

STATE OF MISSISSIPPI

MISSISSIPPI ADVISORY COMMISSION ON MARINE RESOURCES

COMMISSION MEETING

Tuesday, April 18, 2023, 9:07 a.m.

Bolton Building Auditorium

1141 Bayview Avenue, Biloxi, Mississippi 39530

COMMISSION MEMBERS:

Ronnie Daniels
Jonathan McLendon
Cammack "Cam" Roberds

ALSO PRESENT:

Joe Spraggins, Director
Sandy Chesnut, Esquire
Steven Eckert, Esquire

REPORTED BY:

Melissa Burdine-Rodolfich
mburdine@sbmreporting.com

1 RONNIE DANIELS:

2 Good morning, ladies and gentlemen.
3 Welcome to the Tuesday, April 18th Commission
4 meeting. At this time we'll call the meeting to
5 order.

6 I would like to ask Jonathan to lead us
7 in the pledge of allegiance.

8 (Pledge of allegiance was recited.)

9 RONNIE DANIELS:

10 Thank you, Commissioner.

11 Mr. Joe, would you like to lead us in a
12 prayer?

13 JOE SPRAGGINS:

14 Yeah. Before I do that, I would like to
15 ask us all to remember my old hometown in Alabama.
16 Had a bad tragedy this last week. It was in
17 Dadeville, Alabama where the shooting happened,
18 and there was four young kids killed and there was
19 about five or six that are serious injuries and
20 there was 38 total injured.

21 And it was over -- we don't know the
22 answer as to why it happened. It was a birthday
23 party. And everything was fine and then all of
24 sudden, they started shooting, but it was all
25 handgun-type. But anyway, let's just keep that

1 town in our prayers.

2 Okay. If we would, let's got to the
3 Lord.

4 (Moment of prayer.)

5 RONNIE DANIELS:

6 Thank you, Joe.

7 All right. Approval of the minutes, do
8 we have any discussion on the minutes?

9 (No response.)

10 RONNIE DANIELS:

11 Do we have a motion to approve the
12 minutes?

13 CAM ROBERDS:

14 I'll make a motion to approve the
15 minutes.

16 RONNIE DANIELS:

17 I'll second.

18 All in favor?

19 CAM ROBERDS:

20 Aye.

21 JONATHAN McLENDON:

22 Aye.

23 RONNIE DANIELS:

24 Approval of today's agenda, do we have
25 any changes to the agenda today?

1 (No response.)

2 RONNIE DANIELS:

3 Do we have a motion to approve?

4 CAM ROBERDS:

5 I'll make a motion to approve the
6 agenda.

7 JONATHAN McLENDON:

8 I'll second it.

9 RONNIE DANIELS:

10 All in favor? Aye.

11 CAM ROBERDS:

12 Aye.

13 JONATHAN McLENDON:

14 Aye.

15 RONNIE DANIELS:

16 All right. Mr. Joe, it's all yours.

17 JOE SPRAGGINS:

18 All right. Thank you. Appreciate it.
19 Just to get started here, we'll -- let's see what
20 we have.

21 We got any employment updates? We have
22 Elizabeth Moore who was promoted to ENR Specialist
23 III at the Grand Bay NERR.

24 And then we had a certification.

25 Christina Broussard is now certified as shellfish

1 standardized -- standardization officer, and
2 that's a big thing for the State of Mississippi to
3 be able to have -- we have two now that, I think,
4 are certified and this is huge because it helps
5 us.

6 And Christina, thank you so much. We
7 appreciate it. You're in the back, aren't you?
8 Yeah, there she is. There's Christina. Thank
9 you. We appreciate it.

10 CHRISTINA BROUSSARD:

11 Thank you.

12 JOE SPRAGGINS:

13 Let's see. I have to look at this
14 calendar, make sure I'm doing things by this.
15 There is no procurement updates, I don't think.
16 Is there anything on procurement? Is that
17 correct?

18 CRYSTAL MATTA:

19 No.

20 JOE SPRAGGINS:

21 All right. Let's see. The agency,
22 legislative session, well, man, we lived. We're
23 still here. I tell you what, that was a tough
24 90 days. But just to give you an idea, we had the
25 commercial crab law that was -- bill that was

1 passed, and that's where you only have to have a
2 license for the boat and not everybody on it. And
3 so that's great. That was passed and signed by
4 the governor.

5 Our marine patrol bill was signed by the
6 governor to allow the marine patrol officers to
7 work and do the things that they can in federal
8 waters and do that. And that was signed by the
9 governor.

10 We had -- the Secretary of State, Eric
11 Clark, there's an area that we have named after
12 him over in the Hancock County area. And then we
13 have a new island called Gollott Island, and
14 that's what -- the big island out here in the
15 middle of the Bay is now -- is named after Senator
16 Tommy Gollott. It's the Gollott Island.

17 And we also have a new park and it's
18 called Godfather. And that's on the Point Cadet
19 out there, so -- area. So we have got -- those
20 things are named after a senator that had 50 -- I
21 think 52 years, the longest-standing senator in
22 the State of Mississippi ever, so we're proud to
23 have that.

24 So off-bottom -- our on-bottom bill,
25 Senate Bill 2544, that's still with the governor.

1 We're working out some details on it. And it's
2 where they're -- how we're going to lease the
3 bottoms. And so we're meeting and trying to work
4 that out, and we will get something put together
5 in the next day or two. And the governor has till
6 Thursday to sign it, and I think it will be okay
7 and we'll get things signed.

8 But it will be how we can lease the
9 bottoms. And what we've done in that with the
10 bill, that basically states the State of
11 Mississippi is keeping about 20 percent of it and
12 we're going to lease 80 percent of the permitted
13 bottoms. And now, I don't think we'll lease
14 80 percent. I think we'll lease a portion of that
15 80 percent because there's a lot of land out there
16 that costs a lot of money to do an on-bottom
17 fishery. And we'll just be -- we'll find out.

18 We're going to have to go through a
19 process and once we go through that process, we'll
20 decide what we're going to do and how things are
21 going to work. And hopefully, we can get
22 something done in a short period of time. We're
23 trying as quick as possible, but, you know, we
24 just want to do it right. That's the Number 1
25 thing. We're going to make sure that everything

1 is done legal and we don't have any issues about
2 it. Any questions on that?

3 (No response.)

4 JOE SPRAGGINS:

5 Okay. Internships, we're expecting 10
6 this summer, so that's a great deal. You know,
7 we're going to be able to have some interns come
8 in and work with us. We have them in almost every
9 area.

10 And I tell you, we have been very lucky
11 with interns. We will bring them in for a year or
12 two years or something. They work with us. Next
13 thing you know when they graduate from college,
14 they come back and get a job here. And that's
15 fantastic, and that's what we need. And it works
16 out the way it's supposed to work, so that's just
17 fantastic.

18 We had the Gulf of Mexico Fishery
19 Management Council meeting and reception with IMMS
20 last week. Great turnout. IMMS, Moby and them
21 did a great job for us, and we had -- we were able
22 to have a cookout and cooked at IMMS. And we had
23 oysters, shrimp and flounder and all the
24 trimmings. And Charmaine and them did a good job.
25 Marine Patrol did a great job, too, you know,

1 cooking and all.

2 But it was beautiful. And once again,
3 they told me -- you know, we had this in October
4 here and we had the one in Downtown Biloxi. And
5 they said, we did not believe you could top it,
6 but you did. And that -- so now we set the bar so
7 high I don't know what the heck we're going to do
8 next. We're going to have to go -- I don't know
9 what we're going to do. We're going to have to
10 come up with something.

11 But Moby and them even had a dolphin
12 show for us and everything else. The people were
13 just ecstatic. And, you know, I don't think that
14 any of us could have ordered the weather God gave
15 us that day; it was so wonderful. So it was just
16 a beautiful time and everybody worked hard. And
17 Crystal and Charmaine worked hard trying to get
18 the stuff put together, too, and -- with setting
19 it up and all the teams.

20 So great deal. If you want to know what
21 come out of the Council, about the same it's
22 always been, you know. We got a little bit here
23 and a little bit there, but we are working on some
24 stuff. And they did -- basically, we're going to
25 put some working group together and be able to

1 look at the snapper because they are agreeing that
2 we do have some issues and they're looking at
3 that. And so we've got -- we'll talk some more
4 about that in just a minute.

5 But basically, just a standard council
6 and all the minutes will be out shortly on it.

7 DMR will be closed on Monday, the 24th
8 for Confederate Memorial Day.

9 Give you an update on our derelict
10 vessels, we have a total of 83 vessel cases that
11 have been reported since July 1st of last year.
12 We have removed 62 of them. We have 20 of them
13 that are pending removal and one that is received
14 in court for a court order to remove.

15 So great job by that team. They're
16 doing a great job. They've been doing the job
17 through our legal and all that and doing a great
18 job with us. Roy Lipscomb is heading everything
19 up with it and they're doing a great job to get
20 that stuff moved. And Glenn is working with them
21 too.

22 All right. Let's get to what I wanted
23 to talk about a little bit. Endorsement, some
24 type of endorsement for a federal license or
25 something, a fee. And what we're talking about --

1 when we was talking to the Council and talking to
2 NOAA and talking to some other states at the Gulf
3 Council, one of the things that some of the states
4 are doing is putting some type of endorsement
5 and -- to be able to go out and federally fish.
6 And what I'm talking about is our recreational
7 fishermen.

8 And what happens is Mississippi sells
9 about 80,000 saltwater licenses a year, and out of
10 that 80,000 NOAA just basically said everybody
11 fishes. I mean, if you wanted to look at it that
12 way, but they sample 80,000. If we could do some
13 type of endorsement to where we said if you're
14 going to federally fish -- and mainly reef fish is
15 what we're looking at. But if you're going to
16 federally fish, if we did some type of endorsement
17 or some type of fee for that and we could put it
18 on the license, then we could be able to cut that
19 down to probably 8,000 people. I'm just throwing
20 a number, but that's, you know, 10 percent.

21 And so now NOAA would agree with that
22 and say we'll sample that. Well, that could help
23 us a tremendous amount because that's why we took
24 such a big cut in the amount of snapper, but
25 we're -- allocation that we have, is because MRIP

1 and the MRIP works, it was done off of
2 calibration. And if we can cause this, we can
3 still fall in our calibration, but it will help
4 bring us up to where we need to be.

5 And you know, Trevor, you and Rick and
6 Matt, any of y'all come up here, but I'm sure the
7 Commissioners have something. But I'd like to
8 discuss the possibility of what y'all think about
9 that.

10 RONNIE DANIELS:

11 One question off of what you just said
12 that I want to clarify. You said to federally
13 fish. This would still include people that are
14 planning on snapper fishing, even if they're not
15 leaving state waters, correct?

16 JOE SPRAGGINS:

17 I think it's just federal, is all we
18 have got to worry about on it, isn't it?

19 RICK BURRIS:

20 So the premise behind it is fishing in
21 the EEZ. The Council can't manage fisheries
22 within state waters, but I think you could
23 potentially include fishing for federal species as
24 well. I mean -- but the intent was federal
25 waters, yes.

1 RONNIE DANIELS:

2 Okay.

3 CAM ROBERDS:

4 I believe that if it gives us an
5 opportunity to, you know, give some real hard
6 evidence of the actual quantity of people that are
7 snapper fishing, it's a -- I mean, I believe it's
8 a good opportunity for us to, you know, show how
9 many people are actually going out there and
10 catching snapper compared to the 80,000.

11 RICK BURRIS:

12 And we agree with that and -- in hopes
13 that if the states can work together with the
14 Council and with NOAA and with Gulf States Marine
15 Fisheries Commission that we could come up with a
16 plan to be able to utilize, you know, the effort
17 that's going to be collected. Because if it's not
18 utilized, then there is really no point in doing
19 it.

20 But if we could take it and hone it in
21 and start targeting that effort, targeting those
22 individuals for the offshore effort for those
23 federally-managed species, then we should be able
24 to get somewhere in a much better place, but it's
25 all -- we've all got it -- that's why we're all

1 coordinating together and we're not just --
2 because right now, Louisiana does it. Alabama
3 does it.

4 And so to come up with a collaborative
5 effort where everybody is being consistent and
6 collecting the same information and implementing
7 it -- if NOAA will implement it the way it needs
8 to be implemented, then it could be very
9 beneficial.

10 JOE SPRAGGINS:

11 Rick, as I -- do you know what --
12 Alabama and Louisiana, are they charging a fee?

13 RICK BURRIS:

14 I want to say it's a very, very low fee.
15 \$10, maybe, something like that, 10, \$15.

16 JOE SPRAGGINS:

17 Yeah. But, I mean, they are charging a
18 fee of some sort and --

19 RICK BURRIS:

20 Uh-huh.

21 JOE SPRAGGINS:

22 -- which helps offset their program too.

23 RICK BURRIS:

24 Correct. And what it does -- and you
25 alluded to it -- instead of just clicking a box

1 when you buy a license -- well, you could still
2 have 80,000 people if it's free. But if it's -- a
3 small fee associated with it, then you're going to
4 think about it before you buy it, and -- all
5 right, well, I will wait till I actually go
6 snapper fishing before I purchase this.

7 And so having a fee with it has a lot of
8 validity, and if we can put it at the right
9 amount, it shouldn't be too much of an injustice
10 to the angler and still achieve what we're trying
11 to.

12 RONNIE DANIELS:

13 So is this endorsement specific to
14 snapper or any type of reef fish?

15 RICK BURRIS:

16 Well, it's going to be reef fish. We're
17 saying snapper because our -- you know, that's
18 95 percent what we're landing here in Mississippi.

19 JOE SPRAGGINS:

20 And the way -- you know, basically, what
21 it does, it just -- it takes that sample size --
22 and Trevor, talk to me. You're in SSE. The
23 sample size -- if I lower that sample size to
24 8,000 from 80,000, what does that do to us?

25 TREVOR MONCRIEF:

1 Well, what it kind of gives you is a
2 targeted universe to be able to send out your
3 effort survey to. The way MRIP does it right now,
4 it's a random address send-out across the board.
5 It's not from the license data frame. It's a
6 random address across the entire State of
7 Mississippi, which is then matched to a license
8 database.

9 The success that Louisiana had with
10 their program is utilizing their license database
11 directly to be able to get effort estimates and
12 then using noncompliance to increase those effort
13 estimates for folks who are fishing without a
14 license. That's the most logical way to go about
15 this and what will get you consistent numbers.

16 The process we're seeing with MRIP right
17 now is that it doesn't provide that consistency
18 because it's saying that 80 percent of our effort
19 is coming from an unlicensed or unmatched strata
20 which makes no sense at all, right? That's
21 assuming we have a large scale of non-compliance
22 with fishing licenses, and that's just not what we
23 observe. So this would -- it would be a
24 fundamental change in how it's operated.

25 It would shrink the universe down that

1 would allow us to focus to it and basically say,
2 this is the best way for us to approach reef fish
3 landings. It needs to be tailored.

4 JOE SPRAGGINS:

5 And if somebody goes to the effort of
6 buying a license to do this -- they're kind of
7 like a duck stamp, you know, a federal duck stamp
8 that you buy or whatever. Number 1, they're going
9 to hunt in a duck stamp, and Number 2, they're
10 going fish in this on -- the majority of the
11 people if you charge a fee for it.

12 And then on top of that, most of them
13 that -- when -- I've talked to, people pretty much
14 are accurate about what they do because they know
15 what it means. They know what it means to the
16 fisheries, and they know what it means to the
17 state and what it means to the resource. And so
18 they want to maintain the resource just like we do
19 and everything else, and so they're more accurate
20 about doing it.

21 Where, if you just sample someone around
22 out here that is not even a -- going fishing or
23 anything, they don't really pay that much
24 attention about it. If you're not a duck hunter,
25 you don't really care, but yet, you have got a

1 duck stamp.

2 TREVOR MONCRIEF:

3 Yeah.

4 JOE SPRAGGINS:

5 But if you pay \$25 and get a federal
6 duck stamp, then you're going to probably care and
7 that's what we're looking at.

8 TREVOR MONCRIEF:

9 Yeah. That's the discussion that's
10 being had and needs to be had amongst the states
11 because it's a state-specific priority.

12 But if you bring it back to, like, the
13 hunting realm, you're almost comparing something
14 like the HIP permit -- which is just a simple
15 add-on, tack-on, which likely has
16 oversubscription, right? You probably have more
17 people getting that HIP permit that never touch
18 any migratory birds at all versus the duck stamp
19 where it's -- you know, costs a little bit of
20 money and you have to spend it. That helps you
21 rid that oversubscription problem, and then it
22 allows you to bring in those funds like what the
23 duck stamp does to be able to put toward habitat
24 or programs to monitor harvest, all that kind of
25 stuff. It will kind of give us that same ability.

1 RONNIE DANIELS:

2 I fill out the HIP every year whether or
3 not I end up hunting or not.

4 TREVOR MONCRIEF:

5 That's right.

6 RONNIE DANIELS:

7 But I don't buy that duck stamp till the
8 night before.

9 RICK BURRIS:

10 That's right. That's a perfect example.
11 And the alternative and what -- the way this was
12 proposed is that they wanted -- the people that
13 proposed it wanted a federal license. The South
14 Atlantic Regional -- South Atlantic Council is
15 going down this route of federal licensing. And I
16 think NOAA and the states both agree that the
17 states are better off to handle it as we already
18 have the infrastructure in place and we will
19 utilize it the way it -- we will implement it the
20 way it needs to be implemented in fairness for the
21 anglers. So that's why we're pushing for the
22 individual states to be doing it collaboratively
23 rather than NOAA implementing the license.

24 JOE SPRAGGINS:

25 Yeah. And I do think that if we do it

1 as a state, it will be a lot more reasonable price
2 and we will be able to do that. And as Rick said,
3 each state has their own process now.

4 Now, we have -- what I would like for
5 y'all to do is basically -- if you don't mind
6 doing it, is direct the agency to move forward and
7 to try to come up with a plan of how to do this
8 either as an endorsement or either a permit or an
9 extra license fee, you know, whatever it would be.
10 Would y'all be willing to do something like that?

11 RONNIE DANIELS:

12 I'm absolutely in favor of it. I would
13 like to -- for us to make every effort to explain
14 to the public the benefit of this because I can
15 see a lot of naysayers saying, oh, they're just
16 adding something to us, and that's not it at all.
17 We're working towards increasing what they're able
18 to do.

19 JONATHAN McLENDON:

20 Well, and, Rick, do we have any data
21 from Alabama and Louisiana about the percentage of
22 participation that they receive on this
23 endorsement?

24 RICK BURRIS:

25 I know like Trevor said, Louisiana,

1 their compliance rate is pretty high. I think
2 Alabama is pretty close, too, right?

3 TREVOR MONCRIEF:

4 They just started.

5 RICK BURRIS:

6 They just started, but it's in the upper
7 80 to 90 percent compliance rate.

8 JONATHAN McLENDON:

9 No. I'm talking about like -- so if you
10 get the saltwater license and you want the federal
11 endorsement, what --

12 RICK BURRIS:

13 What percentage?

14 JONATHAN McLENDON:

15 -- percentage of the saltwater license
16 man gets the federal endorsement?

17 RICK BURRIS:

18 We can go get those specific numbers for
19 you, no problem.

20 JOE SPRAGGINS:

21 It's got to be considerably less.

22 RICK BURRIS:

23 Oh, yeah.

24 JOE SPRAGGINS:

25 I'm sure it is. And I know in

1 Mississippi, it's considerably less. And, I mean,
2 you know, some of the people in Mississippi when
3 they buy a sportsmen license and it had, "do you
4 want saltwater," they didn't buy it. You know,
5 they just like to support -- people -- a lot of
6 people just like to support Wildlife and
7 Fisheries.

8 RICK BURRIS:

9 And it takes -- when you -- yeah, that
10 type of mindset, you're just making it hassle
11 free, so if you want to go saltwater fishing, you
12 already have it.

13 JOE SPRAGGINS:

14 Yeah.

15 RICK BURRIS:

16 But just to give you -- we've got about
17 3- to 5,000 Tails and Scales users, and that's
18 going to be the majority of the universe. We're
19 thinking about 8,000, 10,000 is the most, but
20 about 3- to 5,000 is what you're going to see
21 here.

22 JONATHAN McLENDON:

23 Now, what would this do to Mississippi
24 if we didn't participate in something like this
25 and the other states are? How would this affect

1 our data and our share allocation?

2 RICK BURRIS:

3 I don't think it would be very
4 beneficial to us to not participate.

5 JOE SPRAGGINS:

6 Well, and we do want -- as Ronnie said,
7 we want the people to understand. And this is
8 something that we won't just come and ask you to
9 do. We will put together a process and maybe by
10 next meeting, if it's okay with y'all, that --
11 we'll put together some information and we'll
12 bring it out.

13 And then we'd have public notice on it,
14 and then we'll go out and have a public meeting on
15 it. But, you know, just something for people to
16 understand. And I agree with you 100 percent, we
17 want everybody to be 100 percent understanding
18 what we can as much as possible.

19 But this is a benefit to the fishermen,
20 even though it's costing them a little bit of
21 money. And, you know, what the fee is, I don't
22 know. We'd have to look at that if there is a
23 fee, what we want to do. We would have to look at
24 it and make sure that this is okay.

25 But if it's all right with y'all, we'll

1 move forward looking at this.

2 RONNIE DANIELS:

3 Absolutely.

4 CAM ROBERDS:

5 Yes.

6 JOE SPRAGGINS:

7 I don't think we have to have a motion
8 or something, Sandy, do we? We can just do this?

9 SANDY CHESNUT:

10 No.

11 CAM ROBERDS:

12 I think the sooner we can move forward
13 the better because Memorial Day is right around
14 the corner.

15 JOE SPRAGGINS:

16 Yeah. I don't know that we're going to
17 get anything done between now and this season, but
18 at least we'll have something for the next one.

19 CAM ROBERDS:

20 So that will be for the 2024 season?

21 JOE SPRAGGINS:

22 Yeah. At least we will have something
23 to put in there.

24 RICK BURRIS:

25 And the Council at the last -- the

1 Council charged the states to come together and
2 start working on it. Like the Director said,
3 there is a working group that's going to start
4 doing this and try to get all the -- so we can
5 implement the avenue to do it, but the data
6 collection part, the states are working on it
7 collectively. They're not concerned with what the
8 mechanism is as long as the mechanism is there,
9 and that's what we can do here.

10 JOE SPRAGGINS:

11 And, you know, if we had something today
12 to bring forward, it would still have to go out on
13 public comment, and that's 30 days and then we
14 would still have to do the other, so this is a
15 situation we're going to probably be into 2024,
16 but at least it gives us something to work with to
17 get headed in the right direction.

18 CAM ROBERDS:

19 I think it's a great idea.

20 JOE SPRAGGINS:

21 Anybody else got any questions? Any
22 other questions, Commissioners?

23 RONNIE DANIELS:

24 No, sir. Sounds good to me.

25 JOE SPRAGGINS:

1 All right. I think right now that's all
2 I have unless something pops up in my head before
3 the meeting is over.

4 RONNIE DANIELS:

5 All right.

6 RICK BURRIS:

7 Director, you want me to talk about
8 Marine Discovery Day?

9 JOE SPRAGGINS:

10 About what?

11 RICK BURRIS:

12 Marine Discovery Day.

13 JOE SPRAGGINS:

14 Yeah, if you want to. Yeah, go ahead.

15 RICK BURRIS:

16 Yeah. So we just want to let y'all know
17 on May 6th, we're going to be taking a lot of --
18 we're going to take the agency and some other
19 entities, USM and Mississippi State and IMMS and
20 some others up to the Museum of Natural Science
21 for some marine education. It's called Marine
22 Discovery Day, but it's essentially marine
23 education outreach day.

24 The whole premise behind this is, I
25 think, everybody down on the Coast does a great

1 job of educating the public on the coastal
2 resources we have down here, but there's
3 70-something other counties that don't get to
4 enjoy our resources like we do.

5 And so we want to go somewhere
6 centralized. We're going to the Museum of Natural
7 Science and going to bring our natural resources
8 down here up there to share with all of them.
9 It's easier to do that than go to different
10 schools when they call you. If they can, we can
11 get everybody to come to one centralized location
12 and talk about our natural resources down here,
13 then that's what -- that's the plan.

14 We're going to do that May 6th at the
15 Museum of Natural Science from 10:00 to 3:00, and
16 I feel fairly certain this will be the first of
17 many of these to come.

18 RONNIE DANIELS:

19 That's a great idea.

20 JOE SPRAGGINS:

21 I do have one other thing. You caught
22 me.

23 The legislature did give us the funds
24 available -- they gave us the availability to get
25 the funds if we want to come out from under MRIP,

1 under NOAA. They did put the funds in there this
2 year to be able to use that. That would -- it
3 would cost the state about \$750,000 a year to do
4 it.

5 What we're trying to do -- and NOAA
6 knows this and Janet Coit knows it, who is the
7 head of NOAA Marine Fisheries, and they're very
8 hard trying to keep us from doing that. They
9 don't want us to come out from under them. They
10 want us to stay there, and we'd love for them to
11 pay the 750,000 a year and not the State of
12 Mississippi.

13 But if -- we're not going to do it
14 unless we can make it work. And if we see we
15 can't work out something to be able to do it, then
16 we have the funds to do that and we will move
17 forward and we will come out. And that would mean
18 that from now on, we will do our own MRIP, and
19 that's what the money would be for and we would
20 pay for it. And then we would do our own study
21 and it wouldn't be a NOAA study as to how we did
22 it.

23 And that could -- that's exactly what
24 Louisiana did. And you have to do it for one year
25 side by side and NOAA would pay their part and

1 we'd pay our part. And then after that, it's all
2 up to us and -- but they went from -- they went up
3 100-something thousand pounds this year because
4 that great -- you know, their study. Because they
5 did get it certified and we could get ours
6 certified.

7 RONNIE DANIELS:

8 So --

9 CAM ROBERDS:

10 So is that -- go ahead, Ronnie. I'm
11 sorry.

12 RONNIE DANIELS:

13 Go ahead, Cam.

14 CAM ROBERDS:

15 I was just going to ask if that was a
16 third party or if they actually performed the
17 study in-house, Louisiana?

18 JOE SPRAGGINS:

19 They do it in-house, I think, is how
20 they do it, and they basically have people hired
21 to be able to do it. The same that we would do,
22 if we -- you know, we have people that do MRIP
23 that gets paid by NOAA right now. We would just
24 turn those people over to being paid by the state,
25 you know, through us, through our funds.

1 RONNIE DANIELS:

2 So what are we trying before we
3 implement that?

4 JOE SPRAGGINS:

5 Trying to get NOAA to understand, and
6 they're looking -- what they're doing is they're
7 looking at a possibility of adjusting the
8 allocation. And if they can adjust the
9 allocation -- we've got a proposal in right now to
10 raise ours to like 82-, 83,000.

11 And then they're also looking at a
12 couple of states, a possibility of them donating X
13 amount of -- to us until we can get this new study
14 done and get everything completed. And if they
15 can do that, then, you know, at least they're
16 working with us and at least we're getting
17 somewhere.

18 And -- but if we don't see that it's
19 working the way that we feel like it, we'll just
20 pull the plug and go forward the way we can. And
21 we do have -- thanks to the legislature, we do
22 have -- and the governor, we have the capability
23 of doing it.

24 RONNIE DANIELS:

25 All right.

1 JOE SPRAGGINS:

2 All right.

3 RONNIE DANIELS:

4 All right. That's all. Do the
5 commissioners have anything to report today?

6 SANDY CHESNUT:

7 We have the actions update.

8 JOE SPRAGGINS:

9 Oh, yeah. See, y'all told me. Actions
10 update.

11 SANDY CHESNUT:

12 At the March meeting, the Commission
13 recommended the approval of the requested
14 variances, proposed mitigation plan and requested
15 permit with the conditions that the traffic
16 control plan be reviewed and approved prior to
17 construction for the Jackson County Board of
18 Supervisors to construct a boat ramp associated
19 with -- associated piers, dredge canal and parking
20 area at the interaction of Beach Bayou Avenue and
21 Racetrack Road in Biloxi. That traffic control
22 plan has been submitted. It shows that the road
23 is going to be rerouted to the north, which will
24 increase pedestrian safety in that area.

25 And then we had approval of state

1 saltwater finfish records, all tackle blue-line
2 tilefish for Joshua Taylor, and conventional
3 tackle, Gulf smoothhound, Cooper Seibert.

4 And then in other business, let's see,
5 Chairman Daniels requested that the agency take a
6 look at kayak guides and speak to the agency's
7 statement on same. I think Trevor is going to do
8 an update on that later on today.

9 RONNIE DANIELS:

10 Yep.

11 SANDY CHESNUT:

12 Okay. And that's it.

13 RONNIE DANIELS:

14 Thank you, Ms. Sandy.

15 SANDY CHESNUT:

16 You're welcome.

17 JOE SPRAGGINS:

18 All right. Maybe I'm through now.

19 RONNIE DANIELS:

20 You done? You sure?

21 All right. Commissioners, anything from
22 y'all?

23 CAM ROBERDS:

24 No.

25 JONATHAN McLENDON:

1 No, sir.

2 RONNIE DANIELS:

3 All right. We're going to move on to
4 Marine Patrol. It is Chief this week -- this
5 month.

6 KYLE WILKERSON:

7 Yes, sir. How y'all doing today?

8 RONNIE DANIELS:

9 Good. How are you?

10 KYLE WILKERSON:

11 I'm well. Glad to see y'all all well.
12 I would just like to start to say all these
13 shootings we've been having in the last weeks have
14 really strained us to an end as a country and a
15 community, but I do think that our tenaciousness
16 as a country and a community, that we will get
17 through it and we will stay strong while we do
18 that.

19 All right. Enough of that, the
20 commission report itself -- or the Marine Patrol
21 Citation Report, all your officers have been doing
22 a phenomenal job staying on top of things and
23 staying safe out there and with the general
24 public, keeping them safe.

25 There were several citations written

1 this month. Checked over 1,500 folks this month,
2 which is pretty common. I think it's -- it's
3 going to double when the boating season really
4 kicks off, so the officers are prepared and they
5 are looking forward to the task itself.

6 Any questions on any of the citations?
7 I will field any questions.

8 RONNIE DANIELS:

9 Looks pretty straightforward to me.

10 Nothing.

11 KYLE WILKERSON:

12 Okay. Well, what we're going to have --
13 I think we also have a wake zone proposal. Deputy
14 Chief Gex will proceed over that. Thank you.

15 RONNIE DANIELS:

16 Thank you, Chief.

17 BRYAN GEX:

18 Good morning. This is a request for
19 reconsideration from Jackson County I received
20 right after our last commission meeting last
21 month. As y'all know, we tabled in June or July
22 of '22 -- there was four parts to a no wake zone
23 in Fort Bayou. And they are asking for
24 reconsideration for what was Leg Number 4, and
25 it's just an extension of the already-existing

1 state-required no wake zone.

2 There is a boat ramp that's underneath
3 the bridge at Fort Bayou, and the state-required
4 no wake zone exists east and west 100 feet from
5 the boat ramp adjacent to it, which just allows
6 for the wake zone to extend to what we call the
7 dolphins, which are the pilings that are gathered
8 together as you enter the channel going under the
9 bridge. That's the only thing that's covered
10 under that 100 foot.

11 So what they're requesting in Jackson
12 County is an extension east and west. It's a
13 total of 1,600 -- one second. It's 1,620 feet, I
14 believe.

15 And there is a view of the proposed no
16 wake zone, Leg Number 4, of the original proposed
17 no wake zone, which is what we're considering
18 today.

19 The effects to boaters are vessels will
20 be traveling from the coordinates at idle speed
21 for three minutes and 22 seconds. That also
22 includes the existing no wake zone, which isn't an
23 awful long time to be under no wake.

24 Special considerations in the area,
25 Leg 4 will only be an extension of the

1 state-required no wake zone, as I said. And
2 southwest of Fort Bayou Bridge is marina. It's
3 open to the effects of wakes and there is several
4 large vessels that are moored there.

5 So with the extension -- I mean, with
6 the existing no wake zone, as vessels start to
7 come down and plow, they are causing a bigger wake
8 in that area of that marina if we don't consider
9 it.

10 So the Office of Marine Patrol endorses
11 the establishment of a no wake for Leg Number 4
12 due to public access areas in which people fish,
13 boat and socialize.

14 RONNIE DANIELS:

15 Why does it go so much further to the
16 southwest than it does to the northeast?

17 BRYAN GEX:

18 I believe that -- I've already gone
19 past. Sorry, Cam. Right there.

20 I believe the reason why is, as you can
21 see to the east, there is a very little area for
22 the public to gather. You can see -- I don't know
23 where the pointer is on this thing, but you can
24 see the open marina just to the west of the bridge
25 right there. That's a large area where people

1 gather. There's also some piers behind Aunt
2 Jenny's restaurant and there is another large
3 structure that's just at the end of the west side
4 of there, and I think they want to cover all of
5 that.

6 CAM ROBERDS:

7 Yeah. Not only that, but there is --
8 the way -- when you go into the boat launch, you
9 have to enter from the west side. There's a pier,
10 so you can't get to the east from the boat launch.

11 BRYAN GEX:

12 Correct.

13 CAM ROBERDS:

14 You actually have to come out under the
15 bridge and go west. So I know this area well and
16 I believe it's -- it will be beneficial to be able
17 to extend it. It bottlenecks. There's a lot of
18 boats coming in there and coming out at the same
19 time, so --

20 RONNIE DANIELS:

21 Yeah. I was about to say that's your
22 backyard.

23 CAM ROBERDS:

24 It is. It is, yeah. It's a -- it would
25 definitely help. And there's more development

1 coming in. I think Gulf Hills is looking at a --
2 you know, at some point doing a marina, so it's
3 just going to add traffic and -- you know, and all
4 those boats that are -- that's a pretty busy spot
5 in the summertime.

6 BRYAN GEX:

7 It's very busy.

8 CAM ROBERDS:

9 They are all coming to the west.

10 BRYAN GEX:

11 We were there -- we were there covering
12 a call recently and there was a lot of activity
13 and it does bottleneck right there under the
14 bridge. So I can imagine as vessels start to come
15 down to meet the no wake zone -- those are like
16 40- to 50-foot vessels that are moored at that
17 marina and they're probably taking the brunt of
18 all that wake.

19 RONNIE DANIELS:

20 Anybody got anything else?

21 CAM ROBERDS:

22 Nope.

23 RONNIE DANIELS:

24 All right.

25 JOE SPRAGGINS:

1 I think we need a motion. Is that
2 right; Sandy?

3 SANDY CHESNUT:

4 Yes, you need a motion.

5 RONNIE DANIELS:

6 Do we have a motion to approve the staff
7 recommendation?

8 CAM ROBERDS:

9 I will make the motion to approve the
10 staff recommendation for the Leg 4 of the no wake
11 zone.

12 JONATHAN McLENDON:

13 And I will second it.

14 RONNIE DANIELS:

15 All in favor?

16 CAM ROBERDS:

17 Aye.

18 JONATHAN McLENDON:

19 Aye.

20 RONNIE DANIELS:

21 Aye.

22 BRYAN GEX:

23 Thank you.

24 RONNIE DANIELS:

25 All right.

1 It looks like we have Ms. Leslie Brewer
2 up with finance and administration.

3 JOE SPRAGGINS:

4 Nope.

5 BRANDI BUSBY:

6 Nope.

7 RONNIE DANIELS:

8 Nope.

9 BRANDI BUSBY:

10 That's okay.

11 JOE SPRAGGINS:

12 Leslie is not here today. Sad to say
13 her father passed away and --

14 RONNIE DANIELS:

15 Oh, no.

16 BRANDI BUSBY:

17 Yeah.

18 JOE SPRAGGINS:

19 -- so keep her in your prayers.

20 BRANDI BUSBY:

21 My name is Brandi Busby. I'm the
22 director of finance and accounting, and I'll
23 present the financials for the month ending the
24 March 31st, 2023.

25 Okay. At the end of March, our state

1 revenue was \$5.1 million, and total agency revenue
2 was 22.3 million.

3 Our state net income was a negative
4 746,000 and agency net income was negative
5 3.7 million.

6 After nine months of Fiscal Year 2023,
7 the agency has 84.5 percent of the budget
8 remaining, while Tidelands budget has 45.4 percent
9 of the budget remaining.

10 Do y'all have any questions?

11 RONNIE DANIELS:

12 No, ma'am. Thank you.

13 All right. Public affairs.

14 CHARMAINE SCHMERMUND:

15 Good morning, Director Spraggins,
16 Commissioners, a legal Counsel.

17 The Mississippi Department of Marine
18 Resources had 11 media mentions since the March
19 MACMR meeting. News items included a boating
20 accident in Ocean Springs, oysters in Mississippi
21 and the list of Tidelands and GOMESA projects on
22 the Coast.

23 Marine Patrol participated in a boater
24 safety presentation at D'Iberville Library on
25 March 30th, the Hancock Middle School Share Fair

1 on April 6th and the St. Mark's Open House and
2 Community Fair on April 15th. Marine Patrol,
3 along with the Office of Marine Fisheries,
4 participated in North Bay Elementary Night Out on
5 March 28th.

6 The Finfish Bureau's Jon Barr and Megan
7 Fleming worked with approximately 75 fifth grade
8 students from Ocean Springs Upper Elementary
9 School on March 31st where the students observed
10 seining and reviewed through the collected samples
11 on East Beach in Ocean Springs.

12 The Oyster Harvester Training Class on
13 April 4th had seven participants with five of the
14 participants attending virtually and two in
15 person.

16 The NERR, the Office of Marine
17 Fisheries, Coastal Resources Management, National
18 Heritage Area, Marine Patrol and Public Affairs
19 did a great job at this year's Celebrate the Gulf
20 Marine Education Festival on April 1st.

21 Hundreds of attendees took part in
22 Festival held at Memorial Park in Pass Christian.
23 Participants learned all about Our Mississippi
24 Gulf Coast through fun and educational activities
25 from a variety of agencies and organizations who

1 helped us put on this wonderful event.

2 RONNIE DANIELS:

3 That was another one we lucked up on the
4 weather. It was supposed to rain from daylight
5 till dark, and we ended up having some really
6 decent weather or that one.

7 Thank you, Charmaine.

8 All right. Trevor, kayak.

9 TREVOR MONCRIEF:

10 Good morning again, Commissioners.

11 Karen, do you mind pulling up the
12 request paragraph that was up there? The request.

13 All right. So our office and Marine
14 Patrol have worked together to get some background
15 information, not only for, you know, what we have
16 on the books for our state, but also what's going
17 on across the Gulf on the subject.

18 Essentially, what it comes down to is
19 that nearly all states, except for one, which I'll
20 discuss here in a minute, consider charter fishing
21 directly applicable to a vessel.

22 Now, there is a reason for that, right?
23 The vessel then ties in an OUPV license. Well,
24 then -- which then brings in safety and first aid,
25 insurance, you know, the captain's license,

1 requirements for knowing how to boat properly, all
2 that kind of stuff. So that's typically why all
3 this stuff is tied into a vessel.

4 There is one state, Texas, who has what
5 is called an all-water paddle craft fishing
6 license and that deals specifically with kayaks.
7 Now, what they do, right, in order to ensure that
8 there are other requirements associated with that
9 license are put in safety and first aid training,
10 a paddle craft course and associated like TPWD
11 boater safety courses and stuff like that.

12 All right. So there is a couple of
13 options to consider here. So status quo right now
14 is that if those individuals are participating in
15 that kind of activity everyone has to have a
16 fishing license across the board, right? There is
17 no specific charter endorsement for a kayak.

18 Since they can't meet the current
19 statute rules that are applied to the charter boat
20 license, technically it's -- you know, they
21 can't -- they don't have to provide the captain's
22 license associated with the vessel registration,
23 right, because it's a kayak.

24 So if we keep status quo, everyone would
25 have to have a license. That activity would keep

1 undergoing, you know, essentially not being
2 licensed by the state.

3 If you want us to develop language and
4 look further into it, then the direction we'd go
5 is probably write up some draft language with
6 whatever requirements that the Commission sees
7 fit, if that's what y'all wish to pursue.

8 And those requirements might include
9 things like the necessary certifications or
10 courses that are associated with it and also maybe
11 something like insurance because that's a
12 requirement on the current charter captain side.

13 As far as the in-state and out-of-state
14 thing, how Texas handles it currently is that a
15 resident gets a certain fee, and then the
16 non-resident fee for it is five times higher than
17 the resident.

18 But we would have the options to do how
19 the Commission would like to proceed on it. If
20 they want to do the same thing as Texas and charge
21 a higher fee and all that since there are licenses
22 available in other states and reciprocity doesn't
23 fall in, we would essentially, you know, have the
24 ability to set what we feel would be the correct
25 price for it.

1 RONNIE DANIELS:

2 And so did we find out anything? I know
3 Marine Patrol Chief said they were going to look
4 into trying to -- do we know what the realm of
5 this thing is because right now, I'm just working
6 off of hearsay?

7 TREVOR MONCRIEF:

8 To my knowledge, I think Kyle and them
9 looked in. I'll say me and Matt went, pore back
10 through our memories and probably have less than a
11 half dozen times where we've gotten calls about
12 this specific subject and folks asking what the
13 requirements are.

14 KYLE WILKERSON:

15 We found one incident, out of Mobile for
16 that matter. Nothing towards the west or
17 anything, so it's pretty -- I'm not saying it
18 doesn't happen, but as of within the last six
19 months, no.

20 RONNIE DANIELS:

21 Okay. So y'all didn't find anybody
22 advertising this type service?

23 KYLE WILKERSON:

24 Not a one.

25 RONNIE DANIELS:

1 I think it's something definitely worth
2 keeping an eye on. I mean, the kayak fishery is a
3 really cool thing for a lot of people, and it has
4 really exploded. My fear is, that if we do have
5 people doing this is just making sure that level
6 of safety is there.

7 KYLE WILKERSON:

8 Of course.

9 RONNIE DANIELS:

10 You know, especially people coming from
11 other places and it's -- that's a situation that
12 you can get in trouble real quick.

13 KYLE WILKERSON:

14 I agree.

15 RONNIE DANIELS:

16 I've seen a lot of videos of people
17 flipping over in those things fighting a fish, and
18 firsthand knowledge of some people that accidentally
19 ended up on Cat Island from Long Beach, so --

20 KYLE WILKERSON:

21 That's right. And we've got to go get
22 them.

23 RONNIE DANIELS:

24 Yeah.

25 KYLE WILKERSON:

1 That's right.

2 RONNIE DANIELS:

3 Exactly. Exactly. All right. Well --

4 JOE SPRAGGINS:

5 Real quick on that, I know Wildlife just
6 passed a bill for charter fishing in, you know,
7 state waters as far as freshwater. Is there
8 anything in their bill about that; do you know?

9 TREVOR MONCRIEF:

10 I think Matt has got a pretty good
11 knowledge about it, but from what I remember
12 reading, it still ties it into a vessel-based
13 activity, which then brings in, you know, all
14 those requirements.

15 JOE SPRAGGINS:

16 Okay. All right.

17 RONNIE DANIELS:

18 All right. Thank you, Chief.

19 KYLE WILKERSON:

20 Yes, sir.

21 RONNIE DANIELS:

22 All righty. Nothing on Grand Bay NERR.

23 Do we have any other business today?

24 JOE SPRAGGINS:

25 Just one thing, I would ask, if the

1 Commission would, to close in honor today of two
2 people, Mr. Robert McClellan who is Micki's son.
3 He worked with us, and he fought a battle of
4 cancer for a long time and passed away at 34, 35
5 years old. So if we could close in his memory,
6 and then also for Leslie's dad, Mr. Robert Cowart.
7 If we could close in their memory today, I'd
8 appreciate it.

9 RONNIE DANIELS:

10 Absolutely. And we have no public
11 comments, so we're going to move forward with
12 today's meeting today in their memory and in their
13 honor.

14 Do I have a motion to adjourn?

15 JONATHAN McLENDON:

16 I'll make a motion.

17 RONNIE DANIELS:

18 I'll second.

19 All in favor?

20 CAM ROBERDS:

21 Aye.

22 RONNIE DANIELS:

23 Aye.

24 Thank you, everybody.

25 (Meeting adjourned at 9:51 a.m.)

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