

STATE OF MISSISSIPPI

MISSISSIPPI ADVISORY COMMISSION ON MARINE RESOURCES

COMMISSION MEETING

Tuesday, May 21, 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
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 MACMR May 21st meeting.

4 To start off the day, I'm going to ask
5 the Director to lead us in the Pledge of
6 Allegiance.

7 (Pledge of Allegiance.)

8 RONNIE DANIELS:

9 We're going to keep you on the mic. You
10 want to lead us in prayer?

11 JOE SPRAGGINS:

12 I will. And, you know, first off, you
13 know, we'd just like to thank everybody for what
14 you're doing. And I know that a lot of people --
15 we have had a lot of people that had accidents
16 over the Coast here in the last few weeks and I
17 want to pray for the families because a lot of
18 them are hurting right now. So if we could, let's
19 go to the Lord.

20 (Moment of prayer.)

21 RONNIE DANIELS:

22 All right. Do we have any discussion on
23 the minutes from April 16th?

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 I'll second it.

6 RONNIE DANIELS:

7 All in favor?

8 (Unanimous vote.)

9 RONNIE DANIELS:

10 Do we have any discussion or changes for
11 today's agenda?

12 (No response.)

13 RONNIE DANIELS:

14 Do we have a motion to approve?

15 CAM ROBERDS:

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

18 JASON OSBORNE:

19 I'll second.

20 RONNIE DANIELS:

21 All in favor?

22 (Unanimous vote.)

23 RONNIE DANIELS:

24 All right. Mr. Joe, it's your show.

25 JOE SPRAGGINS:

1 All right. Well, a lot of things have
2 been going on in the last few months obviously
3 with the legislative session going on. We have
4 a -- I'll give you just a little bit of an update
5 of where we're at.

6 Our -- the oyster bill that we had
7 and -- which was to be able to lease our on-bottom
8 oysters, Senate Bill 2648, was signed by the
9 Governor on the 13th, so you'll have -- you'll see
10 something today in our -- with fisheries and we'll
11 be going to Part 22 to be able to change our
12 regulations to match up to what the state statute
13 says so we'll have this thing right.

14 Hopefully, we have it right this time.
15 We've put a lot of effort into it. The team has,
16 and so hopefully we'll be able to start being able
17 to go out today, if y'all can approve this, and
18 we'll go out and start changing our regulations.
19 And then our goal is to try to shoot for somewhere
20 around the first of August time frame to be able
21 to start doing leases, so hopefully we'll be able
22 to get them in the spring -- the fall spat season,
23 and so they can cultch and do some other things
24 the way they do it.

25 Any questions on that?

1 (No response.)

2 JOE SPRAGGINS:

3 We do have our budget. It was passed
4 the other day, so we're very proud of the Governor
5 and the legislators and the House and Senate for
6 passing our budget for us. We were one of the
7 last ones, but we finally got it in and so
8 everything worked out.

9 But, you know, it's amazing. You look
10 at it. It's \$256 million, so that's a lot of
11 budget, but a lot of that is because of projects,
12 so I want people to understand that. That's not
13 how much it costs to pay to run the agency, but
14 that's what it takes to keep the projects going
15 and things that we're doing, so we're very proud
16 of that.

17 We also have House Bill 1006,
18 recreational crab license, so in other words, you
19 don't have -- it's not by the boat -- the boat
20 itself or was it -- Rick, it's for?

21 RICK BURRIS:

22 Individuals, not households.

23 JOE SPRAGGINS:

24 Household. It's not a household. It's
25 individuals, yeah. So in other words, it used to

1 be that a household could only have so many
2 licenses. Six.

3 RICK BURRIS:

4 Six traps.

5 JOE SPRAGGINS:

6 Huh?

7 RICK BURRIS:

8 Six traps.

9 JOE SPRAGGINS:

10 Yeah, six crab traps. Now it's
11 individuals. So that makes it a lot different
12 because -- so that worked out good.

13 House Bill 1007, authorizing the
14 printing of oystering tags means that basically if
15 you have a business, especially when we do the
16 on-bottom and the off-bottom, that they'll be able
17 to do something where they can print their own
18 tags up. We have rules for them to be able to do
19 it. They don't have to come in and get one from
20 DMR, so that's something that we can use.

21 Shrimp trawling, provides certain waters
22 closed for shrimp, especially half a mile and
23 anything inside of that, you can't trawl and do
24 anything else. But the way it was written, it was
25 messed up to the point to where we -- you possibly

1 couldn't even throw a cast net, and so we've got
2 that straightened. So now people, kids, can go
3 out, throw a net and do whatever they want to
4 inside of that. You just can't trawl inside of
5 it.

6 House Bill 1783 was our appropriations
7 and the other one we just mentioned.

8 We have one other bill. It was House
9 Bill 1439, riparian rights in Hancock County, and
10 that basically took an area over there and changed
11 it from 750 yards to 300 yards as far as the state
12 as to where you could do your riparian rights, and
13 so that's basically so we can do oysters and do
14 other things in that area. And that's only for
15 state-owned property. It has nothing to do with
16 private property. Private property stays the
17 same.

18 Any questions on anything in the
19 legislature?

20 JASON OSBORNE:

21 You going to talk about my confirmation?

22 JOE SPRAGGINS:

23 Oh, yeah, that's right. You did get
24 confirmed, didn't you? I was still wondering. I
25 never did see them sign that.

1 JASON OSBORNE:

2 So now you're stuck with me.

3 JOE SPRAGGINS:

4 Yeah. Now I'm stuck with you. But
5 Jason is confirmed, so we do have him. Sorry
6 about that. I forgot. I don't know why they left
7 that off. I guess they just didn't want you to be
8 talked about, huh?

9 All right. Anything else? We have got
10 a couple of other commissioners that will be
11 coming up in the first of July, but, you know, the
12 Governor put them in. At that point, what we do
13 there, we'll go from there.

14 All right. Southeast Regional Partners
15 for Planning and Sustainability Principles and
16 Steering Committee met 7 through May -- 9 May
17 at -- in Gulfport, and we were able to be a part
18 of that and we appreciated it. Secretary of State
19 was the one that was instrumental helping us being
20 able to be a part of that. And so, Ray, tell him
21 thank you so much for that. We do appreciate it.
22 And he was there also.

23 And we had a good -- it was a good
24 working group. Secretary for Environmental for
25 the United States was there, and I tell you what,

1 it was very interesting to be able to sit down and
2 listen to some people. And we had quite a few
3 states represented and was able to understand what
4 was going on and work with hand in hand. We got
5 to see firsthand knowledge of people that we will
6 now know to be able to talk to that we didn't know
7 from other states around us, like, you know, close
8 states, but anyway, very good.

9 Governor's 2024 Gulf Council -- Gulf
10 Coast Advisory Committee on Seafood will be
11 meeting this afternoon, and Mark is my co-partner
12 in that. And so we will be meeting this afternoon
13 with the DEQ to be able to look at some projects
14 that are going on on the Coast that people are
15 putting into the portal so hopefully we'll be able
16 to fund some more projects there when that time
17 comes.

18 The auction, you know, we have got a lot
19 of equipment, a lot of stuff, some vehicles, some
20 other stuff, even a boat or two, I think, is out
21 there and some other things that are up for
22 auction and it ends tomorrow at 2:00 p.m. So if
23 you want to do it, you can go online and you can
24 set some -- at www.dmr.ms.gov and you can be able
25 to put your application even -- in online. But

1 it's a closed bid, a sealed bid, and we will open
2 them tomorrow at 2:00 or, you know, start opening
3 the bids and be able to say who won what part.
4 But it's always good to be able to get rid of some
5 of the equipment that we have that we're not using
6 anymore.

7 Memorial Day is coming up on the 27th.
8 We will be closed that day, but -- except for -- a
9 lot of our marine patrol will not be closed, will
10 it?

11 WILL FREEMAN:

12 No.

13 JOE SPRAGGINS:

14 We'll be running wide open, so they will
15 be out there. We hope that everybody has a safe
16 weekend. We know that it's coming up, and I'm
17 sure that a lot of different people will be out on
18 the water and we'll just see what the weather
19 turns out. If it's like this weekend coming up --
20 you know, this is beautiful and it's saying all
21 the way through Sunday, right, and Memorial Day is
22 coming right after.

23 So tidelands applications start May 31st
24 and end July 1st. So if you want to put any
25 tidelands applications in, you need to get them in

1 to Sonja by then, so you've got a month to do it.

2 We're going to be -- we're going to
3 sponsor the Mississippi Gulf Coast Billfish
4 Classic and it will start on the 3rd of June and
5 go through the 9th. We're doing a seafood dinner
6 on the night of the 5th for the captains and the
7 boat -- the ones on the boat.

8 I think it will be a great idea for us
9 to be able to market Mississippi seafood, and
10 that's what the goal is. We want people to
11 understand how great Mississippi seafood is, and I
12 think we have some giveaways that we're going to
13 give them, too, that's going to take home
14 Mississippi seafood and how great it is. So
15 hopefully, we'll -- maybe we'll break a new record
16 again since Alabama has got it now. Maybe we'll
17 get it back, you know. I don't know. We will
18 see.

19 Our next commission meeting is scheduled
20 for Tuesday, June 18th at 9:00. Any questions on
21 that?

22 (No response.)

23 JOE SPRAGGINS:

24 Bonnet Carré update, where is -- go
25 ahead. Come on up, Traci, and let's give us a

1 real quick Bonnet Carré update.

2 TRACI FLOYD:

3 Good morning. For the plus payouts for
4 financial assistance, we have 71 of the 83. Those
5 agreements are signed. We're still working our
6 way through several appeals.

7 For the commercial vessel safety
8 program, of the 146 applications received, 52 of
9 those have been processed so far and we're working
10 our way through those.

11 Our grant program for the processing --
12 seafood processing technologies, the Seafood
13 Technology Bureau has been working real hard. We
14 have an application, website landing page, news
15 release, postcard all close to finalized and that
16 will be, we propose, a 60-day application period.
17 We are just waiting for NOAA's response on how far
18 back we can go on those receipts.

19 JOE SPRAGGINS:

20 Okay. And yeah, we're just waiting on,
21 too, for NOAA's response. I may have missed it if
22 you said it --

23 TRACI FLOYD:

24 Yes, sir.

25 JOE SPRAGGINS:

1 -- but we're waiting on their response
2 to be able to decide what we can do all the way
3 back to September of --

4 TRACI FLOYD:

5 Of 2019, the year of the disaster, yes,
6 sir.

7 JOE SPRAGGINS:

8 Yeah. We're trying to make it to where
9 it's eligible all the way back to September 1st,
10 to be able to do that, and hopefully they will
11 come through. I think they have agreed pretty
12 much on it. We're just waiting on them to give us
13 final approval on it; is that correct?

14 TRACI FLOYD:

15 Hopefully, it's just formalities, is the
16 way I understand it.

17 JOE SPRAGGINS:

18 And what will that allow us to do?

19 TRACI FLOYD:

20 So it will allow us to take receipts
21 back to 2019 where before, I think it was -- I'm
22 not sure of the date. It was a couple of years
23 later.

24 JOE SPRAGGINS:

25 Yeah, it was. It was like October,

1 November.

2 TRACI FLOYD:

3 Whenever the award was announced.

4 JOE SPRAGGINS:

5 Yeah. I think it was like November or
6 something.

7 TRACI FLOYD:

8 Yeah.

9 JOE SPRAGGINS:

10 This way it will give us 2020, something
11 like that, '22.

12 TRACI FLOYD:

13 That's correct.

14 JOE SPRAGGINS:

15 And so this will give us back to where
16 we can take and be able to pay the fishermen for
17 what they're doing.

18 But, you know, I think it's great to see
19 that, 290 of the 293 signed commercial fishermen
20 agreements. That's pretty good.

21 TRACI FLOYD:

22 That's good news.

23 JOE SPRAGGINS:

24 You know, those agreements have been
25 signed, and so we're moving forward on that. And

1 71 of the 83 commercial plus payments have been
2 done, and that's up to \$108,000 we have paid some
3 people and -- to be able to make them whole.

4 And I want to -- one time -- I want you
5 to understand, too, Mississippi is the only state
6 that does this. Alabama, Louisiana, Florida and
7 Texas do not pay the commercial fishermen and
8 recreational -- you know, the fisherman for what
9 they do for their loss during the time. They use
10 it different ways. They have to do a
11 reimbursement for whatever. Mississippi is the
12 only state that ever does this, so, you know, I
13 think that's great that we can help them because
14 we are losing them right and left and we need to
15 keep our commercial fishermen.

16 TRACI FLOYD:

17 Yes, sir.

18 JOE SPRAGGINS:

19 Thank you. Any questions for Traci?

20 (No response.)

21 JOE SPRAGGINS:

22 Okay. Thank you, Traci.

23 TRACI FLOYD:

24 Thank you.

25 JOE SPRAGGINS:

1 Snapper season, well, it's coming.
2 Going to open up about -- Friday morning about
3 midnight, one minute after midnight on Friday, I
4 think, is when it opens and -- that morning, and
5 so we'll be here.

6 This year, we have about 64,000 pounds
7 of fish that are available. We're going to set
8 the season starting and we'll go to the 7th of
9 July. Is that right, Rick? And the 7th of July,
10 we will try to be able to fish to that point and
11 then we will look at it at that point and then
12 decide if there is anything left to be able to
13 continue for another -- any more season.

14 But we're working hard with NOAA. We're
15 trying everything we can to be able to get that
16 changed. We put in a new program called the
17 Mississippi Creel, and the Mississippi Creel is
18 running side by side right now, and we're doing
19 also our Tails and Scales. And we're running it
20 all together and we're running it with MRIP. And
21 hopefully, this will give us something. You know,
22 the team in fisheries are doing a great job down
23 there to make sure that we're getting what we
24 need.

25 Alabama is doing the same thing, so if

1 we -- once we get this put together, if we have
2 three states, Alabama, Mississippi, Louisiana, all
3 working under one system, it's going to be hard
4 not to be able to validate that system, you know.
5 We'll be good, and I think it will get us back to
6 where we need to be. It will probably be 2026
7 before we'll have -- see any effect of it, and --
8 but we -- hopefully, we will be able to do
9 something about it shortly.

10 Any questions on that?

11 (No response.)

12 JOE SPRAGGINS:

13 Still two fish per day and still
14 16 inches, so -- I know Louisiana has four and I'm
15 sorry, but we can't do it with the numbers that we
16 have right now.

17 All right. GOMESA funding, we got 35 --
18 we're awarded \$35,217,225 in projects that are
19 being done that was put in our 2025 budget, so
20 these are brand new projects that are coming out.

21 If you had a project from last year or
22 years prior and you have an update on it, please
23 get with Russell and send him an update on it or
24 if you don't, it will stay in the portal and we
25 will get the portal set up and it will be in the

1 portal and you don't have to update it unless
2 there is a change to it. But if you have changes
3 to it, please get it in to him, and we've got to
4 have that by the 1st of July. That's what we're
5 asking for 2025. It will be 2026 projects, is the
6 way it will work out, so please get that in.

7 Tidelands, we received 11,700,000 this
8 year, and we've -- we will be awarding those.
9 It's usually around October or November when the
10 Secretary of State gives us the check, so we'll
11 award at that point.

12 So thank -- once again, Ray, thank the
13 Secretary. We appreciate it. Thank you very much
14 for that.

15 All right. For derelict vessels, we
16 have a federal grant that's in process. A total
17 of 153 derelict vessel cases have been reported
18 since we started tracking. 115 of those vessels
19 have been removed, 38 are pending removal and five
20 are waiting on a court order right now.

21 So very great job that's being done
22 there. We appreciate that, and Steven is working
23 hard with us to do it. And him and Roy are
24 working very hard to make sure we're getting those
25 out.

1 We had about six derelict barges the
2 other day that come washing across there because
3 they broke loose last Friday when the storm -- and
4 they come barging across the Back Bay there, so --
5 but they got them all removed.

6 I'll tell you, it was moved by what
7 time, was it, Jennifer? Friday, Saturday night
8 they were all removed?

9 JENNIFER WITTMANN:

10 Yes, sir.

11 JOE SPRAGGINS:

12 So they got them removed and put back
13 out and so very minimal damage, we hope, to
14 anything, and that worked out great.

15 All right. One other thing, I got a
16 commercial -- oh, I guess I was supposed to do
17 these contracts that I haven't done. All right.
18 So while I'm doing that, let's do the employment
19 contracts. We've got quite a few employment
20 contracts, as you can see. I won't read them out,
21 but you can look at them, and quite a few new
22 hires and then one promotion.

23 And then we've got nine interns and I
24 tell you what, that's great because nine interns
25 work with us and we have had a lot of luck getting

1 interns to work with us for a year or two and then
2 hire them when they come out of college, so this
3 is fantastic and we appreciate that.

4 Any questions on that?

5 (No response.)

6 JOE SPRAGGINS:

7 All right. Any employment? Nothing.

8 All right. We've also got an actions
9 update.

10 STEVEN ECKERT:

11 Good morning. Discussed at the
12 April 2024 meeting, the Commission recommended and
13 the Director approved a motion to recommend the
14 following changes to Title 22, Part 3, Chapter 7
15 to be sent to the Secretary of State's office for
16 notice of intent. That being Subsection G. The
17 change being recreational fishing season, bag
18 limit and size limit for red snapper shall be set
19 by the Executive Director. The recreational
20 opening order for the red snapper shall include
21 language establishing the size limit, bag limit
22 and season structure for the corresponding season.
23 In the event that the size and bag limit is not
24 listed in the opening order, the established
25 limits listed above in Chapter 7 will apply. And

1 that is all the updates that we have.

2 JOE SPRAGGINS:

3 Thank you. Any questions on that? All
4 right. If not, I have got a little video I would
5 like to show you. Cam had sent it to me and I
6 have seen it prior to this, but if you can, put
7 the video up. C Spire did it and I think it's
8 fantastic, so let's see this commercial.

9 (Video played.)

10 JOE SPRAGGINS:

11 Good commercial. I tell you what, it
12 tells a good story, you know. We need more of
13 these telling the stories about South Mississippi
14 and how great our food is. Our seafood is
15 fantastic.

16 And I thank C Spire for doing that.
17 That was a good commercial that they was able to
18 put out. Hopefully, they'll get some more, that
19 they'll do some more in the future.

20 Mr. Chairman, that's all I have got
21 unless y'all want me to talk more.

22 RONNIE DANIELS:

23 We appreciate it, Joe.

24 Next up, commissioners report. Have any
25 of our Commissioners got anything to report today?

1 Nothing.

2 All right. Marine Patrol, who do we --
3 come on up.

4 JOE SPRAGGINS:

5 Most of our -- I know Chief and Deputy
6 Chief are in Jackson at a big conference.

7 WILL FREEMAN:

8 My name is Will Freeman.

9 RONNIE DANIELS:

10 How are you, Captain Freeman?

11 WILL FREEMAN:

12 So Colonel Wilkerson has tasked me to go
13 over the report. Do you have any questions at
14 this time?

15 RONNIE DANIELS:

16 I don't guess so.

17 JASON OSBORNE:

18 I feel like we should haze you a little
19 bit, so you can report back that it was brutal.

20 JOE SPRAGGINS:

21 Just be advised he is investigations,
22 you know, so don't beat him up too much.

23 WILL FREEMAN:

24 No, sir. I'm just a marine patrol at
25 heart, overworked and underpaid as the rest of us,

1 so I'm just a humble guy here to answer your
2 questions. That's it.

3 JOE SPRAGGINS:

4 Don't make him too mad.

5 WILL FREEMAN:

6 No questions.

7 RONNIE DANIELS:

8 No, I think we're good.

9 WILL FREEMAN:

10 Thank you for the opportunity.

11 JOE SPRAGGINS:

12 Hey, y'all be safe out there. I know
13 you're going to be working hard over the next few
14 weeks and, you know, snapper season starting on
15 Friday and then also the weekend and --

16 WILL FREEMAN:

17 It's going to be a rough one. The water
18 is too pretty.

19 JOE SPRAGGINS:

20 I hope the weather will be pretty and
21 water won't be so choppy and y'all will be able to
22 be out there and enjoy yourselves and have a good
23 time while you're doing it.

24 WILL FREEMAN:

25 Yes, sir.

1 JOE SPRAGGINS:

2 And the most important thing, keep them
3 safe.

4 WILL FREEMAN:

5 Yes, sir, we'll do it.

6 JOE SPRAGGINS:

7 Thank you.

8 WILL FREEMAN:

9 All right. Thanks.

10 RONNIE DANIELS:

11 All right. Next up, finance and
12 administration, Ms. Brewer.

13 LESLIE BREWER:

14 Good morning, everyone. I'm presenting
15 the financials for the end of April of 2024. The
16 state revenue is 5.8 million. Agency revenue is
17 72.8 million.

18 The state net income, a negative
19 589,000. Agency state net income of 36.3 million,
20 and, of course, GOMESA, is in -- the 41 million is
21 in there.

22 After 10 months of Fiscal Year '24,
23 operations are at 84.8 percent of budget, and
24 Tideland is at 51.3.

25 Anyone have any questions?

1 RONNIE DANIELS:

2 Any questions?

3 (No response.)

4 RONNIE DANIELS:

5 Thank you, ma'am.

6 LESLIE BREWER:

7 Thanks.

8 RONNIE DANIELS:

9 Ms. Charmaine.

10 CHARMAINE SCHMERMUND:

11 Good morning. The Mississippi
12 Department of Marine Resources had 18 media
13 mentions since the April MACMR meeting. New items
14 included greater amberjack and red snapper season
15 opening, the new 35-acre oyster reef being
16 constructed in Bay St. Louis and the winner of
17 2024 Mississippi Seafood Cookoff.

18 The Office of Marine Patrol took part in
19 the Shuckers Education Day on May 8th, Safety Day
20 at Vancleave Lower Elementary on May 17th, Water
21 and Boater Safety at the Salvation Army Kroc
22 Center on May 18th and Career Day at North
23 Woolmarket Middle School on May 20th.

24 Shrimp and Crab Bureau Director Jason
25 Saucier and NERR staff took part in the USM GenSea

1 lunch panel at the Grand Bay NERR on April 17th.
2 Seafood Technology Bureau Director Kristina
3 Broussard took part in the Sidewalk Saturday Earth
4 event in Biloxi on April 20th. Thomas Butera and
5 Kaitlyn Payne took part in Scout Eco Day at
6 Infiniti Science Center on April 20th. And all
7 bureaus in the Office of Marine Fisheries, the
8 Offices of Coastal Management and the Grand Bay
9 NERR participated in Marine Discovery Day on
10 May 11th at the Mississippi Museum of Natural
11 Science in Jackson.

12 And we hosted the 2024 Mississippi
13 Seafood Cookoff in Gulfport on May 2nd in
14 conjunction with the Gulfport Chamber of
15 Commerce's Taste, Rattle and Roll at Centennial
16 Plaza. It was a great night with six chefs
17 throughout the state competing for the title. And
18 we're proud to announce that our first ever queen
19 of Mississippi Seafood, Erika Lipe from SoLa in
20 Oxford. She won this year's cookoff with her
21 dish, brown buttered snapper with sweet potato hot
22 sauce chili crab, fried green tomatoes and
23 tarragon buttermilk. She will go on to compete
24 among other U.S. states and territories at the
25 Great American Seafood Cookoff in New Orleans on

1 August 3rd.

2 RONNIE DANIELS:

3 Joe, I know they don't let Auburn people
4 into Oxford, but, man, that SoLa restaurant up
5 there is good.

6 JOE SPRAGGINS:

7 You know, I understand. I'll be quiet.

8 RONNIE DANIELS:

9 Thank you, Charmaine.

10 JOE SPRAGGINS:

11 Hey, we do have to -- I forgot to
12 mention it, but we're doing the Neshoba County
13 Fair coming up on the 30th of June -- July. So
14 that's a big event and if you -- you know, if
15 you're ever looking at somewhere to come up -- and
16 obviously, there is a lot of things that happen in
17 Neshoba County, but on that Wednesday night of the
18 30th, we will be cooking and doing seafood for the
19 Coast and it's a OneCoast deal. And we have a lot
20 of people that come, and last year there was over
21 500, almost 600 hundred people that showed up for
22 that one thing and that's a good way for us to
23 advertise that seafood.

24 RONNIE DANIELS:

25 Nice.

1 All right. Marine fisheries, annual
2 shrimp season update.

3 JASON SAUCIER:

4 Good morning, Commissioners. I'm going
5 to go over the annual update with you, and feel
6 free to stop me if y'all have any questions.

7 So I want to go over a little bit of
8 information from last year and previous years,
9 landings and values. You do see a slight increase
10 in 2021 to 2022 to 2023 in overall landings. This
11 is every shrimp landed in the state. But we see a
12 consistent decline starting in 2017 of the overall
13 fisheries value, and I will dig a little bit
14 deeper into that.

15 So we do see species composition here,
16 with the exception of pink shrimp. We see a
17 consistent increase from 2019, which was the year
18 we had a significant hit to the brown shrimp
19 population. We see a consistent increase in
20 landings and compensation of the overall landings
21 with brown shrimp.

22 So just to dig a little bit deeper in
23 the overall catch, I wanted to show this slide,
24 and so we're looking at Mississippi Sound only.
25 This is not all shrimp landed in the State of

1 Mississippi, but those caught in our waters that
2 we manage, all species, and we see a significant
3 increase in 2023 in the -- that's kind of shifted
4 over.

5 I don't know why that legend down at the
6 bottom is like it is, but that blue-green colored
7 bar is the average pounds per trip, so we do see
8 some variation in trip length. And we can't
9 really analyze down to that level, but if we just
10 were to look per trip in our shrimp fishery, we
11 see a drastic increase in the catch per trip.

12 So what I wanted to demonstrate is that
13 we're seeing plenty of shrimp out there. We're
14 just not seeing as many trips overall, and so what
15 we have to consider is fishing behavior might be
16 different across these years and that could be for
17 a number of reasons. They may have not gone
18 because of fuel prices or because of prices that
19 they're getting for the shrimp or certain sizes
20 that they need to catch. They might not be
21 available. There are disparities in market sizes,
22 so obviously bigger shrimp fetch a higher price
23 most years.

24 And overall number of trips is probably
25 a lot lower in 2023 or lower than some of these

1 previous years, but if we see the value, that
2 orange line, even though our 2023 average pounds
3 per shrimp is way higher than those previous
4 years, the value is down lower than any of those
5 years.

6 So this is our opening dates starting
7 historically going back to '23, last year, and in
8 2022 and 2020, we had May openings. If you
9 remember, in 2019, we had a unique circumstance
10 with the Bonnet Carré spillway opening, so we
11 ended up opening in late June. So -- but three of
12 the last five years we had May openings, and the
13 average, if we were to go back all the way to
14 1975, our average opening date is the 7th of June.

15 All right. So this is our vessel
16 counts. We do get out on the water on opening
17 day. We do an aerial survey and then we also do
18 interviews on the water, and we have seen a
19 drastic decline. If we were to go back and show
20 some 1990 years there, we would see a lot higher
21 numbers as well, but over the last few years we've
22 seen a consistent decline in effort at the
23 beginning of the season.

24 Some years, we've got inclement weather.
25 Like in 2022, we only had 32 boats, but it was

1 storming that day. But we really are seeing sort
2 of a shift in the fishery. There's not as much
3 effort on the front end of the season because
4 there's not as high a demand for the smaller
5 shrimp.

6 If we look at license sales, the same
7 kind of theme here. Starting in 2010, we see a
8 consistent decline and really what we key in are
9 the commercial license sales because of the --
10 that's the majority of the fishery effort. And so
11 if you look at the red bar there, the resident
12 commercial license sales have consistently
13 declined.

14 So moving on to shrimp sampling, this is
15 the slide we show y'all every year. We do still
16 do the post-larval sampling or our GCRL does that
17 for us beginning in February and goes through May
18 just to look at when the brown shrimp are moving
19 into the bays, and then they'll migrate out when
20 they get to a different life stage.

21 So beginning in the middle of April, we
22 start our trawl sampling program. We used a
23 standardized 16-foot trawl at set stations, and we
24 are sampling to determine average size per day so
25 that we can project out that opening date when

1 they'll hit 68 count. So here's our stations
2 across the sound.

3 And then this is just a look at what
4 we've seen so far this year as far as CPUE, so
5 this is standardized to catch permitting of a
6 trawl, so we do, like I said, 10 trawls per day.
7 We started April 18th this year and this is what
8 we're seeing in 2024 all the way through
9 yesterday, so we did sample yesterday. It's not
10 as much catch as what we saw last year in 2022,
11 but it's still above 2019 and all the way through
12 2021.

13 This is just a representative of sample
14 at each station, what we saw yesterday. You can
15 see there's pretty wide disparity in sizes. I
16 tried to scale that the best I could, even though
17 the pictures are different sizes. That scale is
18 fairly similar so you can kind of see that there
19 is a big difference based on where you are in the
20 Sound.

21 And I just wanted to -- I put a reminder
22 in here that we still have this program ongoing
23 for our skimmer fleet. It started back in 2021
24 and it will end in July. For anybody that hasn't
25 already updated or added this gear, there is still

1 an opportunity for reimbursement there, up to \$700
2 per vessel and they can apply online on our
3 website.

4 And then just a reminder, I already
5 mentioned this, but we will continue to sample.
6 We'll do another sample later this week. And at
7 this point in time, we don't have a recommendation
8 for the director, but we will recommend to the
9 Director an opening date based on projection of
10 when they'll hit that legal size of 68 count and
11 we'll make sure to get that word out through
12 public notices and through the website. And then
13 we've got our 1-800 number -- or 1-866 number,
14 1-866-We Trawl. Anybody can call that 24 hours a
15 day and we'll update that hotline immediately when
16 we set the opening date.

17 And I will just take any questions y'all
18 have.

19 JONATHAN McLENDON:

20 Yeah. Thank you, Jason. So, you know,
21 this year Louisiana opened like 16 days later.
22 You think Mississippi is kind of going to fall
23 into that same pattern? I saw last year we were
24 like 22 behind Louisiana.

25 JASON SAUCIER:

1 Yeah. Usually we're about three weeks
2 behind them. I mean, they do open on 100-count
3 shrimp, so it's a little bit different management
4 strategy there. Historically, it's a two- to
5 three-week delay on average, and I can't project
6 it now that it's going to be exactly there, but
7 that's typically what we see.

8 And I know that Louisiana, historically,
9 they open by zone.

10 JONATHAN McLENDON:

11 Yes.

12 JASON SAUCIER:

13 And they manage those zones
14 independently as far as opening dates based on
15 what their samples are showing. So this year, I
16 think it was a little bit different. I think it
17 was a statewide opening. I think there was some
18 strategy there to help benefit the industry.

19 JONATHAN McLENDON:

20 So are you seeing -- are you seeing
21 higher counts to the east or the west over there?

22 JASON SAUCIER:

23 Higher counts probably to the east, and
24 that's just the most recent sample, which is off
25 the top of my head, but that's subject to change.

1 We did get a bunch of rain last week on Monday and
2 then on Friday, Saturday and that pushed some
3 smaller shrimp out and that's typical, so -- and
4 we do have a moon coming up Thursday.

5 JONATHAN McLENDON:

6 And that's kind of what we've seen as
7 far as from a processing perspective, is that
8 catch-per-unit is going up just because the raw
9 material prices are hovering at like 20-year lows.
10 You know, right now in Louisiana, we have kind of
11 started out in the same vicinity that we left off
12 in December, so this year really doesn't act like
13 it's going to be anything different than what we
14 have seen.

15 JASON SAUCIER:

16 Yeah. I did attend a presentation
17 Louisiana did at the ASPA meeting a couple weeks
18 ago and they were seeing higher CPUE at least in
19 the western part of the state where a lot of the
20 brown shrimp is produced that ends up in Texas,
21 higher CPUEs than they have seen in a long time.

22 JONATHAN McLENDON:

23 But it's -- you know, with the low
24 prices and the high diesel, like what we've seen
25 from the fishermen -- just like, I'm sure, they'll

1 tell you about the speckled trout. Like, when
2 they're on, they're on, and they can't afford to
3 go when they're off. So I think you've seen a lot
4 of this patience on the part of the fishermen
5 waiting seven, eight days till some ideal
6 conditions. And when they start moving, hey,
7 everybody is right there at them and that's just
8 what they've had to do to survive.

9 JASON SAUCIER:

10 Right.

11 JONATHAN McLENDON:

12 So, you know, we certainly appreciate
13 all of the hard work that DMR is doing to pump
14 money into the commercial fishery.

15 JASON SAUCIER:

16 Certainly.

17 JOE SPRAGGINS:

18 Is there any update on the price they're
19 giving for them?

20 JONATHAN McLENDON:

21 It's the same as last year, General.
22 It's a 20-year low. Like, it's hovering that way,
23 and I know that Mississippi is sitting here with
24 an average count of 68, but, I mean, if the truth
25 be told, like at the market price, you know, like

1 some people have even got 40, 50s and 80 to 100s
2 all the same price, you know. And if there is a
3 larger discrepancy, it's only a nickel a pound,
4 you know.

5 So that being said, hey, as soon as --
6 you know, as soon as you get the counts you need,
7 let them go because they're going to get the same
8 price, you know, no matter what they're counting.
9 So, hopefully, that -- you know, they can take
10 advantage of fishing in the Sound while the shrimp
11 are still there before they head offshore.

12 JASON SAUCIER:

13 And that is our strategy, you know. We
14 always want to give everybody an opportunity, and
15 mainly smaller boats is what we're concerned
16 about, you know, if they don't have an opportunity
17 to get the shrimp and that's to their detriment,
18 so --

19 JONATHAN McLENDON:

20 Yeah. No. If we're down to 52 of them,
21 let them go.

22 JOE SPRAGGINS:

23 And we'll -- as soon as they give me the
24 go-ahead and they feel like it's ready, we'll put
25 that announcement out ASAP and try to give them --

1 we have to give seven days? Is that what it is?

2 JASON SAUCIER:

3 We don't. We try to give as much notice
4 as we can, but we typically give, probably -- I
5 don't know -- three to five days' notice.

6 JOE SPRAGGINS:

7 We'll give you -- as much notice to
8 fishermen as possible to be able to do it because
9 I agree with you. We definitely want to have them
10 to be able to go out and catch them in the Sound
11 before they move out south.

12 JASON SAUCIER:

13 Thank you.

14 JONATHAN McLENDON:

15 Thank you.

16 JOE SPRAGGINS:

17 And if I could real quick before we go
18 to the next one -- no, go ahead, Jason.

19 But one other thing is, too, when we're
20 doing the snapper, I forgot to bring it up, we do
21 have an offshore landing permit this year, so --
22 and it's required for every fisherman. It's not
23 like Tails and Scales where there's just one on
24 the boat. Okay? Everybody should have one, and
25 it's 16 and up, and so that's if you -- please, if

1 you want to be able to do that, you can go to
2 dmr.ms.gov/rolp/ or you can call the (228)325-1585
3 and be able to help, but please make sure you do
4 this. This is going to help us to be able to keep
5 the right numbers that we have and it will be able
6 to give us more numbers of how many actually are
7 fishing and not just buying the license. Okay?

8 RONNIE DANIELS:

9 I think it's important to stress to the
10 fishermen this is not an invasion or --

11 JOE SPRAGGINS:

12 And it's free.

13 RONNIE DANIELS:

14 It's free, and it's not going to do
15 anything but help you in the long run, where this
16 is us working towards upping our quota hopefully.

17 CAM ROBERDS:

18 Is there a -- like a repercussion if --
19 I mean, I'm assuming the -- I know there was a --
20 getting everybody, you know -- the process there
21 and getting the permits, but is that once snapper
22 season starts and you don't have it, there will be
23 a fine associated with that?

24 JOE SPRAGGINS:

25 Well, we probably will not do it this

1 year because it's initial. We'll do it kind of
2 like we did with Tails and Scales and we'll try to
3 get people to work with us and be able to do it.
4 And if they don't have them and they get pulled
5 over, Marine Patrol will talk to them and explain
6 to them and say, look, you need this and show them
7 how to do it or whatever to be able to do that.

8 But the idea is to get them involved and
9 to get the fishermen involved, and as the
10 Commissioner said, it's for their own benefit
11 because this is going to take us down from 80,000
12 licenses that are being sold every year that
13 they're saying that -- when NOAA goes out and
14 samples it, they're saying that that's -- you
15 know, 80,000 people are going snapper fishing and
16 that's not true. And so this will put us more in
17 line with Louisiana and Alabama and other places
18 that are being able to do that and we'll be able
19 to get more of a smaller sample of how many people
20 are actually fishing for offshore, and -- but we
21 probably -- won't be any fine this year and we
22 know -- the idea is not to fine them. The idea is
23 to get them to do it.

24 RONNIE DANIELS:

25 Easing in.

1 JOE SPRAGGINS:

2 Uh-huh.

3 RONNIE DANIELS:

4 All right. Jason Rider, Senate Bill
5 2648.

6 JASON RIDER:

7 Good morning. Like he said, my name is
8 Jason Rider from the Shellfish Bureau. We're
9 going to talk today about the updates that we made
10 to Title 22, Part 1 in relation to Senate Bill
11 2648 and House Bill 1007.

12 As Director Spraggins mentioned at the
13 beginning of the commission meeting, we had to
14 match our regulations to meet state statute, so
15 that's what we're doing here. We did a similar
16 process last year at this time. With the new
17 bills, we had to come back and do it again.

18 If you have any questions, please let me
19 now know and I will go through it and just let me
20 know if you have any questions.

21 So the changes that we're making, we
22 amended the requirements for tagging shellfish
23 according to House Bill 1007, added/adjusted
24 language in Chapter 10 pertaining to Senate Bill
25 2648, added definitions and then amended the

1 requirements for on-bottom leasing in Chapter 10
2 of Title 22, Part 1.

3 So some of the definitions that were
4 added, they were added to comply with the NSSP and
5 the state statute. We added adverse pollution
6 conditions. We added the definition for
7 certification or certify. And I'm not going to
8 read these, but if y'all have questions or want a
9 review further, just ask.

10 We did update our permits, so we have a
11 couple different permits in the Shellfish Bureau.
12 These permits typically expired at the start of
13 the calendar year, but now, we're trying to line
14 them up with fishing licenses, which is in April,
15 so we revised that language with the expiration
16 occurring on April 30th of each year.

17 We defined container for on-bottom and
18 off-bottom oysters. Cultivation was defined in
19 regards to on-bottom leasing, and I will read that
20 one. It's the deliberate actions taken by the
21 lessee to improve conditions for the growth,
22 reproduction and overall well-being of oyster
23 populations within the designated lease area.
24 This involves activities such as bagless dredges
25 and other forms of substrate maintenance.

1 Leaseholders may submit additional or alternative
2 activities to the Executive Director for approval
3 to adhere to the requirements of this part.

4 We did define most probable number,
5 which that correlates with the NSSP. Propagation
6 was defined, relay and trip ticket. Those are all
7 new definitions that we put in to help us
8 regulate.

9 So Chapter 3 is pretty simple. We are
10 going to keep some check stations, but we wanted
11 to give the ability for the agency to open and
12 close the oystering harvest zones and areas
13 through different methods, so we added if
14 applicable, and we are going to keep the oyster
15 hotline. And same thing. If there is a better
16 form of communication with the harvesters, we want
17 to leave that out there, so text messages, phone
18 calls, things like that.

19 Chapter 4, updated it to meet
20 Mississippi Code 49-15-38. And then on, G, we
21 just updated on some language for transferring of
22 oysters. Instead of it having at the check
23 station, we struck through the "check stations,"
24 and we added that "both vessels have been checked
25 out at the designated landing location and that

1 transfers can occur."

2 Chapter 5, this coordinates with House
3 Bill 1007, and what it was, is as Director
4 Spraggins mentioned, we wanted to allow the
5 harvesters to print their own tags. Historically,
6 all tags have been printed through the agency, so
7 harvesters come here. We print the tags, and then
8 they go harvest the oysters at the agency-owned
9 check stations.

10 With the new language, they would have
11 the ability to follow some guidelines according to
12 the NSSP and our permits and they meet those
13 guidelines. They could have systems that will
14 print their own tags, track their tags, and then
15 submit it to -- submit the required information to
16 us.

17 We did have the requirement for the
18 tags, and I will just read those if that's okay.
19 They shall be durable and waterproof. The tags
20 shall be five and a half by two and a half inches
21 in size, stay affixed to the container until the
22 container is in possession of an individual or
23 business who is licensed and certified to sell
24 shellfish, and the tags shall not be re-used.

25 Additional information for the tags for

1 harvesters: Harvesters must complete all
2 information on the tag, including the harvester's
3 identification number as assigned by authority,
4 harvest date, harvest area, type of shellfish,
5 quantity of shellfish. And then there is a
6 statement that's required for all the tags and it
7 states, this tag is required to be attached until
8 the container is empty or is re-tagged and,
9 therefore, kept on file for 90 days.

10 We did strike through some language in
11 Chapter 5, and then the tags have to be attached
12 to the outside of the container, and we struck
13 through some language regarding the fastener,
14 which the tags are attached to the sacks.

15 Chapter 8, we swapped out "generally
16 accepted cultch material" regarding cultch
17 material for "approved cultch material." That
18 just complies with our regulations. Again, a lot
19 of this is just matching wording and verbiage.

20 So Chapter 10, this is -- Chapter 10
21 mainly deals with Senate Bill 2648, and I will
22 read some of this information just to explain it
23 all. So in Rule 10.1: All molluscan shellfish
24 leaseings must adhere to the following boundary
25 marking. Each leaseholder must mark the corners

1 of each lease with an appropriate marker and must
2 maintain all markers. If the lease configuration
3 does not have definitive corners, the boundaries
4 must be marked in a manner that clearly identifies
5 the lease area.

6 This was done because as y'all know,
7 it's easy to draw a square on a piece of paper,
8 but it's not always easy to do it in reality, so
9 they can mark various areas.

10 Chapter 10, continuing on, we updated
11 some off-bottom language just to correct some
12 grammatical formation. And then all off-bottom
13 molluscan shellfish aquaculture harvesters must
14 adhere to the rules and regulations outlined in
15 the applicable Public Tidelands Sublease,
16 Commercial Aquaculture permit, this Part and the
17 most current NSSP Model Ordinance.

18 We did include some language to require
19 private aids for navigation for off-bottom
20 molluscan shellfish leases. What that means is if
21 you have an off-bottom lease, you have to mark the
22 corners.

23 Rule 10.3, Molluscan Shellfish Leases,
24 this is the lease application, so this deals
25 directly with the new language that was passed in

1 Jackson this year, and I will read these. For the
2 lease application: Any person wanting to lease
3 bottoms must comply with on-bottom shellfish lease
4 application in writing and submit it to the DMR --
5 MDMR authority. Applications will be available at
6 the MDMR office and on its website. Applications
7 must -- applicants must be a resident of the State
8 of Mississippi, or if a firm or corporation, such
9 firm or corporation shall be organized under the
10 laws of the State of Mississippi, registered with
11 the Secretary of State's office and owned by a
12 resident of the State of Mississippi. Each
13 application must be accompanied by a plat showing
14 the proposed lease area, using decimal degrees,
15 coordinates depicting the area to be leased and a
16 description of the cultch material and amount to
17 be deployed.

18 Number 7, we modified to read: The MDMR
19 will issue a public notice that applicants --
20 applications will be accepted and such
21 applications will be prioritized based on the
22 qualifications established in Mississippi Code
23 49-15-27. And then we did delete A through F,
24 which that was old language that we revised this
25 year.

1 Under the Lease Application Review: The
2 MDMR authority will review and evaluate each lease
3 application based on the information provided in
4 the application and determine the qualifications
5 of each applicant. Approval of lease applications
6 will be based on the information provided in the
7 response application. Applicants will be
8 prioritized based on the qualifications
9 established in Mississippi Code 49-15-27. The
10 MDMR authority may request additional information
11 from the applicant or conduct site visits as part
12 of the application process.

13 Continuing with Chapter 10, the Lease
14 Application Review, it states: In the event that
15 the applications are received for overlapping
16 areas, the area will be assigned to the applicant
17 with the highest priority based on the
18 qualifications established in Mississippi Code
19 49-15-27. In the event that the areas applied for
20 are the exact same area and the applicants are
21 deemed to possess the exact same experience and
22 financial stability, the MDMR will award that
23 particular lease to the first applicant. The
24 lessee -- the leases must be awarded to promote
25 the maximum cultivation and propagation of

1 molluscan shellfish. And then we did strike
2 through Number 8 of the review process.

3 Lease conditions: We updated to
4 15 years, and they will be -- they will be
5 prorated. I will read it. Excuse me. All leases
6 issued must be prorated from the date of the lease
7 to the following expiration of 15 years from the
8 date of the lease. Number 7: Each application
9 for an on-bottom lease must be for a minimum of
10 one acre, but must not exceed 2500 acres.

11 Number 9 and 10 were struck through.
12 And then Number 11 was revised for formatting. No
13 proposed lease areas will be approved that are
14 within 50 yards of an existing lease area or lease
15 area that is pending final approval unless the
16 same person holds both leases.

17 Continuing with Chapter 10, we did
18 strike through these. We did move these -- this
19 information just to a different section of
20 Chapter 10.

21 The Reporting was revised. We're
22 requesting that all reports be submitted on
23 December 31st of each year. And then Termination
24 and Waivers: Non-compliance with the lease terms,
25 laws and regulations after an opportunity to

1 remedy the non-compliance may result in
2 termination of the lease and format -- and
3 forfeits to the MDMR all works, improvements,
4 betterments and oysters on the leased water
5 bottom.

6 G states that -- G was a formatting
7 issue. We had the information and we moved it to
8 another part of the section, but it was for leases
9 and transfers. And then Number 5 for G states:
10 The lease transferee must be a resident of the
11 State of Mississippi, or if a firm or corporation,
12 such firm or corporation shall be organized under
13 the laws of the State of Mississippi and owned by
14 a resident of State of Mississippi.

15 Number 6 states that no lease transfer
16 can occur of more than 2,500 acres.

17 And with that, our recommendation is
18 that we recommend to the Executive Director that
19 proposed changes to Title 22, Part 1 be sent to
20 the Secretary of State's office for notice of
21 intent.

22 Does anyone have any questions regarding
23 that information?

24 RONNIE DANIELS:

25 On Chapter 10, Number 11, where it talks

1 about 50 yards of an existing lease, is there
2 anything that says -- is there a distance barrier
3 on two different people having leases next to each
4 other?

5 JASON RIDER:

6 Is there a distance barrier? The
7 50 yards is so -- the distance between two leases.
8 If you hold both leases that doesn't apply, but
9 the distance --

10 RONNIE DANIELS:

11 So do we run -- I'm sorry. I didn't
12 mean to interrupt you. Do we run the risk --
13 let's say John Brown leases two that are within
14 50 yards of each other because he has that
15 exception because he has the one next to it,
16 right?

17 JASON RIDER:

18 Uh-huh.

19 RONNIE DANIELS:

20 If he decides not to continue the lease
21 on one of those pieces, does that make that
22 unusable acreage for the next person that comes
23 along because they're inside of that boundary.

24 JASON RIDER:

25 I believe what we can do with that is we

1 can -- you're saying if he does not use that
2 acreage and it goes back out for application
3 status? Is that what you're asking?

4 RONNIE DANIELS:

5 But it's inside that minimum -- I'm
6 going to call it setback, you know.

7 JOE SPRAGGINS:

8 I'll tell you what he's asking, Jason.
9 I think the question is if I lease two pieces of
10 property, have two different leases, then do I
11 have to have the 50 yards?

12 RONNIE DANIELS:

13 Well, no, no, no. It says there if one
14 person -- I'm saying if he gets rid of one of
15 them.

16 JOE SPRAGGINS:

17 And if that's not the case, then if I
18 decide not to lease one of them, when it goes back
19 out, that 50 yards comes into effect if it's
20 somebody else?

21 JASON RIDER:

22 That's correct. The 50 yards would come
23 into effect if it goes to another applicant.

24 RONNIE DANIELS:

25 They would just have to shift a little

1 bit?

2 JOE SPRAGGINS:

3 Yeah. That's what I --

4 RONNIE DANIELS:

5 Okay. All right.

6 CAM ROBERDS:

7 You talked about marking the corners and
8 so if the -- each lease is marked, are there any
9 restrictions for other fishermen, whether it's
10 recreational, shrimpers, pogy, anything?

11 JASON RIDER:

12 My understanding is that it still would
13 be open to all fishing activities in that area.
14 Now, we don't want any destruction of property if
15 someone comes in with some gear that goes over the
16 bottom. That's not intended, but it would be open
17 for recreational fishing and commercial fishing.

18 JOE SPRAGGINS:

19 Yeah. And the thing about it is,
20 they're leasing the bottom. They're not leasing
21 the water above it. Okay.

22 CAM ROBERDS:

23 Yeah.

24 JOE SPRAGGINS:

25 And so the water above it is still owned

1 by the Corps of Engineers and -- which they own
2 all the water basically in the State of
3 Mississippi and the United States government.

4 CAM ROBERDS:

5 Well, as a recreational fisherman, I
6 like to fish oyster bottoms, so that's why I was
7 asking.

8 JOE SPRAGGINS:

9 And one of the reasons for doing it,
10 because, you know, the more oyster beds we have
11 out there, the more food that's going to be there
12 for the fish and everything else and so that's
13 what's better. And so I think that, you know,
14 unless you're deliberately, like Jason said,
15 trying to destroy something or something like
16 that, I don't think Marine Patrol is going to have
17 a problem with that. But, you know, if you are
18 trying to destroy somebody's bottom, you know,
19 then that's a different story.

20 RONNIE DANIELS:

21 So navigable water rules in Mississippi
22 would still apply even though these are leased?

23 JOE SPRAGGINS:

24 Right. Yeah.

25 JASON RIDER:

1 Yes.

2 JOE SPRAGGINS:

3 And I would like to thank Erik and Jason
4 and them for their hard work y'all put into this.
5 I know this has been a -- been a long, hard road
6 of trying to get this together. You know, we had
7 some snafus from last year and so we fixed them.
8 We got with the legislature and the legislature
9 helped us fix them.

10 Now, we're trying to marry up as much as
11 possible with what the Senate Bill says and what
12 statute says, so you need to go in and look at it
13 and that's what we're trying to marry up against.
14 And we're not trying to be a lot -- any more
15 restrictive than what we have to, but want to be
16 able to do what we need to do and we want to marry
17 up to that bill. And I think they have done a
18 great job in trying to do that.

19 And if you applied last year, you're
20 going to have to re-apply. I'm sorry that it
21 happened the way it did, but you're still going to
22 have to re-apply when we open it up.

23 And hopefully, if we can get this passed
24 by y'all today, then we'll go forward and we'll
25 send it to the Secretary of State and have it put

1 out. And then it will take about 60 days or
2 something in that neighborhood to be able to get
3 it back, and hopefully, by the July time frame
4 when you have your July meeting, we can pass it
5 and then it will be able to go into effect
6 sometime close to the first of August, if that
7 works fine. Is that right, Jason? Make sense?

8 JASON RIDER:

9 That's correct.

10 CAM ROBERDS:

11 Is that August date for receiving
12 applications or that's hopefully to be able to
13 start so you'll have the process of receiving and
14 approving prior to the August 1st --

15 JOE SPRAGGINS:

16 Well, the August date would be being
17 able to go out and start asking for applications.

18 CAM ROBERDS:

19 Okay. Got ya.

20 JOE SPRAGGINS:

21 And, you know -- and then the
22 applications will be addressed as they come in.
23 And, you know, I don't think we'll have an
24 application period of X amount of days and -- it
25 will be addressed as they come in, is my

1 understanding. Is that right?

2 JASON RIDER:

3 That's correct.

4 JOE SPRAGGINS:

5 And it's not like you've got from
6 August 1st to August 15th to apply?

7 JASON RIDER:

8 I think that's a management decision
9 that we can work through, but we can structure it
10 how we need to.

11 JOE SPRAGGINS:

12 Yeah. We'll have that -- by July, we'll
13 have that figured out, won't we?

14 JASON RIDER:

15 That's right.

16 JOE SPRAGGINS:

17 All right. Anything else for Jason?
18 Thank y'all so much for all your hard work on
19 this.

20 JASON RIDER:

21 Thank y'all.

22 RONNIE DANIELS:

23 Nothing else.

24 All right. So do we have a motion to
25 approve?

1 JASON OSBORNE:

2 Motion to approve.

3 RONNIE DANIELS:

4 I'll second.

5 All in favor.

6 (Unanimous vote.)

7 RONNIE DANIELS:

8 There we go.

9 SANDY CHESNUT:

10 And the motion is to approve staff's
11 recommendation, right?

12 RONNIE DANIELS:

13 Yes, sorry. I should have said that.

14 SANDY CHESNUT:

15 Okay. Thank you.

16 TREVOR MONCRIEF:

17 All right. Subject Number 3 from our
18 group, final adoption of the regulatory changes to
19 Title 22, Part 3 for red snapper bag and size
20 limits. Same background as the previous meeting.
21 Currently, we're under a 16-inch minimize size
22 limit, two-fish-per-person bag limit.

23 Primary goal is regulations to allow the
24 Executive Director the flexibility to alter the
25 bag size limit for red snapper on what was an

1 annual. Now it's as needed because we took the
2 annual language out. And we have been given this
3 authority through Amendment 50 for this action and
4 other states have -- also have this flexibility
5 now as well, and Louisiana as been exercising it.

6 So the regulation occurs in Title 22,
7 Part 3, Chapter 7 which is Recreational Bag,
8 Possession and Size Limits. It reads as: The
9 recreational fishing season, bag limit, size limit
10 for red snapper shall be set by the Executive
11 Director. The recreational opening order for red
12 snapper shall include language establishing the
13 size limit, bag limit, season structure for the
14 corresponding season. In the event that the size
15 and bag limit is not listed in the opening order,
16 the established limits listed above in Chapter 7
17 will apply, which is that 16 inches, two fish per
18 person.

19 As far as the administrative procedures,
20 the proposed rule was submitted to Secretary of
21 State on 4/18. It appeared on the website on
22 4/19, and an ad was displayed on the *Sun Herald*.
23 And we have not received any public comments to
24 date on this.

25 And what we need to move forward is a

1 motion to recommend final adoption for these
2 changes that were listed.

3 RONNIE DANIELS:

4 Any questions?

5 (No response.)

6 RONNIE DANIELS:

7 All right. Do we have a motion to
8 recommend final adoption?

9 JONATHAN McLENDON:

10 I'll make the motion.

11 JASON OSBORNE:

12 I'll second.

13 RONNIE DANIELS:

14 All in favor.

15 (Unanimous vote.)

16 RONNIE DANIELS:

17 Thank you, Trevor.

18 TREVOR MONCRIEF:

19 Uh-huh.

20 RONNIE DANIELS:

21 We got you up for one more.

22 TREVOR MONCRIEF:

23 One more. All right. Saltwater fish
24 records. We got one of them, so I know we had a
25 recreational -- or a conventional tackle record

1 for red grouper. Somebody saw that and decided
2 they wanted to get one a little bit bigger with a
3 spear, so it's a red grouper again. The old
4 record was the conventional tackle record,
5 22 pounds, 12 ounces. The new all-tackle record
6 is 27 pounds, .3 ounces by Mr. Darin Grant.

7 There is a picture of the fish and
8 Mr. Grant with the fish.

9 JASON OSBORNE:

10 That's pretty impressive.

11 TREVOR MONCRIEF:

12 That's a jumbo. All we need is a motion
13 to adopt the new state record.

14 RONNIE DANIELS:

15 That's nice. You know, I'm glad we did
16 that change to the records to be able to allow
17 these guys with spears or whatever method to hold
18 a record as well.

19 TREVOR MONCRIEF:

20 Yeah. They definitely -- we've set a
21 few of them.

22 RONNIE DANIELS:

23 I will make a motion to approve.

24 CAM ROBERDS:

25 I'll second.

1 RONNIE DANIELS:

2 All in favor?

3 (Unanimous vote.)

4 RONNIE DANIELS:

5 All right. Thank you, Trevor.

6 TREVOR MONCRIEF:

7 Absolutely.

8 JOE SPRAGGINS:

9 We've got one other business.

10 RONNIE DANIELS:

11 That's what I was about to ask.

12 JOE SPRAGGINS:

13 Got -- there on the other business, one
14 thing I would like to talk about is hybrid
15 oysters, and they -- Spat Tech is working on a
16 hybrid oyster that hopefully we will be able to
17 start deploying some time this year into some of
18 our waters -- in the waters that we have.

19 And what they have done is they took a
20 group of oysters -- and I think it started out
21 with 1,500 oysters. They took them over to
22 Louisiana and they put them in the waters where it
23 was less than five parts per thousand, and so
24 that's, you know -- and oysters really would like
25 to have 18, you know, or more parts per thousand

1 to live, but these oysters out of that 1,500 that
2 they took, 20 of them lived.

3 Out of that 20, they took those 20 and
4 now they've gone back and they've started, you
5 know, reproducing with them and now they're up
6 into the millions that they have that are over in
7 that area, and so they're actually living.

8 And the team has went over there and
9 looked at it and saw what was going on and was
10 very impressed with what it was. The water was
11 kind of, you know, mucky-looking and everything
12 else, but it's kind of like living in a back river
13 or something to that point. But the idea is that
14 we can be able to get these oysters to where
15 they -- the brood stock that they're working off
16 of that can live in less than five parts per
17 thousand. Then we can start putting them into the
18 areas of the back bays and all, which are not
19 harvestable, but they would be able to live and we
20 will be able to spawn off of that and when those
21 spawn go out, they would be able to feed the other
22 estuaries where we need it.

23 And then on top of that, it will also be
24 able to help us in a time of a Bonnet Carré
25 opening or the freshwater intrusion of any type

1 that we might not lose the whole oyster resource.
2 So what we're going to try to do is work out some
3 ways to be able to put some -- we have a contract
4 with Spat Tech, this year to be able to put some
5 oysters out. And so we're looking at them to be
6 able to put some of those oysters into the areas,
7 in certain areas and this will be on land that
8 we're going to keep as a state itself, that
9 20 percent. This is where we would put it, but it
10 would be able to do that and then the oyster will
11 adapt a little bit as the time goes on and
12 obviously, you know, the salinity of the oyster
13 will change in the salt or whatever and it will
14 change.

15 But the point I'm getting at is, this is
16 a chance that we have to be able to grow an
17 oyster, in which they are doing it, and they're
18 doing it on their own. They're not charging
19 anybody to do it. They're doing it themselves and
20 they're going out, trying to help us to be able to
21 come up with a way to have a hybrid oyster that
22 can live in this less than five parts per
23 thousand, so I think that's a great idea.

24 T&C has a contract with us -- or has a
25 grant this year for \$1 million to be able to put

1 some more oysters stuff. We're going to look at
2 them being able to put some in an area. One of
3 the places we're looking at is Trapani Reef
4 because they've already, you know, went in and
5 basically cultched it and so now they can seed it.
6 Is a non-harvestable reef, and so it would be
7 something that we can definitely use this and see
8 how it works. And we're hoping that that will
9 work. And also that -- we did get \$1 million,
10 too, through GOMESA to be able to do some more
11 artificial reef, so that's going to help us there
12 and we're going to be able to put out some more
13 artificial reefs for that.

14 So I just wanted to bring that up about
15 the hybrid oyster, and I think that's great.

16 JASON OSBORNE:

17 That's incredible.

18 RONNIE DANIELS:

19 Joe, do you know, these that are living
20 in the low salinity, do they have any drawbacks in
21 high salinity or do they --

22 JOE SPRAGGINS:

23 No, they're not. Right now, we're not
24 seeing anything and that's the idea, too, you
25 know. We're going to take them and put them into

1 the water where the salinity can be a little bit
2 higher, and see how they adapt at that point. And
3 if they adapt and -- they would be used in brood
4 stock.

5 That was another thing, you know. Spat
6 Tech has asked for an area that they can just take
7 some and put some in as brood stock and then be
8 able to harvest them and then spawn and take them
9 and put them back and that's -- that would be an
10 area that we would be looking at too.

11 RONNIE DANIELS:

12 That's really cool. I like it.

13 JASON OSBORNE:

14 Wow. Impressive.

15 RONNIE DANIELS:

16 Any other other business? Nothing.

17 All right. We have got two public
18 comments. Today.

19 First up will be Susan Snyder. Topic
20 will be Reynolds property.

21 Ms. Snyder, you will have three minutes
22 here. Thank you for coming in today.

23 SUSAN SNYDER:

24 Good morning, Mr. Spraggins and
25 Commissioners.

1 I appeared before you at last month's
2 meeting in regard to the Reynolds property located
3 in Ocean Springs, which was purchased by the DMR
4 with CIAP funds after Hurricane Katrina.

5 We were told by you that Fish and
6 Wildlife service had approved the City of Ocean
7 Springs' request to convert the green space into a
8 parking lot, but that you were going to have your
9 in-house legal staff continue to review this
10 request.

11 It is our understanding that Fish and
12 Wildlife has now rescinded its permission for a
13 parking lot. It's clear from the warranty deed
14 that it is the responsibility of the DMR to
15 conserve and protect this property and its natural
16 features for the public good. We, as neighbors,
17 and concerned citizens implore and expect the DMR
18 to uphold this agreement to its fullest extent.

19 We believe that the land trust for the
20 Mississippi Coastal Plain would be the perfect
21 partner to manage the Reynolds property, as its
22 mission is to conserve, promote and protect the
23 open spaces and green places of ecological,
24 cultural or scenic significance in the counties of
25 the Mississippi Coastal Plain.

1 We hope that in the future when City
2 Hall and elected officials decide to ignore,
3 disregard or bend the rules to suit their own
4 desires that the DMR will not allow such egregious
5 behavior to prevail. Thank you for your time this
6 morning.

7 RONNIE DANIELS:

8 Thank you, Ms. Snyder.

9 All right. Next up, we have
10 Ms. Patricia Creel on the same subject.

11 PATRICIA CREEL:

12 Good morning. My name is Patricia
13 Creel, and I'm speaking on the same subject. The
14 subject is the Reynolds property -- and just one
15 second.

16 Several things. I want to thank you so
17 much. I have been advised the U.S. Fish and
18 Wildlife has rescinded the green parking space as
19 approved for use of the Reynolds property. It's
20 my understanding that the U.S. Fish and Wildlife
21 are now requiring the DMR to provide an updated
22 plan that meets the original requirements to
23 restore the property to its natural state.

24 I am recommending the CMR and the DMR
25 submit a plan that restores the property to its

1 natural state. This would include removing the
2 top -- red clay topsoil that was replaced and put
3 a more natural soil, restoring native plants and
4 vegetation to the property, installing a
5 post-and-rope fence around the property similar to
6 the fence surrounding the McIlwain Park at Ocean
7 Springs Harbor.

8 There is an existing drainage system
9 that connects the Reynolds property to the Bay so
10 there would be no need to create a new one. This
11 could be done at a minimal cost and possibly use
12 existing funds from the restorative program.

13 I'm also recommending that the neighbors
14 who are contiguous to the Reynolds property have
15 the input in the restoration of the property.

16 This is from Amendment 3 that y'all had
17 received the 90-acre parcel Front Beach in Ocean
18 Springs adjacent to the sand beach and the new
19 public park. The acquisition of this parcel will
20 ensure its use as green space, a natural area and
21 will be -- complement the ongoing effort to
22 protect the Ocean Springs waterfront and
23 development.

24 Thank you very much.

25 JOE SPRAGGINS:

1 If I could, I'd like to address both of
2 you. I just didn't want to do it individually,
3 but we are working on it. We're working on it
4 every day.

5 Fish and Wildlife did not rescind it.
6 They said that they wanted us to look at it again,
7 and then they have asked us to send another
8 proposal on what to do. We're looking at two or
9 three different options, and so what we're doing
10 is we're looking to work with them and we're
11 looking to be able to find out what should be done
12 with that piece of property and how it should be
13 handled and the right way and that's exactly what
14 we're doing.

15 I can tell you right now we should have
16 never bought it. It should have never been bought
17 by the Department of Marine Resources. It has
18 nothing to do with Coast -- the -- you know, the
19 actual Coast itself and the water, the ecological
20 part of it or anything, so that's just part of it.
21 It was done, but we've got to -- we're going to
22 try to correct it, and our goal is to correct it
23 and make it right, and that's exactly what we're
24 doing.

25 We appreciate it. I see each and every

1 one of you's comment that you send me and all, and
2 I do understand it, but -- and I promise you that
3 the minute that I have an answer as to what we're
4 going to do, I will let everyone know. I will
5 call a meeting to let you know. I'm not going
6 to -- I'm not going to surprise you. I'm not
7 going to just put something and kind of hide it
8 under you or anything else. I'm going to be up
9 front with you, exactly 100 percent what we're
10 looking at.

11 But we are -- we heard you. We're
12 listening. We heard what you're talking about.
13 We're looking into it, and after some other
14 issues, you know, Fish said, okay, wait just a
15 minute. Let's look at this again, so that's where
16 we're at. They did not actually rescind it. They
17 just said, let's look at it and look at it
18 further. They wanted us to put another formal
19 proposal together of what we wanted to do, but
20 we're looking at about two different -- two or
21 three different ways of doing it. And as soon as
22 we get that answer, we will let you know. I
23 promise you that.

24 Yes, ma'am. Go ahead.

25 SUSAN SNYDER:

1 Is a parking lot still under
2 consideration?

3 JOE SPRAGGINS:

4 It is there as a possibility, you know.
5 They're asking us to put another proposal in,
6 official, different ones on it, but we haven't at
7 this time.

8 SUSAN SNYDER:

9 Okay. Thank you.

10 JOE SPRAGGINS:

11 I don't know where we'll be with it, and
12 we're looking at it. We're looking at every way
13 we can. And once again, it's like I said. We
14 should have never bought it. And, you know,
15 that's -- that ought to have been, you know,
16 something someone could have built a home or do
17 whatever they wanted to do on it, you know, but --
18 and to build it back the way that we said that we
19 would do, we would have to tear out, as you
20 talked, all the topsoil that was put in there, you
21 know, that was there. We would have to tear it
22 all out. We would have to build a canal back
23 through it, is what I'm being told, and even the
24 possibility of tearing the road up and putting a
25 bridge over the top of it, and we don't want to do

1 that. That's not what we want to do. We don't
2 want to be a part of that. That's not what we
3 want to do with it.

4 The way -- when the property was bought
5 by Department of Marine Resources, it was in the
6 shape it's in now, you know. It was not in the
7 shape of having a canal through there and having,
8 you know, everything done. So I'm not sure why we
9 did that. I'm not sure why it was done by our --
10 I'm sure they had good intentions on what they
11 were doing and -- but it just didn't -- it's not
12 something that we feel like we want to spend a
13 bunch of money on and go in -- and I don't think
14 you want a canal there either. I don't think you
15 want us to dig a canal.

16 PATRICIA CREEL:

17 There is a canal already.

18 JOE SPRAGGINS:

19 I know, but I mean, I don't think you
20 want us to dig it out according to the size that
21 they said it should be.

22 PATRICIA CREEL:

23 It's pretty wide. It's more than
24 50 feet.

25 JOE SPRAGGINS:

1 And then also tearing up the dirt and
2 everything else there, I'm not sure whether that
3 really makes it a benefit or not. There may be a
4 lot of good uses for that piece of property.
5 There might be some good uses for that piece of
6 property that could be better off than where it
7 is, you know, by doing that. So why we're looking
8 at it.

9 I'll be honest with you, I'm trying to
10 get DMR out of it, and, you know, I don't want
11 DMR -- DMR should not be in it. We should not be
12 a part of that piece of property, and if I can get
13 out from under it, that's what we're trying to do
14 and that's what you're working on.

15 Yes, ma'am.

16 SUSAN SNYDER:

17 If the DMR gets out of it, wouldn't the
18 restrictions or -- in the warranty deed go with
19 the property? Let's say the City of Ocean Springs
20 buys it.

21 JOE SPRAGGINS:

22 We're working on that right now. We're
23 working on all that right now as we talk. We're
24 trying to find out what we need to do and if we
25 did that, what would happen. Would it -- would

1 it -- would all the restrictions that CIAP put on
2 it stay or would they go away? And we're looking
3 at it. We're looking at everything about it right
4 now, and that's why I don't want to tell you
5 something and not tell you 100 percent of the
6 truth until I get the answer for you, and as soon
7 as we get the answers, we'll let you know.

8 SUSAN SNYDER:

9 Thank you.

10 RONNIE DANIELS:

11 All right. Thank y'all.

12 We got all of that done and out of the
13 way. Do we have a motion to adjourn?

14 JONATHAN McLENDON:

15 I'll make the motion.

16 RONNIE DANIELS:

17 I'll second.

18 All in favor?

19 (Unanimous vote.)

20 RONNIE DANIELS:

21 Everybody have a good week.

22 (Adjourned at 10:14 a.m.)

23

24

25

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 public meeting, as taken by me at the time and
9 place heretofore stated, to the best of my skill
10 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 _____, 2024.

17
18 /s/ Melissa Burdine-Rodolfich

19
20 Melissa Burdine-Rodolfich
21 My Commission Expires 4/03/28
22
23
24
25