relay a thousand sacks of oysters and you bring all of them to the new site, you don't a thousand back out.

COMMISSIONER GOLLOTT: But, you know, the people in Louisiana claim they are getting two and three to one.

Now, how are they doing that and we can't get one to one?

COMMISSIONER BOSARGE: I can imagine because they are private reefs and, when they relay, they don't go back on them.

COMMISSIONER GOLLOTT: They let them grow for six or eight months, nine months, and, then, they harvest them.

We have the same option here. We can relay out of Pascagoula and let them sit there for nine months, but,

from one season to the next, at least you would give your fishermen something to look forward to and how to make a living.

COMMISSIONER HARMON: Joe, I'm going to comment on this, too.

JOE JEWELL: Sure.

COMMISSIONER HARMON: I'm totally open minded. I understand where we need to go with this.

If leave marketable oysters out there, not only are we taking money from these fishermen, we are running the risk of losing that stock, but, like with Spotted Seatrout, if we are taking fifteen-inch fish out which we are still doing, let's take these marketable oysters out.

We are working the bottoms and stirring it up. It's good cultivation for these oysters. The key to it is enforcement where we are sticking with these legal oysters, and I'm like Commissioner Gollott, let's move this cultch material.

I'm all for the management program, but we've got that and it's a real fluid situation that we've got to work.

JOE JEWELL: I don't disagree with that, but the management recommendations, or the resource recommendation that the Department of Marine Resources makes to the Commission is based on science, facts and data, and that

is what we are compelled to give to the Commission that comports to the statute that requires the Commission make decisions on the best science available. That's what we give the Commission and we are compelled to do that.

Now, the Commission has to consider a whole host of other things that the Department necessarily doesn't.

The fishermen, the commercial fishermen, particularly the oystermen that are making a living at this, you have had these fishermen come up here and explain to you the detriment of closing the season early, or restricting the season to a certain time period just before Christmas, or just before Thanksgiving, the hardship that it causes them. I have explained that we are not immuned from that, the hardship that it causes them.

I told you I grew up in a commercial fishing family. I used to be an oysterman, and I understand painfully how these decisions impact their livelihood and their families.

We also have to consider that the decisions we make have to be resource based and, when you make that decision, the pathway forward is a lot easier when you have to make tough decisions because the decisions you have to make for that fisherman, that person who is making their livelihood in this industry, is not only today now

and tomorrow, but it's next year, five years from now, or ten years from now.

So, in the back of my head, when we stand up here and make recommendations to the Commission, we are also thinking that this is in a rebuilding stage and how is the condition of this resource going to be two years from now, or five years from now.

They are making their living barely, right now. I have the data here.

In 2014-15, we harvested approximately twenty-six thousand sacks, in 2015-16, we harvested just over forty thousand sacks, and, in 2016, it was thirty-seven thousand sacks.

Most of the fishermen will tell you they are really scrambling to find the resource. We are in a downward trend and, I think, our duty and our job is to try and find ways -- I think Commissioner Gollott, one of the great ways to do that is cultch planting, to try and find a pathway forward for them to make a living at this, not only today, but in the future.

I actually agree with that comment, but we have to be sort of forward thinking.

COMMISSIONER GOLLOTT: Joe, how long will it take y'all to give us an estimate as to what is in Pascagoula, a recent assessment?

Can you do it by the next meeting?

JOE JEWELL: I doubt that, but we do have it on the agenda and we will begin our assessments.

COMMISSIONER GOLLOTT: I think we need an assessment, a recent assessment, and, then, I think we need to have another workshop to sit down and come up with a plan.

I have no problem with planting shells and relaying oysters on top of them, but I do think we need to relay some for harvest.

JOE JEWELL: The second thing I was going to mention is that, at the workshop, I suggested this, or someone else suggested it in our conversations with the Commission and asked that I come forward with an idea of how the quota system would work on a rotation basis in the western Sound. I have that available.

Why don't y'all let me give y'all that presentation, and, then, it will be something for y'all to think about.

COMMISSIONER GOLLOTT: Joe, can we take about a ten-minute break, before you do that?

JOE JEWELL: Sure.

COMMISSIONER GOLLOTT: Recess for about ten minutes.

(Whereupon, at short recess was taken.)

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

I would like to make a motion that we -- we gave the staff a directive to give us an assessment of the Pascagoula Reef and I would like to put that in the form of a motion.

Can I get a second on it?

COMMISSIONER HARMON: So seconded, Mr. Chairman.

COMMISSIONER GOLLOTT: We have a motion and a second.

All those in favor say aye.

(All in favor.)

COMMISSIONER GOLLOTT: Opposed?

(None opposed.)

COMMISSIONER GOLLOTT: Motion carries.

JAMIE MILLER: Chairman, can I just make sure for the staff of y'all's direction?

COMMISSIONER GOLLOTT: Yes.

JAMIE MILLER: The assessment will include a stock assessment, number of available sacks on the reef?

JOE JEWELL: Well, our typical assessment is not a stock assessment. We do square meter dives and one-minute tows.

COMMISSIONER GOLLOTT: Let me say this, too, Joe.

What I would like is, say, Class A, B and C; A being marketable oysters, B being oysters that will be marketable next year, and C being three years from now, just an estimate.

JOE JEWELL: We can provide that. We have that from our previous 2015 data.

COMMISSIONER HAVARD: Is 2015 the last time we did that?

JOE JEWELL: That's correct.

COMMISSIONER BOSARGE: Could you also incorporate into that the cost to go back and cultch plant that area for what you take off so we have a good view of what we're doing?

JOE JEWELL: Sure.

COMMISSIONER BOSARGE: In other words, we are going to take oysters and what we need to know is what it is going to cost to go back and also plant the reef.

JOE JEWELL: Our current plan is to take a certain amount of oysters for seeding and cultch plant in Biloxi Bay, and we absolutely are going to provide the cost to that.

COMMISSIONER GOLLOTT: Okay. You may continue, Mr. Joe.

JOE JEWELL: The only question I would have about that is I want to provide the Commission

clarification. Our dive activities occur generally in the spring, when water temperatures start rising.

COMMISSIONER GOLLOTT: Come on, Joe. I'm a certified diver. You can dive in forty degree water. Give me a break.

JOE JEWELL: You can come dive with them.

COMMISSIONER GOLLOTT: Okay.

JOE JEWELL: We will prioritize Pascagoula reef and will do that strictly for y'all. Absolutely.

COMMISSIONER GOLLOTT: Yes. We need to know that.

JOE JEWELL: Next on the agenda is Item F4. It's the one that the Commission had asked, at the December meeting, for an overview of the quota management system and what it would look like.

Some considerations for the quota system is that it was recommended by the Governor's Oyster Council. Each area is unique. Some areas overlap one another. A good example of that is the tonging reef.

The tonging reef is in Area II "A" which is an inshore area which is what is open today, and, then, Area II "F" is the tonging part that extends from Area II "A" into Area II "F".

Harvest area is reported daily by each harvester at the oyster check station as in the trip ticket program.

Harvest for each shellfish growing area is recorded in our harvester's database.

The total harvest to date for each area can be easily determined.

You have seen this graph here. I sort of just really cut and pasted and updated it a little bit.

This identifies the reef. The next column over is the estimated sack totals that we presented through our square meter dives and one-minute dredge tows. The next column is our percent sack mortality. This is an updated estimate through our recent square meter dives towards the end of the summer and end of the year. This gives a projection of what we felt like the mortality event caused and gave a more accurate description than our initial presentation before the Commission. We were projecting towards the beginning of this event and it didn't accurately reflect what was happening.

Now, the actual sack totals -- if you look at Henderson Point, we projected there were about thirty-seven thousand sacks of marketable oysters, and, then, after the mortality event which was about ninety or ninety-one percent, there were only available, the actual sacks was about thirty-four hundred sacks.

Those numbers in that column there is what I'm going to be projecting and using in this for the quota

system because those are the numbers that we actually feel were out on the reef. I took those numbers and put them on the areas so the Commission can see, by areas, if we manage by quota system, this is what it will look like the beginning of the season.

If the Commission says we are going to adopt the quota system, we are not going to use any number. We are just going to use the quota system.

I would give an estimate, and this is what it really looked like in 2016, as we sit here in October and November.

The Commission would have to consider, if we go to an area-by-area quota system, do we want to harvest thirty-five percent, or eighty percent.

You could say, in Area I "B" which is St. Joe, I want to harvest eighty percent.

Look at Area II "A" which is the tonging reef. There is not as much resource, and I may want to only go to thirty-five or forty percent.

Then, the approved areas which are the light green areas where there is virtually no resource, we may just keep those closed.

Those are the considerations that the Commission can use under a quota system. You can target the management style for these, depending on what's out there.

Now, like I say, in the spring we are going to start our assessment, our reef assessments. The past two years, we have done over a thousand square meter dives and just over a thousand one-minute dredge tows. We would do roughly the same amount of data that is set forth in this area, including the Pascagoula Reef, that the Commission will have available. We will have something very similar to this, in the fall, for the Commission to consider.

If the Commission adopts the quota system, or targeted quota system, there will be a very similar map as this for the Commission to consider and say, well, we want to go either thirty-five percent for all of it, or we want a target management style. In Area I "B", we want to go to seventy percent. In Area II "A", we want to go to forty percent.

That is sort of what we were discussing at the December meeting, but it was very hard to visualize and see when we were talking about data and areas and percents and specific reefs, Marianne versus Pass Christian.

COMMISSIONER HAVARD: Excuse me, Joe.

JOE JEWELL: Sure.

COMMISSIONER HAVARD: You just said we have done over a thousand samples over two years.

JOE JEWELL: Over two years, yes.

COMMISSIONER HAVARD: How does that compare to

other states?

JOE JEWELL: Well, I said this before. The State of Louisiana which has over a million square reefs -- and we have about nine thousand -- and they provide, depending on the season, thirty-three, or thirty-five, percent of the nation's oyster resource, they do just over a hundred on average.

Mr. Gordon has mentioned that if you add all of the Gulf States up, the State of Mississippi still does more than all of them added together.

COMMISSIONER HAVARD: So, according the number of samples that we are doing, square meter samples and the one-minute dredge tows, if any state in the Gulf should know what our oyster resource looks like, we should.

JOE JEWELL: As I previously stated, the Commission has the most accurate, or up-to date, data that the Department can provide for them to make a decision on, absolutely.

Next up is the Biloxi Bay which we have opened this past year. This is what we had estimated for Biloxi Bay through our square meter drive sampling and our one-minute dredge tows. We would have estimated just over six thousand sacks (indicating graph).

COMMISSIONER BOSARGE: And how many did we actually harvest?

JOE JEWELL: Just over four thousand, forty-one hundred. I think the actual number was four thousand six hundred and eighteen. Somewhere in that neighborhood. We are still doing the trip ticket verification.

Remember, these are the areas of the reefs that we concentrate our effort on those two areas. You can see the Biloxi Bay area is a seventeen-acre site, and the Shearwater site is a ninety-one acre site closest to Ocean Springs.

As Commissioner Gollott will point out, there are a whole lot of areas in there that are small reef areas that are historic reefs, but there are some resources that the fishermen, once they exploited the legal size oysters, they moved off into.

This area was heavily harvested just after the Katrina event. This is where we relayed from, Biloxi Bay, to repopulate the Pass Christian, Pass Marianne Reef areas. We relayed heavily from here to that area.

There is some resource available outside of there, but, when we do our assessment, we target the most dense areas, and, then, some other areas, too.

With that being said, the next item is Mr. Erik Broussard who is going to give you Agenda Item F5.

ERIK BROUSSARD: Good morning Commissioners, Director Miller, Ms. Chestnut.

The Commission asked that we come forward with some relay options, or what a relay might look like.

We have received the letter of consistency for our permit. We do not have the permit yet. We are in the final stages and, hopefully, we will obtain our permit shortly which would allow relay activities to occur.

When you start talking about relays, we need to know where we are going to get the oysters from and where we are going to bring them to.

Right here, we have identified two reefs in the Pascagoula River. The two hundred and thirty-three acre Pascagoula Causeway Reef is what we refer to it as, and we have identified a hundred and eight acres as the West River Reef (indicating photograph).

For the verification process, we send a side scan sonar boat out to map the bottom, and, then, we also follow up with square meter dives. We put our hands on the bottom where the side scan sonar has mapped to verify the mapping, as well as we gain data about the oysters and the reef itself.

Both of these reefs are good candidates for relays. They are both very healthy, but they are some of the last two reefs of this size and in this good of a condition probably left in the State that aren't in harvestable ground.

It does have some constraints due to depth. It is probably two to five foot in most of these places. In the wintertime, you could have a little bit of a tough time accessing those during the low tides in the mornings. You might have to work, fish them later in the evening.

A little bit of history on this area. The last time we relayed out of this area was on the Pascagoula Causeway Reef, just that two hundred acre reef, and we moved about nine thousand five hundred sacks of material. That's not market size oysters. That's just sacks of material.

We've got where we are going to get them from, but where to?

This is a map of Biloxi Bay, our Area V. The checkerboarded areas are the areas that are inside of the permit that we are currently awaiting. Most of this is in a harvestable area, as some Commissioners have mentioned, that they might want to harvest off of it. These checkerboarded areas are historic reefs and some of the reefs that are open, now, and good candidates in Biloxi.

Here we have a map of Pass Christian and Henderson Point. The light green is the footprint of those reefs, the purple are cultch plants that we have done with MDEQ in 2012 and 2014, and the black boxes are areas that staff has identified.

In the last two years, as Mr. Joe mentioned, we have done over a thousand dives, and one of the things that we have incorporated recently is, when a diver comes up, one of the first questions we ask is, what is the bottom type? Is it a hard bottom? It is sticky mud? Has it got shell?

We can compile all of that information, and we have a GIS training now, and we have identified these areas that are prime candidates that we can put our hands on to be receptive for cultch planting, or relay material.

Here is another map. We made several of these maps so we can kind of prioritize where we would like to put cultch, or relay material.

As Mr. Jewell mentioned, we just went out on bid, and we are kind of getting ramped up for some cultch planting.

Here we have just kind of logistics of what we would try to accomplish, if staff was the ones doing the relaying. If we use the Conservationist, say, it can hold twelve hundred sacks of material. We would leave from Biloxi, or wherever the boat is located, and go to Pascagoula and back. If we were going to bring them to Biloxi, it would be about a forty-mile trip. It's weather dependent and tides. It would be about a one-day turnaround; two days possibly.

The red line is going to show you what it would kind of look like if we went from there to Pascagoula, and, then, to the western Sound and back. It would be a little over a hundred miles and probably three days under ideal conditions, and that's moving twelve hundred sacks of material.

Also, it would take probably a crew of four guys, or girls, to man the boat and have these operations take place; 5:00 or 6:00 in the morning to 6:00 in the evening.

With that, any questions?

COMMISSIONER GOLLOTT: To me on of the questions is clearly Biloxi Bay would be more cost effective, but, then, we have to worry about the water quality, which the water quality seems to be a little bit better off of Pass Christian. We probably need to look at doing some in both areas. If Biloxi is closed, then, we can switch the fishermen to the Pass, until we can get that area coming back with the cultch material.

What do you think?

ERIK BROUSSARD: Yes, I would agree. I mean, before anything happens, y'all have already requested that we come with an estimate, and what it sounded like you were getting at is a volume.

We will present what we know as market-size

oysters. You want to know the volume of material, period, on the reef, and, then, we can take a percentage of that.

COMMISSIONER GOLLOTT: What do we estimate next year's catch would be, if ideal conditions, and the third year. We need three years because it is going to take us three years to get a cultch plant going up to three inches is what I have always heard.

Is that correct?

ERIK BROUSSARD: Sure. It could be eighteen or twenty-four months, or three years, thirty-six months. That is correct, but the cultch planting will start, permit pending, this spring.

Depending on the volume, like Joe mentioned earlier, it's not a one-for-one. If we move ten thousand sacks like we did before, that's just sacks of material. We are not going to go harvest ten thousand sacks of material.

Ideally, we want to be at two hundred to four hundred thousand sacks, as we have talked about, and, then, we have to kind of slowly get there.

As Commissioner Bosarge has mentioned, it costs money, if we want to replace what we have taken off of the reef. That is something that hasn't been done in the past, and we have seen that high impact in Biloxi Bay. We took over a hundred thousand sacks after Katrina and

really nothing but what we have put on it, since then.

To go back and use money to replace what we took, the Commission would let us know if the money would be well spent just putting that cultch material directly into a harvestable area.

COMMISSIONER BOSARGE: I have one question. You were talking about putting hands on the bottom.

The oysters I've seen come out of Biloxi Bay mostly were what I consider mud oysters.

In other words, is that mostly soft bottom?

ERIK BROUSSARD: The Shearwater Reef which is the larger, a ninety-one acre reef, now, it is more muddy bottom, but the seventeen acre cultch plant are pretty clean oysters, and that's where a lot of material came from after Katrina. There is just not much there, now, but, if we start cultch planting, there could be some pretty oysters come off of that area where it's a little firm bottom.

COMMISSIONER GOLLOTT: Didn't y'all put a cultch plant there three, or four, years ago?

ERIK BROUSSARD: Seventeen acres, yes.

COMMISSIONER GOLLOTT: How many barrels of shells did you put there?

Do you know?

ERIK BROUSSARD: I do not know the exact number.

That was a little before me.

COMMISSIONER GOLLOTT: Just a guess?

ERIK BROUSSARD: The seventeen acres cost us about a hundred thousand dollars to plant. I do know that.

COMMISSIONER GOLLOTT: Okay.

ERIK BROUSSARD: Now, it was oyster shells, a good bit of it, and that is going to cost more than if you want to do limestone.

COMMISSIONER GOLLOTT: Did you do an assessment on what happened on the seventeen acres?

Did we yield from that hundred thousand dollars?

Do you have any idea?

ERIK BROUSSARD: Yes, I do. We did the square meter work, and we estimated there was somewhere in the neighborhood of four thousand, currently, sacks of marketable size oysters.

COMMISSIONER GOLLOTT: Four thousand sacks.

COMMISSIONER BOSARGE: We've got a lot of fishermen in here, a lot of Jackson County fishermen and they are all asking the question, why can't we harvest out of Pascagoula. I know you guys have been working on that.

Can you give us an update?

ERIK BROUSSARD: Yes, and the update is, in the two areas of the Pascagoula Causeway and the West River

Reef, I think most people know we do go water samples once a month, sometimes more. The water quality hasn't been what the FDA would classify as being harvestable.

We have identified, on boat trips with you, some new resources that are even further to the west and we have the side scan process to try to identify that reef, and we are going to try to set up a new sample station to see if the water quality might be a little better in that area. That does take a couple of years of accumulating data before we would be able to make an assessment if we can open that area, or not.

COMMISSIONER BOSARGE: We would like to see you do, basically, what you did in Biloxi Bay.

ERIK BROUSSARD: Sure.

COMMISSIONER BOSARGE: Work on different water sampling stations different times of the month and year and week to where we can eventually get that to where we don't take Jackson County oysters to Hancock County. We can harvest Jackson County oysters in Jackson County.

COMMISSIONER TRAPANI: I would just like to make a comment on the relay of oysters. I think it's really important, and I'm hearing y'all saying we are going to take them and bring them to Biloxi Bay. I'm sure it's closer, but is that where you think that it is going to work better.

ERIK BROUSSARD: We will bring them to wherever the Commission directs us to go.

COMMISSIONER TRAPANI: With that being said, if that is the decision we all make, we need to make sure that all these reefs in the western area are at least cultch planted, if we are not going to relay oysters to them. We have got to take care of those reefs, too.

ERIK BROUSSARD: We definitely have plans to do the main part of cultch planting in the western Sound. That has traditionally been where all the harvest has come from and it will continue to be.

COMMISSIONER GOLLOTT: Saying that, just to make it clear, you are going to plant the areas that have produced the best, St. Joe, St. Stanislaus, places that have traditionally done better than the rest.

ERIK BROUSSARD: Yes, sir, and we can come with maps and get some directive from y'all, but St. Joe has obviously been great the last couple of years. Henderson Point has been doing well and St. Stanislaus. All those are high priority.

COMMISSIONER BOSARGE: Erik, is it possible for us to have another oyster workshop meeting like we did one time prior where we can all get together and try to set in stone a management plan, and, then, maybe hash out where we want to do these relays and how we are going to do them

and for what reason?

Is that possible, Joe?

In other words, we've got to come to a concrete plan here, at some point in time. We can't keep guessing our way through this.

In my opinion, we need to all sit down and say this is going to be the plan. This is what we are going to adhere to, unless there is some catastrophic event.

JOE JEWELL: There are a couple of different things. A management plan is separate from a cultch plant. We need to discuss both of those in a workshop.

COMMISSIONER BOSARGE: A cultch plant inside of the management plan. In other words, we look at a management plan as an overall plan, cultch plants being part of that management plan so we can sit down and determine, yes, we are going to do cultch plants, we are going to do them with this material and we are going to do them at this time of the year, when it's most productive.

In other words, let's try to get something in writing.

JOE JEWELL: Now, the DMR traditionally has done that. If the Commission wants to weigh in and do that, do that for us, that is something we need to work with. We are not opposing that.

COMMISSIONER BOSARGE: I'm saying just like

right now, you presented us with four different management strategies, I think.

JOE JEWELL: The Commission asked for those.

COMMISSIONER BOSARGE: Correct.

JOE JEWELL: We did provide those for your consideration, absolutely.

COMMISSIONER BOSARGE: But we are still no further ahead than what we were when you presented those. None of us have agreed upon which strategy we are going to take.

Do you see what I'm saying?

JOE JEWELL: Well, I presented those four strategies and I absolutely stated on the record that three of those strategies are essentially not going to work for you and that really the only path forward for you, right now, as we currently stand with the status of the stock and the rebuilding of the stock, really the only option available for you, from a logistic standpoint, is the quota system.

COMMISSIONER GOLLOTT: We did instruct you to do an assessment as quick as possible and get back to us so we could have a workshop.

JOE JEWELL: Right, and the motion for the Pascagoula Reef, absolutely.

COMMISSIONER GOLLOTT: So we are going to have a

workshop as soon as they come with some material for us.

COMMISSIONER BOSARGE: Will it be a workshop where we can do action items?

COMMISSIONER GOLLOTT: Sure.

JOE JEWELL: If you have it on the agenda for the workshop, we most certainly can.

We have just opened bids for that eight hundred thousand dollar cultch plant that we discussed. If you want to time that before we actually started deployment, you could do that. We can discuss how that works out, but the Commission could absolutely weigh in on this issue.

COMMISSIONER BOSARGE: I just think we need to all come to some kind of consensus on how we are going to rebuild this fishery because, right now, if I look at the way it's going, I don't even know if we are leveled off. We are still in a downhill spiral. Until we all come to a consensus on how we are going to bring this resource back, I think we are just beating a dead horse.

COMMISSIONER HAVARD: I would agree with that.

COMMISSIONER TRAPANI: I would agree, too, but I think that we do need to do that and we need to look at this as if this isn't so black and white. We have to get a plan, but, also, I think it is going to be that we have to treat each reef differently because it's like having ten kids. One child might need more help with math and

one might need more help with English. We can't just blanket this. When we make these decisions, we need to all take that into consideration that if I look at each area, each area might need a different thing done to it, and that is getting a management style, or program, whatever y'all might want to call it, but, yes, I agree with that.

JOE JEWELL: Before we actually move award and start the implementation of the contract, we will notify the Executive Director Miller so that --

COMMISSIONER GOLLOTT: (Interposing) I don't know if you can do that, Joe. You've got time and temperature, and the water temperature is coming up and you are going to have a window that you are going to have to deploy these shells, and we might not have a chance, unless we want to call a special meeting, when you find out something.

Do you have any idea when that window is going to be, when the water temperature is going to be right?

JOE JEWELL: Well, we are anticipating it being a little bit earlier this year because we have been monitoring the water temperature and the water temperature is substantially higher now than it has been over the last couple of years.

COMMISSIONER GOLLOTT: You don't want to miss

that window of opportunity.

Do you have any idea when it would be?

JOE JEWELL: We have not made that assessment yet, but we are monitoring all of the parameters that lead to that final decision, currently.

COMMISSIONER BOSARGE: Well, if you could get us together in enough time that we can still make all this happen.

JOE JEWELL: We will work with the Executive Director and he can work with the Chairman and schedule that.

COMMISSIONER GOLLOTT: Thanks, Joe.

COMMISSIONER TRAPANI: When do you think you will know when the time is going to be?

I'm like Richard. We do not need to pass that up because that is going to help us for next season.

JOE JEWELL: Well, the spat is triggered primarily by temperature, a major temperature change, that usually occurs somewhere around the seventy degree, or warmer mark, and we haven't reached that quite yet, but we are quickly approaching that.

COMMISSIONER TRAPANI: It has been a warm winter.

JOE JEWELL: It absolutely has. We are eight to ten degrees warmer than we normally have been on average.

We are monitoring that, and we will work with the Executive Director and he can work with the Commission and schedule a workshop.

COMMISSIONER GOLLOTT: Thank you, Erik. Very good presentation.

JOE JEWELL: Then, I think the final thing the Commission wants to consider is a motion in the very beginning to modify the agenda to consider extending the tonging season for two weeks.

Is that correct?

JAMIE MILLER: Before we do that, we had two individuals that submitted a request to make comments on an item we had before, and I apologize. We went through that presentation, and, then, went into the relay program.

We've got two individuals that would like to make public comments on Item F4.

COMMISSIONER GOLLOTT: James Miller.

JAMES MILLER: How are y'all doing today, Commissioners?

COMMISSIONER GOLLOTT: Good.

JAMES MILLER: I'm James Miller, local fisherman. I've been doing this since I was about four years old.

All this money and scientists we've got, Joe Jewell and them, and they haven't figured out the spat.

That's why Louisiana harvests more oysters than we've ever dreamed of because people own those reefs. They invest their money in the reefs so they want the best harvest they can from those reefs.

We've got millions of dollars, and we just can't seem to get onboard as to how to do what we need to get our shell plants and transfer oysters, and in none of this are the fishermen mentioned anywhere in y'all's plans.

Mr. Jewell and them, they want to close it all down and rebuild the reefs. I'm all for it. Just put me to work. Each year, put us to work to rebuild our own reef, and we will be a blessing to you. We're not burdens to you.

I've got a ninth grade education, and I can probably do better than your scientists and that whole DMR up there with my one boat because I'm not afraid to go work twenty-four hours a day seven days a week. I don't work from 8:00 o'clock in the morning to 5:00 o'clock and go home and barbecue on the weekends. I'm serious about my living.

I don't know how to explain it. I'm glad Mr. Gollott feels like we do, harvest them oysters that need to be harvested off that bottom out there because, if you leave them there, something is going to get them, drills, floods, water.

We've got plenty of water in Jackson County to go harvest oysters from.

What's wrong with this system?

We've got a broken system here, and y'all are breaking me. I've been doing this all my life. Not once have y'all mentioned all about these fishermen. We are the ones that are suffering. We truly are, year after year. Ever since the oil spill, we ain't worked twenty-five days in a season.

I'm not optimistic. Do I need to go do something else in my life because I've watched all of this. I hope we come to some conclusion about all this money we have, to do something right with it because we are onboard. Fishermen want to work.

If you don't put us in y'all's plans, we will starve another three years, and your million sacks, you're not going to reach it.

The criteria plan you've got today, listening to Mr. Jewell, he don't even know when the spat is coming out.

Come on, man. Let's get together here.

That means a lot, catching the spat. Like I said, Mr. Mike Cure down there, watch that fellow and learn and observe from him. He is on the ball because he owns his own reef, he produces his own oysters and

millions of sacks. We are behind schedule with all this money.

I hope Mr. Phil Bryant understands because he came down to the harbor years ago and said we were the farmers of the sea. No. We are the starvers of the sea. We are not the farmers because we ain't farmed down here.

I just hope we come together and you put us to work with these relay programs because we really do need work. If we need to close the seasons down, put us to work. We will go out there. Pay us fifteen thousand dollars a season. We will probably work better than that Conversationist boat will. We will really put in some hours for you.

I'm sorry that I've got to come here and complain about the fishermen not working, but this is why we are here, for the fishermen, for our resources out here.

Go to Jackson County. Get off of Pass Christian and Bay St. Louis. Let's go to Jackson County and harvest them oysters, or put them somewhere where they will purge and work them. I'm all for it.

I appreciate it.

COMMISSIONER GOLLOTT: Thank you.

Ms. Thao Vu.

THAO VU: Good evening Commissioners and

Director Miller. I'm Thao Vu with Mississippi Coalition of Vietnamese-American Fisher Folks and Families, and I would like to respectfully ask for a little bit more than three minutes.

To give some context, nothing in the Gulf of Mexico ecosystem provides more ecosystem benefits than an oyster reef. It is known as a keystone species. It's a habitat for oysters and a habitat for so many other species. It greatly improves water quality and so many other qualities that we can't even put a price tag on it.

As we know, living in a disaster zone, after the BP disaster, all of our other spillway openings, changes with the salinity, massive changes with the oxygen and other issues have all combined, as well as, I think, some decisions we've made here, management decisions that have not been the best decisions.

The fishermen who are here and I, we deeply, deeply understand how critical it is. We do, and we know that not only the resource is in terrible shape, but so much of the Sound is because the reefs aren't healthy and it affects everything in the Sound.

We want to really make some recommendations here. I know this conversation started with a management plan.

I would like to make an appeal, right now, that

if you do have a follow-up workshop, that you please engage and invite all the fishermen. I know there was one last December. I was very sick. I could not attend, but I think that the fishermen, at this point, they are in very, very serious dire shape.

You know, from the sacks that have been harvested, it has been a very, very short season for them for the past several years. They are struggling so much, right now.

It's not only their income, Director Miller and Commissioners. It's their livelihood. It's their way of life. It is also a rich cultural part of this Coast; not only the Coast, but the State, the region, the nation. Commercial fishing, shrimping and harvest of oysters contribute a great deal to the economy.

Commercial fishing has been threatened by so many things, from here in Mississippi, the harvesting of these reefs. We need to implement various strategies. For example, there was conversation about relaying oysters from Pascagoula and bringing them to Biloxi Bay.

Well, what about this recommendation?

You do relay and have the fishermen who have the experience and knowledge to relay, give them an opportunity to use their boats. Their boats should not be docked most of the year. That's horrible. They should be

working. Give them the opportunity to relay the oysters from Pascagoula, bring them to Biloxi Bay, but, once those relayed oysters are at Biloxi Bay, leave them for three-and-a half, or two, years.

In the meantime, let them go back to the Pascagoula Reef. Let them cultivate that reef because that reef needs work. It hasn't been worked on for at least twenty-five years and we know. Some of us have been there, and you have even expressed that those oysters have become huge rocks. It needs to be worked.

If you will open the season at that Pascagoula Reef, even if it is a short season, it will greatly, greatly help the health of that reef.

I think that we need to think about a round robin approach about rotating the reefs, and not just sticking to one area.

We know there are a lot of the reefs here in Jackson County that haven't been cultivated. No kind of work has been done on those reefs.

We know there are serious mortality issues in the western Sound. We would also like more data, in terms of what really caused a lot of the serious mortality issues in the western Sound in the Pass Christian area. That was very sudden.

Is it fresh water combined with other things

that maybe we need more research on?

COMMISSIONER GOLLOTT: Thao, you are running out of time.

THAO VU: Yes.

The last thing I wanted to say is about the cultch planting. I think we do need to do a cost-benefit analysis that you don't spend so much money placing cultch material.

How many sacks are you going to produce of oysters on the that reef?

Through the years, with all the cultch planting you have done, have you done a detailed analysis yet?

You should conduct one, I think, before we move forward because the conditions -- cultch planting will be more effective if you actually have more cultivation on the reef, but we're not doing it like that.

Those fishermen in Louisiana who lease those oyster reefs, they are doing more of that cultivation, before they place cultch material. We're not. I think that needs to be done, as well as --

COMMISSIONER GOLLOTT: (Interposing) Thank you, Thao.

THAO VU: Thank you.

JOE JEWELL: The motion to amend the agenda for extension of the oyster tonging season.

COMMISSIONER GOLLOTT: Let me say this. I had a couple of fishermen who have been working -- what has it been, seven to ten fishermen that have gone back to work since you opened the western Sound?

JOE JEWELL: It's been a very small number. We were not open in the month of January. We have only been open in February.

COMMISSIONER GOLLOTT: And very little in February. In Biloxi Bay, the weather doesn't look like it is going to cooperate with us, and what they have asked for is a couple more weeks in March which is only fair. They have lost about six weeks of fishing, and to give them two more weeks -- and it's very few fishermen making a living -- I think we ought to do that.

I would like to make a motion that we open the season only for tonging in the Pass area in the western Sound on the tonging reefs until March the 15th.

Can I get a second on that motion?

COMMISSIONER TRAPANI: I have a question.

COMMISSIONER GOLLOTT: Go ahead.

COMMISSIONER TRAPANI: Since this has been opened, how many sacks have they been bringing in?

JOE JEWELL: Since it's been open this year, we've gotten three hundred and eighty-six sacks total.

COMMISSIONER TRAPANI: And that's ten fishermen

out there?

JOE JEWELL: I don't have that exact number, but it has been a little less than that.

COMMISSIONER TRAPANI: How many weeks was it closed due to weather?

Richard said they lost time that they weren't fishing.

JOE JEWELL: It was closed the entire month of January.

Remember, the Commission made the motion, in December, to open the season. I think the motion was to open the western Sound for dredging in all areas from December the 15th for a maximum of five working days and close on December the 22nd.

Then, they also opened the tonging in the western Sound, when Biloxi Bay is closed, and, then, all oyster tonging will close on February the 28th which is next week.

That's the way the motion was, but, as it worked out, Biloxi Bay, none of those areas were open in the month of January. In February, we've been open, so far, eleven days. It has been very limited in February, also.

The times that we have been open only a total of three hundred and eighty-six sacks have been landed.

COMMISSIONER TRAPANI: But, also, it has only

been open for?

JOE JEWELL: Eleven days.

COMMISSIONER HAVARD: If we are in the rebuilding mode, are we being good stewards of the resource by extending the seasons even further and deplenishing our resources?

COMMISSIONER GOLLOTT: The only thing I would ask is where is the science that says you are in the rebuilding mode and keeping these fishermen from making a living for fifteen days?

How is that helping you?

COMMISSIONER TRAPANI: Well, I think that's the problem that we need a plan, and we will get to that, but we want no more than to -- we would love for all the fishermen, I would love for them to catch as many as you can harvest, but we also understand they are not there. We are seeing both sides of it.

COMMISSIONER BOSARGE: And I would ask one question here.

What is the staff's recommendation?

JOE JEWELL: Well, I think the staff's recommendation would be to adhere to the Commission's motion in the December meeting, close all areas on March the 28th. I think we have made it abundantly clear that we are in a rebuilding mode and not to take additional

resources that are very limited.

Like Commissioner Trapani has pointed out, we have only harvested just under five hundred sacks in the time that we have been open. There have been very limited resources available in the tonging area and very limited participation.

COMMISSIONER BOSARGE: You answered my question.

COMMISSIONER GOLLOTT: Okay. We have a motion. Can I get a second on that motion?

JOE JEWELL: Richard, can I ask for a clarification?

COMMISSIONER GOLLOTT: Yes.

JOE JEWELL: If the Commission so votes to extend the season, would it be under the same conditions as it was previously, in the tonging areas only in the western Mississippi Sound and for two weeks?

I guess that would be March the 10th?

COMMISSIONER GOLLOTT: March the 15th would give them two weeks, wouldn't it?

JOE JEWELL: March the 15th?

COMMISSIONER BOSARGE: Yes.

JOE JEWELL: All tonging areas in the western Sound?

COMMISSIONER GOLLOTT: Yes, just the tonging areas.

JOE JEWELL: And the same sack limits?

COMMISSIONER GOLLOTT: The same thing. All we are doing is extending it a couple of weeks to help them make up some of the time they lost.

I need a second on that.

COMMISSIONER HARMON: I'll second that motion.

COMMISSIONER GOLLOTT: We have a motion. We have a second.

All those in favor say aye.

(Commissioner Gollott, Commissioner Harmon, Commissioner Trapani in favor.)

COMMISSIONER GOLLOTT: Opposed?

(Commissioner Bosarge, Commissioner Havard opposed.)

COMMISSIONER GOLLOTT: We have two opposed; three for. The motion passes.

JOE JEWELL: Commissioners, that completes the Marine Fisheries portion.

COMMISSIONER GOLLOTT: Office of Coastal Restoration and Resiliency. Your show, Mr. George.

GEORGE RAMSEUR: Thank you, Chairman Gollott, Commissioners, Director Miller, Ms. Chestnut.

I just wanted to give you a quick update. DEQ and DMR have been working hard together the last couple of years to get a lot of Deep Water Horizon funds on the

ground in the form of restoration.

There are two projects that are starting to be pretty prominent and you may have people ask you about them, and I wanted to give you some pictures.

I'm here with Marc Wyatt who is my counterpart at DEQ. He is the Director of Restoration there. We are going to talk about over in the eastern side the new Round Island Project, and, then, in the western side the Hancock Living Shoreline. I will let Mark lead off with Hancock Living Shoreline.

Marc Wyatt with DEQ.

MARC WYATT: Thank you y'all. It's good afternoon, now. I'm going to try to speed trough this rather quickly.

I guess about a year ago we came to y'all and were given a permit for Hancock County Living Shoreline and I just wanted to kind of refresh you on it in case you get any questions and kind of give you an update of where we are.

Just to refresh your memory, it is almost six miles of living shoreline and, also, it's forty-six acres of marsh that is going to be created, and, then, forty-six acres of subtidal reef.

What we did with the living shoreline is we split that up into three phases. Each phase is

approximately two miles. The first phase, we are almost complete. Next week, or the next, that phase will be completed. There will be two miles of living shoreline created. Just so you know, the forty-six acres of subtidal reef has already been completed.

I'm just going to kind of show you this video. That's the geotextile membrane that is being laid down for the shoreline. That's what goes on the bottom. Also, this is the largest restoration project we have had so far, just so you know that.

The reason it was selected, during the early restoration process, was this was the fastest eroding marsh we had on the Coast. We felt like we needed to go ahead and do something to protect that.

This is where they are doing the subtidal reef. What we did with that, it's forty-six acres. There has been a lot of talk about oysters and what type of cultch material to use. This is also being used as an experiment. The forty-six acres is in one-by-four limestone, and, then, on each end of that, four acres on each end is using fossilized oyster shell. On one end, we will be using a four-inch layer compared to the other end using an eight-inch layer.

Then, we have some other projects you will hear about in the near future where we are going to be using

resources that are very limited.

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Then, we have some other projects you will hear about in the near future where we are going to be using

other studies on other cultch type materials, and we will be using those as comparisons to help with future reef building, what is going to be the best option, most cost efficient and best results.

COMMISSIONER GOLLOTT: Is this inside of Heron Bay right here that we're looking at?

MARC WYATT: Yes, sir.

Here's the living shoreline (indicating photograph).

I said that it was to help minimize the erosion of the marsh. Look on the back side of that living shoreline. You can see the difference in the wind action on the water, so it is doing its job. There, again, you can see it on that back side (indicating video).

COMMISSIONER GOLLOTT: All I see is some good fishing.

MARC WYATT: Yes, sir.

I'm going to hand it over to George, now, to talk about new Round Island.

GEORGE RAMSEUR: Thanks, Marc.

New Round Island has come out of the ground, really, in the last year. It's now this full two-hundred-and-twenty acre footprint. This is just south of Singing River Island and the West Pascagoula River and just north of what is left of the original Round Island (indicating

photograph).

This is back around April, or earlier, last year when they started construction of the sand berm. The reason it looks sort of washed over there is they constructed it below the water first, during the bird nesting season, and, then, brought it up, the second part later. That minimizes the nesting bird issues they had about doing it (indicating photograph).

This is a little further along where they have more or less completed the perimeter and haven't started bringing it up yet (indicating photograph).

I'm just going to click on through and try to give you a feel for how it looks. You see the original Round Island down here to the south which still has private ownership which is why we haven't connected to it, at this point, and, then, this is once the sand berm on the outside was completed (indicating photograph).

What we really did was go in and there was an old iron footprint in there, an old shoal, that was about one to two feet deep. They mined that down to about minus twelve, put all the sand to the outside, and that created this big sand berm (indicating photograph).

What then happened was the Port of Pascagoula had a channel expansion project. That's with Federal Navigation dollars. Everybody realized that instead of

dredging three-and-a-half million dollars of material in that channel expansion and dumping it in the ocean, they could bring it in and fill this project in for about two million dollars less. That's a two million dollar savings out of the Federal Navigation budget to not throw the material away.

These are just a few more shots to give you an idea of what went on out there. This is where material is pumping in. The pipelines run about five miles from the dredge which is in the Pascagoula Channel.

You can see how it is filling in here. The material was new cut material. It wasn't just sediments that had washed into the channel. It is ideal island and marsh building material.

Another note. The whole inside here which is about a hundred and fifty acres is designed to be primarily marsh.

Here is where some of the material is coming up close to the water surface. They are actually pumping in with the water held about two feet high in the interior of this. You can see up at the north end there is a gap where a meter was put in to kind of control the water levels in the project.

This is getting on towards the end of the dredging. This is probably about a month ago. You can

see where it was pumping in on the right, and they have continued to pump and place heavy material down on this end which is the primary part of the project where the berm is coming out of the southeast. In the meantime, material is filling all the way in there.

This is just an idea of the quality of the material coming in. Watch this bucket. It has just come out from under the pipe area, it dumps it and look how the material stands up. This is not just a bunch of gooey mud going out there. It's really excellent material. We were fortunate to catch that. The timing and everything worked out (indicating video).

I've got to mention that this whole project would not have happened without a tremendous partnership between the Corps, the Port of Pascagoula, DEQ, DMR, and the sand berm was funded by NFWF, National Wildlife Foundation.

This is one more follow-up shot, and I just really don't have any comment on that, other than this was before the filling started and that was the best video for giving you an idea of the scale. You can see just there on the left, that's a twenty-four foot boat. The sand berm is about three hundred feet wide by ten feet high. The outside of the project is two hundred and twenty acres and about a hundred and fifty acres of marsh on the

inside.

We would also like to say that we would be happy to try and get y'all out to look at any of these projects.

Commissioner Bosarge got us out early in the berm construction phase last year and he got Commissioner Drummond out with us, and that was a good time, but we would be very interested in y'all seeing this firsthand.

COMMISSIONER HAVARD: George, if I understand correctly, all the berm going all the way around it will be available for recreational use to the public.

GEORGE RAMSEUR: Yes, sir. It's State land, and one of the reasons we went with sand instead of rock, or something like that, is because that's a natural island habitat.

In the future, depending on how much wave action this site sees, we could do something like Katrina Key, or some sort of breakwater off of the main beach, but we want people to be able to pull up on this and fish around the edge.

COMMISSIONER HAVARD: You can also fish on the inside of it as well?

GEORGE RAMSEUR: Unfortunately, I don't have a good shot of it filled in, but we've got another drone mission scheduled as soon as the weather clears up and we will have some good aerial shots of that.

What we have described is the ability to be able to at least kayak from that north end all the way to the south end in a central channel.

COMMISSIONER HAVARD: Will this be part of the National Seashore?

GEORGE RAMSEUR: No. This is State-owned property.

COMMISSIONER HAVARD: Let's keep it that way, too.

GEORGE RAMSEUR: Yes, indeed.

Any other questions?

COMMISSIONER GOLLOTT: Thank you, sir, very much.

GEORGE RAMSEUR: Thank y'all.

COMMISSIONER GOLLOTT: Next up is Finance, Kacey Williams.

KACEY WILLIAMS: Good morning Commissioners, Director Miller and Ms. Chestnut.

At the end of January, our State revenue was seven point eight million. Our Total Agency revenue was twenty point one million. Our State Net Income was two million Our Total Agency income was negative six hundred million.

After seven months of this fiscal year, we still have fifty-nine point seven percent of our operating

budget and fifty-five point one percent of the Tidelands budget remaining.

MDMR received an Unqualified, or Clean, opinion on our fiscal year 2016 Financial Audit. This means our audit was free of any misrepresentations and is the highest audit opinion that can be issued.

BKD's independent auditor report states that the MDMR financial statements present fairly, in all material respects, the respective financial position off the treasury governmental funds and are in conformity with generally accepted accounting principles.

COMMISSIONER GOLLOTT: Thank you, Kacey.

KACEY WILLIAMS: You're welcome.

COMMISSIONER GOLLOTT: Melissa.

MELISSA SCALLAN: Good afternoon everyone.

The agency was mentioned forty times in local, state and national media, since the January meeting of the CMR. The items of particular interest included the change in minimum length for Speckled Trout and the opening of several oyster reefs.

So far in fiscal year 17, Marine Patrol has held ten boat-and-water safety classes and certified seventy-eight students. Officer Matt Kasovich participated in a boat-and-water safety conservation class at the Ocean Springs Senior Center.

Several other employees participated in community events, since the last Commission meeting. Amber Jones was a judge at science fairs at St. James Catholic Elementary and at Anniston Elementary, Marty Jones from the Shellfish Bureau spoke at Career Day at North Gulfport Middle School and Megan Fleming from he Finfish Bureau participated in Career Day at Long Beach High School.

COMMISSIONER GOLLOTT: Thank you, Melissa.

Next we have Mr. F. J. Eicke who wants to do some public comment.

FROM THE FLOOR: He left.

COMMISSIONER GOLLOTT: Okay.

Well, any other business to come before the Commission?

(No response.)

COMMISSIONER GOLLOTT: If not, can I have a motion to adjourn?

COMMISSIONER BOSARGE: Yes, sir, but, first, I do want to thank the fishermen for showing up here at the meeting. We need your input. Glad to see you. Hope you make it back.

With that, I make a motion to adjourn.

COMMISSIONER GOLLOTT: Could I have a second?

COMMISSIONER HARMON: So seconded.

COMMISSIONER GOLLOTT: I have a motion and a second.

All those in favor say aye.

(All in favor.)

COMMISSIONER GOLLOTT: Adjourned.

(Whereupon, at 1:12 o'clock, p.m., the February 21, 2017, meeting of the Commission on Marine Resources was concluded.)

C E R T I F I C A T E

I, Lucille Morgan, Certified Shorthand Reporter, do hereby certify that the above and foregoing is a true and correct transcript of the February 21, 2017, 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.

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