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COMMISSION ON MARINE RESOURCES

COMMISSION MEETING

March 19, 2013

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COMMISSION ON MARINE RESOURCES

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March 19, 2013

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TRANSCRIPT OF MEETING OF COMMISSION ON MARINE RESOURCES AT
BOLTON STATE BUILDING, PUBLIC MEETING ROOM, 1141 BAYVIEW
AVENUE, BILKCI, MISSISSIPPI, ON THE 15TH DAY OF MARCH 2013
COMMENCING AT 9:00 A.M. AND REPORTED BY NORMA JEAN LADNER
SOROE, CERTIFIED SHORTHAND REPORTER.

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COMMISSION MEMBERS PRESENT:

DR. VERNON ASPER, Chairman
RICHARD GOLLOTT
SHELBIE DRUMMOND
STEVE ROSKREUSE
JIMMY TAYLOR

ALSO PRESENT:

DANNY GUICE, Interim Director DMR
JOSEPH B. SUNNELL, ESQ., Asst. Attorney General
SANDY CHESSNY, ESQ., Asst. Attorney General

A. Call to Order

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

B. Approval of Minutes

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

MR. DRUMMOND: So moved, Mr. Chairman.

MR. GOLLOTT: Second, Mr. Chairman.

DR. ASPER: Those in favor say aye.

C. Approval of Agenda

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

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

MR. GOLLOTT: So moved, Mr. Chairman.

DR. ASPER: Is there a second?

MR. DRUMMOND: Second, Mr. Chairman.

MR. GUICE: Not at this time.

2. Marine Patrol

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

2. Marine Patrol Report

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

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

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

MR. DRUMMOND: Chief, what was his nickname?

MR. CHATIGNIER: Rosano.

MR. DRUMMOND: Where is he from?

MR. CHATIGNIER: Hancock County. He fishes a
lot in Louisiana. He'll slip over there and violate the law
and come back to Mississippi with the fish and vice versa.
We had two fishing license citations, but they're still way down from where they are. I guess people finally getting the word. And only one nonresident fishing license.

Couple of cases of undersized redfish.

Boat and water safety is down.

One marine litter.

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

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

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

We didn't have any dive activity in February.

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

Any questions?

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

MR. CHARTAGNIER: Neither one were.

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

MR. CHARTAGNIER: Nobody really knows what happened in this situation. They had life jackets. One of them was strapped to the kayak.

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

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

MR. CHARTAGNIER: They don't have to wear them.

But it's still considered a vessel, and they have to have some type of wearable device. And you'll see a lot of people will wear them.

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

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

MR. CHARTAGNIER: That's the only thing they're required to have. You don't have to have a fire extinguisher.

There's no source of fire on there. And if there was, as long as you have a portable fuel tank, you're not required to have a fire extinguisher. If you can pick up the -- if you can pick the tank out of the boat and throw it overboard, you're not required to have a fire extinguisher.

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

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

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

MR. TAYLOR: Sandy, what do we have to do to publish it?

MR. CHARTAGNIER: That's the only thing we're doing. It would have to go through the rules procedure.

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

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

MR. TAYLOR: Would you, please?

MS. CHEBUT: Yes.

MR. TAYLOR: Thank you.

DR. ASPER: What do the other states do?

MR. CHARTAGNIER: Excuse me?

DR. ASPER: What do other coastal states do?

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

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

But regardless what the other states do, I mean, it only make sense if you're out there, you flip over, the
thing gets away from you, and you're not that good of a
swimmer, you're stuck. At least you got a life jacket on, you
can bob up and down for a while.

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

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

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

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

MR. CHATIGNIER: Well, I guess you could have
said that at one time, but now they've got clubs out here that
they paddle out to Horn Island and Dauphin Island and Ship
Island. So you're liable to see them anywhere now.

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

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

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

On to fisheries. Joe.

G. Marine Fisheries

MR. JONES: Good morning, commissioners, Mr.
Quice, Sandy. Dale sends his regards. He's out representing
the agency at a Gulf States meeting in Florida.
I want to mention a couple things before we get
started on the agenda item.

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

And second, in our science seminar series last
week, Tuesday, March 12, we had a seminar on Mississippi
artificial reefs. We had approximately 40 people in attendance
at that meeting. It was held here in the Bolton Building. We
had several items on the agenda. And we have an overview of
the Mississippi artificial reef program, invasive species, red
snapper aquaculture, and fishing Mississippi artificial reefs.
It's pretty successful program. It's been a really good public
outreach program on behalf of the agency and those entities
that we coordinate with.

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

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

3. Derelict Crab Trap Cleanup

MR. BURRUS: Good morning, commissioners, Mr.
Quice, Ms. Chesnut.

Today, we want to give you an update on the 2013
Mississippi derelict crab trap roundup that was held last
month.
The first slide is the state statute which
grants the commission authority to establish a closed season on
blue crabs, thus allowing the cleanup to take place.
Authority is also found in our Title 22
regulations, Part 4, Chapter 8 closed season.
A derelict crab trap is defined as a lost trap,
lost traps, which are typically unboxed or unmarked and not
actively fished. These traps can become lost through a variety
of different avenues. High tides, storms, especially
hurricanes are a big problem, entanglement with boats or
fishing gear, such as shrimp trawls or oyster dredges,
egregious people, improper assembly, and theft is also a major
problem. These guys that are stealing traps will pick them up
where they were placed, and they'll run a long ways, take the
crabs out, and then dump them over somewhere else, and the
owner can't find them.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

It was a very successful event, and we would like to thank all of our partners, Gulf Coast Research Lab, Sims Metal Management, especially all our commercial and recreational crabbers and all our volunteers that signed up.

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

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

MR. BURRIS: Thank you.

MR. DRUMMOND: I agree with that.

Stone crabs. Do you get that many stone crabs?

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

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

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

MR. DRUMMOND: Thank you.

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

MR. DRUMMOND: I wasn't talking to you, Steve.

I was talking to Bill (sic).
DR. ASPER: Okay. Thanks a lot.

MR. JEWELL: If there are no more questions, that concludes marine fisheries.

DR. ASPER: Thanks, Joe.

H. Coastal Ecology

MR. BOJD: Good morning, Mr. Chairman, commissioners, Mr. Guice, Ms. Chesnut.

Coastal ecology has two action items for your consideration this morning. And Jennifer Wittmann will be our first presenter.

3. Bureau of Wetlands Permitting

a. Jackson County Board of Supervisors

MS. WITTMANN: Good morning. As Jan said, my name is Jennifer Wittmann. I'll be presenting coastal ecology's first action item on the agenda today.

It's a request for permit by the Jackson County Board of Supervisors located on the Lake Yazoo canal in Pascagoula. It's in the general use district, and Compton Engineering is the agent.

Project location is located by the yellow thumb tack. You can see Highway 90 and Market Street.

And this is a better zoomed-in picture showing the project area. There's public boat launch.

Few pictures from the site.

The applicant is seeking authorization to maintenance dredge the Lake Yazoo canal. It's 2,200 feet in length and average of 60 feet in width. They'll be dredging to a depth of ten feet below mean low water. Approximately 40,000 cubic yards of material will be dredged and will be utilized at a beneficial use site.

This is a diagram showing the dredging area. You can see that this red line here and the red line here are the match lines. So this is headed out into the Mississippi Sound, and then this is the canal. This is back further past the boat launch.

The project serves a higher public purpose by restoring safe navigational depths and providing public access to the use of the waterways.

The project is allowable within the general use district.

Similar projects have been approved, and no precedent setting effects are anticipated.

There will be a temporary increase in turbidity and sedimentation during dredging operations, as well as a loss of benthic organisms. However, the conditions will not exceed DEQ's water quality guidelines.

The project should not have any adverse impact other than the loss of benthic organisms.

The activity will remain well away from the shoreline and will not affect the natural supply of sediments, nutrients, temperature, salinity, water flow, or circulation.

Best management practices will be utilized during all phases of the dredging.

The applicant did explore the option of more extensive dredging impacts which would total approximately 60,000 cubic yards of material but reduced that to approximately 40,000 cubic yards in order to reduce the impacts to the system.

No offshore alternatives have been considered.

This is a maintenance dredging project, and the same channel path will be followed. No new dredging areas.

Maintenance dredging does require a waterfront location.

The project will not change the location of the navigation channel and should not affect the natural scenic qualities.

Notification of the project appeared in the Sun Herald as required. No public comments were received.

DEQ is reviewing the project. Department of Archives & History has no reservations. Secretary of State's Office has stated that the project will not require a tidelands lease. And the Department of Wildlife, Fisheries & Parks has recommended best management practices and the dredging occur between May and September when Gulf sturgeon are least likely to be in the area.

Based on departmental review and evaluation, it has been determined that the project is consistent with the Mississippi Coastal Program and serves a higher public purpose by restoring safe navigational depths and providing public access to and use of the waterways.

Therefore, staff recommends approval of the project with the condition that dredging occur between May and September.

And I'd be happy to answer any questions. Also, Lisa Morrison with Compton Engineering is here if you have any questions for her.

MR. BOSARGE: I just have one. Do you know where you're going to put the dredge spoils?

MS. WITTMANN: I've spoken with George Rameur with the beneficial use group and MDR. He said that Greenwood Island will be able to take all the material.

MR. BOSARGE: Good. Thank you.

MR. DRUMMOND: Jennifer, does the length of that dredging go all the way up into the lake up there?

MS. WITTMANN: It doesn't go all the way to the lake.

MR. DRUMMOND: I'm not sure how far it goes. I guess it's...

MS. WITTMANN: Basically going to start out in...

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

3. MR. DRUMMOND: Okay. Thank you.
4. MS. WITTMANN: You're welcome.
5. DR. ASHER: Is there a motion?
6. MR. HOSAIRE: I make a motion we accept staff's
7. recommendations.
8. MR. DRUMMOND: I second the motion, Mr.
9. Chairman.
10. DR. ASHER: Any further discussion? Those in
11. favor say aye. Carries unanimously.
12. MS. WITTMANN: Thank you.
13. b. Jackson County Board of Supervisors
14. MR. CHRISTOFICOU: My name is Greg
15. Christoficou, and I have the final item for coastal ecology
16. today.
17. It's a permit modification request by the
18. Jackson County Board of Supervisors located in the Mississippi
19. Sound adjacent to Lake Mars Road, Jackson County, general use
20. district, and Seymour Engineering is the agent for the project.
21. Project location is here where the yellow thumb
22. tack is marked. Just for reference, this is Highway 90
23. east-west, Highway 57 running north-south. Roughly right here
24. is the dividing line between Ocean Springs on this side,
25. Gautier on this side. The area in question is down here on the

1. Sound. It's in an unincorporated portion of Jackson County
2. known as Gulf Park Estates.
3. Here is a closeup aerial of the area with the
4. jetties, existing pier, and the boat launch.
5. The county is requesting to extend and reorient
6. the existing east jetty and also perform dredging. The
7. structures in question that they're asking for approval for are
8. an extension of the eastern section of jetty approximately 265
9. feet in length, 30 feet in width, and it's going to be oriented
10. at a 45 degree angle with the existing jetty.
11. Also, they are asking for six new single pile
12. channel markers to mark the navigation channel.
13. Dredging for the new navigation channel
14. realignment is 420 feet by 50 feet to a depth of five feet
15. below mean low water. And that will be approximately 610 cubic
16. yards of material. And while it doesn't meet the minimum
17. amounts for the beneficial use, the county is planning on
18. taking it to the Deer Island site.
19. Here is a diagram of the proposed project. In
20. red, this is the new orientation of the jetty going in a 45
21. degree angle to the existing section. The area in purple will
22. be the dredge area. And the yellow marked areas are where the
23. locations of the new channel markers will be.
24. Some pictures at the site. This is looking
25. south from the boat ramp area. You can see the jetties on

1. either side.
2. And this is a picture from the eastern jetty.
3. So the new alignment would be roughly at a 45 degree angle to
4. the end of the east jetty here.
5. The benefit of the project would include
6. increased accessibility to the waters of the Sound for the
7. public and restoration of navigable depths to the launch area.
8. The project is allowable in the G district.
9. Similar projects have been approved by the
10. commission, and the proposed project is not expected to set a
11. negative precedent.
12. Dredging would result in a temporary increase in
13. turbidity and a temporary decrease in benthic organisms. Best
14. management practices will be used to minimize these impacts.
15. The project will likely continue to cause
16. accretion on the eastern side of the facility and erosion to
17. the western side of the facility. These effects should not be
18. increased by the additional jetty. And the applicant is in the
19. process of developing a beneficial use plan to keep the
20. sediment from accumulating on the eastern side and moving it to
21. the west side to keep the sediment basically in the cycle that
22. it normally goes to. The sediment cycle we have here is
23. usually what they call longshore transport, and it runs from
24. east to west.
25. The sediment does move from east to west. And

1. then the 45 degree leg that will be added on should reduce any
2. onshore movement since most of the year round we have a
3. southeasterly flow. That 45 degree leg should keep some of
4. that material that would come up from the south and southeast
5. from getting into the navigation channel.
6. No alternative sites were considered as this is
7. an existing public access boat launch.
8. The site already has existing jetties, and the
9. addition of another section to the eastern side should not
10. affect the scenic qualities of the area.
11. Notification was placed in both the Sun Herald
12. and the Mississippi Press as required. We did receive a
13. comment from the adjacent property owner to the west with
14. concerns about erosion his property has experienced since the
15. jetties were constructed in '09.
16. The adjacent owner is not opposed to the
17. project; however, he would like to make note that his land loss
18. be documented by the department and that monitoring of his land
19. continue to take place to ensure that additional erosion is
20. documented if it occurs and that the property be designated a
21. shoreline restoration site.
22. Other comments: DEQ is currently reviewing the
23. project. Archive & History has no objections. Wildlife,
24. Fisheries & Parks has recommended best management practices be
25. implemented and that dredging operations be conducted between

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

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

And in my talks with the applicant, with the agent for the county, that they don't have any problems doing any kind of monitoring for the adjacent property owner. DR. ASPER: Are there any questions for Greg?

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

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

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

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

So that's something that's kind of in the works.

If we were to do anything like that, we would have to come by y'all to get approval to do that, if there was an application that was put in for that.

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

DR. ASPER: Is there a second?

MR. BOSARGE: I'll second the motion.

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

Carries unanimously.

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

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

I was just curious if you have any knowledge on that.

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

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

Thanks.

I guess that's the end of coastal ecology.

MR. BOYD: Yes, sir.

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

J. Administrative Services

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

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

2. Financial Report

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

Tidelands budget for this year is obligated.

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

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

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

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

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

I do appreciate receiving that.
MS. VERSA: Thank you.

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

3. MDMR Website Presentation

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

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

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

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

And it looks like this. We can see visitors. We can see traffic type, whether it's direct or referred, mobile visits, pages, whether they're popular, how long people stay on the website and such.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

And that looks like this.

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

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

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

Are visitors able to find what they want? From what we can tell, they are. Typically when you have a high pages per visit or a high time on site, that means high engagement. They're reading the information, they're interested. Only four percent used the site search feature, which means the navigation seems to be working. They don't have to search for much. And only 40 percent came and then left.

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

How long does it take someone to find the information they want? After getting the search result, the average visitor viewed two more pages and stayed two more minutes. And only 17 percent used the search and then left.

So that seems to mean that they're finding what they want fairly quickly and then looking at more information, staying on the site.

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

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

What about the rest of the stuff? You know, what about our...
research projects? And what about support for seafood
businesses and wetland permitting? And how can we more
effectively inform visitors of the other things that we have to
offer?

Finally, that last question: What's the most
popular content, and what can this tell us? Obviously,
visitors love to fish. Our visitors like viewing photos of our
work. Our photo galleries rank among the top 50 in popular
pages. And our publication pages rank among the top 100.
So ultimately, how can we use all of this to
improve the delivery of our services to our customers?
This website report that you have is available
on our website at dmnr.ms.gov/stats, and visitors have the
ability to subscribe to our news releases and our public
notices, as well.

Do you have any questions?
MR. BOSARGE: I'm curious as to what's the
number of repeat visitors, in other words, people that visited
the website more than once?
MS. DENG: I don't know what the number exactly
is. I want to say that it's 43 percent. So of 50,000, 43
percent of 50,000.
MR. BOSARGE: That's good. That means that
they're willing to come back and look some more.
MS. DENG: Yeah. It actually is a pretty good
number. They say anything that's better than 60-40 is good.
And ours runs, you know, close to that but above average.
MR. BOSARGE: Thank you.
MR. TAYLOR: One of the things that when I talk
to people, and I go on the web to fishing sites, is pictures.
And I haven't been on our website, so excuse me. But one of
the websites I go on is RodNReel.com which is a fishing site
out of Louisiana, and they have one in Mississippi, Texas, and
Florida. But photographs of people catching fish.
And I don't know if there's a link to the
charter industry or the something here to where you could maybe
do a brag board or pictures of something where the fish people
come in today and put the fish, you know, up on the website.
It might draw more people to the website once it gets out.
If you go to, I forget how many hits
RodNReel.com have, but people all over the United States and
all over the world know about it.

But just a thought.
MS. DENG: That's actually -- that's one of the
things that we notice is a spike in wherever there's a fishing
rodeo, a spike in checking the records, just to see, you know,
like what, you know, oh, I need to get a fish that's this big
or whatever.
Also, our artificial reef program, I do get
pictures from them, pictures of the types of fish that you can
find in the inshore and the offshore reefs.
But, no. I mean, like I said, people do like
the pictures.
MR. TAYLOR: Do you all have like a list of
maybe fishing tournaments for Mississippi on it?
MS. DENG: No.
MR. TAYLOR: That would be another suggestion
that we could do some, you know, and I think it would spur
people there, and just general events like when we have this
thing in Pass Christian -- what is it? -- Share the Gulf, and I
can't remember the name, but I've been to it a couple of times.
But any stuff like that where you can -- people will go and
look, especially tourists before they go somewhere. You know,
they don't pick up magazines anywhere. They go to the net,
where do I go eat, can I do this, can I go fish, or play golf
or whatever.
So I think if you would add a couple of those
things to the website and with pictures on all of them, you
know, it would -- I think it would boost over time the use.
MS. DENG: I think you're right. Thanks so
much.
Is there anything else?
DR. ASPER: Okay. Thank you very much. I have
actually visited the website quite a few times. And the new
look is really an improvement.
I will make it a point to visit again and see if
I can come up with any other suggestions. That's something we
can all (inaudible). Thank you.
MS. DENG: Thank you.
DR. ASPER: Now, there's an agenda item on the
commission handbooks. Is that intended to be on there?
MS. CHESS: I think that just wasn't taken off
from last time. That's a mistake.
DR. ASPER: Okay. I was wondering about that.
The only other thing that we have is the closed
session. And for those of you who may have come in a little
bit late, the purpose of this closed session will be to
determine the need to go into executive session. And the
purpose of that would be twofold. First, we have a personnel
item to discuss. And the other one is that the five candidates
that were selected during our special meeting last week, we
interviewed all five of those candidates yesterday, and we will
be meeting to discuss those interviews, discuss what we found,
and select the final three names that will be sent to the
governor. So we're hoping that those three names will be sent
to the governor this week. So that will be the purpose of the
closed session.
Is there a --
MR. COLLINS: Mr. Chairman, I'd like to make a
motion to go into closed session to consider going into
executive session to consider applicants for executive
director's position.

DR. ASPER: Is there a second to the motion?
MR. DRUMMOND: I second the motion, Mr.

Chairman.

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

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

COMMISSION ON MARINE RESOURCES

COURT REPORTER'S CERTIFICATE

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

I do further certify that my certificate annexed
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The undersigned assumes no responsibility for the accuracy of
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Witness my signature this the 2nd day of April 2013.

NORMA JEAN LACNER SOROE, CSR #1297
Certified Shorthand Reporter