COMMISSION ON MARINE RESOURCES

COMMISSION MEETING

Tuesday, December 19, 2017
9:00 a.m.
Bolton Building Auditorium
1141 Bayview Avenue
Biloxi, Mississippi 39530

Commission Members:

Steve Bosarge, Chairman

Ron Harmon, Vice Chairman

Richard Gollott

Mark Havard

Jolynne Trapani

Also Present:

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

COMMISSIONER BOSARGE: We are glad to see everybody. Looks like we've got a very rambunctious crowd here.

I would like to call the meeting to order and begin with the Pledge of allegiance led by Executive Director Jamie Miller.

(Whereupon, the Pledge of Allegiance was recited.)

COMMISSIONER BOSARGE: Approval of the minutes. We actually have two sets of minutes to approve at this meeting.

I need a motion for the approval of minutes for November 21st, 2017.

COMMISSIONER GOLLOTT: So moved, Mr. Chairman.

COMMISSIONER BOSARGE: We have a motion.

Do we have a second?

COMMISSIONER HARMON: So seconded, Mr. Chairman.

COMMISSIONER BOSARGE: All those in favor say aye.

(All in favor.)

COMMISSIONER BOSARGE: Opposed?

(None opposed.)

COMMISSIONER BOSARGE: Motion carries.

Next we have approval of the minutes for the special session meetings of December 5th, 2017.

COMMISSIONER HARMON: Mr. Chairman, I would like to make a motion that we approve the minutes.

COMMISSIONER GOLLOTT: Second, Mr. Chairman.

COMMISSIONER BOSARGE: We have a motion and second.

All those in favor say aye.

(All in favor.)

COMMISSIONER BOSARGE: Opposed?

(None opposed.)

COMMISSIONER BOSARGE: Motion carries.

Approval of the agenda.

Do we have any changes, or modifications, to the agenda?

(No response.)

COMMISSIONER BOSARGE: Seeing none, do we have a motion to approve the agenda as written?

COMMISSIONER GOLLOTT: So moved, Mr. Chairman.

COMMISSIONER BOSARGE: Do we have a second for that motion?

COMMISSIONER HAVARD: I'll second it, Mr. Chairman.

COMMISSIONER BOSARGE: We have a motion and a second.

All those in favor say aye.

(All in favor.)

COMMISSIONER BOSARGE: Opposed?

(None opposed.)

COMMISSIONER BOSARGE: Motion carries.

Next is the Executive Director's report.

Before we get to that, today is, of course, Jamie's last meeting with us and this is our chance to kind of say our thank you for him.

It has been an honor to have him lead us and to bring this agency to what it is. I may be the second longest serving member. I think Commissioner Gollott has probably been here a little longer than I have. We have seen some changes.

To bring Jamie onboard and he's a younger gentleman, but I tell you he has impressed me. He has done a lot for this agency.

I tell him all the time I can see him. He's got a conscience. Things bother him. To me, that goes a long way. It makes him think about things.

Like I say, it's been an honor and a privilege. I hate to see him go. I think Mr. Joe is going to have some big shoes to fill. I'm sure he can handle it, but we are going to miss you.

JAMIE MILLER: Thank you.

COMMISSIONER BOSARGE: If any of the other Commissioners here would like to say a few words, now is a

good opportunity.

Jolynne.

COMMISSIONER TRAPANI: I would like to say I have enjoyed my short time with Jamie, and I really appreciate how he pulls everybody together and makes an extra effort to work with everybody as a whole.

We wish you the best in your future endeavors.

JAMIE MILLER: Thank you.

COMMISSIONER BOSARGE: Mark.

COMMISSIONER HAVARD: Jamie, one of my deciding factors, when I was approached with the Commissioner position, was looking at the leadership within, and you understand not only the leadership, but you understand the resource.

I think you have done a great job in bringing the department to where it is today, and I think Joe will take the bull by the horns and run with it.

I have enjoyed working side-by-side with you through this short tenure. Good luck with your new venture.

JAMIE MILLER: Thank you.

COMMISSIONER GOLLOTT: Mr. Chairman, I would like to say a couple of things.

First of all, since the time I've met Jamie, I have thought of him like a friend as well as a director.

He has always been there to talk to. You could always talk with ease, and he would tell you exactly what is on his mind.

I told him, when I came in a while ago, that I had forgotten the Gretian. I wanted to get some because I think he's more like Barack Obama. When he started this job, he didn't have gray hair in his head and, now, he's salt and pepper. We are probably saving his hair, by sending him to another job.

JAMIE MILLER: Thank you.

COMMISSIONER BOSARGE: Ron.

COMMISSIONER HARMON: Director Miller, I would like to thank you. You took a rough cut charter boat fisherman, cleaned him up, polished him up, and you have been a mentor to me on this Commission.

I can't say thank you enough. I think you have done an outstanding job for this agency, and I have been proud to serve on this Commission under your leadership.

JAMIE MILLER: Thank you.

COMMISSIONER BOSARGE: Joe.

JOE JEWELL: Good morning Commissioners and Director Miller.

I wanted to say a few words to you this morning, before you got out of here. As everyone knows, today is your last day.

Jamie, I had just the utmost respect for you and the leadership that you provided to our agency in a very difficult time. You saw us through those issues. You laid the foundation for us to be a great agency and to move forward in a very positive direction. There are just not enough words to say how grateful I am and the staff of the DMR for all that you did for us.

On behalf of the Marine Commission, Department of Marine Resources and especially the Fisheries staff, we are going to honor you this morning with what we do for all Commissioners that leave the Commission and Executive Directors. We have a presentation for you.

If Chairman Bosarge would like to come down with Jamie.

JAMIE MILLER: I would like the whole Commission to come down and join me, if that's okay.

JOE JEWELL: Sure. This is on behalf of the Marine Commission.

As you know, we have a tradition of awarding the Executive Director and outgoing Commissioners what we call the fish compass. It's a compass, but artistically we do it with a series of fish that represent certain things. We are going to present this to you this morning.

JAMIE MILLER: Thank you.

KEITH DAVIS: Since y'all are already standing,

I was going to do this as part of our report, but Marine Patrol also has a small presentation to make to the Director. It's not a photograph as nice as the fish compass.

Director Miller is going to be traveling to Jackson. I'm not sure about all the reports that we hear about the City of Jackson, but I hear that the crime is pretty bad up there.

When we got the news that Director Miller was going to be traveling and working and living in Jackson, we thought, well, he needs the means of protecting himself.

Marine Patrol passed the hat and we went out and purchased Director Miller a little small token to conceal and protect himself.

We are not giving this to him lightly. I want the Commission to know that Director Miller has traveled to the gun range. He has gone through our qualifications course.

One of the things that Director Miller instilled upon me, when he brought me onboard, was training, and he led by example. He has been out there. He has gone through the FBI Small Arms Qualifications course, and he is very well equipped to handle this weapon.

On behalf of Marine Patrol, we would like to

present to you this Glock 9 millimeter that has been inscribed with "Enhance. Protect. Conserve. Executive Director from 2013-2017".

We are going to miss you, and we appreciate your leadership. Thank you.

JAMIE MILLER: Thank you.

KEITH DAVIS: We also bought him some bullets, too. For y'all that don't know Director Miller, he's a little cheap. He doesn't like to spend money.

We would like to get a couple of pictures with the Commission, as well.

COMMISSIONER BOSARGE: Now, we will continue on with the Executive Director's report.

JAMIE MILLER: Thank you, Chairman.

I had an opportunity Friday to spend time with many of the employees and to thank them.

I have not had a chance to thank the Commission, and I really just wanted to say, when I interviewed for this position, Chairman Bosarge was part of that interview committee and he asked some simple, but tough questions. He really wanted to know, I think, if I understood the resource and he wanted to believe that I was going to be the right person coming in.

I don't know if I convinced him of that, but I did get the opportunity, and it absolutely has been one of

the career highlights for me, being able to serve in this capacity for the agency, but also working alongside men and women that are committed to the resource.

Although they serve and represent different stakeholders, I think at the end of the day each of these Commissioners want what is best for Mississippi and for the resource. I truly believe that.

I appreciate your patience with me. I know that sometimes we had difficult discussions, but I appreciate your patience and I appreciate your support, and I appreciate you giving me the opportunity to serve in this capacity.

I do consider each of you friends, and I hope that if there is ever an opportunity for me to help anyone here in any way, that you would call on me and ask.

Although I'm going to Jackson, I was still born and raised on the Coast and understand the Coast, and I hope that I can bring that voice to Jackson and make sure that we are represented up there the right ways.

Everybody that I have met along the way, fishermen, dealers, just folks interested in the resource, it was a pleasure to get to know you and I hope that I served you well and I hope that if there is anything I can do for you in the future that you won't hesitate to call me.

I really appreciate it. I just want to say thanks. Just like what the Chairman said, sometimes words just don't do enough, but I want you to know from the bottom of my heart thank you.

COMMISSIONER BOSARGE: Just don't change your number.

That concludes the Executive Director's report.

Chief Davis, Office of Marine Patrol.

KEITH DAVIS: Good morning. The report is pretty straight forward. I don't think that there is anything that sticks out that you may have concerns with, but, if there is, I will certainly try to answer any questions that you may have on the regular report.

That being said, I do want to give you an update. Back in July, during your July meeting, you requested Marine Patrol to give you some more details on what enforcement looked like, in terms of speckled trout.

Since that meeting, three thousand three hundred and three fishermen have been checked. We have encountered twenty-three hundred and six Spotted Seatrout. We have issued thirty-seven undersized trout violations. We issued four over the limit trout citations.

I do want to point out that at last month's meeting in Jackson County, a concerned recreational fisherman approached me and informed me that there were

recreational fishermen in the bayous that were keeping undersized speckled trout.

We responded to that complaint. We have checked six hundred and seven fishermen since then, encountered three hundred and thirty-six Spotted Seatrout, issued seven citations for undersized Spotted Seatrout and one citation for over the limit.

I do want to point out that that particular day when we received the report, I sent an officer to the particular bayou. I don't want to mention any specific bayous because we are still concentrating enforcement efforts there, but the day of that complaint we went out and encountered an individual who had ten undersized Spotted Seatrout onboard his vessel at the time.

We quickly learned that the information that was provided was accurate and that enforcement picture looks the same, and we have spread out the enforcement across the Coast and we are encountering recreational guys keeping an abundant amount of undersized Spotted Seatrout.

If any of you have a question on what we are doing with the undersized trout, we first try to return it to the sea, if the fish is alive. If it's not alive and it's an exorbitant amount, we donate it to local food banks.

COMMISSIONER GOLLOTT: Great.

COMMISSIONER BOSARGE: That's good. With that particular species being overfished and undergoing overfishing, we need all the help we can get to try to rebuild it.

We appreciate it.

KEITH DAVIS: Yes, sir. Although we are not dismissing any of the other enforcement efforts, most of our enforcement efforts, right now, are concentrated on recreational fishermen.

We appreciate the information, and I wanted to make sure that we point that out in the Commission meeting so if there is anyone out there who knows of individuals violating the resource, we would like to have that information so we can follow up on it. Thank you.

COMMISSIONER HAVARD: Chief, one real quick question.

On the Spotted Seatrout and keeping the short fish, do you think it's lack of knowledge of the limit, or do you think it's just they are blatantly keeping short trout, in your opinion?

KEITH DAVIS: In my opinion as a fisherman myself, the fish are just now coming in, I think, to the bays. I anticipate that those numbers will go down, as the fish are more abundant in the bays.

The other problem that we are caught with is the

amount of days that we've had a lot of bad weather. Being a fisherman myself, it is awfully cold going out there trying to catch Spotted Seatrout and it's tough to throw those back.

COMMISSIONER HAVARD: I guess my point was is there a way that we need to publicize the limits to get the knowledge out there?

KEITH DAVIS: I don't think it's a bad idea, if you are asking my personal opinion.

I do know that, when the Commission decided to change the size limit, there were a lot of publications that went out from our public relations office.

I wouldn't be opposed to maybe considering going back out and republicizing that the size limit has been changed and enforcement is heavily looking at that.

COMMISSIONER HAVARD: Thank you.

COMMISSIONER BOSARGE: I think that would be a good idea. We will get Melissa on that.

Now, we move on to Office of Marine Fisheries, Mr. Joe Jewell.

JOE JEWELL: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I want to thank you again, Jamie, for all you've done for our agency. We appreciate that.

In honor of your leaving us, I'm going to try to be as brief as possible.

We have three agenda items this morning. First will be Mr. Erik Broussard with an oyster update.

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

This morning I have the Oyster Season Update prepared for you. I'm going to start off with a table that you are pretty familiar with by now.

Move over to the fourth column. Everything in red are areas that have reached their quota. There are two areas that have not. They are in black.

The Pass Dredge, Area II "F", the quota is one thousand fifty-nine and two hundred and thirty-four sacks have been harvested, leaving eight hundred and twenty-five sacks remaining for harvest.

In Area II "G", Pass Marianne, one thousand two hundred and eight sacks was the quota and one thousand seventy-seven sacks have been harvested, leaving a hundred and thirty-one sacks available for harvest.

These two areas did open up Saturday morning. They were open Saturday and Monday. Unfortunately, the weather wasn't very conducive for the fishermen to get out and fish, so we had minimal effort.

This is basically the same breakdown just for more visual aid. Red is the areas that are closed and how many days they were open. Green is the two areas we just

spoke about, what the quota is and what the harvest is to date.

Then, the same for Area V "A", Biloxi Bay. The Commission authorized another thousand sacks of harvest at the last meeting. We have not been able to get this area open with the weather, with the rainfall that we have had in the recent week. We have been monitoring and we will continue to monitor this area to try to get it open as soon as possible.

COMMISSIONER GOLLOTT: Erik, can I interrupt you right there?

ERIK BROUSSARD: Sure.

COMMISSIONER GOLLOTT: Thank you for saying that, that we haven't been able to get this open for our fishermen and we have got a closing date on it. We put that on it at the last meeting, the end of December.

I would like to extend that and modify the motion to say that we will leave it open until our fishermen can harvest a thousand sacks out of the Bay in the area that you determine.

It's just because we had relayed about a thousand sacks in there from Pascagoula, so we are really not tapping into the thirty percent.

Like I say, I would like to make that motion, if I can get a second on it.

COMMISSIONER BOSARGE: Joe, have you got something you want to say?

JOE JEWELL: I do.

A couple of things, Commissioner Gollott. The Commission's vote and approval last Commission meeting, I think it stipulated that a thousand sacks before Christmas, or whichever one comes first.

Technically, it doesn't look like it will open again. We've had bad weather, rainfall, and there is going to be a lot more rainfall predicted this week. You are correct that they likely will not meet that thousand sack quota by Christmas. It's not the end of December.

Then, for technical sake in line with our management program, with the weather that it is, this could be drawn out for quite some time.

I would respectfully ask that you modify your motion to say a thousand sacks until the end that the management criteria stipulates because it could go past April technically.

COMMISSIONER GOLLOTT: Sounds good.

JOE JEWELL: Thank you.

COMMISSIONER BOSARGE: What would the motion be, then, Commissioner Gollott?

COMMISSIONER GOLLOTT: It would be that we extend the season until the end of the --

JOE JEWELL: (Interposing) Until the management criteria normally ends the season. A thousand sacks, or when the management criteria ends the season.

COMMISSIONER BOSARGE: Do we have a second for Richard's motion?

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

COMMISSIONER BOSARGE: We had one public speaker that would like to speak. I don't know if it's on this issue, but on oysters, and that would be Mr. John Livings.

JOHN LIVINGS: Good morning. My name is John Livings. I'm just coming back today to talk about two different things.

For dredging, the fishermen still would like to try to go to St. Joe, if y'all would consider that.

The other is tonging. Between the Bridges, it didn't get worked very much. There were four boats that tried to go in there, but it was the wrong time. I think only one, or two, boats actually went in there to work. We would like to try to see if we can get that back open for tonging, Between the Bridges.

We would like for the St. Joe dredging reef to open after Christmas, before Christmas.

The map shows that, like, Pass Marianne, the only spots that are open are the spots that don't have

anything on them. The reefs that have oysters are all the ones that are closed.

I think their estimation was under on some reefs and over on others. If it takes until 3:30 to catch four sacks dredging, then, it's pretty safe to say there was nothing there.

At St. Joe, we were done at 9:20 in the morning.

That's what I'm asking for.

COMMISSIONER BOSARGE: I guess we will call you back up, when it comes to stock assessment time.

JOHN LIVINGS: Thank you.

COMMISSIONER BOSARGE: I don't think there is any further public comment.

We have a motion and a second.

Any further discussion?

(No response.)

COMMISSIONER BOSARGE: All those in favor say aye.

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

COMMISSIONER BOSARGE: Opposed?

(Commissioner Havard opposed.)

COMMISSIONER BOSARGE: Motion carries.

COMMISSIONER GOLLOTT: One more thing, Mr. Chairman.

When will those two areas close in the Pass?

Do we need to put an extension on that to keep it open?

ERIK BROUSSARD: No, Commissioner. It closed yesterday to rainfall. There are, again, eight hundred and thirty-five sacks left on Pass Marianne to catch and a hundred and thirty-one left at Pass Dredge, based on the thirty percent quota.

The area will remain open until the quota is reached, or the Commission closes the area. It is closed temporarily for rainfall. We will be sampling and we will issue reopening orders, when the water quality meets the criteria.

COMMISSIONER GOLLOTT: Thank you, Erik. That's what I wanted to make sure of.

ERIK BROUSSARD: That would conclude my presentation.

COMMISSIONER BOSARGE: Thank you, Erik.

JOE JEWELL: Thank you, Erik.

Next up for the Commission's consideration is the Stock Assessment Update by Mr. Matt Hill.

MATT HILL: Thank you, Joe.

Good morning Commissioners, Director Miller, Sandy.

I will try to make this as brief as possible,

but I would like to start with some comments about Director Miller, or Jamie, as we know him.

First off, I would like to thank you for the many things that we talked about, but mainly I would like to thank you for giving a sincere effort to understand all the programs that we carry out and the benefits gained from these programs and how they benefit the resource and the fishermen. You were always concerned about that.

JAMIE MILLER: Thank you.

MATT HILL: I would also like to thank you and I always appreciated your acknowledgment of how closely I did follow the dress code on a daily basis. I was always impressed with your attention to these small details. I will try to do the best I can today to make you proud.

JAMIE MILLER: Thank you for wearing a suit today.

MATT HILL: You're welcome.

We will get into a brief stock assessment update. The CMR approved the stock assessment schedule in May. I believe it was May of 2015.

The order began with Spotted Seatrout. We did do a full stock assessment on Spotted Seatrout. It has been peer reviewed. It is accepted. We made regulation changes based on this. We have been tasked through the CMR to do annual updates on Spotted Seatrout.

Right now, the big topic and it's in progress is the Sheepshead, and we are going to get a little bit more into that, but this is pretty far along in the process.

Black Drum. We are in the initial data analysis stage, and I'm also going to talk a little bit more about that in the next few slides.

We expect to be able to do the full assessment of Red Drum in 2019 and, hopefully, have that completed.

Southern Founder will occur in 2020.

These assessments take a long time. They take a lot of resources, and it is very impressive, right now, that we are actually conducting two assessments simultaneously, Sheepshead and Black Drum. Hopefully, as time goes by, we will continue to do better on the time line.

First I want to talk about the Spotted Seatrout Annual Update. I just gave this annual update a few months ago, and we saw a slight bump in the SPR. We saw some encouraging signs.

The Stock Assessment Panel will continue to provide an annual Spotted Seatrout update, giving the stock status and projected trends. This will occur until 2021, at which time a full stock assessment with a new base model run will be initiated, and this will also go through another peer review process. This will give the

regulation a full five years to take hold and we will be able to see exactly what is happening with this new base model run.

The big topic, right now, is our Sheepshead Assessment. Our Sheepshead draft assessment has been completed. The document has gone through the internal MDMR review process and has been returned to Dr. Robert Leaf, with comments attached to be re-edited. The finalized stock assessment document will be ready to send out for peer review in the next four to six weeks.

Usually, we try to place a six to eight week time line on that peer review. Hopefully, after this time, maybe late summer we can give a full stock assessment report on Sheepshead and begin to make some resource decisions.

Next will be the Black Drum Assessment. The data analysis for the Black Drum assessment is currently underway. This process involves merging data sets from MDMR and GCRL into the format required to run the base model for the stock assessment. This process also helps in identifying data deficiencies to possibly be addressed in sampling protocols.

What I'm trying to say by that is if we see where we are lacking data possibly in the future, we can modify some of our sampling to specific species, whenever

we get ready to do some of these assessments.

I'm not going to go into the Red Drum and the Southern Flounder because they are just so far off, and our plate is pretty full, right now.

I do want the Commission to understand that we have our full focus on Sheepshead. However, we are also tasked to continue to do an annual Spotted Seatrout update which also takes a pretty good amount of our time. For the next several years, I see us completing one full assessment of the species and the Spotted Seatrout update as was requested by the Commission.

COMMISSIONER BOSARGE: On most of these species, these will be the first runs we have ever done.

Correct?

MATT HILL: That is correct, and I would like to say that these assessments will only get better. The initial base model assessment is what takes so long, and, then, what we would do after that is what we are doing with Spotted Seatrout. We will just do annual updates. We call it the turn of the crank. We just put new data in it. The base model has already been peer reviewed. It has been accepted. It doesn't take near the amount of time.

Once we can get to that point, then, we can start maybe looking at some other species to do some of

these base model runs.

However, I do see us pretty much every four to five years having to rerun the base model for the Spotted Seatrout, or any species for which we have a significant regulation change.

COMMISSIONER BOSARGE: At some point in the future if there is a different model -- I know another species that I have experienced in other times where the model that we were using wasn't the best model.

MATT HILL: That is correct. We don't see this as a static process. This is a very dynamic process. Even the model that we are currently using, the ASAP model, is a dynamic model. The more data you put into it -- and what we saw with the update, I think you saw it changed some of the historical numbers.

If there is another model that comes out, like I said, we're not stuck with one model. We are very flexible and this is a dynamic process, and we have some of the best modelers around, and we will continue to look at some of these newer techniques.

If a new model comes up and we feel like, in the next three years, we should use that for Spotted Seatrout, we will run that base model. We will come to the Commission and request to run that base model.

COMMISSIONER BOSARGE: Good.

COMMISSIONER GOLLOTT: Matt, can I ask you a question?

MATT HILL: Yes, sir.

COMMISSIONER GOLLOTT: Sorry, Mr. Chairman.

One of the problems we had, when we went to fifteen-inch fish, is we got a tremendous amount of fishermen starting to fish for speckled trout.

Have we seen the amount of people fishing for trout going down, since we put this fifteen-inch limit on it?

MATT HILL: No. The effort is going to continue to increase. The effort is increasing for all species. We are up close to ninety thousand recreational licenses sold. When we started this process, I think we were around thirty-two thousand licenses. Logic tells you that we are going to continue.

That is one thing that we try to harp on as much as we can. The one thing we cannot control in the recreational fishery, right now, is effort. We cannot do it. We do not have the ability to put a moratorium on licenses, or anything. We are going to continue to see more recreational fishermen, and they are mainly going to target the sport fish such as Spotted Seatrout, Red Drum and Southern Flounder to some degree.

We do not see any slowdown in the effort any

time soon, just from the trends that we have seen.

COMMISSIONER GOLLOTT: I had a guy call me the other day. He said he was in Fort Bayou and he caught sixty-four speckled trout and he kept one. He was disappointed, but that's just part of it.

MATT HILL: I think it's a good time for some public comment. We did have a Charter For Hire Task Force meeting last Wednesday. No official motions, or votes, were recorded.

However, we have members in the audience that would like to speak on some of the issues discussed pertaining to Sheepshead and Black Drum specifically. We gave a report to them. They have some ideas.

The Sheepshead is not finalized. We are still a little ways away from that, but we are open to ideas now because the process that will happen is the Commission, I'm sure, will ask us to run some scenarios, and we are starting to put some of the scenarios together that user groups would like to see, bag limit, size limits, some different things so maybe we can come with options, once the assessment is done and the model is done, and we can run the projections through there just as we did the Spotted Seatrout.

We did encourage them to maybe start thinking about it, and I think we do have a few of them that would

like to speak today.

COMMISSIONER TRAPANI: Matt, I have a question.

What is your time line on looking at the flounder assessment?

MATT HILL: The flounder assessment, we are looking at 2020, right now. There are only so many of us. We are doing the best we can.

COMMISSIONER TRAPANI: In my industry, one of the species that we are having the hardest time to get is flounder. It has never been like this, and it is really hard for us.

MATT HILL: We have already looked at the independent data that has come in on flounder, and there is a lack of independent data. Our sampling methods have never been targeted for flounder. That is one of the things, when I start talking about data deficiencies, that we are really going to have to look at to start targeting these to get enough.

One of the most important things that we have to build, when we do this, is an age-to-length key, and we have to have a pretty good number of fish from our independent sampling, and we just do not have that to be honest with you.

We are beginning to look at some different protocol. I have talked with Joe. We have talked with

some of our commercial fishermen. We have talked with them a lot on some ways to maybe change some of our protocols to target flounder specifically. That is one reason it is pushed down the line a little bit.

We have plenty of data on the Red Drum, so we can push it through pretty quickly, but the flounder is going to give us some problems, and it gives every state problems. It's just that the sampling protocols aren't there. It's a very specialized protocol to target flounder.

COMMISSIONER TRAPANI: Thank you.

COMMISSIONER BOSARGE: We see flounder as continuing to decline.

Can we, as a Commission, implement -- in other words, 2020 is a long way down the line.

MATT HILL: Yes, sir.

COMMISSIONER BOSARGE: Everything I see and everything I hear and everybody I talk to indicates there is a problem with flounder, whatever that problem may be.

MATT HILL: We hear it a lot and we lean heavily -- I do take a lot of the recreational fishermen's input, but, when you start seeing the commercial numbers, I lean heavily on those, and when I see how low they are and we talk to them a lot, there is definitely an issue, and it is just something that we don't have a good answer for,

right now, and we do need an assessment, but we want to have a good assessment.

We would like to get at least the Sheepshead and Black Drum pushed through. I don't think we are going to have a big problem with the Red Drum. We have the data. Hopefully, when that one starts, we can start focusing the main part of our efforts on flounder and see what we can do.

COMMISSIONER BOSARGE: All right.

JOE JEWELL: Commissioner Bosarge, I want to address the question -- well, one, that is correct. We are seeing overall population declines in the entire Gulf. All states are reporting declines, significant declines in flounder populations.

I do want to reiterate what Matt said that we are going to modify our methodology in the field to try and target flounder. We work with our representatives at GCRL. They have established some independent stations, and we are going to do the same. We are hoping to address some of the data poor issues that we are having with that.

Then, specifically your question about can the Commission take action without clear data that is appropriate, I think our legal counsel probably should answer that, but I feel confident the Commission has, in the past, taken action on a data-poor species. The

Tripletail would be a good example of that, but our legal counsel should comment.

COMMISSIONER BOSARGE: Well, if it comes to a point where you guys -- you are the ones looking at the data -- see it where we don't need to wait until 2020, then...

MATT HILL: Commissioner Bosarge, I know you are very familiar when we say the words "data-poor species", and we feel like flounder is a very data-poor species for us, right now. We are trying to correct that somehow.

It's not going to be as strong as the Spotted Seatrout assessment. I'm very confident in that, but we need to be able to try to make it as strong as we possibly can. It is a data-poor species, right now. We need to try to get it out of that category somehow.

COMMISSIONER TRAPANI: I just wanted to add that y'all can try to work on that because, again, like I said before, I have sold flounder for twenty-three years. In the last two years, the decline has been substantial. It is so substantial that literally in January we are changing our menu and I'm taking flounder off because we cannot get flounder. I have never seen it do this.

I understand we don't have the data, but we need to try to look at that and see. I think that is a sign that there is a problem out there with flounder.

COMMISSIONER GOLLOTT: Matt, let me ask you something.

Would it be unreasonable to ask you to put the Southern Flounder ahead of the Red Drum?

From everything I understand, there is no problem with the Red Drum and there is with the flounder.

MATT HILL: I don't think it would be unreasonable to do that. I think it would be inefficient to do that because we just don't have a lot of -- we're not going to have difficulties running the Red Drum assessment. It's not going to take a lot of work on our part to get the data together.

While Robert is running the assessment for Red Drum, we can fully focus on -- the Red Drum data is ready to go. We just don't have the modeler, right now, in place to do that, so we would like to get the Sheepshead and Black Drum.

If you remember, we did not do a full Red Drum assessment. We did the escapement rate. So that data is still available and that's the data that we need to be able to run the full assessment. It's at our fingertips. We just need the modeler in place to do that.

I will not recommend doing that currently from efficiency sake, but if it's the Commission's will for us to do that, we can do that.

JOE JEWELL: Commissioners, I agree with Matt. The issue is not that we're not trying to do an assessment on the Southern Flounder. It's that we just don't have the data. If we moved it up, it wouldn't increase the data. We need to have data to drive that model.

The other thing I wanted to point out, back in May of 2015, if y'all recall, I gave that presentation to the Commission and asked the Commission to prioritize the species for the stock assessment.

If the Commission did choose to do that -- and I agree. I wouldn't recommend that -- you would have to vote for that to reorder the prioritized list.

Does that make sense?

COMMISSIONER BOSARGE: Yes.

COMMISSIONER GOLLOTT: It just seems rough to have to wait.

MATT HILL: Commissioner Bosarge did point out that this is our first run on all of these. Once we get all these in place, it is going to be a much easier process. We are just going to have to go through the growing pains for a little while.

COMMISSIONER BOSARGE: I remember you and I having that conversation and Southern Flounder was the one that I said that I felt was probably in the most need.

MATT HILL: Once we get through these growing

pains and we have these base models in place and these base assessments, I think we're going to be in a much better place, but we're going through the growing pains, right now, and it is probably going to take four to five years to get through them all.

COMMISSIONER BOSARGE: Well, if you just continue to see it tank, then, in my opinion, you guys need to come to us and let's see what we can do to try to shake it up, or hold it.

MATT HILL: Yes, sir.

COMMISSIONER BOSARGE: We've got some public comments from folks that want to speak on this.

To start off with is Mike Foto.

MIKE FOTO: Good morning. My name is Mike Foto. I want to speak on the Sheepshead and the Black Drum.

COMMISSIONER BOSARGE: Pull that mike over just a little bit closer to you.

MIKE FOTO: How is that?

Is it better?

COMMISSIONER BOSARGE: Yes, sir. Thank you.

MIKE FOTO: Sheepshead to start off with, and I know they are doing a stock assessment. Talking to Matt, the stock assessment is supposed to be good. There is supposed to be a lot of fish out there, but we would love to see -- I say "we" -- the charter boat and recreational

fishermen would like to see some kind of regulations put in place before it is overfished, before we get in a problem like the flounder.

I think she said it best (indicating Commissioner Trapani). She has been serving flounder for twenty-something years in her restaurant and, now, she can't get them.

What is the next fish she is going to serve?

Is it going to be Sheepshead?

Is it going to be Black Drum?

Are we going to be in the same situation with these fish that we are now with the flounder, if we don't put some kind of regulations in place?

What kind of creel limit, size limit?

I'm not sure. We will leave that up to Matt and Joe.

Me personally, I would love to see a five fish limit per person on the Sheepshead. That is plenty of fish.

Size limit. You catch small ones, but you don't catch the little tiny ones.

You catch more of the small Black Drum, and social media lets everybody see what everybody is catching. Everybody posts pictures. If anybody looks on Facebook at people's catch, you will see the little tiny

Black Drum. That's a fish that grows to sixty pounds.

Why is everybody keeping them?

The reason people are keeping them is go back to the Spotted Seatrout. We upped the limit on them. We went to fifteen inches. Nobody can catch them anymore.

Commissioner Gollott said it. Sixty-four fish and you keep one.

That puts pressure on the other species of fish, Black Drum and Sheepshead. They are easy to catch.

What I'm doing here is asking y'all to do something before we get in a crisis mode with these fish.

Black Drum needs something. I know the stock assessment is way off. If you could do something, if it's wrong when the stock assessment comes in, maybe we can adjust it.

You did something on the Tripletail, like Joe said. Without a stock assessment, we did something. There are plenty of fish, now. There are larger fish to catch. Everybody is catching them. It was great.

How come we can't do something on the Black Drum and stop those little fish?

How come we can't do something with the Sheepshead, before we get in this period with the spawn which is coming on in March and everybody goes out there and keeps twenty, or twenty-five, fish per person?

I would just love to see something done before it gets overfished, before we get in that situation like we've got with the flounder.

Also, before I leave, I would like to thank Mr. Miller for his services. He's a great guy. He's got a lot of respect from the charter boats and the public. Thank you.

JAMIE MILLER: Thank you.

COMMISSIONER HAVARD: Mr. Foto, in your professional experience in being out here fishing every day, are you seeing an increased effort on Sheepshead fishing?

MIKE FOTO: Yes, sir, we are.

Back when I started this business in 1997, there were very few people fishing Sheepshead, very few. Now, today everybody is fishing Sheepshead, and I feel it's because you can't keep the other fish that's got limits. There are no limits on Sheepshead and Black Drum. That's why they are getting overfished.

Again, social media. Four, or five, years ago you never saw boxes full of Sheepshead. Now, you can go on there any day and you see large coolers -- people posting pictures -- full of Sheepshead.

It goes back to the same thing. If you stop them from catching one fish, they are going to catch

another one.

This effort, like Matt said, ninety thousand recreational licenses, and everybody can't fish speckled trout. They are going to go fish other fish.

COMMISSIONER HARMON: Mr. Foto, as we progress into the spring months, don't we also have an issue of these Sheepshead being full of eggs?

MIKE FOTO: Yes, they are, and that's when they are most vulnerable, and they get on the wrecks and they get in places, and you can go sit there and catch a hundred of them with no problem, and that's really when they are getting overfished, in my opinion.

I'm not saying stop it. I want everybody to go catch fish, but let's put a limit on it that everybody can live with. Everybody can go catch fish. They can take fish home to eat. They can bring their kids and go enjoy it, and, when their kids get older, the stock will still be there for everybody to go catch some.

COMMISSIONER HARMON: So, basically, what we need to do is take a proactive stance on this, instead of reacting like usually happens on a lot of other species.

MIKE FOTO: Yes.

You don't see a lot of small Sheepshead. I guess they are kind of like a pigeon.

Did you ever see a baby pigeon?

We don't see the baby Sheepshead. We don't catch them. When you catch them, they are twelve inches, or ten inches. You don't see the real small ones.

The Black Drum do bite when they are little. There is no size limit on them, and people will keep them. I really think something needs to be done pretty quick, not two or three years from now.

COMMISSIONER HARMON: Thank you, Mr. Foto.

COMMISSIONER BOSARGE: I'm sure Matt and Joe are paying attention.

Mr. Bryan Cuevas.

BRYAN CUEVAS: With a name like Cuevas, you know I live here.

COMMISSIONER BOSARGE: That's right.

BRYAN CUEVAS: I was born here. I've been fishing here since I was about three years old.

Have I seen a decline in fishing?

Absolutely, and I agree with her (indicating Commissioner Trapani). Her livelihood is flounder.

My livelihood for the last nine years has been chartering, guiding. I have seen a major decline in the overall catch of every species, including species we don't assess, or talk about, things like Florida Pompano, Spanish Mackeral, things like this. A big decline.

My biggest concern is, of course, Sheepshead,

Black Drum and the flounder.

I have very few clients that really come to fish, believe it or not, speckled trout. They know the population is low. They know they can't keep them, or can't get their limits, and for most tourists it is kind of hard for them to catch speckled trout. It does take a little bit of practice.

The easiest fish to catch are the Sheepshead and the Black Drum. Their bites are different. Their catch is different.

I would suggest and ask the Commission to take, as you said, a proactive stand on this. We need to conserve. Conservation should mean doing something before the species is gone.

I agree with Mike. He covered a lot of good areas.

With ninety thousand recreational fishing licenses, if one person kept fifteen speckled trout, that's over one point three million fish harvested from the water. I don't think any fish, or any species, are reproducing that fast. The time to do something is now.

No flounder. We are going to be faced with that with Black Drum and Sheepshead. People fish these Sheepshead pretty aggressive. As Mike said, when they are spawning, they are very prone to being caught. They are

hanging on the wrecks, the pilings.

I just think it's time to do something. Stock assessments and data are great. That informs us as to what the species are doing. We can tract the species and see where the species future is headed, but I think we all know that we do have a problem with flounder.

I can remember getting my limit on flounder. I think some of the limits may be too high on flounder.

Look what we did with Red Drum. Three per person. I can catch Red Fish all sizes. They are just abundant. That was the right move.

I think that maybe the Commission may also look at recreational gigging. Let's limit that a little bit more. I think that's where a lot of the flounder are being caught, before they move into the Bay. They are being caught on the beach and the islands, prior to coming into the Bay to spawn. Thank you.

COMMISSIONER BOSARGE: Thank you.

Mr. Sonny Schindler.

SONNY SCHINDLER: Good morning.

COMMISSIONER BOSARGE: Good morning.

SONNY SCHINDLER: I'm pretty much in agreement with Mike.

After we heard they were possibly bringing this up, I called, or texted, or emailed, eighteen charter

captains from Long Beach to Bay St. Louis, or Waveland, and I just wanted to let you know what they were thinking. I'm included in this.

Fifteen would be in favor of size and bag limits on Sheepshead.

Fourteen would be in favor of size and bag limits on Black Drum.

Fifteen would be in favor of a no take for captain and crew, if it were to go into effect.

One operator would be in favor of a bag limit, but no size limit on Sheepshead and Black Drum.

One of the operators would be in favor of the captains being allowed to keep.

Two of the eighteen did not respond.

I just wanted to let you know that we are pretty much in favor of limits on them.

I think Mr. Harmon said it best, a proactive approach.

That's pretty much all we fish for the next three months is Sheepshead and Black Drum, and we do a lot with them. They carry us through the winter. It's pretty much the only thing we do.

If y'all could, please help us with that fishery. We just want to protect it and have it for many years.

Before I go, I just wanted to say thank you Director Miller. You always treated us with fairness and respect. Best of luck to you up in Jackson.

JAMIE MILLER: Thank you.

COMMISSIONER BOSARGE: Thank you, Sonny.

Joe, you listened to all of this?

JOE JEWELL: Absolutely. We have a lot of input from the charter boat community through our Charter For Hire Task Force. They certainly have made it clear and made those same comments to us at a couple of our recent meetings. They are on the front lines. They see it every day. They understand the dynamics of the movement into the estuarine systems and that sort of carrying capacity of the overall Mississippi Sound and the north central Gulf.

We understand their perspective and we appreciate that, and we are going to keep monitoring the resource in advance of stock assessments.

COMMISSIONER BOSARGE: Well, these are guys that do it every day and they have done it for years and years. When they see a problem, it's good to have their voice. They have that knowledge.

JOE JEWELL: Absolutely.

COMMISSIONER BOSARGE: I think we really need to take a hard look at what is going on and maybe get you

guys to come back to us with not blanket regulations and not totally restrictive regulations, but something that we can, like they said, be a little proactive and be sure we have the resource for years to come, until we get our stock assessment.

JOE JEWELL: We absolutely can do that. Like I said, we have a tremendous amount of input from both the recreational and charter community.

If the Commission wants us to come back maybe next month, or February, with a presentation, or an update on this issue, I would strongly suggest we take a vote on that, and we can certainly do that.

COMMISSIONER TRAPANI: Joe, I would like to request from the staff to provide the regulations for flounder and Black Drum from the other Gulf states for the size and bag limits for those two so we can look at that.

I know we don't have data to move forward, but if we can compare this to what the other states are doing, maybe move forward from there and try to tweak this to try to, again, be proactive and maybe help this fishery, before we get into the shape that are with the speckled trout.

JOE JEWELL: Sure. I understand the Commission's request. We absolutely can do that.

I would like the Commission to vote for that so

you are a unanimous voice directing us. We would suggest maybe February, or March. Give us a little latitude in that because, then, we can update the landings data, the new weight data will come in, and we absolutely can include those suggestions, Commissioner Trapani, in our report when we come back to the Commission.

COMMISSIONER GOLLOTT: Mr. Chairman, I would like to make a motion.

COMMISSIONER BOSARGE: I appreciate that, but let's get the rest of the public comments.

COMMISSIONER GOLLOTT: I'm sorry.

COMMISSIONER BOSARGE: Mr. F. J. Eicke wants to comment, and, then, one more behind him.

F. J. EICKE: You have already said what I was going to talk about. We have a major concern about flounder in the recreational community. We are hearing it all the time. I will leave that at that and comment later on something else.

COMMISSIONER BOSARGE: Thank you.

Mr. John Livings, I believe, wants to speak on speckled trout, also.

JOHN LIVINGS: Good morning. I know that the speckled trout are down, from what they say. Personally, I went fishing the other day, and I caught fifty-one speckled trout, and one of them was fifteen inches. There

were a bunch of them ten, nine, twelve; a bunch of them fourteen.

I just ask if it can be even on the commercial and recreational, same size limit, instead of commercial being fourteen and recreational being fifteen.

I mean, if the recreational saves them, what are they saving them for?

For commercial to catch them later.

That's the only thing I'm asking if they could do the same size limit for both.

COMMISSIONER BOSARGE: Well, that's something we will have to get the staff to look at. Thank you, John.

Now, Commissioner Gollott.

COMMISSIONER GOLLOTT: Hang on just a minute, please. I'm getting some legal counsel here.

COMMISSIONER BOSARGE: There are a lot of issues with game fish, fish that are targeted by recreational fishing, and we've got a lot of folks that want to fish and have the right to fish, but that effort is continuing to increase. We have to look at that, and I don't know of a way to control the effort. I don't really want to control the effort, but we've got to make sure that we don't go overboard and really over fish these species.

COMMISSIONER GOLLOTT: I'm going to let Commissioner Harmon make the motion.

JOE JEWELL: I will address some of your concerns, Commissioner Bosarge, while we are waiting for the motion.

I think one of the fishermen said it quite eloquently. Our main game fish in the Mississippi Sound here in the northern Gulf of Mississippi is Red Drum, Spotted Seatrout and flounder. When those for whatever reason, regulation, or the populations are reduced, the fishermen have to go to other species, and there are so many species that we have in Mississippi that have no regulations, no size and no bag limits, and I hear the fishermen. They are concerned about those other fish that they feel are being overfished, and those include Sheepshead, flounder and Black Drum.

We have been aware of that. We've been talking with the fishing community. They have pointed that out.

Like I said, the staff's responsibility to the Commission is to provide them the best scientific data available to base their decisions on, and that generally is through our stock assessments.

COMMISSIONER BOSARGE: When we restrict one species, well, then, folks want to fish and they want to catch fish, so they move to another species.

I know we've had this conversation before, but everything is driven off data, and ninety thousand, that's

the number that scares me.

Most recreational fishermen -- I think Mr. Eicke would agree -- would not mind reporting their catch. I know that would be a major undertaking. That's a lot of folks.

Have you given any more thought to a means of capturing that data for fishermen that want to report their data?

JOE JEWELL: Well, we are looking at other species. I think one of the species we are contemplating -- all the Gulf states are -- is an exempted fish permit and that would include Red Snapper and Gray Triggerfish. We are attempting to expand Tails n' Scales to include other species. It's certainly an option.

It's just with potentially ninety thousand inputs at any point, it can be overwhelming. Those are things that we would have to address and address them in the system.

We are looking at other species.

COMMISSIONER TRAPANI: I think a good point made today that kind of brought this to the surface -- and I appreciate all the fishermen that came forward talking about it -- as a recreational fisherman myself, the Black Drum, they are right. People are keeping Black Drum of every size.

That has been brought to our attention and it's something that we do need to look at, having some type of limit, or size.

JOE JEWELL: The Commission has, in the past, in advance of a stock assessment, or analysis of our independent and dependent data, taken action. One of those species is the Tripletail. We do know that the Commission did set size and bag limits on the Tripletail.

It's sort of a regulatory process. The Commission does have authority to do that.

COMMISSIONER BOSARGE: Commissioner Harmon.

COMMISSIONER HARMON: Mr. Chairman, I would like to make a motion, please.

COMMISSIONER BOSARGE: All right.

COMMISSIONER HARMON: I would like to direct the staff to report to the Commission regarding the species identified as Southern Flounder, Sheepshead and Black Drum and the possible recommendations regarding adjusting quotas and bag limits pending the official stock assessment no later than March 2018.

COMMISSIONER GOLLOTT: I will second that motion, Mr. Chairman.

COMMISSIONER BOSARGE: We have a motion and a second.

I see Matt rolling his eyes. Calm down. It's

just a little more work. It's okay.

Any further discussion?

(No response.)

COMMISSIONER BOSARGE: We have a motion and a second.

All those in favor say aye.

(All in favor.)

COMMISSIONER BOSARGE: Opposed?

(None opposed).

COMMISSIONER BOSARGE: Motion carries.

Yes, sir, Mr. Joe.

JOE JEWELL: We have one final item on the agenda for the Commission's consideration.

I want to make a couple of comments about that, before Jon gets started. We did have a lot of input from the charter for hire, the charter fishermen, the recreational fishermen, and the CCA commented on this particular issue.

Jon is going to present to the Commission a process for establishing a youth category for State fish records.

The Commission has talked about this in the past. We haven't taken a lot of action because we had to do a lot of homework, particularly in how we implement the program.

Jon is going to get into some of those details for the Commission, but we chose this time of the year because all fishing tends to drop off because of the cold weather.

For your consideration, Jon is going to present a State Records Category for Youth.

JONATHAN BARR: Thank you, Joe.

Good morning Commissioners, Ms. Chestnut, Director Miller.

Thank you for everything that you have done, Director Miller, and best of luck to you in your future endeavors.

JAMIE MILLER: Thank you.

JONATHAN BARR: Marine Fisheries would like to add a category to the current State Fishing Records aptly titled Youth Division.

The Bureau feels that adding this division provides an excellent opportunity for young anglers to achieve fishing goals and accomplishments.

It gives young anglers an opportunity to obtain State records, and it also promotes stewardship and conservation of Mississippi's Marine resources.

We plan on following the exact protocol that we have in place for our current State records, with a few main differences. The first being this is a category for

anglers under the age of sixteen.

As y'all are aware, in the State of Mississippi, when you turn sixteen, you have to purchase a fishing license.

Also, we are going to require a minimum weight limit which would be fifty percent of the current State record. This is to soften the blow of the overwhelming number of submissions.

For example, the current Spotted Seatrout state record is ten pounds ten ounces. That means that we would be accepting applications of five pounds five ounces and over.

We will have both conventional and fly tackle categories just like the current State records.

These are the rules. They have a little less words than the ones already posted on our web page, just to make it a little more reader friendly for the younger ones (indicating slide).

The initiation of the program. The proposed startup date would be January 1st, 2018. As Joe mentioned, we wanted to start in the winter when fishing efforts are down.

It will be administered by members of the Marine Fisheries staff.

It's open for all species of marine finfish

landed in the State of Mississippi.

Just like our current State records, once the records have been submitted, they will go through a formal review process and come to y'all for adoption.

This is an example of the certificate that we would award to the State record holder (indicating slide).

What is required is a motion to adopt the Youth Division.

COMMISSIONER GOLLOTT: Why the fifty percent?

JONATHAN BARR: Because, in the State of Mississippi, our records are open to all marine fish. Because we don't have anything on the record, it is going to be a little overwhelming.

COMMISSIONER GOLLOTT: Once you get that first one, you've got a benchmark.

JONATHAN BARR: That is something that we have discussed maybe revisiting. Once they get established, maybe pulling that, but, as of right now, we are going to stick with fifty percent. We have discussed that maybe in the future down the road.

JOE JEWELL: Part of the reason why we are anticipating a dramatic increase in workload for our fisheries staff.

COMMISSIONER GOLLOTT: That's terrible.

JOE JEWELL: Isn't that terrible?

We are trying to put a little bit of boundaries around it. A couple of things that we considered is establishing it at this time of the year and putting a weight category in there.

As Jon mentioned, as we establish records and the youth are awarded these, if we look at other categories and see that the fish are not being captured, or records are established in those categories, we would reconsider that.

COMMISSIONER GOLLOTT: Can you imagine a five year old, or six or seven year old kid catching a little ground mullet?

JOE JEWELL: I'm sure we're going to have four or five Spotted Seatrout records that will be broken and resubmitted, in the first five, or six, months. I'm sure we will be coming forth before the Commission pretty much every month, once we do this.

COMMISSIONER BOSARGE: What other states?

JONATHAN BARR: Currently, Texas is the only other Gulf state that has a separate division for youth.

COMMISSIONER BOSARGE: How did this come about I guess is my question?

JOE JEWELL: It came about through a recommendation through the Charter For Hire Task Force and almost simultaneously the CCA mentioned that they would

like to see it established as a part of their PR output, and it's a good PR for getting youth engaged in the fishery.

COMMISSIONER BOSARGE: I'm with you and it sounds like a great program, but we just got through talking about effort. Here we are with effort going through the roof, and this looks like a program that would increase effort more.

JOE JEWELL: That's a legitimate concern and it is certainly something that we considered, that among other things, but we try to find a balance between participation in the fisheries effort and trying to promote conservation in the fisheries.

I do understand that it will likely increase effort, but I think once the records are established, it will weigh out, and the benefits of the program will far outweigh the deficit in the program.

COMMISSIONER TRAPANI: That was my question, too, but it's a great idea for kids. I understand the age variation because of the license, but a fifteen year old can catch the same fish as a twenty-something year old.

I think it's a neat idea, but establishing it, y'all are going to be very busy people. You are going to get about ten to twenty calls a week.

JONATHAN BARR: We are prepared for that. If we

have to put a little more effort in, that will be okay.

COMMISSIONER BOSARGE: Where do you see the conservation side of it?

JOE JEWELL: Well, youth will be required to be aware of the rules and regulations and understanding how those are implemented.

I think just the general knowledge of the program and the general knowledge of the recreational fisheries, the size and bag limits, they would have to have this knowledge first hand to submit a record.

I don't think a lot of the children that are in the program, when they catch a fish when they are fishing with their parents, or with their grandparents, or a family member, or a friend, understand the rules and regulations that are in place, but this will require them to be active participants in the fishery and to have that knowledge.

COMMISSIONER BOSARGE: Do we have a motion?

COMMISSIONER HAVARD: I would like to make a motion that we adopt the State Records for the Youth Division.

COMMISSIONER BOSARGE: We have a motion.

Do we have a second?

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

COMMISSIONER BOSARGE: We have a motion and a second.

Any further discussion?

(No response.)

COMMISSIONER BOSARGE: All those in favor say aye.

(All in favor.)

COMMISSIONER BOSARGE: Opposed?

(None opposed.)

COMMISSIONER BOSARGE: Motion carries.

Thank you, Jonathan.

JONATHAN BARR: Thank you.

JOE JEWELL: Thank you, Commissioners. That concludes the Office of Marine Fisheries presentations.

COMMISSIONER BOSARGE: Thank you, Joe.

I think up next would be Ms. Kacey Williams, Office of Finance.

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

On behalf of the Office of Finance, I wanted to thank you for your leadership, Director Miller, and we appreciate your support and your trust in us.

I'm not sure if I ever told you this, but you are affectionately referred to as Coach by my team, and we will miss you and wish you all the best.

JAMIE MILLER: Thank you.

KACEY WILLIAMS: These are the financial results as of November 30th, 2017.

At the end of November, our State Revenue was four point two million. Our Total Agency Revenue was one point two million. Our State Net Income was fourteen point seven million. Our Total Agency Net Income was seven point three million.

After five months of fiscal year 2018, we have seventy-nine point four percent of the Operating budget remaining and eighty-seven point five percent of the Tidelands budget remaining.

Any questions on the financial results?

COMMISSIONER BOSARGE: Any questions?

(No response.)

KACEY WILLIAMS: I do not have beautiful artwork, or weapons, but I do have a clean audit. We just recently received our third-party independent audit results, and we can provide the Commissioners with a copy of that, if you have not been provided one yet. We just got them in the mail last week.

DMR received an unqualified, or clean, opinion on our FY 17 audit results, and this means our audit showed that our financial statements were free of any misrepresentations and it is the highest audit opinion

that can be issued.

BKD is our independent auditor and their report states that the MDMR financial statements present fairly in all material respects and respective financial position of the treasury of the governmental funds and are in conformity with the generally accepted accounting principles.

COMMISSIONER BOSARGE: That is good news.

JAMIE MILLER: That's the best gift you can give me.

KACEY WILLIAMS: Thank you.

COMMISSIONER BOSARGE: Now, we go on to Ms. Melissa.

MELISSA SCALLAN: Good morning Commissioners, Director Miller, Ms. Chestnut.

I also would like to thank Director Miller for his leadership over the past four-and-a-half years. I do have a little story, and he does know about this. I'm not telling anything he doesn't know.

I met Jamie the first time, no matter what anybody else thought, on April the 8th of 2013. It was his first day at the DMR. I was having dinner with a friend, and Jamie showed up at the same restaurant.

My friend said, "I want to introduce you to somebody".

I turned around, and when he said his name, I said, "I'm not sure whether I should congratulate you, or pray for you."

And Jamie said, "Why don't you do both?"

I guess because of fate, or God, or whatever, we ended up working together here, and it has been my pleasure to work with him, and we appreciate all you have done for us.

JAMIE MILLER: Thank you.

MELISSA SCALLAN: Of course, the agency was mentioned about thirty times since the last meeting, and the item most mentioned was Jamie going to the MDA as a deputy director. We wish him luck in that endeavor. If you ever need anything, you can give us a call.

We also have some good news for Fisheries. The agency was recognized last month by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's Gulf of Mexico Program. The award was for exceptional leadership in Gulf Coast preservation efforts. The agency received first place in the 2017 Gulf Guardian Award in the Partnerships Category. That award is for the agency's collaboration with GCRL to establish the Derelict Crab Trap Program.

The award was given last month in Mobile, and Traci Floyd, Rick Burris and Harron Wise attended the ceremony to receive the award, along with several other

members from GCRL. That was a very nice award.

Also earlier this month, we had twelve employees from Marine Fisheries who passed the Coast Guard Captain's Class. Those are Kristina Broussard, Dylan Kessen, Scottie Reid, Jack Husley, Michael Sweda, Miles Barras, Emily Satterfield, Wade Hardy, Jon Barr, Trevor Moncrief, Andrew Meinzinger, Thomas Bustamante. For the first time in the agency's history we have two women who have passed this course, and that was Kristina Broussard and Emily Satterfield. We are very excited about that.

Marine Patrol, so far in fiscal year 18, has held eight boat and water safety classes and certified a hundred and twenty-four students, and they also participated in twenty-three marine events so far this fiscal year.

Any questions?

COMMISSIONER BOSARGE: That's a lot of information.

MELISSA SCALLAN: I also want to say Merry Christmas and Happy New Year.

COMMISSIONER BOSARGE: Thank you, Melissa.

Other business.

COMMISSIONER GOLLOTT: Yes, sir. Mr. Chairman, I would like to make a motion that we go into closed session to determine the need to go into executive session

to consider personnel matters.

COMMISSIONER BOSARGE: We have a motion.

Do we have a second?

COMMISSIONER HARMON: So seconded, Mr. Chairman.

COMMISSIONER BOSARGE: We have a motion and a second.

All those in favor say aye.

(All in favor.)

COMMISSIONER BOSARGE: Opposed?

(None opposed.)

COMMISSIONER BOSARGE: Motion carries.

We are going to step out for a little bit and see if we can straighten a few things out. We will be back. Thank you.

MEETING STANDS IN RECESS

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

At this point, I think we need a motion to go back into regular session.

COMMISSIONER GOLLOTT: I'll make that motion, Mr. Chairman.

COMMISSIONER BOSARGE: We have a motion.

Do we have a second?

COMMISSIONER HARMON: So seconded, Mr. Chairman.

COMMISSIONER BOSARGE: We have a motion and a

second.

All those in favor say aye.

(All in favor.)

COMMISSIONER BOSARGE: Opposed?

(None opposed.)

COMMISSIONER BOSARGE: Motion carries.

Now, I think we will go to Ms. Chestnut for a report on the meeting.

SANDY CHESTNUT: At 10:30, a motion was made by Commissioner Gollott to go into closed session to discuss the need for executive session to discuss personnel matters. That motion was seconded by Commissioner Harmon.

At 10:35, Commissioner Havard made a motion to go into executive session to discuss personnel matters, specifically setting the new Director's salary. That motion was seconded by Commissioner Gollott.

Commissioners present were Steve Bosarge, Ron Harmon, Richard Gollott, Mark Havard and Jolynne Trapani. Legal counsel Sandy Chestnut, Executive Director Jamie Miller, legal counsel Faye James, and Human Resource Director Christy Royals were present at the executive session.

At 10:37, a motion was made by Commissioner Gollott and seconded by Commissioner Trapani recommending the starting salary for Joe Spraggins for the incoming

Director of the Mississippi Marine Resources. This motion was passed unanimously.

At 10:52, Commissioner Gollott made the motion and it was seconded by Commissioner Trapani to approve the executive session minutes. That motion passed unanimously.

At 10:53, Commissioner Trapani made a motion to end executive session, that motion was seconded by Commissioner Harmon, and that motion also passed unanimously.

That's the end of the report.

COMMISSIONER BOSARGE: Thank you, Ms. Chestnut.

We move on to our last agenda item, public comments.

I think we've got Mr. Gilbert Ramsey.

GILBERT RAMSEY: Good morning.

I've been networking in the community to introduce a veteran's outreach program for the disabled community.

The City of D'Iberville has got Tidelands funds coming into play for a new park on the Bay, and I would like to introduce a new program at that location for the disabled community for a public service for our patrons and our tourists to come in to get associated with their own personal water crafts, retrofitted water crafts with

stabilization to lift them up out of the water, to put them in it and let them control it and drive.

I have these three prototypes initiated, and I'm coming forward with this introduction because I need assistance with the counsel to help me with a proposal.

At the bicentennial event at the VA Hospital in Gulfport, I had a booth set up. Mr. Joe Spraggins helped me out with that application to get me a booth set up at the bicentennial event.

During that bicentennial event, Senator Roger Wicker approached me with Andrew Higginbotham, and, then, they asked me to submit a proposal with their office.

What I would like to do is I would like the counsel's approach with the National Heritage Program to initiate an opportunity for all residents and tourists, the disabled community to get an opportunity to enjoy nature and go fishing and whatever they might want to do at their leisure, the activities like we all do in our lives.

It is something I'm very passionate about. The state has seven hundred and fifty million dollars for economic development opportunities, along with the BP money.

I have a BP contract that identifies educate, recreate, employ and facilitate appropriately, and that's

what my BP contract identifies.

That's what I'm rolling into, gentlemen and ladies. I am here to make sure it is handled with our capability with all fifty-two counties in the State of Mississippi. Pilot location is City of D'Iberville.

I'm coming forth with the University of Southern Mississippi and Mississippi State. Gulf Coast Research Laboratory, they all know me.

Gulf Coast National Seashore with the development opportunity out there, I've seen that initiative there as well because I've seen different applications there to incorporate with this outreach.

The Veterans Day representatives are with me and the VA Hospital is with me, and are all concerned about what I have to offer for all our actions and opportunities within our community.

I'm very passionate and concerned with this initiative, and I've been overwhelmed throughout the years and Governor Barber days.

It's very intriguing and I'm humbled to have this opportunity to recognize Mississippi more appropriately.

I am here to make sure it is handled with international recognition for the hospitality state. I already have that. I found that with the World Leisure

Congress in 2014 in Mobile, Alabama. All tourism associations around the world came to the United States. First time ever. I reached that organization to assess the tourism opportunities in Europe.

All of these countries are coming to me, right now, to inquire what type products and services I have to offer.

I'm going to be initiating manufacturing opportunity and economic development opportunity within the community. It's big. They have all been asking what I want and what I need, all these counties.

Now, I'm going with the National Heritage Program because I felt like it was more appropriate means to handle things with our capabilities.

I cannot emphasize this enough. It is very intriguing to have this opportunity to recognize us with our capabilities in our community, our waterways and everything else, pollution control and everything, water quality and everything. I looked at all of this.

COMMISSIONER BOSARGE: That's great information there, Gilbert. You definitely have a passion. I can say that, and it looks like you are making some good headway with it.

GILBERT RAMSEY: Yes, sir. It is coming together very well. The City of D'Iberville has a new

park on the Tchoutacabouffa River and a sports complex on Highway 15, and we have a new outreach capability park on the Bay being developed.

COMMISSIONER BOSARGE: Get with our new Executive Director and he will bring it to us.

GILBERT RAMSEY: Look forward to working with you.

COMMISSIONER BOSARGE: Thank you.

Is there any other business before this Commission?

(No response.)

COMMISSIONER BOSARGE: Seeing none, I ask for a motion to adjourn.

COMMISSIONER GOLLOTT: I'll make that motion, Mr. Chairman.

COMMISSIONER BOSARGE: Do we have a second?

COMMISSIONER HAVARD: I'll second it, Mr. Chairman.

COMMISSIONER BOSARGE: We have a motion and a second.

All those in favor say aye.

(All in favor.)

COMMISSIONER BOSARGE: Motion carries.

Meeting adjourned.

(Whereupon, at 11:09 o'clock, a.m., the December

19, 2017, meeting of 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 December 19, 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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