

STATE OF MISSISSIPPI

MISSISSIPPI ADVISORY COMMISSION ON MARINE RESOURCES

COMMISSION MEETING

Tuesday, February 20, 2024, 9:00 a.m.,

Bolton Building Auditorium

1141 Bayview Avenue, Biloxi, Mississippi 39530

COMMISSION MEMBERS:

Ronnie Daniels
Jonathan McLendon
Jason Osborne
Cammack "Cam" Roberds

ALSO PRESENT:

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

REPORTED BY:

Melissa Burdine-Rodolfich
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1 RONNIE DANIELS:

2 All right, ladies and gentlemen. Good
3 morning. Welcome to the February 20th Mississippi
4 Advisory Commission Meeting.

5 We have got the director, Joe Spraggins,
6 on via telephone with us this morning. He's out
7 taking care of some important business. We have
8 got Patrick Levine sitting in his spot this
9 morning.

10 I'm going to ask Patrick to lead us in
11 the Pledge of Allegiance.

12 (Pledge of Allegiance.)

13 RONNIE DANIELS:

14 Thank you.

15 Do you mind leading us in prayer this
16 morning?

17 PATRICK LEVINE:

18 It would be an honor. Let us pray.

19 (Moment of prayer.)

20 RONNIE DANIELS:

21 Thank you, Patrick.

22 All right. Do we have any discussion on
23 the January 23rd minutes?

24 (No response.)

25 RONNIE DANIELS:

1 Do we have a motion to approve?

2 JONATHAN McLENDON:

3 I'll make that motion.

4 CAM ROBERDS:

5 Second.

6 RONNIE DANIELS:

7 All in favor?

8 (Unanimous vote.)

9 RONNIE DANIELS:

10 Any discussion on today's agenda or
11 changes?

12 (No response.)

13 RONNIE DANIELS:

14 Motion to approve?

15 CAM ROBERDS:

16 I'll make a motion to approve the
17 agenda.

18 JASON OSBORNE:

19 I second.

20 RONNIE DANIELS:

21 All in favor?

22 (Unanimous vote.)

23 RONNIE DANIELS:

24 Well, I guess I'm going to turn it over
25 to you.

1 PATRICK LEVINE:

2 Sounds like a plan.

3 Well, good morning. And as Commissioner
4 Daniels said, Director Spraggins, he's on the
5 phone. He is at the GOMA meeting this week, and
6 so he is joining us on the phone and making sure
7 everything is good to go. I know he has lots of
8 busy things going on for the agency, for the State
9 of Mississippi.

10 This week, he will be at GOMA talking
11 about things that pertain to the state, and next
12 week, he is going to be in Washington, DC for a
13 Gulf States delegation trip. So he is not letting
14 the grass grow under his feet for sure. And so I
15 know he'll be ready to be back here with us as
16 soon as he can.

17 We do have a couple of employment
18 updates that we can talk about. First of all, new
19 hires are Chelsea Prince, a contractor in the
20 Office of Coastal Restoration and Resiliency.

21 There have been a few promotions. Jack
22 Husley in the Office of Marine Patrol was promoted
23 to master sergeant, and Dylan Kessen and Jacob
24 Strickland both promoted to sergeants, effective
25 February 1st. Selena Burhorn was promoted to an

1 admin support specialist February 5th, and she
2 will be working out at the Grand Bay NERR. And I
3 know Selena, she's been a dispatcher with marine
4 patrol for quite a while and she wanted to --
5 wanted to spread her wings and do something a
6 little bit different in the agency, so she is
7 going to be over at the Grand Bay NERR. So
8 congratulations to all of them.

9 As far as agency updates, there are
10 quite a few things going on. Things are busy.
11 The legislative session is up and going in
12 Jackson, and we have four bills that have been
13 dropped and you will be hearing more about those
14 and we'll provide updates as necessary.

15 The first one that's going to be
16 discussed is the creation of a compliance officer
17 to make sure that we provide a checks and balance
18 when it comes to administrative procedures. So
19 right now, whenever something comes in, if it's
20 wetlands, it goes to -- the complaint goes to the
21 director. The director reviews it. The director
22 is the one who brings it to the commission, and
23 then afterwards, the Director is the one who has
24 to look at fines and not fines and what decisions
25 we're going to make. So he's involved in that

1 entire process.

2 To be able to provide a checks and
3 balance, we're hoping to be able to put a
4 compliance officer in there so we'll have somebody
5 that's designated as a compliance officer. When
6 something comes in, it will go to that individual
7 first. Then it will go to the advisory committee
8 and then it will go to the director. Okay? So
9 that's the first one.

10 The second one is an update to 49-15-46,
11 which would allow for the printing of oyster tags.
12 Right now, whenever there is an oyster harvester,
13 whenever they want to get tags, they have to come
14 to the agency. The hope with where things are
15 going to go with oysters in the future is, through
16 approved mechanisms and programs, that oyster
17 fishermen will be able to print their own tags and
18 not have to come to the agency to get those
19 oystering tags, so that's something that's being
20 looked at.

21 The third one, 49-15-84, is an update
22 for recreational crab fishermen. Right now, in
23 legislation it says "household," that the
24 individuals are allowed to have those six traps
25 per household, but what it's going to do is it's

1 going to change it to the license holder, so it
2 will go to the license holder. So everybody who
3 has a license will be able to engage in crab
4 fishing.

5 The fourth one is 49-15-64.1 making a
6 change there. Right now, in there it says that
7 there is no recreational shrimping allowed within
8 a half mile. And so it may seem a lot like
9 semantics and a play on words, but what we want to
10 do -- we've encouraged to just change out the
11 "half a mile recreational shrimping," strike that
12 out, and change it to "shrimp trawling."

13 Here's the reason why: For somebody who
14 reads that black and white, it says "recreational
15 shrimping." That does not allow somebody to throw
16 a brill net or a cast net within a half mile.
17 Somebody wants a seine, if you want to go catch
18 shrimp with your hands, if you want to dip net,
19 you know, right now, the way it reads black and
20 white, it's illegal to do any of that inside of a
21 half mile.

22 Now, we know that -- we don't think that
23 the intention was there for it to be that, so we
24 want to strike through the "shrimping" and then
25 change it to "shrimp trawling." That way, it

1 clears that up. And, you know, as folks have been
2 allowed to go out there and throw their brill
3 nets, in the future we may not be here, but we
4 want people to be able to keep throwing those
5 brill nets in the future.

6 So those are the four bills that have
7 been dropped, and as we get updates, we will make
8 sure we provide updates as necessary.

9 The other information that is
10 interesting is, on Friday, the on-bottom oyster
11 lease applicants were notified that the RFP is
12 being canceled and more information will follow
13 soon. We need to make sure we make -- do some
14 things different, change some things.

15 As going through and reviewing the
16 application process, as it was, we realized that
17 there needed to be some changes in regulations and
18 statutorily to make things better, not only for
19 the State of Mississippi, but also for the
20 applicant. So, you know, effective Friday, that
21 RFP was canceled, and we're going to be starting
22 the process over and we will make sure everybody
23 is updated as we receive more information.

24 Online, there's a few things that
25 fishermen need to look at. The Commercial Vessel

1 Safety Reimbursement Program, as part of the 2019
2 Bonnet Carré Disaster Fishery Funds fishermen are
3 eligible to be able to apply for reimbursement for
4 up \$2,000 on safety equipment that will enhance
5 safety measures for themselves or for their crew.

6 And then also there is discussion in
7 there if you want to try to make things more
8 resilient for future disasters in fisheries
9 management or your vessel, you can apply for those
10 fundings. If you have questions, you can reach
11 out to the fisheries office.

12 The crab tap cleanup, we've been talking
13 about that for a couple of months and what it's
14 looking like and, you know, I think it would be
15 great to hear an update. Jason, can you come up
16 and give us an update on the crab trap cleanup?

17 JASON SAUCIER:

18 Good morning, Commissioners.

19 Yeah. I just wanted to give a quick
20 update. So it is this week, Thursday, Friday,
21 Saturday from 9:00 to 4:00. The sites will be
22 open. We've got sites located in Pascagoula at
23 Point Park, Ocean Springs Municipal Harbor, and
24 Bayou Caddy, Pleasure Street Boat Launch.

25 We did send out solicitations for

1 volunteers a few different ways. This year, we
2 did specifically direct that solicitation to all
3 of our high schools, per y'all's request, and we
4 have got a list of all the folks that we sent it
5 to, but basically every high school in the three
6 Coastal counties got it. So hopefully, we get a
7 good turnout. We've got some volunteer incentives
8 this year. We've been trying to do some
9 advertisements of the program a little bit better
10 this year, so we're optimistic. I think the
11 weather is going to be good for us too, so -- and
12 I can take any questions y'all have.

13 RONNIE DANIELS:

14 I've just got one that I -- so there is
15 three sites, but moving towards the west, it goes
16 from Ocean Springs all the way to Bayou Caddy. Is
17 there a reason there's not one in between there?

18 JASON SAUCIER:

19 Those were just always -- historically,
20 those were the sites we selected, so we tried to
21 stay consistent. If there is a situation where
22 folks have pots and they can't get them to us,
23 they can always, you know, reach out to us and we
24 can help with that logistics-wise. If there's --
25 you know, if there is a large number of them in

1 Long Beach or Pass Christian or somewhere like
2 that, we can send a staff with a trailer if
3 needed.

4 RONNIE DANIELS:

5 Okay.

6 JASON SAUCIER:

7 So certainly, they can reach out to me
8 with -- if they need to. And we have had that
9 come up in Jackson County this year, you know.
10 We've offered that for some folks over in
11 Graveline.

12 RONNIE DANIELS:

13 I was just curious.

14 PATRICK LEVINE:

15 Thank you, Jason.

16 JASON SAUCIER:

17 Thank y'all.

18 PATRICK LEVINE:

19 All right. Another thing we've been
20 talking about for some time is the offshore
21 landing permit, and that did go into effect on
22 February 1st. You can find it on our website.
23 And so anglers are now required to obtain a
24 recreational offshore landing permit to possess
25 any reef fish species, including species of

1 snapper, amberjack, grouper, hind, triggerfish and
2 cobia in Mississippi waters.

3 So what does this do? To clarify -- and
4 Rick, if you have got to get up, get up, but I
5 think, to simplify it, is right now, fisheries
6 management at the federal level, they look at it
7 and they say, okay, y'all have sold X amount of
8 saltwater fishing licenses. So you have that many
9 people that are targeting all of your species,
10 including offshore species, and we know that's not
11 true because there are people who buy saltwater
12 fishing licenses to fish off of the piers here on
13 the Coast and they never make it offshore.

14 So to make for better -- to make for
15 best practices moving forward in the future, we
16 want to scale down the size of that universe and
17 how many people are targeting those species, and
18 the only way to do that is to find out better how
19 many people are really targeting those species
20 that are being discussed.

21 And so you can go online to our website.
22 It does not cost anything. Okay? It doesn't cost
23 anything, but it is going to be a better tool for
24 us to be able to have discussions, not only at the
25 federal level, but at the local level to make

1 decisions on each of those species that are being
2 discussed. And so make sure you get that permit
3 if you're going out there. It's online. It don't
4 cost anything, and so it's going to -- it's going
5 to be a way that we can help manage species moving
6 forward in the future.

7 Also, online if you go onto our website,
8 if you're interested, right now, the Gulf of
9 Mexico Fishery Management Council is seeking
10 applications for its ad hoc commercial red
11 snapper, grouper, tilefish, individual fishing
12 quota. It's the IFQ program.

13 So if you're interested in that, there
14 is a link on our website to get more information
15 about it, and it's for those individuals that are
16 involved in commercial red snapper, grouper,
17 tilefish, IFQ. So if you have knowledge on that
18 and would like to be a part of that program, the
19 application is online.

20 We're getting close.

21 The derelict vessel program, you know,
22 we have been talking about it for some time, and
23 we have a total of 135 derelict vessel cases that
24 have been reported. Of those 135, 87 have been
25 removed. We have 48 that are pending removal, and

1 then we have six that we have court orders for
2 removal, and so hopefully, very soon in the near
3 future -- we received some money through NOAA for
4 large debris removal that came from GOMA, and GOMA
5 is helping us with that, and so we're hoping that
6 very soon we can take that funding and at least
7 get these six out of the water and change that --
8 make that 87 go up.

9 And so that's all the comments that I
10 have.

11 Director Spraggins, do you have anything
12 that you want to add?

13 JOE SPRAGGINS:

14 Yeah, Patrick. Thank you very much.
15 And that's a very good overview of what's going
16 on.

17 I just want people to understand with
18 the offshore permit, there is a very big chance
19 that if we do this correctly, that we can cut out
20 our sample size down to NOAA to where it's all the
21 way from 80,000 that they're looking at to maybe
22 15- to 20,000 that they're looking at, which will
23 give us a better idea of how many people, as you
24 stated, are doing this and how many are fishing
25 offshore. And it will turn around and change our

1 allocation of how much we get.

2 As you know, we were cut back last year
3 because of the MRIP, and MRIP is something that
4 has been broken for the State of Mississippi for
5 years and it doesn't work for a small state, and
6 this will help us to be able to do that.

7 So I encourage every one of them to
8 please go out -- if you're fishing offshore and
9 you're doing reef fishing, please do this and
10 please go forward and look at it. If you're not
11 going to fish reef fish, please do not go and
12 punch on this and get that because it will give us
13 false information.

14 But I appreciate it and -- but that's
15 the biggest thing I have and thank y'all.

16 PATRICK LEVINE:

17 Well, thank you. And that's all I have.

18 Steven, do you have any action updates
19 from the previous meeting?

20 STEVEN ECKERT:

21 We do. So good morning.

22 Discussed at the January 2024 meeting
23 was the Commission recommended and the Director
24 approved the motion to recommend approval of the
25 youth conventional tackle state saltwater finfish

1 record for Margaret Schindler's 3.2-ounce silver
2 perch.

3 And that's all the action updates that
4 we have.

5 RONNIE DANIELS:

6 Thank you.

7 PATRICK LEVINE:

8 Thank you, Chairman. That's all I have.

9 RONNIE DANIELS:

10 Appreciate it. That's a lot of good
11 information.

12 Next up, we have commissioners' report.
13 Do any of our commissioners have anything to
14 report?

15 CAM ROBERDS:

16 I've just got one quick question on the
17 offshore landing permit. Is that -- the questions
18 I'm getting are -- I know we're trying to -- it's
19 not really going to help us for the 2024 season,
20 but we're hoping for the 2025 season, correct? Is
21 that right?

22 PATRICK LEVINE:

23 So I'm going to do this. Trevor, if you
24 could, come up and let us know if you think it
25 will help us for 2025.

1 TREVOR MONCRIEF:

2 All right. So short-term, right, direct
3 allocations as they stand now, it's not going to
4 truly affect it until we go down another
5 calibration route between all the different
6 surveys. But really, what we're talking about is
7 the overall comparison across the states and the
8 allocation by a state in general. That's where
9 this conversation is going to come into play.

10 The way it's basically done now is that
11 the distribution of the allocation amongst the
12 states is Mississippi has three and a half percent
13 and it's largely attributed to the amount of
14 effort and also the amount of fish that are caught
15 in each one of the states. Now, we're sitting at
16 three and a half percent. The other states are
17 all higher.

18 Ever since all these different programs
19 came into play, right, it gets a little bit
20 complex. You've got MRIP, CHTS, Coastal Household
21 Telephone Survey, which the last assessment was
22 done in, which is what basically assigns the
23 overall -- is what helps go into assessment and
24 then assigns the overall ACL amongst everybody.
25 That's them splitting between commercial and

1 recreational, and then the recreational side is
2 split between the private rec and charter fishery.
3 So that's, right now, the governing process that
4 the ACL is developed in is that program.

5 When the state programs came online, all
6 the different ones, right, because we're talking
7 about us with Tails and Scales, Alabama with
8 Snapper Check, Florida with SRFS and Louisiana
9 with LA Creel, those are -- when those other
10 calibrations started coming in and we started
11 seeing those penalties come across.

12 Our argument has always been that we
13 don't have a very good understanding of the
14 relationship between the state programs and the
15 federal programs. Therefore, these allocations
16 that are punitive just don't seem -- or the
17 changes in allocations that are punitive don't
18 seem timely. We should do the work on the front
19 end, rather than being punitive and then starting
20 to check on the back end, so that leads to the
21 prospects for the future. Right?

22 And this is kind of the entire reason
23 why we made the decision to go with MS Creel and
24 to mimic what LA has been doing. It's to have
25 regional consistency across the board. So if us,

1 Louisiana and Alabama are all running the same
2 program and Florida's program, which is SRFs,
3 operates similarly, which it does, you then have a
4 point where the region itself can be evaluated a
5 little bit more equally because you're all on the
6 same playing field. You don't have different
7 currencies running across the board like what
8 we've been talking about for the last little
9 while. You don't have different programs
10 performing at different rates, where our
11 comparison to MRIP is completely different than
12 Florida. Their program had MRIP.

13 So really, what we're talking about is
14 regional consistency across the board, which will
15 allow for a common currency throughout the Gulf of
16 Mexico to then go into an assessment that will
17 then provide us overall an ACL to be split out.
18 Then the argument can be made on a state-by-state
19 allocation based on a consistent measure of red
20 snapper catch across the board.

21 So a lot of moving parts. It is not --
22 it's a complex process, but that's the --

23 CAM ROBERDS:

24 I mean, the explanation is unbelievable,
25 but going to like this -- so we're looking at

1 maybe 2025 to be able to hopefully have some kind
2 of change?

3 TREVOR MONCRIEF:

4 Yeah. So the current red snapper
5 assessment was conducted. It got a fair amount of
6 critical review, and so they are trying to make
7 changes based on that. And we're also at a point
8 where we're trying to basically move forward with
9 the entire way the federal management and
10 recreational fisheries have been measured.

11 I mean, this program has been going on
12 since the '80s and we're trying to conduct a
13 fundamental change. And most of you that have
14 been involved in the federal process and even the
15 state process knows that that takes time, but the
16 arguments are there to try to allow flexibility
17 and get us to where we need to be.

18 CAM ROBERDS:

19 It sounds like the goal will get all the
20 states consistent and then when you get them all
21 consistent and have them reporting -- yeah.

22 TREVOR MONCRIEF:

23 Right. Because then you have a better
24 idea of the true measure, right, because a pound
25 in Tails and Scales isn't necessarily a pound in

1 Alabama. Isn't necessarily a pound in SRFS, so
2 that's kind of the issue that was brought to
3 light. And the reason why we're going the
4 direction we're going now is to try to do what's
5 best for us and then in that same breath, being
6 able to have regional consistency, so that's best
7 of both worlds.

8 JONATHAN McLENDON:

9 Now, Trevor, they're well aware of our
10 differences and the numbers between what
11 Mississippi says and what the feds say. So
12 obviously, 2024 with this new permit, we're going
13 to have like an "I told you so" number?

14 TREVOR MONCRIEF:

15 I mean, not to -- not to be -- not be to
16 overly confident, but I think we have an "I told
17 you so" number with what we've got now.

18 JONATHAN McLENDON:

19 Right. Can that percentage or some kind
20 of portion of that percentage be allocated to
21 previous years based on the 2024 findings or does
22 that even matter?

23 TREVOR MONCRIEF:

24 It could, so, I mean, the route you have
25 to go down is recalibration, right, and that in

1 itself takes a while because it's got to go
2 through the SSC, the council process and
3 everything else. So 2025 is a good number to
4 throw out there for any consideration. Whether
5 that actually occurs or not, it's going to be up
6 to, you know, that discussion at the council level
7 and how to move forward.

8 And I think it's important to note that,
9 you know, our main priority is red snapper.

10 That's our fishery, but this -- I would say this
11 lack of change or this hesitancy to recognize that
12 there is a better way to do things on a
13 recreational side have led to -- it's essentially
14 led to a large amount of issues that involve not
15 just red snapper at this point. Every species
16 that has been re-assessed under MRIP, FES and
17 undergone various allocation changes between the
18 commercial and recreational sector is now going to
19 have to be re-evaluated, rediscussed. Everything
20 is going to have to go back through amendments and
21 everything else to change.

22 So you're kind of at a point where we --
23 we conducted federal management in a way for the
24 last six years that really just dug us in another
25 hole that you're going to have to dig out of. And

1 our argument right now is to stop making those
2 changes and to stop running those assessments the
3 way we're doing it now because the only thing
4 we're doing is just causing more and more work to
5 have to be done later on. Really, our
6 fundamental -- the basis is to stop making
7 punitive changes and try to exist where we are now
8 and let's put all of our effort toward figuring
9 out the relationship between the regional
10 consistency of LA Creel and MS Creel versus MRIP
11 and the other state programs and everything else
12 and figure out a path forward.

13 I know it's a long, drawn-out answer
14 that probably doesn't answer your question
15 directly, but this is -- this is a process that, I
16 mean, it's going to be years to fix everything
17 that's been done for the last little while, and
18 it's not going to be a fun process. It's not.

19 It's going to be a controversial one,
20 but I think by the end of it, the way we have set
21 ourselves up and the way we're structuring things
22 with the other states moving in the same
23 direction, it will allow for us all to be in a
24 better place, especially fisheries management in
25 the future, recreational, commercial across the

1 board.

2 And I think most of the folks in this
3 recognize that at this point as well, and that's
4 why there is support. They're helping fund the
5 program for us to do it, and I think there is a
6 recognition that this pathway is the best one.
7 And hopefully, that doesn't lead to any more
8 punitive measures for any of these fisheries and
9 it will hopefully allow us to have a better
10 evaluation to be able to get to a better spot.

11 CAM ROBERDS:

12 I will just say the work you guys do on
13 that side does not go unnoticed, so we appreciate
14 it, man, and working to keep these ACLs where we
15 need them here soon. So thank you guys very much.

16 TREVOR MONCRIEF:

17 All right. Thank y'all.

18 RONNIE DANIELS:

19 We appreciate it, Trevor. Thank you.

20 Anybody else?

21 I do have one point that I would like to
22 bring up. Something that was brought to my
23 attention by a charter boat captain this past
24 month. Patrick, you and I have talked quite a bit
25 over the past few years about the permit that is

1 required for a charter boat to fish within a
2 certain distance of Gulf Island National
3 Seashores, primarily being Ship Island and Horn
4 Island. That was very difficult to get for a
5 while. I think they have kind of worked some of
6 the kinks out in that process.

7 But the new curveball that we've gotten
8 thrown at us is now they're asking that charter
9 boats, which are currently recognized and defined
10 federally as recreational boats, carrying
11 recreational fishermen, that they provide an
12 annual report and pay three percent of their gross
13 revenue from any of those trips to Gulf Island
14 Seashore.

15 I really don't understand this. I can't
16 wrap my head around it, and I would like to see if
17 maybe we can get the department to look into the
18 legalities of this or where it's coming from.

19 PATRICK LEVINE:

20 We can definitely look into it. And we
21 know that our fishermen and our charter industry,
22 they don't need any unnecessary burden put on
23 them, so it's something we need to look into and
24 make sure we understand the definition, so we can
25 get together and look at it. We will get some

1 more information, talk to legal and maybe have to
2 have some discussions with our delegation in DC
3 and see if there is an issue because, you know,
4 where else is there a three percent surcharge
5 being put on everything? And so we need to get
6 all the facts first. We need to get all the facts
7 first and then look at it from there.

8 RONNIE DANIELS:

9 Yeah. If we could start digging into
10 that, that would be great.

11 PATRICK LEVINE:

12 Okay. Well, we'll start looking at it.

13 RONNIE DANIELS:

14 Before we move on, if anybody is
15 planning on making any public comments, the forms
16 are in the back. If y'all have got anything you
17 want to discuss, please fill one of those out.
18 They'll take it up in the back and get it up to us
19 up here and we'll get you in towards the end.

20 Next up is going to be chief -- Captain
21 Strickland, Marine Patrol.

22 MICHAEL STRICKLAND:

23 It's always fun following behind Trevor.
24 Colonel Wilkerson apologizes. He
25 couldn't be here this morning. He had some prior

1 engagements. I trust everybody had a good
2 weekend.

3 Y'all have gotten -- should have
4 received a copy of the report. I will be glad to
5 take any questions you may have. But one of
6 the things that -- nothing really sticks out to
7 me, except in the very back section for our total
8 number of stops and our total number of citations.
9 Obviously, the month of January, very cold.
10 Weather plays into -- into factor. Not as many
11 stops. Not as many citations out there as normal.
12 But everything else looks on par with the Office
13 of Marine Patrol.

14 I'll be glad to take any questions you
15 have.

16 RONNIE DANIELS:

17 Anybody?

18 (No response.)

19 RONNIE DANIELS:

20 Y'all keep up the good work. I know
21 it's fixing to get really busy for y'all.

22 MICHAEL STRICKLAND:

23 Get real busy soon. All right. Thank
24 y'all very much.

25 PATRICK LEVINE:

1 Thank you.

2 RONNIE DANIELS:

3 All right. Next up, we've got Coastal
4 Resources, Alyssa Timbs.

5 ALYSSA TIMBS:

6 Good morning.

7 RONNIE DANIELS:

8 Morning.

9 ALYSSA TIMBS:

10 Good morning. As you said, my name is
11 Alyssa Timbs and today, I will be discussing the
12 request for a permit by the Jackson County Port
13 Authority.

14 The project location is within wetlands
15 adjacent to the Escatawpa River, near Highway 63,
16 in Moss Point, Jackson County. The proposed
17 project is within a General Use District. The
18 agent is Lisa Morrison with Neel-Schaffer, and the
19 purpose and need of this project is to provide
20 additional railroad capacity and connectivity
21 between existing infrastructure, support the
22 growing needs of the Port of Pascagoula and Bayou
23 Casotte Harbor and remove operational conflicts
24 between railroad, reduce congestions with the
25 abandonment of rail crossings and accommodate the

1 proposed restoration of a passenger rail service.

2 So the proposed project will fill 3.27
3 acres tidal and tidally-influenced marsh. A
4 one-acre site has already been created for
5 mitigation in an area adjacent to the project, and
6 the applicant has proposed an additional 2.27
7 acres to create -- to mitigate at a one-to-one
8 ratio.

9 So up on the screen -- it's hard to see.
10 It's kind of dark -- that red star is where the
11 project will be located in the southeast corner of
12 Highway 63 and the Escatawpa River in Moss Point.

13 So the yellow line up there, it shows
14 the proposed path of the rail line through the
15 marsh adjacent to the Highway 63 bridge.

16 So this project has been brought to the
17 Commission two previous times, so I'm going to
18 briefly go through its history.

19 So the original proposal was to build a
20 rail line on fill along the blue line that's a
21 little bit hard to see where it says "original
22 path." So this was going to require the fill of
23 4.89 acres of coastal and nontidal wetlands. But
24 then the applicant later acquired some land more
25 southward in order to take advantage of some

1 upland areas, and so in 2020, they submitted a
2 modification to build an elevated rail along this
3 yellow path and that would only required 0.9 acres
4 of wetland fill.

5 However, due to increased labor and
6 materials, the elevated rail is no longer
7 feasible, so Jackson County Port Authority is
8 proposing to construct the rail line on fill using
9 that same yellow path, but it's going to be on
10 fill, as I said, and impacting 3.27 acres of tidal
11 and tidally-influenced marsh.

12 So the two areas within the red boxes
13 are the sections where the fill will be placed.

14 And here is an image of what it looks
15 like right now. You can see that the area is
16 already impacted by the presence of power lines
17 and the maintenance activities that are associated
18 with those.

19 So in this figure, it shows the planned
20 mitigation, so one acre of marsh creation adjacent
21 to the project area has already been implemented
22 as part of mitigation for the currently approved
23 project. The Jackson County Port Authority
24 proposes to create an additional 2.27 acres in
25 close approximately to that original site, as you

1 can see up here.

2 So the proposed project is allowable
3 within the General Use District.

4 And the applicant has requested four
5 variances to the Mississippi Coastal Program as
6 follows: Permanent filling of coastal wetlands is
7 not authorized. Sensitive coastal wetlands must
8 not be filled. Bridging is preferred, and
9 projects must generally follow existing alignments
10 in coastal wetlands.

11 And the justification for these is that
12 no feasible, alternative sites or construction
13 techniques are available. There is significant
14 public benefit, and a public hearing has been
15 held.

16 So this project will aid with the
17 efficient transport of goods and will increase
18 public safety with the closing of railroad
19 crossings.

20 So in this figure, those red dots that
21 are really hard to see illustrate the 21 road
22 crossings through Moss Point and Pascagoula that
23 will be abandoned with the completion of this
24 proposed project.

25 So a public notice was published in *Sun*

1 *Herald* on January 7th, 14th, and 21st. There were
2 no comments received. The notification appeared
3 on the DMR website from January 8th through the
4 29th. And a public hearing was held on
5 February 1st, and no public comments were
6 received.

7 We didn't receive comments from MDEQ or
8 MDAH. And the Secretary of State's office stated
9 that the project area is held under a rent-exempt
10 Tidelands Lease.

11 So the staff has evaluated the project
12 and made findings in accordance with the
13 Mississippi Coastal Program. The project will
14 serve a higher public interest by allowing more
15 efficient movement of goods by rail from Bayou
16 Casotte and the Port of Pascagoula and increasing
17 the public safety through the abandonment of
18 approximately 21 rail crossings in areas of
19 Pascagoula and Moss Point.

20 Therefore, we request a motion that the
21 Commission recommends to the Executive Director to
22 approve the requested variance and approve the
23 permit as requested.

24 Anyone got questions?

25 RONNIE DANIELS:

1 So whenever you say abandoning 21 rail
2 crossings, the piece of track that you see going
3 out to the west there, they're not going to use
4 that railway anymore?

5 ALYSSA TIMBS:

6 That is my understanding. When they
7 kind of bridge this gap between this rail line
8 over here and that rail line that's on the left,
9 that they will no longer have to go through the
10 cities of Moss Point and Pascagoula.

11 RONNIE DANIELS:

12 Okay.

13 Do y'all have any questions?

14 CAM ROBERDS:

15 If -- they were originally going to be
16 elevated, I guess, like a bridge style with
17 pilings and like actually evaluated, so now it's
18 going to be built up with fill?

19 ALYSSA TIMBS:

20 Yes. They discovered that actually them
21 doing the soil amendments and filling was going to
22 be almost 50 percent cheaper than doing it
23 elevated.

24 CAM ROBERDS:

25 Does installing the fill, is it

1 permeable? So if you're in a tidal -- like a
2 wetland area now that has tidal influence and the
3 water's flowing back and forth and they build up
4 without the bridge concept, is that going to just
5 block the water or is the fill permeable where the
6 water can run through?

7 ALYSSA TIMBS:

8 So I'm not sure if the fill is
9 permeable, but they will have culverts installed
10 where there is already like natural streams and
11 stuff, so that there can still be tidal flushing
12 in and out of that area.

13 CAM ROBERDS:

14 I got ya. That's all I had.

15 RONNIE DANIELS:

16 All right.

17 If we don't have any other questions, do
18 we have a motion to approve the staff's
19 recommendation?

20 JASON OSBORNE:

21 I'll make that motion.

22 RONNIE DANIELS:

23 I'll second it.

24 All in favor?

25 (Unanimous vote.)

1 ALYSSA TIMBS:

2 All right. Thank you.

3 RONNIE DANIELS:

4 Thank you.

5 And next up, we have Ms. Katie Nelson.

6 KATIE NELSON:

7 Hi, there. Good morning. Is it on? I
8 can't tell. Probably not.

9 RONNIE DANIELS:

10 There you go.

11 KATIE NELSON:

12 There we go.

13 Okay. So good morning. I will be
14 presenting a beneficial -- a proposed beneficial
15 use site within Railroad Corner, which is near the
16 mouth of the West Pascagoula in Jackson County.

17 It is in the General Use District. The
18 Mississippi Department of Marine Resources is
19 actually the applicant. Covington Civil and
20 Environmental -- just kidding.

21 RONNIE DANIELS:

22 That's the last one.

23 There we go.

24 KATIE NELSON:

25 Okay. Thank you, Brady.

1 So I guess let me go ahead and start
2 over because I'm sure what y'all were reading was
3 not correct.

4 So I will be presenting a proposed
5 Beneficial Use site within Railroad Corner, which
6 is near the mouth of the West Pascagoula in
7 Jackson County.

8 The Mississippi Department of Marine
9 Resources is actually the applicant for this
10 project. The project area is currently under the
11 General Use District. Covington Civil and
12 Environmental is agent, and the purpose and need
13 for this project is to create approximately 175
14 acres of tidal marsh habitat and provide an
15 additional location for the placement of dredged
16 materials.

17 The overall project impact is to fill
18 coastal wetlands for the construction of a
19 Beneficial Use site. To accomplish this, the
20 applicant is proposing three containment
21 structures. One, 1,365-foot rock berm in the
22 southern extent of the project area, a 3,500-foot
23 earthen berm on the western side of the project
24 area to protect existing SAV, 1,325-foot vegetated
25 berm on the eastern side of the project to

1 reinforce existing marsh habitat, and
2 additionally, a 926-square-foot area of marsh will
3 be covered by the eastern tie-in of the proposed
4 rock berm.

5 And this is the project location. It is
6 noted by a star.

7 And here is the project diagram, so the
8 proposed rock containment berm is highlighted in
9 purple. It's a little bit hard to see, but it is
10 at the southern extent of the project area and,
11 like I said, in purple.

12 The proposed earthen berm is highlighted
13 in pink, and it is waterward of the existing SAV,
14 which is shown in green.

15 The proposed vegetated berm is
16 highlighted in yellow and is at the eastern side
17 of the project area, and this will reinforce
18 existing marsh habitats in that area.

19 The proposed marsh impact area is shown
20 in blue and it is at the eastern tie-in of the
21 proposed rock berm.

22 Also noted on the diagram is temporary
23 impacts, which include access canals that will be
24 dredged out to allow equipment to reach the
25 proposed project areas for the containment berms,

1 and these areas will be allowed to fill in
2 naturally once construction is completed, and
3 that's in orange.

4 The proposed project is allowable within
5 the General Use District, but the applicant is
6 requesting a change to the use plan in the
7 footprint of the proposed project to a Special
8 Use, S-6, restoration and enhancement areas.

9 The applicant is justifying this request
10 under Title 22, Part 23, Chapter 7, Section
11 105.06.01, which states that: No significant
12 environmental impacts would occur. There are no
13 feasible alternatives. The general public and
14 governmental entities were notified of the
15 project. No significant conflicts with
16 surrounding uses or public access to coastal
17 wetlands would occur, and the activity does not
18 adversely affect the public interest in wetlands
19 protection.

20 The applicant is requesting a variance
21 to the coastal program under Title 22, Part 23
22 Chapter 8, Section 114.01, which states: The
23 permanent filling of coastal wetlands below the
24 mean high tide line because of potential adverse
25 and cumulative impacts is not authorized.

1 Their justification for the variance
2 request is the same -- under the same chapter of
3 the coastal program, but in Section 118.04 which
4 states: Impacts to coastal wetlands would be no
5 worse than if the guidelines were followed.

6 And further explanation of that: The
7 filling of shallow water bottoms is conducted to
8 support ecological enhancement, which will provide
9 a net positive environmental impact. This project
10 will create approximately 175 acres of productive
11 tidal marsh habitat through the use of -- through
12 the beneficial use of dredged materials.

13 Notification of this project appeared in
14 the *Sun Herald* for three consecutive Sundays,
15 which was January 7th, 14th and 21st of this year.
16 And notification of the proposed project also
17 appeared on our DMR website on January 4th through
18 January 26th. No public comments were received
19 from either of those notices.

20 MDEQ has issued a 401 Water Quality
21 Certification. MDAH has no objections on the
22 project, and the Mississippi Secretary of State,
23 they basically say: We authorize this use of the
24 public trust land at this location for the
25 purposes identified in the application.

1 The staff of marine resources has
2 conducted a thorough evaluation of the project and
3 has made findings on the decision factors
4 according with our coastal program. The project
5 would serve a higher public interest by providing
6 an additional Beneficial Use Site for dredged
7 materials for current and future local dredging
8 projects and by creating a highly productive marsh
9 habitat that would protect shorelines from wave
10 energy while also performing environmental
11 functions such as improving water quality,
12 promoting settlement of suspended particulates and
13 providing habitat to various species of birds,
14 fish crustaceans and other invertebrates.

15 Therefore, staff requests a motion that
16 the Commission recommend to the Executive Director
17 to approve the requested -- to approve the
18 requested variance, approve the requested use plan
19 change and approve the permit as requested.

20 Do you guys have any questions? Do you
21 need me to go back?

22 CAM ROBERDS:

23 That's a lot of -- a good bit of
24 information.

25 KATIE NELSON:

1 Yes.

2 CAM ROBERDS:

3 The way I'm looking is you basically
4 have a mud bottom that's, you know, water, tidal,
5 but you guys are missing the SAVs and you're
6 creating 175 acres of marsh --

7 KATIE NELSON:

8 Uh-huh.

9 CAM ROBERDS:

10 -- to filter, you know, our water, so I
11 think that's good.

12 KATIE NELSON:

13 Yes. There is some existing SAV, as I
14 stated, which is in green, and where they are
15 anticipating to protect that with one of berms.

16 RONNIE DANIELS:

17 Any other questions?

18 (No response.)

19 RONNIE DANIELS:

20 Do we have a motion to approve the
21 staff's recommendation?

22 CAM ROBERDS:

23 I'll make a motion to approve the staff
24 recommendation.

25 JASON OSBORNE:

1 And I'll second.

2 RONNIE DANIELS:

3 All in favor?

4 (Unanimous vote.)

5 RONNIE DANIELS:

6 All right. Thank you. Good job.

7 All right. Up next is going to be
8 finance and administration, Ms. Leslie Brewer.

9 LESLIE BREWER:

10 Good morning, everybody. I'm presenting
11 the financials for January 31st, 2024.

12 At the end of January, our state revenue
13 was 4.8 million. Our agency revenue was 26.1.

14 State net income is 605,000 -- 605,000,
15 yeah. Agency net income is 1.7 million.

16 After seven months, we have 90.1 percent
17 of our budget remaining for operations, and
18 Tidelands has 62.9.

19 Anybody have any questions?

20 RONNIE DANIELS:

21 Thank you.

22 All right. Ms. Charmaine.

23 CHARMAINE SCHMERMUND:

24 Good morning. The Mississippi
25 Department of Marine Resources had seven media

1 mentions since the January MACMR meeting. News
2 items included last month's fish record, the
3 recreational offshore landing permit and the
4 Commercial Vessel Safety Program.

5 The Office of Marine Patrol took part in
6 Career Day at Gautier Elementary School on
7 February 16th.

8 Artificial Reef Bureau director, Travis
9 Williams, co-authored the paper, "Artificial Reef
10 Footprint in the United States Ocean," and it has
11 been published in the January 2024 *Nature*
12 *Sustainability Journal* where he and the agency
13 were both recognized.

14 The Seafood Technology Bureau's
15 Kristina Broussard, Raul Anzola and Jilliane Craft
16 took part in the Ag and Outdoor Expo Spring Show
17 in Jackson this past weekend.

18 Finfish Bureau scientist, Kyle
19 Wiggington, presented the poster "Efficacy of Fyke
20 Nets for Monitoring Southern Flounder Along the
21 Mississippi Gulf Coast" at the Mississippi -- at
22 the annual Mississippi chapter meeting of the
23 American Fisheries Society. The meeting was held
24 in Tupelo, February 14th through the 16th. CSO
25 Rick Burris and finfish scientist, Matt Burns,

1 also participated. That's it.

2 RONNIE DANIELS:

3 All right. Thank you, Charmaine.

4 All right. Next up, state records.

5 Trevor.

6 TREVOR MONCRIEF:

7 We've got a good one today, folks. All
8 right.

9 This is a conventional tackle record.
10 It's a red grouper. The old record was 20 pounds,
11 1.2 ounces. The new record is 22 pounds,
12 12 ounces.

13 The angler is Mr. Ron McMillan.
14 Mr. McMillan beat his old record. He held the
15 20-pound record, caught the new one, brought it
16 in, just wanted to upstage himself.

17 There's a picture of the fish. There is
18 Mr. McMillan with the fish.

19 All we need is a motion to adopt the new
20 state record.

21 RONNIE DANIELS:

22 Great looking fish, and I'll be happy to
23 make the motion.

24 CAM ROBERDS:

25 I'll second it.

1 RONNIE DANIELS:

2 All in favor?

3 (Unanimous vote.)

4 RONNIE DANIELS:

5 I think it looks like he has got a --
6 his lure is in the gunnel right there. Brady, can
7 I blow this up so I can see what he was fishing
8 with?

9 RONNIE DANIELS:

10 The coordinates would be bonus points
11 too, right?

12 CAM ROBERDS:

13 Exactly.

14 RONNIE DANIELS:

15 Thank, you Trevor.

16 All right. Public comments, we have one
17 public comment today. Leo Manuel. Did I say that
18 right?

19 LEO MANUEL:

20 Yes, sir.

21 RONNIE DANIELS:

22 All right. Come on up, Mr. Manuel.

23 LEO MANUEL:

24 Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

25 Is that okay? Can you hear me now?

1 RONNIE DANIELS:

2 We got you now.

3 LEO MANUEL:

4 That's difficult to follow, but I will
5 try.

6 As you said, my name is Leo Manuel. I'm
7 actually an attorney with Balch and Bingham, and I
8 wanted to spend a minute to talk to you about the
9 bottom oystering reefing program.

10 Chairman, you alluded to it earlier in
11 your update, I think the minutes, which I think it
12 accomplishes one of the reasons for me coming here
13 today. I have got a client and potentially others
14 that are concerned about the letters that were
15 sent out on February 16th, Friday, pretty much
16 abruptly terminating that leasing program.

17 You know, I understand -- and I would
18 have, quite frankly, requested to be on the agenda
19 to discuss this, but under your rules, I would
20 have required 10 days' notice, which I couldn't
21 do, so I'm really just here to kind of get on the
22 record, tell you what some of the concerns are
23 from the applicant's standpoint and we can go from
24 there.

25 And so as you alluded to, there was a

1 letter that was sent to all applicants, as I
2 appreciate, on February 16th that terminated the
3 leasing program. I was notified of it over the
4 weekend. Admittedly, I don't know all the facts.
5 You're going to know much more about them than I
6 am. I'm looking into them.

7 But as far as I can understand, this
8 program was created by legislation last year.
9 That was passed. The DMR noticed and published
10 regulations back in May to formalize the program.
11 RFPs were issued back in July. That requested
12 proposals be submitted in August, which, as I
13 appreciate, several were, including my client's.

14 And then there was an evaluation process
15 that was undertaken. I'm not sure of the details
16 of that process. The regulations aren't terribly
17 detailed about that as well, and, of course,
18 you're not required to elaborate on it too much
19 publicly.

20 But be that as it may, at least my
21 client was awarded leases on December 4th of 2023
22 and was asked to come in January to sign his lease
23 after the 30-day notice provision that's in the
24 statute ran. It's my understanding -- and I
25 reviewed your published notice -- that that did

1 occur and the 30 days did run.

2 January came, and the leases were not
3 tendered to him. He has been asking for weeks,
4 and then the next communication that was received
5 was the letter on the Friday terminating the
6 program.

7 And so it's a little troubling, quite
8 frankly, from his perspective and I'm sure other
9 applicants' perspectives about why the program is
10 being halted in literally the 11th and a half
11 hour. There is not much explanation. The letter
12 alludes to the fact that there was public comments
13 received. I'm not aware -- I could not find and
14 my client was not aware of any opportunity to
15 provide any public comments, other than through
16 the notice of the regulations that were published
17 back in May and/or the notice of the leases to be
18 tendered back in December. Of course, those
19 comments were not provided in the communication.
20 I don't know if any were received, what they were.
21 If you're willing to tender them to us, what they
22 were, that would be the great.

23 I'm really sort of here in, honestly,
24 sort of protest, because, quite frankly, my client
25 wasn't sure he wanted me to be here. But having

1 learned about this as a lawyer over the weekend,
2 I'm in sort of defense preservation mode, quite
3 frankly, and I'm just trying to get on the record
4 somehow, some way. We don't know what to do or
5 what we would or can do at this point.

6 I want to just communicate to y'all it
7 seems to me, personally -- I'm speaking on behalf
8 of me, not my client now -- that the communication
9 with respect to this program over the last few
10 weeks has been poor, to say the least.

11 And, you know, if there is anything that
12 can be done, I would much prefer to sit down with
13 somebody and see what can be done and have a
14 better understanding of what's going on. The
15 letter alludes to the fact that you're seeking
16 to -- to seek changes in legislation. I heard
17 your legislative update. It was consistent with
18 my review last night. I didn't see a bill that
19 really impacted this program at all. It's been
20 dropped. The drop deadline was yesterday, I
21 believe, in the legislature, so I don't perceive
22 any way in which a change in the regulations or
23 law for this program could even occur this year.

24 And so it's just confusing, and so I
25 will leave it at that. I know I only have three

1 minutes. I wasn't here prepared to kind of
2 litigate anything. I don't -- I'm not trying to
3 allude that we intend to do that. I really am
4 just here to make sure, one, that this Commission
5 was aware the action was taken. It appears that
6 you were. It's not clear to me whether you had a
7 vote in that or not. I could not find in previous
8 meeting agendas or minutes that were available
9 online that that was the case.

10 And so I really just wanted to get out
11 onto the record sort of the applicant's point of
12 view with respect to this program and see if there
13 is a dialogue that can occur after this meeting
14 or, you know, some time in the near future to
15 figure out what's going on, what we can do.
16 That's really it.

17 RONNIE DANIELS:

18 Thank you.

19 LEO MANUEL:

20 Yeah, absolutely.

21 RONNIE DANIELS:

22 Patrick, you got anything?

23 PATRICK LEVINE:

24 Yeah. I was going to say, thank you for
25 comments.

1 Director Spraggins, were you able to
2 listen and do you have any comments?

3 JOE SPRAGGINS:

4 Yeah, I was. And first off, I
5 appreciate your comment and thank you for being
6 able to come here and talk to us today.

7 I can tell you that I don't think
8 that -- first off, no one was awarded any piece of
9 property or anything. I think there was a letter
10 sent out to them to maybe tell them that these are
11 the -- what areas that we looked at that they
12 could possibly be able to lease, so I hope that
13 was not the misunderstanding, that -- when you
14 said something awarded because I hope we did not.
15 As far as I know, we did not. We did not award
16 anything to anyone.

17 The reason -- and if you look at the
18 senate bill -- and Senator Thompson, I think he
19 dropped it. I think he dropped that bill at the
20 last minute -- was to be able to modify this. We
21 met with the Senate and the House in the last
22 couple of weeks to be able to look at it, and they
23 did drop a bill to be able to modify what the
24 state statute says.

25 There is a couple of little issues in

1 it, and, you know, we will work on those as the
2 time goes. But the biggest thing was that we
3 had -- we had a couple, little minor issues
4 with -- there is some things in our own
5 legislation as far as our regulations. And we
6 needed to make it better for the person that's
7 going to be able to lease the property and also
8 better for the resource use of the State of
9 Mississippi. That was the reasoning for that.

10 We put a lot of work into trying to
11 decide which way to go with this. And if we had
12 really been -- if we had went with the rules and
13 followed the ones that we should, that were in
14 effect at the time, we would have had less than
15 16 percent of the people that we would have been
16 able to lease the property to because of what
17 happened.

18 And some of them, it was some things
19 about -- we had to have square corners, which
20 would eliminate a lot of people on what they did.
21 The other thing was that the State had to -- that
22 you either got all or none of the property that
23 you asked for, which would have caused a lot of
24 issues there with what we would have done. Also,
25 it couldn't be any longer -- more than twice the

1 length of the width of the property, which was
2 another issue. So the first-come/first-served
3 stuff that was coming in, first-come/first-served
4 didn't mean that you were most qualified, by any
5 means, and so that would have been an issue, too,
6 that we would have had to work with. And it would
7 have meant that someone -- if it was a
8 first-come/first-served and someone got it in
9 before the other one asking for the same property,
10 we had no choice but to give it to them and they
11 may not even have anywhere close to the
12 qualifications of the other people.

13 We need to make it right. We want to
14 make it right for the State of Mississippi. We
15 want to make it right for the people that are
16 working in the state and the ones that are leasing
17 it, so I hope you understand that.

18 I will be more than glad to meet with
19 you at any time. I'm out of town this week and
20 next week, as Patrick said, but I will try to sit
21 down with you. We're trying to work some
22 legislation out. It should come out soon as far
23 as the bill. And I'm not exactly sure which bill
24 it is, but I can get that to you, now, as soon as
25 we get it. Also, we'll be coming out for public

1 comment, too, about our changes in the regulations
2 as far as the Department of Marine Resources.

3 I hope this helps you a little bit. If
4 not, I'll be -- I'm here. If you just ask me,
5 I'll be glad to comment on it any way I can.

6 LEO MANUEL:

7 Yeah. Director, thank you. And I'm
8 sorry to have done this when you're on the phone.
9 I understand that this is awkward and that's
10 really not my intent. I just -- time is of the
11 essence from my perspective, so, you know, the
12 circumstances are what they are. I do appreciate
13 your explanation.

14 Of course, you know, having just started
15 looking into this over the weekend and not being
16 an applicant myself, you know, I'm happy to look
17 into everything and discuss everything you
18 mentioned. I really appreciate your invitation to
19 sit down and discuss. I think I would like to
20 accept that invitation when time would permit.
21 And I'll -- you know, I will work with your staff
22 or whomever you direct me to do so to coordinate
23 that.

24 But, you know, I just wanted to -- I
25 just want to thank again the Commission for giving

1 me the time to speak here today and just express
2 some of the concerns we had and see what we can do
3 about, you know, making the program -- I
4 understand the -- you know, everybody has a desire
5 to make the program work. You know, my client,
6 for one, believes he is a strong candidate and can
7 do so, and so that's what we're trying to pursue.

8 JOE SPRAGGINS:

9 Well, we'll be glad to help you any way
10 we can. The only time I have this week is late
11 Friday afternoon. If you're available, I'll be
12 glad to meet with you, but other than that, it
13 would have to be after the first of March.

14 LEO MANUEL:

15 Understood. Actually, yeah, I think I
16 am available, having not looked at my calendar,
17 and I will just leave my card with your chairman
18 or somebody.

19 JOE SPRAGGINS:

20 Okay.

21 LEO MANUEL:

22 Thank you. And thank you, Chairman.
23 Thank you, Commission.

24 RONNIE DANIELS:

25 Thank you for coming out.

1 All right. No other public comments.

2 Do we have a meeting -- a motion to
3 adjourn?

4 JONATHAN McLENDON:

5 I'll make the motion.

6 JASON OSBORNE:

7 I'll second.

8 RONNIE DANIELS:

9 All in favor?

10 (Unanimous vote.)

11 RONNIE DANIELS:

12 Everyone have a great week.

13 (Adjourned at 10:05 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 placed the
12 witness under oath to truthfully answer all
13 questions in this matter under the authority vested
14 in me by the State of Mississippi.

15 I further certify that I am not in the employ
16 of, or related to, any counsel or party in this
17 matter, and have no interest, monetary or
18 otherwise, in the final outcome of the proceedings.

19 Witness my signature and seal, this the
20 _____ day of _____, 2024.

21
22 /s/ Melissa Burdine-Rodolfich

23
24 Melissa Burdine-Rodolfich
25 My Commission Expires 4/28/24