COMMISSION ON MARINE RESOURCES

COMMISSION MEETING

June 21, 2011

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COMMISSION ON MARINE RESOURCES

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TRANSCRIPT OF MEETING OF COMMISSION ON MARINE RESOURCES AT
BOLTON STATE BUILDING, PUBLIC MEETING ROOM, 1141 BAYVIEW
AVENUE, BILOXI, MISSISSIPPI, ON THE 21ST DAY OF JUNE 2011
COMMENCING AT 9:00 A.M. AND REPORTED BY NORMA JEAN LADNER
SOROE, CERTIFIED SHORTHAND REPORTER.

COMMISSION MEMBERS PRESENT:
DR. VERNON ASPER, Chairman
RICHARD GOLLOTT
SHELLEY GRIEVE
STEVE REAGOR
JERRY TAYLOR

ALSO PRESENT:
WALTER J. CHAYAGNIER, Acting Executive Director
JONATHAN R. RONNEFELD, Esq., Asst. Attorney General
SANDY CHESNUT, Esq., Asst. Attorney General

A. Call to Order
DR. ASPER: Good morning. I'd like to welcome everybody to the regular June meeting of the Mississippi Commission on Marine Resources. It's great to have everybody here.

B. Approval of Minutes Commission Meeting - May 17, 2011
DR. ASPER: There is an agenda before us. And before we get into that, we have the minutes distributed. Are there any corrections to the minutes? Is there a motion to approve as presented?

MR. GOLLOTT: Motion to approve, Mr. Chairman.

MR. DRUMMOND: Second.

DR. ASPER: Those in favor say aye. And so the minutes are approved.

C. Approval of Agenda
DR. ASPER: The agenda, I understand we have some changes?

MR. CHAYAGNIER: Yes, Mr. Chairman. Item H-3, bureau of wetland permitting, (a) and (b), those need to be pulled off the agenda.

DR. ASPER: Are there any other changes? Is there a motion to approve the agenda as amended?

MR. DRUMMOND: So moved.

MR. GOLLOTT: Second.

DR. ASPER: Those in favor say aye. The agenda is approved as amended.

D. Public Comments

DR. ASPER: We'll now move on to the time of public comments. We only have one letter filled out here for public comments.

And we're going to really try and enforce our three minute ruling.

MR. SCIAMA: This shouldn't take much longer than a half hour, Doc.

Commissioners, Ms. Chesnut, I'm here speaking on behalf of our CEO and chairman of the board Joe Von Rosenberg for Omega Protein.

He basically wrote this letter to Dr. Walker. And I will read this letter for the commissioners.

(Reading) Dear Dr. Walker, on May 18, 2011, one of Omega Protein's fishing vessels, the SANDY POINT, was involved in a collision with another vessel in the Gulfport Ship Channel near Ship Island.

The collision resulted in the sinking of the vessel. Thirteen members of the ship's crew were fortunately rescued. However, three crew members died aboard the vessel.

I wanted to take this opportunity to thank you and the dedicated work performed by the employees of Mississippi Department of Marine Resources. Minutes after the collision, our staff contacted Omega Protein personnel, notified us of the incident.

Marine patrol immediately participated in the rescue efforts of the 13 crew members who managed to escape the sinking ship.

During search and rescue efforts for the three missing crew members, marine patrol searched tirelessly throughout the night and over the course of the next several days, including sending divers to search the damaged vessel.

These divers put their lives in danger as they searched the wreckage for survivors, battling adverse sea conditions in almost no visibility under water.

Marine patrol monitored and secured the incident site and kept our staff informed of the situation on a continual basis.

The service these men provided and their dedication to their job was invaluable, allowing us to keep the victims' families informed of the progress and the attempts made in the rescuing of the three missing men.

As efforts transitioned from search and rescue to recovery, these men provided the critical information needed to retrieve the bodies of our lost crew members.

On behalf of the entire Omega Protein family, I wish to thank your staff for their service and dedication in making this difficult situation manageable. Please accept our heartfelt gratitude to your team on a job well done.
Sincerely, Joseph L. Voa Rosenberg III. (End reading)

DR. ASPER: Thank you, Rick. And our condolences, of course, go to the families of those who were lost and our best wishes to everybody involved in that tragedy. Thank you.

We've got two more here, one from Mark Stewart and one from Catfish.

Would you rather talk now or after the shrimp report?

MR. MILLER: It doesn't matter. Whatever y'all want to do, sir. If y'all want us to step aboard, we'll step aboard and talk to you. We ain't got no problems.

If you want to go with the shrimp report first, Stewart said, go ahead.

DR. ASPER: Would you rather do that?

MR. MILLER: Yes, sir.

DR. ASPER: Fine. We'll bring you back up after that, that way you can go --

MR. MILLER: Thanks.

DR. ASPER: Because some of your questions may be answered in that report.

MR. MILLER: It truly might be, because that's why some of us are here.

MR. CHATAGNIER: All right. Executive director's report.

E. Executive Director's Report

MR. CHATAGNIER: Everything looks good.

F. Marine Patrol

1. Marine Patrol Report

DR. ASPER: Marine patrol.

MR. PITTMAN: Good morning, Mr. Chairman, commissioners, Mr. Chesnut, Chief Chatagniern, Sandy.

You have a report in your office. You'll notice our saltwater fishing license citations went down from the month before. We did have an increase in our boat and water safety violations. Got a few without the life jackets, PFDs, and several children under 12, and under, without life jackets on, and several reckless operation, negligent operation citations, mostly no-wake zone violations.

We had one boat and water safety class, certified 15 students.

And the boating accident in May that Rick just talked about with the SANDY POINT and three fatalities.

We did have all of our dive team out there for two days searching. And one of our divers did get in harm's way when he got entangled in a net, and that's when we called off dive operations until the salvage crew got there.

Special events, we had six. Presentations and outreach, we had two.

And on our JFA totals, we had 43 patrols, 671 man hours, 456 contacts, and one state citation issued.

Any questions?

DR. ASPER: Any questions for Rusty? Okay.

MR. PITTMAN: Thank you.

DR. ASPER: We'll move on to fisheries. Dale Diaz.

G. Marine Fisheries

MR. DIAG: Good morning, Dr. Asper, commissioners, Mr. Chesnut, Chief Chatagniern.

I wanted to mention just a couple of things before I start calling the staff up.

One is I want to recognize the shrimp and crab bureau, Traci and her staff. They worked really hard putting together a Shrimping the Sound newsletter that was sent out in y'all's mailout.

This is something that we send out to everybody that purchased a commercial shrimp license prior to shrimp season. And it's our effort to try to communicate better with people in the shrimp industry.

I know Commissioner Bosarge had asked us a couple of years ago to try to do some extra efforts to relay information to the shrimp industry, and this is one of the things we're doing. We plan on continuing that.

And thank you, Traci, and shrimp and crab staff for your hard work.

MR. BOSARGE: Thank you, Traci. It's good information and I read it cover to cover, and I'm sure most people do. Thank you.

MR. DIAG: And we'll keep that up.

I also wanted to mention that we've been working, the fisheries staff has been working with the legal team and marine patrol to develop a draft crab trip ticket form and a draft crab ticket manual.

We have been developing this over the course of the last month or so. And we plan on having these things in a pretty good draft form here in the next couple of days. And we're going to have a couple of opportunities for folks in the crab industry to come in and give input.

First, we're going to have a crab task force meeting on July 7 at 3:00 p.m. for the crab task force, and we're going to show them the draft ticket and the draft manual and get some comment and input from them.

And after that, we're going to have a meeting on July 12 at 4:00 p.m. for crab fishermen and crab processors so they can have a chance to give us some input on those forms, also.

So we'll be seeking some input. And we'll report back to you next month. And we will be ready to bring
you something at the August meeting as the motion indicated a
couple of months ago.

With that, first up for marine fisheries is
going to be brick Porche, and he's got some state records.

3. State Records

MR. PORCHE: Good morning. We just have two
records this month. Both of them are conventional tackle.
The first one is for a creole fish. It's a
first time entry, paranthias furcifer. It's a new record of 1
pound 8.69 ounces caught by Cecily O'Brien.

MR. TAYLOR: What's the difference from this and
a red snapper? Most people would think this was a juvenile red
snapper.

MR. PORCHE: First of all, this is in the
grouper family. One of the big things that you can look at and
you can see in this picture here is if you look at the dorsal
fin, you've got this really pretty yellow stripe up on the
dorsal. The axe spot on the pectoral fin isn't nearly
distinct as it is on a red snapper either. And you've got a
much more forked caudal fin. That will be the easiest way to
identify the two.

The easiest is to look for the yellow.

And Mrs. O'Brien and her fish.

The second one is for bigeye tuna, thunnus
obesus. It's also a new record, first time entry, of 92 pounds

2.88 ounces, caught by Stacy Combs. And Mr. Combs and his
tuna.

Any questions?

DR. ASHER: Is there a motion to approve these
records?

MR. DRUMMOND: I make a motion to approve these
7 new records.

MR. BOSARGE: So second.

DR. ASHER: Those in favor say aye. Those
10 records are approved. Congratulations to the anglers.

MR. PORCHE: Thank you very much.

4. Bonnet Carre Update

MR. DIAZ: Next up for marine fisheries, Scott
Gordon is going to give an update on the Bonnet Carre Spillway.

MR. GORDON: Good morning. Mr. Chairman,
commissioners, Sandy, Colonel Chatagnier.

I'm happy to report that the Bonnet Carre
Spillway was totally closed as of yesterday. We had a total
of 1 I believe it was 330 gates that they had open during the
20 event. And they closed the very last one yesterday.

This is the same background information that I
gave to the commission last month with the update that it did
close yesterday.

And to familiarize you with the locations of the
spillway, here is the Mississippi River coming down. And here

i 1 is Lake Pontchartrain. Here is the Mississippi Gulf Coast, and
2 the Bonnet Carre Spillway goes right into Lake Pontchartrain.
3 We were able to go over to the Bonnet Carre and
4 actually see the structure. In my entire career, I've never
5 been over there when it was operating, so this was a very good
6 opportunity to actually see the structure. And it's pretty
7 impressive. Three hundred fifty gates total. There's 20 pins
8 to each gate. And it's a 7,000 foot structure.
9 The design capacity is for flow of 250,000 cubic
10 feet per second. And at the maximum, it got up to a total of
11 316,000 cubic feet per second.

Here is a closed bay which there was a little
gap in between there. You can see the water flowing through.

And with the bays opened, and I was lucky enough
in this picture to catch — see on the very corner there, that
happens to be a silver carp. And Dale Diaz, he noticed just as
we got up there, within 50 yards of the shoreline, about one of
these was jumping every minute. And so we do have silver carp
that have been introduced on the Pontchartrain side of the
spillway.

I thought this was a pretty impressive picture.

This is with all 320 bays open out of the -- I'm sorry -- 330
out of the 350 total. So that was a pretty impressive picture.

And to the left there, that's the Pontchartrain
side.

And on the right is the Mississippi River side.

And we did have a picture from 2008, the last
time they had opened it. It was an astronaut picture, and so I
searched for another one, and sure enough, they took another
picture for this year. And this is from May 17, and you can
see the Mississippi River coming down through here. Here is
the City of New Orleans. And the spillway is designed to
protect the City of New Orleans.

We were also looking at some satellite imagery
and had to go back to June 18. And we've had all these clouds
around, but we haven't been able to get the precipitation out
of them that we would like.

Again, this is Lake Pontchartrain here. You can
see you the Bonnet Carre Spillway is down in the southwest
corner of Lake Pontchartrain, and then it flows through the
Rigolets and across Lake Borgne. And here is St. Louis Bay,
Cat Island, Ship, Horn. And we did see -- throughout this we
did see plumes of water that -- or turbidity that seemed to get
as far as the Belle Fountain Point area.

And again, this is the Mississippi River gauge
at New Orleans. Formerly they called it the Carrollton gauge.
And they were able to maintain with the addition of opening up
the Morganza Spillway a 17 foot stage in New Orleans. So they
were cutting it fairly close there.

When we went over to the Bonnet Carre Spillway,
We happened to go over the Mississippi River just south of the spillway, and I was able to get this picture of the levee. This is the Mississippi River over on the left-hand side, and you can see the water level here. And down below, you can see the road. And I thought it was interesting to see the school buses.

So that's one of the reasons why it was important for them to open up the Bonnet Carre Spillway to keep all of these areas from flooding.

This is looking at the Bonnet Carre Spillway operation from when it first opened up in early May until it was closed yesterday.

And this is flow. The flow is going to be the blue lines here. And that's in cubic feet per second. And then the red lines are going to be number of bays open. So it only got up to 330 bays open.

And even though you might look back and say, well, there were other years they opened up all 350 bays, you know, so there were more substantial openings, this was still pretty substantial because they were above the design flow or the design capacity for the structure.

Again, it opened up on the 9th of May and closed the 20th of June.

It was operated a total of by my calculations 42 days. There were 316,000 cubic feet per second. And I think to put that into some kind of real -- something I could wrap my head around, that was the equivalent of approximately 3.6 Olympic size swimming pools per second going across the spillway.

The average flow was 210,000 cubic feet per second. And the total volume was 8,654 thousand cubic feet. I've seen this put in different terms. The second date feet, that would be the number of cubic feet per second that goes through the structure in an entire day.

Also from my calculations I estimated the total discharge to be 5.6 trillion gallons of water. And again, to put that back in the Olympic swimming pool realm, it would be 9.5 million Olympic size swimming pools. Or it would have been enough water to fill the entire Mississippi Sound to a depth of 14 and a half feet. I believe that includes Alabama waters, as well.

We had a lot of constant recorder instruments that have been in place over the years. But they've been very helpful in this. And the main ones we're going to be looking at is the Rigolets, St. Joe, Merrill Shell Bank, Gulfport Light, and East Ship Island.

And at the Rigolets, you can see this is the salinity. The salinity dropped off pretty drastically from about between four and five down to one and even below.

And at St. Joseph Island Light, before the spillway opened, we were in the neighborhood of around eight parts per thousand, and it dropped down to I know the lowest that I've seen it was a half parts per thousand. That's drinkable water.

Merrill Shell Bank Light, it dropped down also as low.

As you can see here, we had a lot of fluctuations, and that's where the tidal -- the tides were moving in and they were moving the higher salinity offshore waters mixing in with the fresher waters.

And then as the event continued, you saw less fluctuation there because we had fresh water throughout the entire area.

So as they had started to close the spillway, you can see the fluctuations became even greater. So that water is being mixed.

And this is Gulfport Light. We got down to maybe about two parts per thousand. And that was a pretty drastic decrease.

East Ship Island Light, we saw there was even some effects there.

And East Ship Island Light, it was good that they have a DO meter on there, as well, and we did have some oxygen problems in there towards the end of May, first part of June and about the second week in June.

This is not really pertaining to the Bonnet Carre, but this is one of the rivers that we normally would deal with. This is the Pearl River gauge at Pearl river, Louisiana.

And the little triangles on here, this is the main daily statistic over a 14 year period. And we have been well below that. The current river stage is somewhere around four foot. And that's one of the things that has really helped us.

Dealing with the flood situation when we are under an extreme drought, we didn't have the same effect that we would have seen if the rivers had been up towards their normal levels because that's additional fresh water moving in. Since they weren't contributing as much to the fresh water that we saw from the Bonnet Carre, I believe that's one of the things that may have helped us.

Oysters. We've been sampling the oyster reef areas, and we have seen mortalities range from early on from about six percent mortalities all the way up to 95 percent. And I imagine we'll probably have, especially around the St. Joe reef area which is our furthest reef to the west, I would expect us to see 100 percent mortalities there.

We were seeing oysters in some of the areas. They were feeding early on. As the fresh water moved in, they stopped feeding. And they were swollen up. They couldn't
close their shells. In fact, one of the biologists said a lot
of those oysters were dead and they just didn't know it yet.

So we have some of these were live oysters in
here. You can see the color is still pretty good. But then we
had some that were dead in the shell which one of the guys
referred to fondly as zombie oysters. You can see that that's
pretty disappointing to see that there.

And we would also find a lot of these empty
shells that were fresh dead. The inside of the shells were
still clean, you know, the meat had already -- something had
 gotten in there and eaten out the meat of them. But we've got
at least three of them here in this picture.

I'm hoping this video will work. This is one
that we took on the Bonnet Carre Spillway. And let's see how
good your eye is, see if you can catch the silver carp jumping
in there. We're making it a little easier for you.

It's a short video.

MR. GORDON: That's looking towards Lake
Ponchartrain and the railroad bridge, and that's back towards
the spillway structure.

You can see that's a several foot drop from the
Mississippi River down to the actual spillway structure itself.
So that's what it's trying to meant to level out.

When we saw these fish we were able to get this
video and take one of the pictures, I contacted the Mississippi
Department of Wildlife, Fisheries & Parks and spoke with the
head of their freshwater fisheries division and informed him of
what they might have to be dealing with.

My concern would be this getting into the Pearl
River system and also into the St. Louis Bay and the Wolf and
Jourdan Rivers.

So the carp that we were seeing is this silver
carp right here. And I know they're saying the salinity
tolerance is low, four parts per thousand, we certainly had
below that, in some of the other literature that we had looked
at, there was indications they could handle as high as seven
parts per thousand.

Okay. Some of the seen or expected effects that
we should expect, many of the mobile species, shrimp, finfish,
and crabs should be able to continue moving ahead of diverted
floodwaters. And Traci Floyd is going to be speaking
specifically about shrimp in her next presentation.

There have been reports of reduced crab harvest
in the western Mississippi Sound, increased mortalities of
larval stages and young unable to escape. Significant
mortalities of oysters and other sessile benthic marine or
estuarine species in the western Mississippi Sound.

This is a good thing. Increased mortalities of
the predatory oyster drill. We've had a problem with that on
some of our western reefs. And it looks like this fresh water
is going to be able to control them.

The extreme drought conditions along the coast
have helped through the lower than average river flows, the
increased nutrient load, phytoplankton blooms, and lower oxygen
levels. That's something that we will be closely following
throughout the summer.

Possible permanent introduction of invasive
species into coastal rivers and streams, and a delayed or
setback coastal restoration activities, and salinities
gradually returning to normal levels.

And we will continue to identify and monitor
areas over the next several months and document any potential
impacts.

Any questions?

DR. ASPER: Thank you, Scott. Any questions?
MR. DREXLER: Where was the school bus? Is
that New Orleans?

MR. GORDON: No. That was just to the south.

I'm not sure of the little town, but it was just to the south
of Bonnet Carre. It was the first little town there. I'm not
real familiar with New Orleans.

DR. ASPER: Just to be clear, so far we haven't
seen the silver carp in Mississippi waters yet.

MR. GORDON: Not as of yet. And I hope we
don't. As fun as it looks on some of those videos, I'd rather
we not have it here.

MR. GOLLANDT: Scott, what about the tonging
reefs? Have y'all looked at that?

MR. GORDON: Yes, sir. We were seeing
mortalities on just about all of our reefs. And we did have
salinities as low as I believe about one part per thousand on
there. And so we're going to continue our monitoring. I think
that fared maybe a little better than some of the other reefs.

DR. ASPER: Thank you, Scott.

MR. DÍAZ: And last up for marine fisheries,
Traci Floyd has a shrimp season report.

5. Shrimp Season Report

MS. FLOYD: Good morning, Mr. Chairman,
commissioners, chief, and Sandy.

This is the shrimp season report.

Mississippi shrimping grounds opened May 25 at
6:00 a.m. When sampling showed that shrimp had reached the
legal size of 68 cent per pound.

Based on records going back to Year 1975, this
is the earliest opening, as we typically open in June.

Since April 30 and in preparation for the coming
season, we have sold 453 resident commercial shrimping
licenses, 134 nonresident commercial, 117 resident
recreational, and one nonresident recreational.
In our aerial survey on opening day, we counted 162 boats. And, of course, these are recreational, commercial, nonresident, and resident.

And most of those boats were congregated around Horn Island. And as you can see, this continues our downward trend in effort in the fishery.

This is a look at our historic nine shrimp sampling stations. We did do some additional sampling that is ongoing in response to the Bonnet Carre opening.

But in advance of the fresh water coming into Mississippi, we were catching excellent numbers of brown shrimp at all of our stations. And as the fresh water came in, we continued to see that at all of our stations.

The only exception is at Stations 5 and 6 the week of June 8 we did have some low dissolved oxygen levels that Scott mentioned in his presentation around Ship Island, but we did not catch any shrimp that week at those two stations. We did, however, catch hardhead catfish, croaker, and blue crabs.

So this is a look at the opening by week. As I said, May 25, we had 162 boats counted. That week, in the DMR sample, the size of the average brown shrimp was 55 count. Fishermen reported to us fair to good numbers of 41-50s to over 70 count size shrimp.

The next week June 1, our flight showed 29 boats working. The DMR samples showed an average brown shrimp of 61 count. Fishermen reporting fair catches of 41-50s to 61-70 count shrimp.

And for June 8, the next week, we saw more boats. And 62. About a third of those were working over in the western Sound. And that week, the average brown shrimp was 57 count. And our samples of those seven historical stations and fishermen working the entire Sound told us that shrimp were thick that week, meaning very good harvest, 41-50s to over 70 count.

And then last week June 15, we counted 16 boats. In the DMR sample, the average brown shrimp was 62 count. Fishermen reporting fair to good numbers depending on where they're working of 41-50s to over 70 count shrimp.

And interspersed in the brown shrimp catches are very nice white shrimp, 21-25s and larger, continue to be there, and last week we did see some of the small white shrimp showing up.

So this is just a look at landings since January, very preliminary, of course. But as far as Mississippi, all species heads on, a little under two million pounds.

And we broke that down further to look at just the first two weeks of shrimp season. And this is based on landings reported by our Biloxi dealers.

This final column over here is 2011. What we're looking at are the six years since Katrina since we've seen that decrease in effort.

So in 2011 for brown shrimp, this blue number down here, over 900,000 pounds of brown shrimp landed in the first two weeks at our Biloxi dealers. Over 267,000 pounds of white shrimp.

And when you look at these six years for those two weeks, 2011 is in second place behind 2007 which you may recall is a very good year.

MR. TAYLOR: What was the effort in 2007, the number of boats? Could you back up a slide? Three hundred as compared to 162.

MS. FLOYD: So about half.

MR. TAYLOR: Seems like the number of boats are catching (inaudible) shrimp per boat.

MS. FLOYD: Also, to look at the size of the brown shrimp where the majority was landed for these six years, you see they're either in the 41-50 or 51-60 range. And for 2011, that's where the majority lie and follow that trend.

This is just another way to look at those numbers. The red bar represents the brown shrimp. The blue bar represents the white shrimp. Here is 2011 and second as far as landings for these first two weeks behind 2007.

And I would be happy to answer any questions you may have.

MR. GORGIE: I guess by opening it earlier it appears that it hasn't hurt anything, but it did allow our fishermen to produce some pretty good shrimp from what I see.

Is that what you --

MS. FLOYD: Yes, sir, I agree.

DR. ASPER: Traci, do you have any idea why the shrimp are a little bit small this year? Does it have anything to do with the fresh water, does it have anything to do with the opening early? Do you have any ideas on that?

MS. FLOYD: We did open it a bit early. And if you have your shrimp newsletter there, if you look on Page 2, you see that we had different peaks of post-larval shrimp. And as those grow and move offshore, you will see that.

So we do have small shrimp still. It's an early opening. But typically we do see smaller shrimp to the west. That's what we're seeing this year. But, of course, the Bonnet Carre could have an impact.

MR. GOLLITT: Traci, what you're saying that maybe the Bonnet Carre has pushed some of those smaller shrimp out of Lake Pontchartrain and Lake Borgne into the Mississippi Sound.

MS. FLOYD: It's possible, yes.

DR. ASPER: Anything else for Traci?

PERSON IN AUDIENCE: We have a question over
DR. ASPER: We have two gentlemen who have submitted requests to make comments, so we'll take those in turn. Catfish and then Mark come to the podium.

You have three minutes, so just try to keep your comments concise.

MR. STEWART: Mark Stewart, commercial fisherman.

I think that something else may be wrong that hasn't been mentioned here today about the BP oil spill.

Yes, the season opened early. The shrimp were small. But it's not early any more, and the shrimp are very small, what few are there. They're very scarce.

And these reports for these landings in Mississippi are very deceptive. These shrimp haven't come from Mississippi. These shrimp are coming from Louisiana and the Gulf. There were a few caught here like the second week of the opening. They were very small. Where the 40-50s were caught at, I guess I don't know what I'm doing because I haven't seen any, or either the factories are getting me on the count. I don't know what it is.

I got 50-60s, very few 60-70s and 70-80s.

That's what I've caught in Mississippi.

Opening day of the season, I had to go back to Louisiana because I didn't catch any. The second week, I did catch some. But right now, the shrimp aren't there. Where are they at right now?

As far as these good catches and landings last week or two, I don't know of them. They're not here. And the shrimp are still small. And the season, by this time we should be looking at 36-40s to 26-30s under these islands, and they're not there.

There's nothing there, you know.

MR. ROGANCE: I tend to agree with you on some points. But there have been some good catches in the eastern Sound and still are. And like —

MR. STEWART: Yes, toward Alabama. I know.

MR. ROGANCE: And you have to wonder why these shrimp are quite small, maybe — whatever, we don't know, oil spill, fresh water, whatever, they are running I agree smaller than normal. I was just proud to see that there were some.

MR. STEWART: Right. I was, too. But there wasn't in the beginning for me. You know, the boats under Horn Island just catch a few shrimp for about half a day, and they were gone. Cat Island where I was at, Gulfport, you couldn't have made a po-boy around there. Not even one. And the shrimp were very small on top of it. Yes, the fresh water did come after that and pushed the shrimp out, you know. It did do that.

But these reports right here of 40-50 count shrimp around here, might have some of them made 40-50s this week, what few are there, but as far as opening and all, there were no 40-50s caught in Mississippi.

And also these landing reports here, I don't like it. It's false information. And I don't know how to classify this false information. But I feel the need for trip tickets in our industry in the State of Mississippi once again, you know.

I haven't heard a word about any assessment of any oil spill damages that we're seeing from shrimp season.

I'm very disappointed in that. That's all I have to say.

DR. ASPER: Thanks, Mark.

Traci, are we still sampling the shrimp for traces of the hydrocarbons?

MS. FLOOD: Yes. That is ongoing indefinitely.

And you can find those results on our web page updated monthly.

I did want to respond to what Mr. Stewart said. Yes, we do have Louisiana shrimp reported in those landings, but what our port agents tell us and what we've seen over the years is this is indicative of the shrimp season throughout the Sound.

So we do look at those landings that way.

And also the 40-50 count shrimp were reported more to the east, and some of those are sold in Alabama. So I just wanted to note that, as well.

MR. MILLER: How y'all doing today? My name is James Miller a.k.a Catfish.

I'm disappointed today. I get up here and listen about the oysters real quick. Nothing was said about the oil spill, what they do to our oysters before the fresh water got to them.

You can go back and play some of my videos. I stayed on top them oyster reefs for six weeks after the oil spill, and it wasn't very nice.

Them oysters was killed by that oil. And I'm here to say that and living proof because I stayed out there.

And I'm full of hydrocarbons, too. I've had blood tests done to me. I'm doing a detox right now from the VOO program. I've been deathly sick. I've been going to a detox person, seeing her pretty frequently.

But my big issue today, Richard Gallott, is about our shrimp prices. Who controls our shrimp prices in Mississippi across the board? Why are they so staggeringly low right now? Forty cents, 30 cents, 55 cents, 65 cents. I've caught 60,000 pounds of shrimp in about five weeks. I'm a hell of a fisherman.

But I want to know why I got ripped off $17,000 in five weeks on my produce here in Mississippi where I landed it.

And you know, you being a dealer and a processor
1 dealer on the coast? Have y'all talked to him personally? I 2 talk to him every day.
3
4 This dude buys millions of pounds of shrimp 5 daily. I'm not kidding you.
6
5 MR. BOSARGE: I know. You asked the question, 6 and I was --
7
8 MR. MILLER: And I want a really answer. Don't 9 fog me with some foreign shrimp. We live in America.
10
9 MR. BOSARGE: But that's what sets our price, 11 Catfish. That's what sets our price. And we're working on 12 trying to differentiate domestic shrimp from imported shrimp.
13
10 MR. MILLER: You're telling me that Vietnam, 14 Thailand, Ecuador, Brazil controls my white shrimp price at my 15 dock that I unload here in Mississippi; right?
16
11 DR. ASPER: Okay. I believe we've reached the 16 end of this discussion.
17
12 MR. MILLER: Mr. Vernon --
13 DR. ASPER: It's a matter of opinion. It's --
14 MR. MILLER: I didn't come for an opinion, Mr. 15 Vernon. I come to get some literature on who's setting the 16 prices in Mississippi on our brown shrimp and white shrimp; and 17 the landings, they're wrong. I know y'all don't even want me 18 up here. Y'all hate me coming here.
19
20 But I'm sorry because I'm a concerned citizen 21 about our prices and what we're doing today to our industry.
25
21 And you people up there's got all the good answers. But we're 22 living in the water, and we're seeing and living. You know why 23 our brown shrimp ain't growing?
25
22 DR. ASPER: Catfish, your time is up.
23 (Several people speaking at one time.)
24 DR. ASPER: Let me say just for the record, 25 Catfish, that we do not hate having you here. We really enjoy 26 having you here because you keep everybody honest. You bring a 27 perspective --
29
28 (Several people speaking at one time.)
30 DR. ASPER: We appreciate your input. But we've 31 heard your comments. We understand that there is a price issue 32 out there. Believe me, we would like to see the highest price 33 we possibly can as an agency because we pride ourselves in 34 being able to make the very best use of this resource that we 35 can. And we're not trying to hurt anybody. We're trying to do 36 the very best job we can.
39
40 Okay. Thank you very much.
41 We'll move on now to I believe coastal ecology.
40
42 Are we through with fisheries, Dale?
43 MR. DIAZ: Yes, sir.
46
45 H. Coastal Ecology
47
48 MR. BOYD: Good morning, Mr. Chairman,
50 commissioners, Chief Chatagnier, Ms. Chesnut.
52 Coastal ecology only has one nonaction item for
you this morning. George Ramseur is going to give you an update on our beneficial use program.

2. Program Status

a. Update on Mississippi Beneficial Use Program

MR. RAMSEUR: Good morning, Mr. Chairman, commissioners, Ms. Chesnut, Chief Chatagnier.

Okay. I need a little technical assistance here.

Okay. I want to tell you a little bit about our current use of dredge material here in Mississippi. I saw a cup the other day that said Rigs to Reefs program. I thought we needed our own slogan, so for now that's Muck to Marshes program.

A lot of what's driving the current efforts with beneficial use of dredge material in Mississippi derive from what we call the BU law, the beneficial use law.

There have been several changes in the law over the years. This print is pretty small, but I highlighted in red the changes that became effective a year ago.

Essentially now when dredging over 2500 cubic yards of material in Mississippi, it's required that that material go to beneficial use if the material is suitable and there is a beneficial use project that the material can be placed in. This recent change to the law was put together by the beneficial use group which is called the BUG which is now meeting here at DMR second Tuesday of every month, and it's composed of a whole range of folks that I've listed the attendees to date up there, but we have representatives from ports, our Senate and Congressional offices, all the agencies working in the area.

And so it's a truly inter-agency collaborative kind of group.

Why beneficial use? I just throw a couple of pictures together. This is Deer Island in 1850. And as you know, it doesn't look a whole lot like this now. This eventually became what they call Little Deer Island and then disappeared altogether. But we'll see some more shots of Deer Island that show quite a bit of land loss, not only since 1850, but since 1950.

Here is a shot of Port St. Joe in Hancock County. This is land loss here since 1957. So you've got 150, 175 feet of coastal loss here.

The whole idea is that until fairly recently, most of the time we dredged, the material either went to a landfill or went in the deep water. And so we dug it out of the nearshore system, and we then hauled it completely away.

Now the idea is to try to keep this material right here in the coastline and use it to rebuild coastal margins like this and to do other things with it which we'll talk about in a minute.

Okay. So why build marsh? One reason here in Mississippi, it's the best use of our main material which is for lack of a better term muck once you dredge it up. You can't put this material out on the barrier islands. You can't put it in environments that are sandy like the beaches or anything like that. It takes a lot of effort to deal with this kind of material.

Essentially what we've been doing so far is building containment structures, putting material in the middle, and then growing marsh because that's what the material, the soils are most suited for. But marsh is also one of the most productive habitats we can work with.

And so it helps us get these projects permitted when we're talking about taking waterbottoms and converting them to another use, particularly NOAA/NMFS is a lot happier to see us going to a higher value habitat like marsh.

We had a presentation from NOAA/NMFS at the HUG meeting we had this month. Texas, Port of Houston, Galveston, has been working on this stuff about 20 years. And we're trying to learn as much as we can from that program because they've gone through some pretty radical changes since they started with conventional structures like I was talking about, a dike filled with material growing marsh. Now they're doing entirely different things, and we'll also talk about that, as well.

So we've got a good mentor here from the very large program in Texas, and these are just a few slides that Rusty Swafford showed us the other week.

Among other things, it's frequently said that built marshes are not as productive as natural marshes. And that's probably true, although their data seems to indicate that they may be 70 percent of a natural marsh and maybe 12 to 150 times as productive as the open bay that was replaced.

I also want to say that I don't think anybody has measured a built marsh that's 100 years old. So, we've got some that are a couple decades old. But I think you can't really tell what the long term is going to be.

Some of the productivity stuff from the Texas marshes, it's been said by Zimmerman and other folks at NOAA that the marsh edge is the important part, that sort of active eroding and accreting edge of the marsh.

And this is just some numbers of brown shrimp. And you see right here inside from the edge you've got your thick density of brown shrimp. Same for blue crabs, very close to the edge of this system. This is open water on the right, and this is the marsh.

So we kind of have to have a balance of marsh edge that's breaking down and providing this habitat. At the same time, we can't let it break down and disappear. And a lot...
of our shoreline where we have beach or bulkheads or that sort
of thing, if the marsh breaks down all the way to the bulkhead,
then you just got open water and you got to start from scratch.

So one of the strategies we have in mind is that
we'll periodically rebuild some of these marshes. But we'll
also talk about that for the end of this.

This is just some more of the work NOAA has
done. This kind of is a plan on one of the beneficial use
sites. And this is an edge data and elevation survey that just
tells more about how much of that critical edge is in the
project and what their elevations are.

Work so far for us, I want to be clear that the
program we're talking about here, although DNR and Mobile Corps
are basically the co-sponsors of the beneficial use group, we
are focusing as DNR primarily on all the private dredging that
goes on in Mississippi, private commercial. The Corps is
totally in charge of navigation dredging, although they are
working very closely and I think very hard to maximize their
beneficial use.

But just private commercial dredging in
Mississippi this year we're set to break through two million
22 cubic yards of material. And we're really going to be
challenged year to year in just being able to have enough --
24 being able to accommodate all that material.

But the main work we've done so far really

revolves around Deer Island. This is a shot back in early
2000. And BU efforts have been going on between Mobile and DNR
since early 2000, and they kind of got knocked off track during
Katrina, and we really got them back on about 2008 when we
started having the BOG meetings.

But this is Deer Island before any beneficial
use project. One thing to note, the earlier 1850 picture of
Deer Island showed it extending all the way out. This is
fairly recent. These yellow lines are 1957 and 1980 or
thereabouts, and this shows where Little Deer used to be. And,
11 of course, none of that is there, and you still see some loss
of shoreline there on Deer.

Really, the first major beneficial use project
in Mississippi, the Corps put this in, and they've now turned
it over to us to manage, but this is what's referred to as the
20M site. It is about 50 acres marsh habitat. Trouble is it
17 didn't get real wet vegetated before Ivan, Cindy, Katrina,
Gustav. This is what it looked like after Katrina, and this is
actually a barge out here working to reopen the access channel.

They're getting ready to put about 30,000 yards of sandy
material out of Graveline Bayou right on this corner.

But this project, this whole containment dike is
blown out, and it's basically short of the target for making
marsh as a result of Katrina.

Now, this is a real recent view. In conjunction

with the Corps, we have gotten this dike repaired. So this
project is now ready to take new dredge material. We'll get
the elevations up in there, and then we'll plant more marsh.

This is just way more open water than we want in there. We
want some open water, but not that much.

By the way, this is the MSIP project to restore
Deer Island that the Corps has implemented. You know, they
restored the west end of the island, and then the entire four
miles they pumped up this 200 foot wide berm, that's the width
on top, and this is to protect and restore the south shoreline
of Deer.

I mentioned that Mobile Corps is being very
proactive with beneficial use. The way the design worked out,
there's this large lagoon out to the south between the original
shoreline and the berm, and they're looking very closely at
putting the next cycle of Biloxi channel maintenance into this
lagoon and putting more marsh in there. If they're able to do
that, that's going to put us a long way towards sort of the
greater goal which is restoring Deer Island to about its 1850
footprint.

The next thing we have planned out there, you
all approved a permit for this meeting before last, but this is
an expansion -- this is the existing Deer Island marsh that we
looked at a minute ago. We're proposing about a 30 acre
expansion to the west. And so that will be the first project

where we have dug in and actually run the permit as DMR and are
working with private industry to expand marsh here on the north
side of Deer Island.

We've also got plans to go ahead and eventually
rebuild that east tip. This is just a sketch that shows where
we would need some wave protection here. That would be a dike
of some sort. This shows the original Deer Island marsh
expansion I just showed you, and then the Corps' beach
restoration runs right down here.

So you can see with the exception of this blue
area, we're moving along in the restoration of the island back
to its 1850 footprint.

This is a similar concept for Round Island. You
can see a fine yellow line in there which represents about the
15 1957 footprint. But roughly we are looking at possibly using
up to a million yards of sandy material which is pretty rare
for Mississippi to try and rebuild this island. The black
would be wave protection we'd need to add. Green is some
rip rap that's already there associated with Round Island
Lighthouse project.

But that's just the type of thing we're looking
at doing.

The problem is we're very limited in how much of
this kind of area is available because of Gulf Sturgeon
habitat. If we really get going in trying to capture a million

N.J. SOROE, CSR #1297
MR. DRUMMOND: Is that area, has that been placed on it?

MR. RAMSEUR: No, this is proposed right here.

The green is in place. But otherwise, it's just this green and then what you see on the photograph.

We figure Round Island's got two more storms in it, and then it's probably going to be under water.

MR. TAYLOR: What is the depth of that lagoon behind Deer Island?

MR. RAMSEUR: It's about four feet deep in the middle right now.

Some of the other things we're going to need to work on, this is lower Escatawa River. This the 613 bridge right here. Pelican Landing is right up here. This is a current shot of that. Here is the Pascagoula River right here.

Now, look at -- there it is. That's 1958. We estimate we've lost four to five hundred acres of marsh just right here in this area since 1958. Various things have gone on. The main channel of the Escatawa got dredged. But you can have a combination of hydraulics from channel dredging and you could have subsidence due to other reasons.

One way or another, we know that we have lost a lot of material in here, and this is not a place that's suited to go in and put a dike and load a bucket of material in.

Now, the way Texas is handling situations like this when you first see a slide of it, it looks like something that would be illegal in wetlands here. But it's actually this is the kind of thing we're trying to learn from them, not going on just sort of our initial ideas.

And let me see if this will go ahead and load. Close to the last slide, I guess it's worn out.

Well, the next and last slide is a picture of the 30 inch pipe in Texas pumping dredge material directly into open water areas in the middle of a big marsh. And as Rusty Swofford from NOAA said, if you walked into his office ten years ago and showed him that picture, he would have run you out of the office.

What they realize now that putting this material into these subsiding marshes in an uncontained way is actually the best way to fix them. You can't, of course, go with no containment or protection say on Deer Island because you've got too much wave energy. But in places like this, and we've got literally thousands of acres in Mississippi of marsh that are subsiding that we can restore and enhance by pumping material into them.

So one of the things we really need to do in terms of developing a program is come up with capacity and methods for both collecting dredge material from a lot of the small jobs that people haul away with trucks, we'd like to come up with staging areas for that material. And then we need capacity to be able to take that material out and pump it into places like Escatawa that so desperately need it.

So I would say long term based on what we've seen in the last few years, as I say, we've got a million or two million yards of very fine grain material and maybe another 20 or 30 percent of that in sand that's easier to deal with that's going to be coming down the pike every year.

So any support for funding requests or legislation to support this effort, I would appreciate your support on it.

Any questions?

DR. ASPER: George, there was an article on the front page of the paper, one of the sections of the paper this morning, about sea level rise, that new study (inaudible). At that rate, since 1950, when you showed the first picture, the sea level has gone up roughly six inches.

Do you ever feel like you're fighting a losing battle here?

The subsidence in sea level rise, are these projects really going to do a good job? I'm just playing the devil's advocate here because I really think what you're doing is great and necessary. But it's also pretty frustrating.

MR. RAMSEUR: Well, that's a great question because that's really precisely one of the goals with this is to -- you can actually -- marsh is dependent on the particulars can accrete and keep up with sea level rise to an extent. But we can actually, the ones that are not keeping up, we can actually build them up particularly with this pumping method.

And then also on other projects, like the containment one at Deer Island that we have a permit pending for, we actually are setting up sort of a cherrier like -- some high ground on the back side so that if it starts getting overwashed a lot we'll have material automatically eroding into the marsh.

And again, that's one of those things that normally people think about being a bad thing, you've got to put up a silt fence. But those things need material. They can accrete by collecting total suspended solids in the water.

They can accrete by just creating plant mass from nutrients, and in other words, they can grow their elevation some. But they seen to need a combination of all that, trapping sediment that's in the water, growing, and then getting mineral sediment in. And it's a little different for each system.

And, you know, we're going to learn a whole lot in this process. But this is the best shot we have at keeping -- particularly where we have marsh and there's no retreat zone, say where you've got the beach and Highway 90, normally
marshes will also tend to move up slope as the water comes up, and if you've got bulleheads or other built environment, they can't do that.

So we're kind of focusing on state owned areas that -- where we kind of have a little more control on the land side where we can both build the marshes up and also maybe provide a room for them to slide up slope.

DR. ASPER: Anything else?

MR. RUSEAU: Thank you very much.

DR. ASPER: I believe that finishes up the coastal ecology. Are we finished with the agenda?

We have the financial report.

PERSON IN AUDIENCE: Just come sit up there and ignore me and act like I didn't ask to say something. I want to know why the fishermen only get three minutes to speak about several issues that are very important, should be to this board, but they -- y'all won't let us speak of it. Three minutes. Who makes these rules up?

(Comments from audience.)

DR. ASPER: You've had your say. We'll talk about it offline.

J. Administrative Services
2. Financial Report

MS. RUSEAU: Today's report reflects the status of our budget as of May 31, 2011. Our budget remained at

$6,266,493. Our funds remaining are zero. We have spent our budget. And tidelands funds have all been obligated this year.

Are there any questions today?

DR. ASPER: Thank you, Kara.

Are there any other agenda items? Is there a motion to adjourn?

MR. GOLIOTT: I make a motion to adjourn.

MR. DRUMMOND: I second the motion.

DR. ASPER: Those in favor say aye. We're adjourned.

(Meeting adjourned 10:10 a.m.)