

STATE OF MISSISSIPPI

MISSISSIPPI ADVISORY COMMISSION ON MARINE RESOURCES

COMMISSION MEETING

Tuesday, March 21st 2023, 9:01 a.m.,

Bolton Building Auditorium

1141 Bayview Avenue, Biloxi, Mississippi 39530

COMMISSION MEMBERS:

Ronnie Daniels
Jonathan McLendon
Cammack "Cam" Roberds

ALSO PRESENT:

Joe Spraggins (Virtually)
Patrick Levine
Sandy Chesnut, Esquire
Steven Eckert, Esquire

REPORTED BY:

Melissa Burdine-Rodolfich
mburdine@sbmreporting.com

1 RONNIE DANIELS:

2 Morning, ladies and gentlemen. Welcome
3 to the March 21st Mississippi Advisory Commission
4 meeting.

5 General Spraggins is out today, but he
6 will be attending virtually with us. He's got a
7 camera set up here and the ability to talk, so he
8 may chime in at some point.

9 We're going to call this meeting to
10 order and I'm going to ask Patrick Levine to lead
11 us in the pledge of allegiance.

12 (Pledge of allegiance was recited.)

13 RONNIE DANIELS:

14 I'm going to work you today, Patrick.
15 Do you want to do the prayer for us as well?

16 PATRICK LEVINE:

17 It would be an honor.

18 (Moment of prayer.)

19 RONNIE DANIELS:

20 Thank you.

21 All right. Minutes from February 14th,
22 do I have a motion to approve those?

23 JONATHAN McLENDON:

24 I'll make a motion to approve them.

25 CAM ROBERDS:

1 I'll second.

2 RONNIE DANIELS:

3 All in favor?

4 JONATHAN McLENDON:

5 Aye.

6 CAM ROBERDS:

7 Aye.

8 RONNIE DANIELS:

9 All right. Does the agenda for today
10 look good to everybody?

11 Motion to approve the agenda?

12 CAM ROBERDS:

13 I will make a motion to approve the
14 agenda.

15 RONNIE DANIELS:

16 I will second it.

17 All in favor?

18 JONATHAN McLENDON:

19 Aye.

20 CAM ROBERDS:

21 Aye.

22 RONNIE DANIELS:

23 All right. I'm going to turn it over to
24 you, Patrick.

25 PATRICK LEVINE:

1 Good morning, and thank you. I want to
2 start out by saying that if anybody has a public
3 comment, TJ is back in the back. TJ, raise your
4 hand real quick. TJ is in the back. If you have
5 a public comment, be sure to fill one out, turn it
6 in to him and he will get it in for later in the
7 meeting.

8 It's been a busy, busy couple of weeks
9 at the DMR, you know, lots of things that are
10 going on. The session is coming to an end up in
11 Jackson, and I know that some of the bills that we
12 have been following have been a part up there. I
13 will tell you, the Director is working hard, hard,
14 hard, lots of conversations going on.

15 And quick update: Senate Bill 2544 on
16 the oyster beds, it's still in conference. The
17 Marine Patrol bill, Senate Bill 2551 is still in
18 conference. House Bill 1636, our appropriations
19 bill is still in conference.

20 But the good news is the commercial
21 crabbing license bill, Senate Bill 2550, it passed
22 and the governor signed it. And so the simplicity
23 of that bill is that instead of everybody being
24 required to have a crab license, it goes to the
25 vessel, to the operation. And so it will simplify

1 that process when it comes to the licensing of
2 commercial crabbing vessels. And I know that if
3 anybody has a question on that, they can grab Rick
4 later on and talk to him. But that one has been
5 signed by the governor and so it will take effect
6 July 1st, so that change is coming up. So that's
7 a good thing.

8 But I will tell you, the Director, he is
9 up there in conversations every moment, every day
10 as we look at all those other bills that are
11 moving forward and good things are happening
12 there.

13 The internship program, you know, it's
14 really neat that every year we get the opportunity
15 to look for people that can intern with the
16 agency. And if you know a young man or young
17 woman that may be interested in serving with the
18 DMR, please send them our way. And the closure on
19 the application process, I believe, is March 29th.
20 If they have questions, they can reach out to our
21 human resources department and they can get them
22 pointed in the right direction.

23 And what's really amazing is we have a
24 lot of employees that we found through the
25 internship program. They come here and we don't

1 want to let go of them, I mean, because they do
2 such a good, good job. They excel, and we're
3 thankful for that because they get a place. So be
4 sure to look at that internship program.

5 Derelict vessels, I know that that seems
6 like a conversation we have had every month and
7 you would think, you know, at some point we'd get
8 things cleaned up. We've had a total of 82
9 vessels reported to our Derelict Vessel Program.
10 Sixty-one of those have been removed. There's 21
11 that are pending and right now, of those 21, we
12 have one that we already have court orders for,
13 ready to remove them.

14 So thank you. You know, it's hard to
15 say a particular person because by the time a
16 vessel goes through the entire process, almost
17 everybody in the agency touches that thing. When
18 you think about if it's -- if it's in the coastal
19 zone or it has something to do with it, the
20 coastal zone team touches it. Then fisheries may
21 have something to do with it. And obviously, to
22 get it out of the water, finance is going to have
23 to touch it and then the legal team. And so
24 marine patrol is a part of the derelict vessel
25 process, so almost everybody in the agency has

1 something to do with it. It's a team approach.

2 CAM ROBERDS:

3 What's the total time frame from the day
4 it's reported to where it's removed normally?

5 PATRICK LEVINE:

6 So you know, I'm going to do this. I'm
7 going to defer that down to Steven, because he is
8 the house expert on derelict vessels. And so
9 Counsel, if you would, report on that.

10 STEVEN ECKERT:

11 Generally speaking, from the time of
12 report to get it worked up and making every effort
13 to find the owner -- it's kind of difficult --
14 might be one, two, three weeks. If it's -- the
15 Director has approved it as a derelict vessel,
16 proceed with letters, make efforts. You're
17 probably looking at maybe two months, three months
18 before we get into court to get an order.
19 Sometimes a little longer; sometimes a little
20 less.

21 CAM ROBERDS:

22 That's the main -- I think people
23 understand that the program is out there. It's
24 just a question that I get now, so I appreciate
25 it.

1 STEVEN ECKERT:

2 Sure.

3 PATRICK LEVINE:

4 Well, and I want to say kudos to legal
5 because I don't know if you've ever tried to work
6 with the court system. Even in marine patrol, to
7 do something in two, three months, start to
8 finish, that's quick, and it's amazing. So our
9 team is continually, you know, having those
10 conversations with the courts, trying to get
11 things cleaned up and, man, they are doing a
12 fantastic job, so thank you to them.

13 You know, at this time, what I'm going
14 to do, I think Rick has some good news and some
15 things he wants to report about. So, Rick, if you
16 could -- he and the Director had a trip up to DC
17 to talk to NOAA and Rick is going to report on
18 that, and then he's going to talk to us a little
19 bit about the upcoming snapper season.

20 RICK BURRIS:

21 Morning. Yeah, as Patrick mentioned, we
22 went to DC a couple of weeks ago. It was a trip
23 put on by the Gulf States Marine Fisheries
24 Commission that got all the representatives from
25 each state up in DC to talk to NOAA leadership and

1 the Gulf Delegation as well as Fish and Wildlife
2 Service.

3 The Director and I -- he was a part of
4 the NOAA conversations, so we talked to Janet
5 Coit, who is the administrator of all of NOAA.
6 The main two things we talked about were fisheries
7 disaster and the issues with it, mainly the Bonnet
8 Carré spillway funds, as I've talked about ad
9 nauseam every month up here that we still don't
10 have, and the issues with MRIP. Trevor has gone
11 over those and the Director has expressed his
12 frustration with that, but we talked about those
13 issues.

14 They had representatives from their
15 Fisheries Disaster Program. We've expressed the
16 concerns that we had about the timeliness. You
17 know, there was a bill put in by Senator -- or
18 passed by Senator Wicker's office last year or two
19 years ago, I think, that puts timelines on these
20 fisheries disasters on the front end of them.
21 Everybody likes to point fingers at OMB, but there
22 is a lot of issues on the front end. So it puts
23 timelines on it, and hopefully that will clean up
24 some stuff on that part of it.

25 And they are trying to work through the

1 issues on the back end, but -- so I think we have
2 got a plan moving forward that's better than what
3 we have now. But that still doesn't change the
4 fact that we haven't received our money from 2019.

5 We don't have official word as far as
6 the agency goes. But there is a lot of momentum
7 going and we're having a lot more conversations
8 with NOAA about fixing some minor things here with
9 the budget and some -- updating some dates and
10 things like that, so I feel like things are
11 getting close, much closer than they were.

12 I don't want to say any dates. I have
13 heard dates, but I don't know how official they
14 are, so things are -- we are in a much better
15 place than we were, so hopefully, we will have
16 something to report here in the next few months.

17 Like I said, we met with the Gulf
18 Delegation. We met with the Representatives Carl
19 from Alabama, Ezell from Mississippi and Graves
20 from Louisiana. And then we met with Senator
21 Rubio from Florida, Senator Tuberville and Senator
22 Britt from Alabama, Senator Cassidy from
23 Louisiana, Senator Wicker from Mississippi and
24 Senator Cornyn from Texas. Much of what we talked
25 about was the same as what they talked about with

1 NOAA, the issues with the disaster funds. That
2 was most of the conversation because they all were
3 very interested in hearing the issues that are
4 going.

5 And it's not just us. It's Alabama. In
6 this particular fund, Alabama and Louisiana are
7 still waiting on their dollars as well. And then,
8 you know, Florida, Texas -- Texas currently
9 doesn't have anything on the books, but Florida
10 has been dealing with all the hurricanes, so
11 they're going through the same thing. So to be
12 able to hear that -- they are working on some
13 things to try to push a little bit, and that may
14 be why we're hearing more recently.

15 And then we met with Fish and Wildlife
16 Service. We expressed the pleasure it is to work
17 with them in comparison with the other funding
18 agencies that we deal with, which is -- working
19 with Fish and Wildlife Service, especially through
20 Sport Fish Restoration Program, is more of a
21 partnership. We talked with them about that and
22 got a few things worked out, so overall, it was a
23 really good trip. I think -- I hope we got a lot
24 accomplished.

25 And then as Patrick mentioned, the

1 Director wanted me to update everybody. As we
2 have historically, we will open the red snapper
3 season on May 26th, which is the Friday before
4 Memorial Day. They are still -- we are still
5 working some kinks out as far as what the quota is
6 going to be or what the ACL is going to be for the
7 state. But we hope to run through July 4th and
8 then we'll evaluate after that, so there shouldn't
9 be a whole of lot change up until the 4th of July
10 weekend.

11 So that's what we're planning on now.
12 If you've got any specific questions, Trevor
13 should be up here earlier, but right now, it's
14 pretty straight -- earlier -- later, but that's
15 pretty straightforward.

16 I also wanted to mention the Gulf
17 Council meeting will be held at the Gulfport
18 Marriott the week of April 3rd, I believe, so in
19 about two or three weeks. And as we said last
20 time, when it was held in Biloxi, you know, this
21 is everybody's opportunity to come to the council
22 meeting, see how the process works and actually
23 provide public comment.

24 We didn't have a whole lot of public
25 comment from Mississippi residents at the Biloxi

1 meeting. I hope maybe that will change at the
2 Gulfport meeting, but this -- you know, this is
3 the time to express your concerns or your thoughts
4 with the council because public comment is a very
5 serious part of the process and they do accept
6 those.

7 So it's the week of April 3rd. I
8 believe the public comment period would be the --
9 Wednesday afternoon, so if that's the -- maybe
10 April 5th. So if anybody has any questions, reach
11 out to me or the Director and we can guide you to
12 that.

13 RONNIE DANIELS:

14 Sorry. I'm taking notes. Thank you.

15 PATRICK LEVINE:

16 Yeah. Thank you, Rick.

17 And I know the other day I was talking
18 to somebody who went offshore fishing and they
19 said they went out -- they were targeting
20 obviously non-red snapper species, but they pulled
21 up to a particular spot. They said whenever they
22 pulled up, the water -- they said, you know, why
23 can't this happen when snapper season is open?
24 But the water just turned red; all those snapper
25 came up to the top.

1 And so I know there is some folks that
2 are seeing red snapper out there and obviously,
3 our fishermen, they are waiting for the day that
4 they can go out there and we're really expecting
5 and hoping for a good season. So, Rick, thank you
6 for that update.

7 I moved through really quick, and as far
8 as the employment and contracts, there are no
9 contracts to talk about.

10 But we do have an employment update.
11 Kyle Wigginton started March 16th as an ENR
12 Specialist 1 in Marine Fisheries, so we're
13 thankful that the DMR team is growing and that
14 we're bringing on some good folks to help us
15 accomplish the mission.

16 And so we look forward to what this next
17 month is going to bring, and as we go into the
18 summer, we know that it's going to get busy, busy,
19 busy because lots of things are coming up.

20 And so I was, you know, kind of joking
21 around with some of the marine patrol officers the
22 other day and I -- this is a fishing tip, not for
23 you because you catch really big fish, Chairman.
24 But those of us who catch little fish, if you
25 carry an action figure with you and you put your

1 fish in front of that action figure, it will make
2 your fish look really big. Okay? So for you guys
3 that catch big fish, you don't have to worry about
4 that.

5 For those of us that go out there and
6 our fish are not as big, you know what, you can
7 carry -- get you an action figure made, put it in
8 front of there and, man, it looks really, really
9 big. But, you know, that's just a fishing tip for
10 the day.

11 Director Spraggins, do you have anything
12 you would want to share with us? Hopefully you're
13 online.

14 JOE SPRAGGINS:

15 No. I don't have anything. Thank
16 y'all.

17 PATRICK LEVINE:

18 Thank you, sir. Remember that action
19 figure tip there for them big fish that we don't
20 catch.

21 And then, do we have any actions update
22 for March 21st from the previous meeting?

23 SANDY CHESNUT:

24 So we had a couple of state saltwater
25 finfish records. Conventional tackle, mutton

1 snapper, for Johnny Montgomery, and fly tackle,
2 sheepshead, for Doug Borries. And that's it.

3 PATRICK LEVINE:

4 Thank you, ma'am.

5 Well, that concludes the Director's
6 update. On to you, Chairman.

7 RONNIE DANIELS:

8 All right. I appreciate it.

9 Do any of our Commissioners have
10 anything to report today?

11 I did have one thing I wanted to talk
12 about that I would like the agency to talk about.
13 I got a call. I have been hearing some stuff over
14 the past month. Kayak guides, people that are
15 guiding fishing trips out of kayaks, I think it's
16 kind of a very gray area in our law at this point,
17 but it's been brought to my attention that there
18 may be some out-of-state guides that are coming
19 over here and using the resource and showing
20 people around and how to fish out of kayaking.

21 And I don't think that we really have
22 anything on the books to track or know who is
23 doing it or any type of licensing or fees for them
24 to come here and use these resources, so I would
25 like for the agency to take a look at that and see

1 where we stand with it.

2 If we don't have anything else from any
3 of the commissioners, we will move on to Chief
4 Wilkerson, Marine Patrol. Okay.

5 PATRICK LEVINE:

6 Looks like we're getting Captain
7 Strickland today.

8 MICHAEL STRICKLAND:

9 Good morning. I'm going to fill in for
10 Colonel Wilkerson.

11 Good morning, everyone. I trust all is
12 well. Hopefully you have had a chance to review
13 the report. Nothing really stands out to me as
14 being unusual.

15 We had a total of 67 citations for the
16 month of February. Activity still remains high on
17 the water for this time of year. We were blessed
18 with some pretty good weather for the month of
19 February, so our total stops or contacts with the
20 public was 1,267 contacts for that month.

21 Good news, we only had one boating
22 accident in the month of February and it was a
23 simple grounding, no injuries. And we had zero
24 waterborne fatalities to report for the month of
25 February.

1 So I'll be glad to answer any questions
2 you have may have.

3 RONNIE DANIELS:

4 Appreciate it. Thank you. Y'all keep
5 up the good work.

6 MICHAEL STRICKLAND:

7 Y'all have a good day. Thank you.

8 RONNIE DANIELS:

9 All right. Coastal Resources
10 Management, we have got Brett James.

11 BRETT JAMES:

12 Good morning. I have a project today
13 for the Jackson County Board of Supervisors. The
14 project location, at the Beach Bayou Avenue -- at
15 the end of Beach Bayou Avenue and intersects with
16 Racetrack Road. It's in the General Use District,
17 and the agent is Brown, Mitchell and Alexander.

18 The project description, it consists of
19 a -- filling .0108 acres of coastal wetlands for a
20 boat ramp and .05 acres of non-tidal wetlands for
21 a parking area. And the boat ramp, it will be
22 approximately 20 foot wide in width and need
23 around 96 cubic yards of fill on unvegetated water
24 bottoms for the creation of the boat ramp.

25 It will also be a dredging channel --

1 dredging of a channel that is 336 feet in length
2 by 30 foot width from a depth of -- current depth
3 of 2 foot to 4 and a half foot below mean lower
4 low water. And there will be two piers
5 construction -- constructed, 70 foot by 5, on each
6 side of the boat ramp, and a breakwater -- a
7 70-foot breakwater will be created on the west
8 side.

9 Right here shows the project area where
10 the little anchor is. And this is the non-tidal
11 wetland fill for the parking lot. This is just a
12 diagram of where the parking lot is. And on the
13 bottom, you can see where the boat ramp is going
14 to be.

15 This is a diagram of -- that shows
16 pretty much the boat ramp up at the top with the
17 adjacent piers on each side with the breakwater
18 along with the channel that's going to be dredged
19 on the right side.

20 And this is just an enlarged picture of
21 the recent slide that shows the boat launch and
22 piers.

23 And this is just an aerial photo of
24 where the project is going to take place, and the
25 little patch of green there is going to be the

1 tidal marsh that's going to be affected and also
2 transplanted.

3 And they have requested three variances
4 for this project. From the Mississippi Admin.
5 Code Title 22, Part 23, Chapter 8, 101.01, which
6 states, boat ramps must be located in areas which
7 do not require the destruction of sensitive
8 coastal wetlands; 114.01, permanent filling of
9 coastal wetlands below the mean high tide line
10 because of potential adverse and cumulative
11 environmental impacts is not authorized; and
12 117.3, a minimum of 10-foot buffer must be
13 maintained between the dredging/excavation and any
14 wetland.

15 And the variance request has been
16 justified by the Mississippi Admin. Code, Title
17 22, Part 23, Chapter 8, Section 118.04, that the
18 activity requires a waterfront location, a
19 significant public benefit, and a public hearing
20 has been held.

21 The extent of which the proposed
22 activity affects the biological integrity of
23 coastal wetlands, there has been mitigation
24 proposed at a three-to-one ratio and it's
25 approximately 1,500 -- a little over 1,500 square

1 feet of revegetation, and they are also going to
2 be taking the vegetation from where the proposed
3 boat launch is going to be and they are putting it
4 in the area of vegetation as well, while following
5 the DMR's restoration guidelines.

6 And there will also be a little debris
7 removal, but it will not have any big impacts
8 because they're not using any kind of machinery.
9 It will just be picking up with -- by personnel.

10 And this is the same picture again with
11 the aerial, but this is just showing the -- where
12 the revegetation is going to be in the blue and
13 the tidal marsh that's going to be taken from the
14 green area and transported over to the blue and
15 that is going to make up the little over 1,500
16 square feet of revegetation.

17 And the project has been posted on
18 public notice for three consecutive weeks,
19 January 18th, 22nd, 29th of 2023, also on the DMR
20 website from January 18th to present.

21 DEQ has no comments. Department of
22 Archives and History has no objection. Department
23 of Wildlife and Fisheries has no comments, and a
24 rent exempt public trust tidelands lease is
25 required from the Secretary of State. And also, a

1 public hearing was held on February 23rd, 2023,
2 and no public comments were received.

3 So the staff of the Department of Marine
4 Resources has conducted a thorough evaluation of
5 the project and it has made findings on the
6 decision factors in accordance with Mississippi
7 Coastal Program. Based on the result of these
8 findings, it has been determined that the project
9 is consistent with the Coastal Program because the
10 project serves a higher public purpose, and staff
11 requests a motion that the Commission recommend to
12 the Executive Director approval of the requested
13 variances of the proposed mitigation plan and the
14 requested permit.

15 Any questions?

16 RONNIE DANIELS:

17 Just two things that really kind of jump
18 out at me with this. If I'm looking at this
19 correctly, there is a pretty sizable launch right
20 there under I-110, correct? I mean, is there a
21 need for another launch that close?

22 BRETT JAMES:

23 It's for smaller -- smaller vessels and
24 more kayaks because, actually, people are already
25 launching their kayaks there, kind of disturbing

1 the vegetation as it is, so they'll be putting
2 more vegetation back and giving them an area where
3 they're not running into bigger vessels as well
4 and getting swamped out.

5 RONNIE DANIELS:

6 Okay. That kind of answers my second
7 question with the water depth leaving out of there
8 and the amount of maintenance that it's going to
9 take to keep a channel in there. I think that's a
10 pretty shallow area back in there, but kayaks and
11 small boats makes sense to me.

12 JONATHAN McLENDON:

13 Now, this existing location used to
14 actually be a boat ramp 20 years ago?

15 BRETT JAMES:

16 Yes, sir.

17 JONATHAN McLENDON:

18 Yeah.

19 CAM ROBERDS:

20 I was looking at the Racetrack Road. I
21 know that some of those cars get pretty wild
22 coming around there. Is there going to be -- is
23 the County putting some type of -- or would that
24 be the City of D'Iberville or the county, but is
25 somebody putting any kind of traffic stop signs or

1 some kind of identification because it looks like
2 they will probably be pulling up -- in towards the
3 parking and then backing across the road?

4 BRETT JAMES:

5 I'm not really aware of that at this
6 time.

7 MATTHEW HOSEY:

8 We can speak to that, if you will.

9 PATRICK LEVINE:

10 Matthew Hosey here is from Jackson
11 County. Would you be willing to comment on that?

12 MATTHEW HOSEY:

13 Yes, sir.

14 PATRICK LEVINE:

15 Okay.

16 RONNIE DANIELS:

17 Thank you, Matthew.

18 MATTHEW HOSEY:

19 Okay. Thank y'all for hearing us.

20 Yes, we -- this is a tidelands-funded
21 project. We have funding for Phases 1 and 2,
22 which is what you were shown here today. The boat
23 launch itself is Phase 1, and then Phase 2 is the
24 parking lot.

25 We have applied for additional funds for

1 Phase 3 that would re-align Racetrack Road, a
2 little bit further to the north so that it would
3 give enough space to pull a boat and trailer out
4 of the launch and be out of the water, but not
5 inside the roadway.

6 And so, you know, we're still in the
7 process of deciding. Hopefully, we can get all
8 three phases funded at one time and just do the
9 whole project at once. But if that third phase is
10 delayed for some reason, we could look at, you
11 know, phasing those out differently or probably
12 maybe a stop sign on Racetrack Road at the
13 intersection would be the best, you know, traffic
14 device to, you know, accommodate for any kind of
15 conflict right there until we can get the road
16 re-aligned.

17 CAM ROBERDS:

18 Yeah. Just some kind of identification
19 coming in so people know since --

20 MATTHEW HOSEY:

21 And we would definitely put --
22 regardless of what we do, we would definitely put
23 signage, you know, from either side to say, you
24 know, "slow, boat launch ahead," some type of
25 warning like that for sure.

1 RONNIE DANIELS:

2 I can tell you in Pass Christian, our
3 boat launch is inside of a parking lot and you
4 have got to watch people pulling out or backing
5 out. They'll shoot behind you, I can imagine, on
6 the road.

7 But one thing you just said is
8 re-aligning Racetrack Road. If you moved that
9 north, wouldn't that end up going through your
10 parking lot?

11 MATTHEW HOSEY:

12 It's -- I mean, we're not going to go
13 too far. It's probably going to be another 25 to
14 30 feet north, you know, right at the boat launch
15 and then as -- you know, that will taper back down
16 into the roads. So in front of the parking lot,
17 we may be only extending another 10 to 20 feet
18 north of there. So it may get into it a little
19 bit, but it's not going to, you know, be a
20 detriment to it to where we can't use it as a
21 parking lot. And it's currently, you know, just
22 an open lot. It's got a gravel base there now
23 that's somewhat being used as parking lot already
24 that's owned by the County.

25 CAM ROBERDS:

1 It's surely warranted because if you're
2 familiar with Brittany or I-110 in the summertime,
3 I mean, it's -- we need to relieve the pressure
4 off of that.

5 MATTHEW HOSEY:

6 Right. Exactly. And that's our whole,
7 you know, idea of this, is that, yeah, in the slow
8 seasons, there is, you know, plenty of parking at
9 the boat launches. But in the height of the
10 summer, when we're in the peak boating season, our
11 boating parking lots fill up. I mean, the Ocean
12 Springs Harbor, you know, is full. Brittany
13 Avenue can fill up, even with the expanded parking
14 lot we have recently done there.

15 So yeah, this is just another -- you
16 know, it makes sense to us, since we already own
17 the property there, to try to accommodate some
18 smaller vessels there. And we plan to put signage
19 up that kind of lets the public know that, that
20 says, you know, "recommended for only boats 20
21 foot or less. For any larger vessels, please go
22 to Brittany Avenue or other launches."

23 JONATHAN McLENDON:

24 So what is the water depth out there, a
25 couple of feet?

1 MATTHEW HOSEY:

2 You can see it's on somewhat of a little
3 inlet, and the majority of that inlet, I think, is
4 around three and a half foot deep. But then as
5 you get to the northern third of that inlet,
6 towards there, it shallows off a good bit, so
7 that's why we would need to do a little bit of
8 dredging there.

9 JONATHAN McLENDON:

10 So you couldn't get too big of a boat?

11 MATTHEW HOSEY:

12 Right. Yeah. I mean, anything that
13 drafts more than four, four and a half feet, I
14 wouldn't feel comfortable taking in there, so it
15 would probably be mostly boats that draft less
16 than three feet or so.

17 JONATHAN McLENDON:

18 And your next smaller ramp, like if you
19 head off to the east, is it down St. Martin Bayou,
20 maybe right of Lemoyne Boulevard?

21 MATTHEW HOSEY:

22 Brittany Avenue is south of Lemoyne
23 Boulevard up St. Martin Bayou, and we have
24 recently dredged that bayou out. So it can -- it
25 can -- you know, a good five-foot draft vessel

1 should be able to make it up that.

2 JONATHAN McLENDON:

3 Got ya.

4 MATTHEW HOSEY:

5 Now, and then moving -- continuing to
6 the east, you have the Fort Bayou Bridge boat
7 launch. We have just recently made some
8 improvements there, and the depth is really good
9 because it's right under the bridge in the deep
10 part of the bayou.

11 JONATHAN McLENDON:

12 Thank you.

13 MATTHEW HOSEY:

14 Uh-huh.

15 RONNIE DANIELS:

16 All right. Any more questions?

17 (No response.)

18 RONNIE DANIELS:

19 Do we have a motion to approve the
20 recommendation?

21 CAM ROBERDS:

22 I'm going to make a motion to approve
23 all -- the three recommendations from the
24 department with the condition that we get to
25 review the traffic control prior.

1 RONNIE DANIELS:

2 I like that. I will second that.

3 All in favor?

4 JONATHAN McLENDON:

5 Aye.

6 CAM ROBERDS:

7 Aye.

8 RONNIE DANIELS:

9 Aye.

10 Thank you.

11 BRETT JAMES:

12 Thank you.

13 RONNIE DANIELS:

14 All right. Finance and administration.

15 LESLIE BREWER:

16 Good morning, everyone. I'm Leslie
17 Brewer, CFO. I'll be presenting the financials
18 for the month ending February 28th, 2023.

19 At the end of February, our state
20 revenue was 5 million. Our agency revenue was
21 21.4.

22 Our state net income was a negative
23 116,000, and our agency net income was negative
24 1.6 million.

25 And after eight months of Fiscal Year

1 23, we have 86.5 of our budget remaining for
2 operations, and the tidelands is at 49.8.

3 And we should be getting GOMESA probably
4 in April, so this should start looking a little
5 better.

6 Anybody have any questions?

7 RONNIE DANIELS:

8 I don't think so. Thank you.

9 LESLIE BREWER:

10 Thank you.

11 RONNIE DANIELS:

12 All right. Ms. Charmaine.

13 CHARMAINE SCHMERMUND:

14 Good morning.

15 The Mississippi Department of Marine
16 Resources had 16 media mentions since the February
17 MACMR meeting. News items included the
18 Mississippi River sediment diversions, state
19 fishing records and the prescribed burn on Deer
20 Island.

21 Marine Patrol participated in career
22 fairs at Harper McCaughan Elementary School,
23 D'Iberville High School and Pass Christian Middle
24 School. They also participated in Touch-a-Truck at
25 the Long Beach Harbor this past Saturday.

1 Rick Burris, serving as past president,
2 Jason Saucier, Jon Barr, Nick Moreno, Chris Graham
3 and Traci Floyd participated in the Mississippi
4 American Fisheries Society annual meeting in
5 Natchez, February 15th through 17th, and Graham
6 presented, "An Overview of the MDMR Estuarine
7 Seine Project."

8 Travis Williams gave a presentation
9 about the artificial reef program at the HOSS Fly
10 meeting February 16th. Rick Burris gave a
11 presentation about the agency to the Rotary Club
12 of Waynesboro on February 22nd.

13 A total of 20 participants took part in
14 the Basic Seafood Hazard Analysis and Critical
15 Control Point, HACCP Workshop February 15th
16 through the 17th, which was conducted at the
17 Bolton Building by the MDMR Seafood Technology
18 Bureau and Mississippi State University staff.

19 Members of the Mississippi seafood
20 industry and MDMR regulatory personnel received
21 valuable instruction and conducted food safety
22 exercises mandatory in the proper handling of
23 seafood intended for consumption.

24 MDMR staff from the Hatchery, Shellfish
25 and Shrimp and Crab Bureaus participated in the

1 Institute for Marine Mammal Studies sea turtle and
2 marine mammal strandings workshop last month.
3 MDMR Fisheries staff worked with local police,
4 fire departments, beach management groups and
5 local officials from partnering agencies on how to
6 best maximize stranding response, as well as
7 address sea turtle nesting sites encountered
8 during field work.

9 Protected Species Coordinator Mike
10 Brainard and Fisheries Director Traci Floyd
11 attended the 2023 Southeast Regional Sea Turtle
12 Meeting February 28th through March 2nd in Orange
13 Beach, Alabama. The program featured special
14 sessions, workshops, keynote speakers and invited
15 presentations that addressed major topics which
16 are pivotal to sea turtle conservation in the
17 southeastern U.S.

18 Mike co-authored the abstract and
19 poster, "Sea Turtle Nesting Trends in Mississippi:
20 Data Gaps and the Necessity of Future Monitoring,"
21 with the Institute for Marine Mammal Studies, the
22 U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the National
23 Park Service.

24 Hatchery staff also participated in the
25 St. Jude's Classic Tournament in D'Iberville this

1 past Sunday.

2 Mike Pursley and Katie Nelson with the
3 Invasive Species program in the Office of Coastal
4 Resources Management took part in Mississippi
5 Aquarium's Invasive Species Day on February 25th.
6 Aquarium visitors stopped by to learn about
7 invasive species in our state's marine waters.

8 That's it.

9 RONNIE DANIELS:

10 All right. Busy month.

11 CHARMAINE SCHMERMUND:

12 Always.

13 RONNIE DANIELS:

14 Thank you.

15 PATRICK LEVINE:

16 That's a very busy month.

17 RONNIE DANIELS:

18 Yeah.

19 PATRICK LEVINE:

20 When you think of people out there
21 making much of the DMR and what public relations
22 is doing, they are making much of the DMR. And I
23 know somebody went and -- y'all had a boat show or
24 something the other day and they were talking
25 about some of the programs that were occurring and

1 it's just amazing the things that happened through
2 the public relations and how we promote the
3 resource here on the Gulf Coast.

4 RONNIE DANIELS:

5 Yeah, absolutely. And Charmaine was a
6 huge help in putting those -- or the Biloxi kids
7 program on and getting people from the department
8 to come out and participate in that. It was a lot
9 of fun. And even at the Mobile boat show, we
10 had -- the Grand Bay NERR came there and presented
11 at one, too, so that was really good.

12 All right. Saltwater records.

13 TREVOR MONCRIEF:

14 Good morning, Commissioners. I guess
15 since Rick had opened up the door, do y'all have
16 any questions about snapper before we go through
17 the presentation, or are y'all good?

18 CAM ROBERDS:

19 I would just ask, are we still at the --
20 it was at 50 -- 58, I think, Trevor?

21 TREVOR MONCRIEF:

22 Sixty-two is where we're at now with the
23 recent ACL increase from last year.

24 CAM ROBERDS:

25 We did get the 62. Okay. That's great.

1 TREVOR MONCRIEF:

2 And if the new -- the new request gets
3 through in time, hopefully through this year,
4 we'll be at around, I think it was, 84. Don't
5 quote me on that directly. We will be the low 80s
6 for sure.

7 CAM ROBERDS:

8 We're going in the right direction.
9 We'll just say that.

10 TREVOR MONCRIEF:

11 Yeah, incrementally. Trying to go in
12 the right direction.

13 All right. So we've got two records for
14 y'all to look at today. The first one is an all
15 tackle record, blue-line tilefish. The old record
16 was 2 pounds 13 ounces. This new record is
17 12 pounds, 5.6 ounces. The angler is Mr. Joshua
18 Taylor. This is a picture of the fish, picture of
19 Mr. Taylor and the fish.

20 This next one is a conventional tackle
21 record. It's a Gulf smoothhound. It's a new
22 record. Hadn't been seen before. 23 pounds,
23 15.99 ounces. The angler was Mr. Cooper Seibert.

24 And I will say we have had this record
25 swirling around about two or three months and the

1 reason for that is because when we got it, we
2 couldn't differentiate between the species of
3 smoothhounds that exist in the Gulf, so we sent it
4 to the shark folks over at the research lab. They
5 also had difficulty differentiating it.

6 So we sent off genetic samples over to
7 Texas. They did vertebral counts and more per
8 metric counts. Finally got it down to the point
9 where it is a Gulf smoothhound and it is a new
10 record. Obviously, this is a shark that we rarely
11 see.

12 So here is a picture of the shark.
13 There is Mr. Cooper with the shark.

14 And all we need is a motion to recommend
15 the adoption of these new state records.

16 RONNIE DANIELS:

17 Love seeing these kids smiling with
18 these fish. That's always a good part of the day.

19 I will make a motion to approve the
20 records.

21 JONATHAN McLENDON:

22 I will second it.

23 RONNIE DANIELS:

24 All in favor?

25 CAM ROBERDS:

1 Aye.

2 JONATHAN McLENDON:

3 Aye.

4 RONNIE DANIELS:

5 Aye.

6 TREVOR MONCRIEF:

7 Thank y'all.

8 RONNIE DANIELS:

9 Thank you.

10 All right. Grand Bay NERR, Ayesha Gray.

11 DR. AYESHA GRAY:

12 Good morning. Well, while I was here, I
13 thought I would also take an opportunity to update
14 you on a recent visit that we had from a NOAA
15 administrator. So Nicole LeBoeuf, who is the
16 assistant administrator for National Ocean Service
17 came to visit the Grand Bay NERR, and the City of
18 Moss Point.

19 We -- the mayor of Moss Point, Mr. Billy
20 Knight, hosted us at city hall, where we had a lot
21 of folks there, including the county supervisors,
22 including the school superintendent, the director
23 of parks and recreation for the City of Moss
24 Point, our chief science officer and folks from
25 the NERR.

1 We hosted Ms. LeBoeuf and showed her
2 around some of the new projects that we're working
3 on in the City of Moss Point, working on
4 stormwater. And that was the reason that she was
5 there, because the Grand Bay NERR acquired a
6 stormwater project that will start in April or
7 May.

8 We also showed her around the Grand Bay
9 NERR, showed her some of the reef restorations
10 that we have done there and also the active
11 restoration with the NRDA project that's restoring
12 wet pine savannas across 3,000 acres in the Grand
13 Bay NERR. Speaking of that wet pine restoration,
14 we've also had several recent burns, and they are
15 actually out there burning today.

16 But if y'all don't have any questions
17 about that, I wanted to invite you to join us for
18 the Celebrate Gulf Marine Education Festival.
19 This is every year. The DMR and Grand Bay NERR
20 host a marine education festival with Art in the
21 Pass. We have over 30 partners, Natural Resource
22 Agency, federal and state, county folks all come.
23 Chevron is also one of our partners, and we -- it
24 is full of hands-on displays, exhibits, science
25 showcases and a lot of fun for the whole family.

1 We hold a poster contest every year. We
2 engage schools across Mississippi to attend. We
3 have a student art contest, and we also have a
4 student science showcase where students are able
5 to show their science fair projects and have a
6 competition for those with cash prizes for the
7 winners.

8 We had over 243 entries in the student
9 art showcase, student art contest this year, and
10 there's 11 entries for the student science
11 showcase and we expect over 5,000 people to come
12 and enjoy the festival.

13 Our art winner this year, the poster
14 winner was Kendal Rolsin, who is 21 years old from
15 Gulfport, Mississippi, and they will be there
16 signing the poster.

17 RONNIE DANIELS:

18 I'll tell you, if y'all haven't ever
19 been to this, you ought to try to make it this
20 year. It's a really cool event and it's a lot of
21 fun and interesting stuff that goes on out there.

22 One thing it doesn't show on here, what
23 are the hours; do you know?

24 DR. AYESHA GRAY:

25 We start at around 10:00 a.m. and then

1 usually by about 4:00, we start breaking down so
2 that we're packed up by the end of the day, by the
3 time it's dark.

4 RONNIE DANIELS:

5 Well, we'll be there for sure. I can't
6 wait.

7 DR. AYESHA GRAY:

8 That's fantastic. Thank you.

9 PATRICK LEVINE:

10 Thank you.

11 RONNIE DANIELS:

12 All right. Have we got any other
13 business? No other business.

14 No comments.

15 Do we have a motion to adjourn?

16 CAM ROBERDS:

17 I will make a motion to adjourn.

18 JONATHAN McLENDON:

19 I will second.

20 RONNIE DANIELS:

21 All in favor?

22 CAM ROBERDS:

23 Aye.

24 JONATHAN McLENDON:

25 Aye.

1 RONNIE DANIELS:

2 Aye.

3 Thank you, everyone, for coming out.

4 (Adjourned at 9:46 a.m.)

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CERTIFICATE OF COURT REPORTER

1
2 I, MELISSA BURDINE-RODOLFICH, Court Reporter
3 and Notary Public, in and for the County of
4 Harrison, State of Mississippi, hereby certify that
5 the foregoing pages, and including this page,
6 contain a true and correct copy of my stenotype
7 notes and/or electronic tape recording of the
8 testimony of the witness, as taken by me at the
9 time and place heretofore stated, to the best of my
10 skill and ability.

11 I further certify that I am not in the employ
12 of, or related to, any counsel or party in this
13 matter, and have no interest, monetary or
14 otherwise, in the final outcome of the proceedings.

15 Witness my signature and seal, this the
16 _____ day of _____, 2023.

17
18 _____
19
20 Melissa Burdine-Rodolfich
21 My Commission Expires 4/28/24
22
23
24
25