

STATE OF MISSISSIPPI

MISSISSIPPI ADVISORY COMMISSION ON MARINE RESOURCES

COMMISSION MEETING

Tuesday, August 27, 2024, 9:00 a.m.,

Bolton Building Auditorium

1141 Bayview Avenue, Biloxi, Mississippi 39530

COMMISSION MEMBERS:

Matthew Mayfield
Jonathan McLendon
Jason Osborne
Cammack "Cam" Roberds

ALSO PRESENT:

Joe Spraggins
Sandy Chesnut, Esquire
Steven Eckert, Esquire

TRANSCRIBED BY:

Melissa Burdine-Rodolfich
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1 CAM ROBERDS:

2 Ladies and gentlemen, I want to thank
3 everybody for attending the Tuesday, August 27th
4 Mississippi Advisory Commission on Marine
5 Resources Meeting.

6 I would like to call Commissioner
7 Mayfield to please lead us in the Pledge of
8 Allegiance.

9 (Pledge of Allegiance recited.)

10 CAM ROBERDS:

11 Thank you, Commissioner.

12 General Spraggins, would you like to
13 lead us in the prayer, sir?

14 JOE SPRAGGINS:

15 Yeah. And if we could, let's go to the
16 Lord in prayer.

17 (Moment of prayer.)

18 CAM ROBERDS:

19 It looks -- next on the agenda, we have
20 election of officers today.

21 So do we have a nomination for chairman?

22 JOE SPRAGGINS:

23 That's between y'all.

24 JASON OSBORNE:

25 This is Commissioner Osborne. I

1 nominate Cam.

2 MATTHEW MAYFIELD:

3 Matthew Mayfield. Second.

4 CAM ROBERDS:

5 I guess we have to take a vote.

6 JOE SPRAGGINS:

7 Did we have a second?

8 CAM ROBERDS:

9 We had a second here.

10 MATTHEW MAYFIELD:

11 Matthew Mayfield. Second.

12 JOE SPRAGGINS:

13 Do you have any other nominations?

14 CAM ROBERDS:

15 All right. Do we have any other
16 nominations?

17 (No response.)

18 CAM ROBERDS:

19 All right. I guess we will take a vote.

20 All those in favor of Cam as director --
21 chairman, I'm sorry, please vote in favor.

22 JONATHAN MCLENDON:

23 Jonathan McLendon. Aye.

24 JASON OSBORNE:

25 Jason Osborne. Aye.

1 MATTHEW MAYFIELD:

2 Matthew Mayfield. Aye.

3 CAM ROBERDS:

4 All right. Do we have a vote for a
5 co-chairman?

6 JASON OSBORNE:

7 This is Commissioner Osborne. I
8 nominate Jonathan.

9 CAM ROBERDS:

10 I will second that.

11 All right. All those in favor for
12 Jonathan as co-chair?

13 Cam Roberds. Aye.

14 JASON OSBORNE:

15 Jason Osborne. Aye.

16 MATTHEW MAYFIELD:

17 Matthew Mayfield. Aye.

18 CAM ROBERDS:

19 Sounds good. Good to go.

20 JOE SPRAGGINS:

21 All right. We got through that.

22 CAM ROBERDS:

23 All right. We got through that.

24 Appreciate it.

25 JOE SPRAGGINS:

1 Boy, how much money did y'all put in
2 that campaign?

3 CAM ROBERDS:

4 It seems like we're always caught
5 offguard on those.

6 All right. So here we go. Let's -- so
7 we have got approval of the minutes from
8 July 16th. Does anybody have any questions or
9 comments on the minutes?

10 If not, can we get a motion to approve?

11 JASON OSBORNE:

12 Jason Osborne. Motion to approve the
13 minutes.

14 CAM ROBERDS:

15 Cam Roberds. I will second the minutes.

16 All those in favor?

17 (Unanimous vote.)

18 CAM ROBERDS:

19 All right. Chairman, it's all yours.

20 JOE SPRAGGINS:

21 The agenda.

22 CAM ROBERDS:

23 Oh, I'm sorry.

24 Approval of the agenda, do we have a
25 motion to approve the agenda?

1 JOE SPRAGGINS:

2 If we could before we do that, I need to
3 make a couple of changes to it, if possible. It
4 normally states that we would have a meeting in
5 September, but -- the 17th, but we need to change
6 that to September 16th, if possible. Is there any
7 problem with changing our meeting from the 17th to
8 the 16th? Anybody have a -- again, I need a
9 motion to do that, to change the meeting.

10 CAM ROBERDS:

11 Cam Roberds. I'll make a motion to
12 change the September meeting to the 16th.

13 Do we have a second?

14 MATTHEW MAYFIELD:

15 Matthew Mayfield. Second.

16 CAM ROBERDS:

17 All those in favor?

18 (Unanimous vote.)

19 JOE SPRAGGINS:

20 All right. One other motion, I need to
21 move the October meeting to Tuesday, October 22nd.
22 We have Gulf States that week before and I'm not
23 going to be able to be here, so I want to see if
24 we can move it to -- both of these at 9:00 a.m.
25 It's October 22nd.

1 CAM ROBERDS:

2 Do we have a motion to make that change
3 in October?

4 JONATHAN MCLENDON:

5 Jonathan McLendon. I make a motion.

6 MATTHEW MAYFIELD:

7 Matthew Mayfield. Second.

8 CAM ROBERDS:

9 All right. All those in favor?

10 (Unanimous vote.)

11 JOE SPRAGGINS:

12 All right. Now, we can move on. Now
13 you can approve the agenda.

14 CAM ROBERDS:

15 All right. So I'll make a motion to
16 approve the agenda. Cam Roberds.

17 Do we have a second?

18 MATTHEW MAYFIELD:

19 Second. Matthew Mayfield.

20 CAM ROBERDS:

21 All those in favor?

22 (Unanimous vote.)

23 JOE SPRAGGINS:

24 All right. You ready for me?

25 CAM ROBERDS:

1 Now, it's yours, Director.

2 JOE SPRAGGINS:

3 All right. We -- if you did not get to
4 make the Neshoba on the 31st of July, you missed a
5 heck of a time. I'll tell you what, it was -- it
6 was about 20 degrees up there and beautiful
7 weather. You know I'm telling a lie there because
8 it was about 100 degrees, but it was beautiful
9 weather up there, though. We did have a good
10 time.

11 About 600 people showed up for our
12 dinner that night and -- so we had the OneCoast
13 dinner and that's where we go in and basically
14 cook the fish and the shrimp and oysters. And we
15 had a good time and a lot of people showed up.

16 And I just want to thank our cooking
17 team for whatever they -- they did a great job.
18 That group is fantastic, you know.

19 I have never had anybody tell me that I
20 had bad food when they came to one of our deals.
21 They all just rave about the cooking and how great
22 it was, so thank them for that.

23 But good deal. We're going to do it
24 again next year, and it's a lot of fun. What we
25 do it for is to sell our seafood. It's to be able

1 to market our seafood. And when you get that many
2 people coming from a lot of different towns in
3 Mississippi, it really helps to be able to show
4 how South Mississippi is and how great our seafood
5 is.

6 Mississippi Wildlife Fisheries, Parks
7 and Marine Foundation, it's got a new name now.
8 It used to be the parks and -- Wildlife and Parks
9 Foundation. Now it's adding "marine" because DMR
10 is part of it. We have partnered -- we're equal
11 partners with wildlife, and we joined the
12 foundation.

13 We're going to be able to do a lot of
14 things with that. We're going to be able to
15 put -- raise some money and be able to give
16 scholarships for people to go to marine biology
17 school or whatever and be able to study and be
18 able to enhance what we're doing.

19 We're going to be able to help our law
20 enforcement with new types of equipment and other
21 things that they would need so we can go out and
22 raise money to be able to get it if we don't have
23 the funds to pay for it.

24 For our outreach, we will be able to go
25 out and actually do things in the community,

1 little things like fishing tournaments for the
2 kids or -- and things like underprivileged and
3 being able to help them or the handicapped and
4 being able to do some type of fisheries or
5 whatever to show them how or to help them in
6 tournaments or whatever.

7 And we'll never forget our soldiers, our
8 wounded soldiers. We will do something with that.
9 In fact, we may have a tournament for them. We'll
10 probably have something to do with a governor's
11 fishing tournament down the way and -- where we'll
12 be able to raise the money and we'll bring people
13 in and be able to fish offshore and onshore and
14 have different tournaments and things.

15 I'll tell you, you know, DMR has not had
16 a foundation since 2013 and so we have not been a
17 part of it, but this is going to be a great thing
18 for us to be able to be a part of a foundation
19 that now that -- if you want to give money and --
20 if any of you out there has got a lot of money
21 just laying around in your pockets that you need
22 to get rid of, you can give it to a 501(c)(3)
23 company and you can get a write-off for it and
24 we -- can also go to Department of Marine
25 Resources. So this is going to be a great deal.

1 One of the things -- one of the projects
2 we're going to start off with that the foundation
3 wants to help us on is to work on the houseboats.
4 And when you think about that, there is a lot of
5 houseboats that have no way to be able to have
6 sanitation on them, and these are all up and down
7 our rivers.

8 We want to try to find a way to be able
9 to buy the sanitation part for that and then have
10 some type of way of cleaning it, and so that we
11 can set something up and down the river on a
12 normal basis to be able to clean out these
13 houseboats. This will stop a lot of raw sewage
14 going into our rivers and -- which, in turn, gets
15 down to our Gulf.

16 So it's just something we're looking at.
17 We want to help. We want to be a part of the
18 solution and not a problem, so that's something
19 that's going to help you. But we are very proud
20 to be a part of this, look forward to having some
21 good things happen here in the very near future.

22 Any questions on that?

23 (No response.)

24 JOE SPRAGGINS:

25 All right. Gulf Council, well,

1 Mr. Osborne got his first week of blood there, you
2 know, so he got -- he got to go to the Gulf
3 Council. He is on it with us now, and we had a
4 week of it here in Biloxi last week. It was
5 pretty good. We came out fairly well with a lot
6 of things. We -- a lot of good information
7 brought out.

8 There's a lot of things that's going to
9 have to come back, and the IFQ program is
10 something that we're working on and what do we
11 do -- you know, what do we do with the
12 allocations, what we would do with the process in
13 the future. And I tell you what, we had quite a
14 few of our own commercial fishermen show up and
15 talk about that and they explained to us why they
16 think we need to do it this way and why not. So
17 hopefully we'll listen and hopefully something
18 will come out -- good out of it.

19 We did get on our recreational fishing
20 and all. We had a commission that we started on
21 it, and out of the 12 that was allowed in the
22 Gulf, Mississippi got three, so that means we got
23 more than our share. So that's pretty good. So
24 we're proud to have that, and we have got three
25 people that's going to be on there for

1 recreational fishing and charter boat type to be
2 able to set some rules and see what we need to do
3 and be able to come back and give the Council some
4 information of what we can do in SSC.

5 Mr. Osborne, you got anything you want
6 to talk about on that?

7 JASON OSBORNE:

8 I think one other thing, too, that I
9 guess we're going to vote on at the next meeting
10 is opening up red snapper the Friday before
11 Memorial Day potentially, which I think is going
12 to be a good one.

13 JOE SPRAGGINS:

14 Yeah. We're talking the
15 federal-for-hire part of that?

16 JASON OSBORNE:

17 Correct.

18 JOE SPRAGGINS:

19 You know, right now the federal-for-hire
20 has always been 1 June. One of our thoughts is
21 why don't we make it the same as -- you know, the
22 week -- the Friday before Memorial Day. That way,
23 we can bring people in and a lot of them can be
24 able to get some charters and things that they
25 need to do and it would help out.

1 That may -- the date may change to the
2 15th of May because that was another big issue
3 that they was bringing back. We don't know if
4 we're going to have to come back and look at it,
5 but the whole idea is to not take Memorial Day
6 weekend out and to be able to give them that
7 opportunity for our commercial fishermen that are
8 doing the federal-for-hire a chance to be able to
9 do the same thing that other fishermen are doing.

10 And if we do something with the 15th of
11 May, we will probably open our season the 15th of
12 May. If that's when they say the commercial is
13 going -- you know, the federal-for-hire is going
14 to open, then we will probably just fall in line
15 because I'm not going to jeopardize the private
16 rec or the charter boats without having everybody
17 equal. That's what the whole idea is, to get us
18 all equal, on the same line, and so hopefully that
19 will work.

20 Any questions on that?

21 (No response.)

22 JOE SPRAGGINS:

23 Crystal says we will be closed on
24 September 2nd, Labor Day. So, you know, we will
25 be closed, but I'll tell you what, Marine Patrol

1 won't be. They will be out there in force and
2 they're going to be out there working hard and a
3 lot of fisheries will be out there working also,
4 so we appreciate them.

5 All right. We have got the next
6 commission meeting is September 17 -- the 16th now
7 at 9:00 am.

8 We're the sponsor for Cruisin' the
9 Coast. We're the title sponsor. DMR is. And
10 it's really not DMR. It's Mississippi Seafood,
11 isn't it? Mississippi Seafood is a title sponsor.

12 And so what we did last year, we did
13 something that -- we just got to talking to them
14 and -- Woody Bailey and the group -- and we said,
15 what do we do to be a part of this to sell
16 Mississippi seafood?

17 Well, we were able to put together
18 something that -- where we went in and our cooking
19 team and our group of people that work here very
20 hard, you know, to help us every day and we set up
21 at Centennial Plaza where they have all the
22 registration and everything and -- when they come
23 in to register. And we had our own booth there,
24 the DMR booth. It was Mississippi Seafood, and
25 then we had a booth there.

1 And what we did is we -- they boiled
2 these shrimp and we gave them about two or three
3 to a cup, and I'll tell you what, they were
4 standing in line waiting to get that shrimp. It
5 was so good, and they was telling us how great
6 Mississippi seafood is.

7 Well, what happened with that,
8 everywhere we went, people wanted to know where do
9 I get it and how do I -- you know, where can I get
10 it to take home with me?

11 Well, that was the whole idea. The idea
12 is, you know, to get people eating our Mississippi
13 seafood and to ask, is it Gulf fresh. That was
14 the thing that we want. Is it Gulf fresh? We
15 don't want this imported food. We want Gulf fresh
16 food, so that's what we're after.

17 So we're doing it again. We signed a
18 three-year contract this time, so we have the next
19 three years we will be the title sponsor. And we
20 will also be down at Town Green. I think we will
21 be working with the Gulf Coast Tourism down there
22 that day and we'll be in -- is it Ocean Springs, I
23 think, and Pascagoula and Bay St. Louis.

24 So we'll be in different areas that
25 we'll be set up and having some Mississippi

1 seafood. We will not be cooking in those places,
2 but we will be doing -- giving out some different
3 things that Charmaine and them have come up with
4 to have as far as our giveaways.

5 But 100,000 people, and I'll tell you
6 what, that's a big one. You know, I did not know
7 this, but I found out the other day that Cruisin'
8 the Coast is the largest, as far as that type of
9 event, in America. It's larger than anywhere else
10 in America, so it's a pretty good size. Woody and
11 them done a great job. Over 10,000 cars will be
12 registered.

13 So come out. You've got the whole week
14 of October. I think that's the first week. It
15 starts on the 5th and ends on like the 12th, so
16 you have a whole week of enjoying time and we hope
17 you enjoy it.

18 CAM ROBERDS:

19 I do -- I will say this, General, too,
20 all the bags for every registered vehicle had
21 Mississippi seafood. All the marketing was
22 plastered all inside of it, every one of them, so
23 that was good.

24 JOE SPRAGGINS:

25 Well -- and we're glad to do that. And

1 I'll tell you what, it's a way to get it updated.

2 And as -- the snapper season, it's going
3 to be officially closed right now for this year.
4 You know, we had around -- a little over 60,000
5 pounds that we caught of our 62,000 or 64,000,
6 whatever we had to catch. We can't open up a day
7 and not go over, and so the best thing to do is
8 just to go ahead and move forward with it. Next
9 year, we'll get a larger allocation and so we will
10 have a little bit more.

11 And we're still doing the MS Creel,
12 which has started now, and once we get MS Creel
13 going wide open and be able to do the side-by-side
14 with the federal government and MRIP, then maybe
15 we will have our allocation even larger and things
16 will work out and we'll be able to do that
17 short-term, but -- so we've talked about opening
18 up one other day, but I think we're just going to
19 leave it as it is right now.

20 Bonnet Carré update -- and Crystal, did
21 you give me that piece of paper for that?

22 CRYSTAL MATTA:

23 Yes, sir.

24 JOE SPRAGGINS:

25 You did. She is very opinionated about

1 what she lets me have.

2 All right. As far as the Bonnet Carré
3 update, we've got, all 72 charters have been sent
4 final payment, so that's good things for that.

5 Our grant for new and emerging seafood
6 processing technology, we have \$3,694,000, and we
7 spent so far about 67,000 of that. And that's
8 where the grant application period opened up
9 July 15th and will close on September 13th, so we
10 have got a lot of our emerging technology and
11 stuff that our processors are doing.

12 So, Jonathan, anything you want to say
13 on that?

14 JONATHAN MCLENDON:

15 I will say that the department has been
16 doing an excellent job reaching out to all of the
17 processors involved and assisting them with their
18 application process and trying to get money into
19 the industry, so -- and we are way ahead of our
20 neighboring states on all of this, so certainly
21 appreciate the leadership and the effort of all
22 those involved.

23 JOE SPRAGGINS:

24 Good deal.

25 And we have a commercial vessel safety

1 program. We had 286,000-plus in it. We spent
2 about 230,000. That's where you can spend up to
3 \$2,000 to upgrade your vessel in some way if
4 you're a commercial fisherman and -- you can
5 upgrade your vessel in a way. That's worked out
6 for many people.

7 We have a restoration of Mississippi
8 oyster reefs. We have a little over 5 million to
9 go in it and we spent a little over a million in
10 that in conducting -- well, sending out spat --
11 well, cultch and other things we're doing, and
12 hopefully we'll get -- some other part of that
13 done. And we'll talk about our on-bottom here
14 shortly.

15 Now, we're -- the investigation of --
16 CAM ROBERDS:

17 Sorry.

18 JOE SPRAGGINS:

19 Oh, I'm sorry.

20 The investigation of point source
21 pollution for shellfish, we have got 315,000.
22 We've spent 56,000 on it and we're still working
23 to be able to come up with different ways to be
24 able to make sure that we can eliminate as much as
25 possible.

1 Expansion of the Mississippi derelict
2 crab trap removal program, we funded 70,000 and we
3 spent 11,000 of that for the public derelict crab
4 trap in February. And we had 393 -- 98 traps
5 removed by 91 volunteers. That was pretty good.

6 We have the Bonnet Carré Response and
7 Mississippi Western Sound Science Collaborative.
8 We funded a million of it and it has not begun at
9 this time. We're working on it through USM and
10 some others and Mississippi State.

11 We have Mississippi Seafood marketing.
12 We had 300,000 of it, and we're still working on
13 it and it will be -- part of it, as I said, we'll
14 do some different things. We have other programs
15 than we have for the seafood marketing that we're
16 using the funds for right now.

17 Online commercial fishing is still --
18 we're working on to be able to get to where you
19 can buy your license online if you're a commercial
20 fisherman, so hopefully that will happen soon and
21 we'll be able to get something working with it.

22 All right. And the last part of it is
23 we have developed a shellfish harvesting training
24 video. We were working on it, and we've got about
25 \$70,000 with that.

1 Any questions on the Bonnet Carré?
2 We're still working on finishing out all the
3 commercial fishermen, and hopefully we will get
4 that done. We are basically working on appeals at
5 this point and to be able to pay them out. But,
6 you know, we have been able to pay up to \$108,000
7 of what they have lost in that year, so that's
8 pretty good.

9 We're the only state -- I will say
10 that -- the only state in the Gulf that does that,
11 that pays the fishermen.

12 Any questions on any of that?

13 (No response.)

14 JOE SPRAGGINS:

15 All right. Coastal Markers is back out,
16 so if you -- got copies of it in the room here if
17 you want a copy of the Coastal Markers. It's just
18 something that tells you what we're doing in DMR.

19 The Camille Memorial at the Maritime
20 Museum, you know, we moved it. And that was part
21 of DMR and Heritage did that, and we paid to move
22 that memorial over there. So if you was able to
23 make it last weekend when they had it and -- so
24 we're good with -- there.

25 And our derelict vessels, 164 of them

1 have been brought in that we have of derelict
2 vessels, 128 have been removed, 36 of the vessels
3 are pending removal and 12 received court orders
4 for removal.

5 All right. Other than that, any other
6 questions on the update?

7 (No response.)

8 JOE SPRAGGINS:

9 Employment, have anything on it? There
10 we go.

11 As you see there, the names. Wyatt Webb
12 was promoted to sergeant. And we have new hires
13 of Lawrence McCutcheon and then Leslie Ervin, and
14 they're both -- one is one of our new marine
15 patrol officers and the other is an accountant
16 working on grants.

17 Any questions on that?

18 (No response.)

19 JOE SPRAGGINS:

20 Okay. Contracts, if you see, we had
21 Silver Ships. We did a reverse auction to buy a
22 boat there, and that's -- we got two 27-foot
23 aluminum hull vessels that we was able to purchase
24 from them.

25 And then we have got invitation for bid

1 for the EPA grant that we're doing for stormwater
2 systems.

3 Okay. Any questions on those?

4 If not, update on actions?

5 MR. SIMPSON:

6 Thank you.

7 Good morning. Our actions updates:

8 Discussed at the June (sic) 2024 meeting was, the
9 Commission recommended and the Director approved
10 the following motions. The first was to move
11 today's meeting from the 20th to today due to Gulf
12 Council meeting, and our second motion, which was
13 recommended was, for two state saltwater finfish
14 records for all tackle. One being a gray snapper
15 of 15 pounds, 14.4 ounces to Mr. Joseph Rizzuto
16 and an Atlantic creolefish of one pound,
17 9.6 ounces to Mr. Sean Cook. And that is our
18 actions update from our June '24 meeting.

19 JOE SPRAGGINS:

20 Okay. Any questions?

21 (No response.)

22 CAM ROBERDS:

23 Thank you, Director.

24 Commissioners report, do any of the
25 Commissioners have anything to report on today?

1 (No response.)

2 CAM ROBERDS:

3 All right. We will move on to Chief
4 Wilkerson with the report on citations on Marine
5 Patrol.

6 KYLE WILKERSON:

7 Good morning, Commissioners, Legal,
8 Director. Congratulations on the new positions.

9 CAM ROBERDS:

10 Thank you.

11 KYLE WILKERSON:

12 Before we get started, I want to say a
13 few things.

14 We had our second annual public safety
15 summit in Jackson in May. It's where all the
16 federal and local and state departments get
17 together and go over a -- it's a montage of events
18 and it is a very thought out and very, very
19 great -- I mean, a great summit.

20 We were honored as an agency and an
21 office to have an officer named officer of the
22 year. It's an honor, guys. It is. Everybody
23 from the state is there.

24 So I'm not going to go on about it, but
25 I'm going to have Captain Strickland come up and

1 he's going to read the letter on what he did to
2 receive this honor. Captain Strickland.

3 MICHAEL STRICKLAND:

4 Good morning. Thank you, Colonel.

5 As the Colonel mentioned, at the DPS
6 annual summit we had an officer receive the
7 governor's award for law enforcement officer of
8 the year.

9 The letter that we presented for that
10 summit goes as such -- at this time, though,
11 before I do that, I would like to have Corporal
12 Comstock come up here and stand in front of the
13 room, please. Put him on the spot. Good looking
14 rascal.

15 As the law enforcement branch of the
16 Mississippi Department of Marine Resources, we
17 strive daily to uphold the mission of enhance,
18 protect and conserve. In this mission statement,
19 the public safety rises above all and it's most
20 important to protect.

21 This has never been more evident than
22 the selfless actions demonstrated by Corporal
23 Comstock on Monday, March 20th, 2023. Corporal
24 Comstock's actions on this day prevented the
25 United States Border Patrol Agent, Timothy Davis,

1 from sustaining serious bodily injuries and
2 possible death.

3 On March 20th of 2023 at approximately
4 1213 hours, Corporal Comstock was traveling east
5 on Interstate 10 in Biloxi, Mississippi. As
6 Corporal Comstock neared Exit 44, he observed
7 United States Border Patrol Agent, Timothy Davis
8 fighting for his life with a Hispanic male next to
9 Agent Davis' patrol vehicle, which was located on
10 the south side of the shoulder of Interstate 10.

11 The Hispanic male was, at the time, in
12 the United States illegally.

13 Corporal Comstock, observing Agent Davis
14 had lost tactical control over the subject,
15 without hesitation stopped his patrol vehicle and
16 crossed three lanes of busy interstate traffic to
17 aid Agent Davis in securing the offender. At the
18 time that Corporal Comstock arrived, the offender
19 had gained top control on Agent Davis and was
20 delivering damaging blows to his head and face
21 region.

22 Corporal Comstock quickly tackled the
23 offender, knocking him off Agent Davis, allowing
24 the two officers to secure the offender without
25 further incident.

1 Corporal Comstock's quick and decisive
2 actions prevented Agent Davis from serious bodily
3 injury and as a result suffered only a laceration
4 to his head. Corporal Comstock's role was pivotal
5 in the sequence of lifesaving actions as
6 demonstrated on that date, as the possible
7 outcomes, had he not intervened, could have been
8 devastating.

9 Corporal Comstock is a highly-trained
10 Marine Patrol officer and United States Marine
11 Corps veteran, and during this event, his training
12 supported by the acts of courageousness put the
13 lives of others above his own.

14 Corporal Comstock, like I mentioned, has
15 been commended for his bravery and split-second
16 decision-making by receiving the governor's award
17 for law enforcement officer of the year, but we
18 felt that it was important to recognize him at a
19 local level and in front of his peers and the
20 citizens that he protects down here.

21 So at this time, Corporal Comstock, face
22 the crowd.

23 KYLE WILKERSON:

24 Would y'all like to take a picture with
25 the man?

1 JOE SPRAGGINS:

2 Sure. Come on down.

3 I was there the day that he received
4 this and it was a big honor. And it was an honor
5 for DMR to have someone like this, one of these
6 young officers to be able to get some -- an award
7 of this type. It was just amazing for the
8 Department of Marine Resources to be brought out
9 for that, as small of an agency as we are compared
10 to highway patrol and everything else that's going
11 on out there. So it's just amazing to be able to
12 have such great officers. And we look around this
13 room right now and you see a lot of them in here,
14 and we are so lucky to have them. Thank you very
15 much.

16 KYLE WILKERSON:

17 All right. Back to business.

18 I will say the Director is correct.
19 Every one of those officers that work under the
20 Office of Marine Patrol and under DMR as a whole
21 are stellar officers. They would do the same
22 thing that Garrett did. Garrett was put in the
23 right place at the right time to save this
24 individual and hopefully they will remember that
25 in the future.

1 All right. We'll get back to the --
2 this would be under the July 4th weekend month, so
3 we're looking at the month of July. We had a busy
4 weekend as y'all know. I'm sure y'all were out
5 there, you know, enjoying the 4th and everything.

6 We had one -- we had a few oyster
7 violations. They were pretty -- I would say more
8 than just harvesting illegally on rocks and stuff
9 like that. You know, they were in possession of
10 several gallons of oysters they had just harvested
11 off a pier or off a jetty, so that was pretty --
12 that's pretty common, unfortunately, and that's
13 very dangerous.

14 The bulk of our safety citations --
15 there are a lot. Negligent operation, we had 22
16 of them. My biggest thing was child under 12
17 without a PFD. We have 12 of those. That's a
18 no-no, and they were cited for that. And we
19 had -- actually, BUIs were actually low, 11. I
20 mean, we have had historically several of years
21 we're well into the 20s, for that matter, so I
22 think people are complying now. I think we're
23 getting designated drivers and, they're -- you
24 know, not driving as much under the influence.

25 We had several -- we had several -- I

1 say "several." We had seven Tails and Scales,
2 telling people to register for those. And we had
3 2,962 stops for that month, and I'm sure most of
4 those were on that weekend. So at the end of the
5 day, I will field any questions on these
6 y'all need me to.

7 JOE SPRAGGINS:

8 Go to do it. Illegal alligator, tell
9 the story.

10 KYLE WILKERSON:

11 Well, I didn't want to call him out, but
12 we had one commissioner, he was instrumental in us
13 intercepting an illegal possession of an alligator
14 on Horn Island. And I'm not going to call his
15 name, but he knows who he is. And he coordinated
16 with us and we were able to locate him and were
17 able to actually free that alligator and put it
18 back in the water.

19 JOE SPRAGGINS:

20 Yeah. He had the alligator in the boat
21 with him?

22 KYLE WILKERSON:

23 Yes, sir. He wasn't -- he wasn't a
24 local actually. He was out of state.

25 It wasn't a giant alligator, only about

1 15 feet.

2 CAM ROBERDS:

3 Any questions? Thank you very much,
4 Chief. Appreciate, Corporal Comstock, that act of
5 selflessness. That's just amazing, so
6 congratulations on that, that award, for the whole
7 department.

8 KYLE WILKERSON:

9 I am proud of him and I am proud of all
10 these officers that work under us officers. Thank
11 you.

12 CAM ROBERDS:

13 Thank you.

14 JOE SPRAGGINS:

15 And I think that's only the second time
16 that that award has ever been given out.

17 KYLE WILKERSON:

18 That was the second annual summit.

19 JOE SPRAGGINS:

20 Well, that's amazing, you know, to get
21 there and to be there. You know, I'm not even
22 sure he was -- how long you been with us, a year,
23 two years?

24 GARRETT COMSTOCK:

25 Almost three.

1 JOE SPRAGGINS:

2 Almost three. I mean, it hasn't been
3 that long. He was trying to get there as quick as
4 he could.

5 CAM ROBERDS:

6 Congratulations. Amazing.

7 All right. Moving on to Coastal
8 Resources Management. It looks like we have a
9 wetlands permitting update by Willa.

10 JOE SPRAGGINS:

11 No. Willa is not. It's --

12 CAM ROBERDS:

13 Oh, okay.

14 ALYSSA TIMBS:

15 Good morning, Commissioners. Willa is
16 not -- Willa couldn't be here today, so I am
17 Alyssa Timbs, the wetlands permitting team lead.

18 So I'm going to quickly go over the
19 numbers for the first half of the year.

20 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER:

21 You want to turn on your mic?

22 ALYSSA TIMBS:

23 It's on. I'm just short.

24 JOE SPRAGGINS:

25 Yeah.

1 ALYSSA TIMBS:

2 All right. So I'm going to quickly go
3 over the numbers from the first half of this year.

4 So as seen on this table, between
5 January and June we have completed a total of 388
6 actions. This is made up of 323 regulated
7 activities and coastal zone consistency
8 determinations. It is 49 reviews and
9 pre-application meetings, and there have been 17
10 violations. Of these violations, six received
11 after-the-fact certifications, five are resolved
12 and six were determined to have no violation.

13 So how this compares to previous
14 mid-year reviews, so our total actions are down
15 slightly from 2021 and 2022, but a little bit
16 higher than last year, so that's the same for the
17 regulated activities and coastal zone consistency
18 determinations. The numbers for reviews are about
19 average, and our violation numbers, unfortunately,
20 have been trending upward for a few years.

21 So that's all we've got for y'all. Do
22 you have any questions?

23 CAM ROBERDS:

24 Any questions?

25 (No response.)

1 CAM ROBERDS:

2 Thank you very much.

3 ALYSSA TIMBS:

4 Thank you.

5 CAM ROBERDS:

6 City of Ocean Springs, coastal wetlands
7 fill.

8 KATIE NELSON:

9 All right. Good morning, everyone.

10 So we have received a permit application
11 from the City of Ocean Springs for a project that
12 is located between -- excuse me -- between
13 Washington Avenue -- or I'm sorry. I'm sorry --
14 along Washington Avenue between LaFontaine Road
15 and Front Beach Drive in Ocean Springs.

16 The project is allowable within the
17 current General Use District. The agent for the
18 project is Neel-Schaffer.

19 The city is requesting to make road
20 improvements by elevating the roadway by
21 three feet to prevent flooding during high tide
22 and storm events. And they are intending to
23 install improved storm drains, three new
24 stormwater inlets, new piping under the roadway,
25 as well as installing a bulkhead on the west side

1 of Washington Avenue.

2 To accomplish this, these road
3 improvements, the applicant is requesting to fill
4 462 square foot of coastal wetlands, which
5 includes 217 square feet of existing road, 48
6 square feet of shoulder, 74 square feet of
7 unvegetated water bottoms and 123 square feet of
8 the vegetated water bottoms.

9 For unavoidable impact to coastal
10 wetlands, the applicant is requesting variances,
11 which will be discussed in a later slide. They
12 are also requesting to fill 833 square feet of the
13 non-tidal wetlands.

14 Again, here is the project location.
15 It's on Washington Avenue between LaFontaine
16 Avenue and Front Beach Drive in Ocean Springs.

17 And then on the left side, we have the
18 project diagram, which includes both tidal and
19 non-tidal impacts, as well as just an aerial of
20 the project area on the right side of the screen.

21 The City is requesting three variances
22 for the unavoidable impacts to coastal wetlands.
23 Their justification for the impacts state that no
24 alternative sites or construction techniques are
25 available. There is significant public benefit in

1 the activity, and a public hearing has been held.

2 For the impacts to unvegetated and
3 vegetated Coastal wetlands, totaling 197 square
4 feet, the applicant is proposing to remove
5 approximately 200 square feet of debris from
6 Coastal wetlands located west of the Fort Bayou
7 bridge on Washington Avenue.

8 Additionally, any vegetation that will
9 be impacted by this project will be removed and
10 relocated to nearby marsh habitat outside the
11 construction zone.

12 This project ran in *the Sun Herald* on
13 three separate Sundays, which were June 30th,
14 July 7th and July 17th, and was published on our
15 website from June 27th through July 27th. No
16 public comments were received.

17 We also held a public hearing on
18 Tuesday, July 23rd and received one comment in
19 favor of the project.

20 MDEQ provided no comments on the
21 project, and MDAH had no objections. The
22 Secretary of State is requiring a rent-exempt
23 lease.

24 After a thorough evaluation of the
25 project, based on the decision factors in our

1 Coastal program, the project would serve a higher
2 public interest by ensuring the residents of the
3 area will have a safe means of travel during storm
4 events and evacuation as needed.

5 Therefore, the staff recommends a motion
6 that the Commission recommend to the Executive
7 Director to approve the requested variances and
8 approve the permit as requested.

9 Are there any questions?

10 CAM ROBERDS:

11 Any questions?

12 I'm familiar with the area and I will
13 say that it is low and the amount of impact seems
14 pretty minimal to be able to lift that road up
15 three foot, so -- and then the trade-out for the
16 debris on the west of Fort Bayou seems very nice
17 because I see that quite often.

18 All right. Do we have a motion to
19 approve the requested variances?

20 JASON OSBORNE:

21 Osborne. I make a motion to approve.

22 CAM ROBERDS:

23 I will second that motion. Cam Roberds.

24 All those in favor?

25 (Unanimous vote.)

1 CAM ROBERDS:

2 All right. We need one more.

3 Do we have a motion to approve the
4 permit as requested?

5 JASON OSBORNE:

6 Osborne. I approve -- I make a motion
7 to approve the permit as requested.

8 MATTHEW MAYFIELD:

9 Second. Matthew Mayfield.

10 CAM ROBERDS:

11 All those in favor?

12 (Unanimous vote.)

13 CAM ROBERDS:

14 All right. Thank you.

15 KATIE NELSON:

16 Thank you.

17 CAM ROBERDS:

18 No presentation?

19 JOE SPRAGGINS:

20 No.

21 CAM ROBERDS:

22 All right.

23 Ms. Charmaine, Public Affairs.

24 CHARMAINE SCHMERMUND:

25 Good morning. The Mississippi

1 Department of Marine Resources had 28 media
2 mentions since the July MACMR meeting. News items
3 included Commissioner Mayfield's appointment to
4 the MACMR, the Bonnet Carré spillway disaster
5 grant program for seafood processors, the Katrina
6 Key expansion and MDRM joining the newly-named
7 Mississippi Wildlife Fisheries, Parks and Marine
8 Foundation.

9 The Office of Marine Patrol took part in
10 the Back to School Health and Wellness Fair with
11 the City of Gulfport on July 27th.

12 The Office of Marine Fisheries hosted a
13 biology class visit from GCRL on July 19th. The
14 Lyman Hatchery hosted a tour with the marine life
15 class from MSU on August 5th.

16 Robert Gruba in IT gave a GulfSeeLife
17 presentation to the Fly Fishermen Club on
18 August 7th. And IT, along with Rick Burris, gave
19 a presentation to the 2024 GulfSeeLife scholars on
20 August 15th.

21 On July 31st, the agency cooking team
22 served Gulf fresh Mississippi seafood to an
23 estimated 600 guests at the Neshoba County Fair,
24 so here is some photos from that event. And the
25 cooking team also served Gulf fresh seafood last

1 week to nearly 100 guests of the Mississippi Gulf
2 Council reception on August 21st at the Maritime
3 and Seafood Industry Museum.

4 And on August 3rd, Chef Erika Lipe from
5 SoLa in Oxford represented Mississippi at the
6 Great American Seafood Cookoff in New Orleans. A
7 total of 13 chefs competed from throughout the
8 U.S., and Chef Erika won second place in the
9 competition with her dish, Snapper Pascagoula.
10 Third place was awarded to the chef from Maine,
11 and first place to the chef from Massachusetts,
12 making Erika the only Gulf state to place in this
13 year's competition. We are very proud of how well
14 she represented Mississippi.

15 CAM ROBERDS:

16 Amazing. Thank you very much.

17 Office of Marine Fisheries, it looks
18 like we have a shrimp season update, Jason.

19 JASON SAUCIER:

20 Good morning, Commissioners.

21 Just to provide an update since last
22 time we presented back in May on the shrimp season
23 so far this year, so looking at opening day
24 effort, we do go out every year on opening day and
25 do an aerial survey and on-the-water interviews.

1 This year, we saw 46 boats out. You'll see that
2 we saw a pretty sharp decrease beginning in 2018.

3 This year, the season did open on
4 May 29th and the average opening date is June 7th
5 historically, but for the four of the five last --
6 four of the five previous years we have opened in
7 May.

8 Looking at license sales, this is for
9 the 2024-2025 season so far, we do see a
10 continuation of the trend beginning back in 2010
11 when we had the oil spill. It is important to
12 focus on the commercial licenses. That's where
13 most of our effort, most of our landings comes
14 from in this fishery. And so if you look at the
15 red bars and the green line there, we see a pretty
16 consistent decrease in resident and non-resident
17 license sales.

18 Looking at landings and values for the
19 fishery so far, 2024 obviously is just through
20 July, but we do see a continuation of a decrease.
21 You should note there we did see an increase in
22 landings in 2023, but we did see sort of the
23 stagnant value from previous years there. And so
24 the value did drop significantly and that's
25 continuing into 2024, the value being that far

1 below.

2 And so obviously this is just part of
3 the year. Most of our landings and value in this
4 fishery occurs in June, July and August
5 historically when we see most of the activity.
6 And in 2024, this includes through the end of
7 July, but with the exception of 2010, when we had
8 the oil spill, this is the lowest on record or at
9 least in the time periods to '08.

10 Monthly landings versus our five-year
11 average, every month with the exception of January
12 and May, we're seeing a pretty -- I'm sorry, April
13 as well, we're seeing a decrease in landings. And
14 it should be noted that in January, it's still
15 relatively low most years, but we did see a big
16 increase in landings. That shrimp is not likely
17 to be harvested here. That's coming from federal
18 water or other jurisdictions.

19 And then looking at shrimp prices on
20 average, so it should be noted this is across all
21 market sizes, so this is -- includes our larger
22 shrimp and smaller shrimp, just on average by
23 month. Everything is below \$2 a pound other than
24 March, so if you remember back on that previous
25 slide there the landings in March were relatively

1 low, very nominal numbers compared to what we see
2 in other months where there is a lot of activity.

3 So even though we saw this large jump in
4 value, that may be from one or two trips,
5 literally, that were landed, you know, big boats
6 that were landing shrimp at one of our docks. So
7 on average, though, if we look across for the
8 whole year, so the figure to the right, we're less
9 than \$1.50 a pound on average. And that trend
10 line kind of indicates what we've been seeing, is
11 there is a lot of fluctuation from year to year.
12 But on average, we're seeing less and less, and
13 that's the opposite direction of what you would
14 expect.

15 Everything else is going up with
16 inflation, cost of their expenses, mainly fuel,
17 which is the largest cost that they face in the
18 shrimp fishery. It's continuing to increase and
19 then we see this decrease in average value of the
20 product.

21 So with that, I just -- you know, we
22 have said this before, we like to encourage
23 consumers to be conscientious with their buying
24 habits. Try to shop local, try to support our
25 local fishermen. Buy at the dock when you can.

1 Ask your restaurants where that shrimp comes from,
2 because what's driving these low prices are our
3 imports, and so they -- the imports are
4 controlling the market and there is so much of
5 that product that's coming in and it is not a fair
6 playing field, so to speak. So if we can increase
7 market shares for the local harvesters, that would
8 help.

9 And I will take any questions y'all
10 have.

11 CAM ROBERDS:

12 From what I understand is the -- the
13 population of shrimp is good. We just don't have
14 fishermen. Is that --

15 JASON SAUCIER:

16 Yeah, that's right. So we do year-round
17 sampling now just to monitor sizes and abundance,
18 and our CPUE is what we would expect it to be. It
19 does drop after the opening, but a lot of that has
20 to do with migration offshore and effort.

21 The CPUE within the fishery, if we
22 calculate based on tickets, trip tickets, it's a
23 rough estimate, but it is -- I did present that at
24 the last meeting that I presented that the CPUE
25 went up, so the catch per unit effort in the

1 fishery is up based on what they're reporting to
2 us. So it's a lot less trips now that they may be
3 changing a little bit of their behavior, going out
4 and getting the small amount, taking shorter
5 trips, just what they can sell off the boat, but
6 we don't have any reason to believe that the
7 stocks are in any need of change.

8 JONATHAN MCLENDON:

9 Jason, I appreciate you mentioning that
10 about buying local because, hey, look, if these
11 guys are getting a buck 50 for a pound, you know,
12 certainly go down to the local docks and try hard
13 not to complain about paying 2.50, \$3, you know,
14 whatever it is they're asking these days.

15 One trend that we have seen, and I see
16 it here a lot, is actually, like, a lot of these
17 fishermen are aging, you know. Their children
18 aren't in the business. We have seen several
19 boats repossessed in the past six months. We have
20 seen several boats sold in the past six months.

21 And, you know, the price of a
22 replacement boat is several million dollars, so
23 nobody is going to go out and pay that right now
24 in the shrimp business.

25 So I think that it's important to note

1 that, you know, as these boats go away, like,
2 they're not returning. So the people that are
3 left are right -- exactly what you said, trying to
4 increase the catch per unit, you know, every time
5 that they go out to make up for some of the lower
6 prices.

7 So -- and I'm just curious how -- like,
8 how has the Mississippi numbers, do you know how
9 they compare with, say, Alabama, which is a
10 similar fishery? Louisiana has got a much larger
11 coastline.

12 JASON SAUCIER:

13 As far as license sales or landings?

14 JONATHAN MCLENDON:

15 Landings.

16 JASON SAUCIER:

17 So we typically present at the ASFA
18 meeting in the spring, and Louisiana presents.
19 Alabama does not. But Louisiana is experiencing
20 very similar numbers. Federal permit holders'
21 activity in that group is steadily decreasing.
22 The number of active federal permit holders is
23 going down.

24 And so I think there was an amendment a
25 few years ago at Gulf Council where they -- once

1 we hit a certain threshold of active permit
2 holders, they have to re-evaluate whether we open
3 it back up, so it's -- there is activity --
4 lessening activity across the entire Gulf. I
5 can't really speak to Florida, but I know in
6 Alabama they're seeing the same thing, just
7 talking to the managers over there.

8 JOE SPRAGGINS:

9 Yeah. I know looking at -- the Gulf
10 Council has talked about this numerous times,
11 about what we can do and Jason is on our shrimp
12 commission.

13 JASON SAUCIER:

14 SCC.

15 JOE SPRAGGINS:

16 And so we'll be able to come back and
17 get some more information from it.

18 How do we stop it? We don't stop it,
19 and the only way that -- if we want to -- if you
20 want to continue to eat Gulf fresh shrimp, you
21 better buy it and you better continue to buy it
22 because, otherwise, as you said, Commissioner,
23 once that boat leaves, it's not coming back. And
24 as long as we keep losing these boats -- and we're
25 going to lose them when somebody can only get a

1 1.50 as the max. I mean, but, you know, when you
2 think about it, what, it costs \$5 a gallon of
3 diesel or whatever it is to run that and right now
4 they're going -- having to go out into the deeper
5 water to catch them because the shrimp have moved
6 out, it takes a lot of money to do that and with
7 the ice and everything else they have to buy, just
8 an overall deal.

9 And these local ones, if you don't
10 demand local fresh seafood when you go into your
11 restaurants, then shame on you, because that's
12 what you should do. You ought to tell them, I
13 don't want an import. I want this, and that's
14 what will stop them from doing it.

15 And I don't blame them. I'm not after
16 those restaurants. I'm not blaming them for
17 anything. But what I'm telling you is, is you ask
18 for local fresh and everybody says, I don't want
19 it if it's not local fresh, if it's not from the
20 Gulf, I don't want it, then people will start
21 serving the right thing and they will do what we
22 need to do. And that's what we need. We need
23 that, and you need to go down to the dock.

24 And I'll tell you what, go down there
25 and buy it. And, you know, go buy it off of that

1 or either to your local markets and buy the
2 seafood and make sure you ask them if you're
3 getting Gulf fresh too. Make sure you ask that
4 question. That's the only way we're ever going to
5 be able to do anything with this.

6 We thank y'all for all the hard work
7 you're doing on it, Jason. We know y'all are
8 working hard every day, and it's up to us as the
9 consumer to make the decision if we want to keep
10 this fishery or not.

11 JASON SAUCIER:

12 Thank you.

13 CAM ROBERDS:

14 Thank you, Jason.

15 All right. It looks like we have an
16 update on the upcoming on-bottom oyster lease with
17 Jason.

18 JOE SPRAGGINS:

19 I want to apologize. This is going to
20 be a little while, I think, and -- but it's worth
21 it. I wanted y'all -- we have went in and worked
22 hard. Their team has worked extremely hard trying
23 to get the right things to do to how to lease
24 these on-bottoms and I wanted y'all -- we're
25 waiting -- this is the last thing. If the

1 Commission agrees with this, then we'll go live
2 sometime the first of September with it.

3 JASON RIDER:

4 Thank you, Director, and good morning,
5 everyone. As he did mention, it will be a little
6 bit, so please bear with me. But if you have any
7 questions, let me know. I will be happy to answer
8 them anytime.

9 I want to give an update regarding the
10 on-bottom molluscan shellfish lease process of
11 2024. As you may know, we did do an application
12 process last year. Towards the end of it, we
13 identified some inconsistencies. We didn't want
14 to move forward with those inconsistencies, so the
15 Agency and the Mississippi Legislature asked us to
16 pause it and try again in 2024, so that's where
17 we're at right now.

18 The past legislative session, Senate
19 Bill 2648 was passed, and it tasked the Agency
20 with establishing a system to qualify applicants
21 and it also stated the five metrics which we
22 should follow to develop the program. So with
23 that Senate Bill, the Agency worked and developed
24 a program and that's what you see here.

25 This is the complete process and we

1 hope -- we developed a web page, and we hope that
2 the public can understand it, gain the information
3 and then apply for the necessary leases in areas
4 they deem necessary.

5 So I will go over the web page and the
6 application. First off, this is the landing page
7 that will be on the DMR website when we go live.
8 We are not live yet, but in the near future we
9 hope to go live.

10 It's broken out into four sections of
11 program information sections: What you need to
12 know, how to apply and then the application and
13 review.

14 So first off, this is, again, program
15 information, so it just gives you the who, what,
16 why, what we're doing. Basically, what we're
17 trying to do is take previously inaccessible areas
18 that were -- that the Agency managed and we're
19 going to lease them privately to individuals to
20 develop their acreage as they see fit and try to
21 jump-start the oyster industry to get oysters
22 coming back through Mississippi's docks and get
23 seafood coming back, specifically oysters to the
24 Mississippi Gulf Coast, and we feel like that is
25 the best way possible through the private process,

1 private development.

2 So as program information, in the "what
3 you need to know," this is just a quick breakdown,
4 and I have it right here. It gives you everything
5 that you need to know about the process. It will
6 tell you the lease conditions, so if you go
7 through the process, you will sign a lease with
8 the Agency. It outlines what you have there, the
9 requirements associated with the lease, reporting,
10 terminations, subleases and transfers and then the
11 supporting documents for the application process.

12 The main thing that I wanted to mention
13 is the scoring matrix. This is basically
14 everything that you need to know in a nutshell.
15 The Senate Bill 2648 tasked us with -- they
16 developed five general concepts that we had to
17 work within. Those five concepts or five items
18 would be experience in reef development,
19 experience in oyster cultivation and harvesting,
20 registration on an interstate shellfish shippers
21 list, the amount of leased acreage and then
22 financial stability.

23 The Senate bill said they all had to be
24 weighted equally, so what we did as an Agency is
25 we developed questions inside of the general

1 things, the general topics and we are scoring them
2 appropriately. This matrix shows how much each is
3 worth. And then we are requiring supporting
4 documentation this year, so it tells you a list of
5 the type of information that you will be required
6 to submit so the Agency can verify it, and then it
7 gives the scoring matrix.

8 This is a snapshot of the program. If
9 anyone has any questions, this is the best
10 resource, I think, they can use to identify what
11 would work best for them.

12 So at this time, that's what the
13 legislative -- the Legislature asked us to develop
14 and now we went in and we developed a program on
15 how the public would apply for the leased areas.

16 So one thing we had to do is we
17 developed a video. Our IT department developed a
18 video to explain everything about it, and I think
19 it outlines how they apply, what they can apply
20 for. I would highly suggest anyone that's
21 interested watch this video before applying.

22 So with this, I will let everyone watch
23 this.

24 (Video played.)

25 JASON RIDER:

1 Okay. So that was a brief overview of
2 the video and how to apply and what the map does.
3 And then as you can scroll down through the
4 website, Step 2 would be use that tool. Use this
5 tool right here to identify your areas.

6 As mentioned in the video, we're trying
7 to lease out this area as efficiently as possible.
8 We understand that it's a little complicated if
9 you're not familiar with the software. We're
10 happy to help you identify the coordinates and
11 submit an accurate application, so if you do need
12 help, please come to the DMR and we will help you
13 at any time.

14 So use this tool, this map to identify
15 your coordinates. You would write down your total
16 acreage and then the coordinates associated with
17 your lease.

18 The next step in the process would be
19 gather the necessary documentations. As mentioned
20 before, we are working within the metrics
21 identified in the Senate bill, and with those the
22 verification would be documentation for
23 individuals. So we're suggesting you get that
24 information before you apply, and this is some of
25 the information that you may need.

1 Once you have all that information done,
2 you would submit the application, and I will run
3 through that briefly.

4 The application is done online. It is a
5 standard application that you see through various
6 websites that you would put your application
7 information in here. You would answer the
8 questions as you -- as they apply to you or your
9 business. If you have a business, you can apply
10 under your business or as a private individual.
11 Either way is fine. If you have questions with
12 that, we'll help you.

13 So here is an example of a question,
14 experience in reef development. Has the applicant
15 previously held a valid private oyster lease in
16 Mississippi or any other state? If so, please
17 indicate the length of time that the private lease
18 has been held for. And then, again, this is your
19 scoring matrix for that question. The individual
20 would click -- if they had 14 years, they would
21 click their 14 years if they have a lease. And
22 then this supporting documentation tab would be an
23 area that they would prove to us that they had the
24 lease. The supporting documentation is just as
25 important as the number of years.

1 During the last process, the application
2 was the final step, and that was a one-stop
3 situation. This year, we're taking a different
4 approach to where if you click 14 years and you
5 submit documentation for 10 years and you're
6 missing the remaining four years, e-mail us, call
7 us. Say, I'm going to get you that information at
8 a later date. We will put it in your file. You
9 will not be penalized if you don't have the
10 information at the time that you submit the
11 application. It will be a window to apply. It
12 won't be a one-day type situation. You will have
13 plenty of time to apply and get us the
14 documentations that are required.

15 So you would go through the application.
16 There is multiple questions and multiple areas to
17 identify -- I mean, to support, to upload your
18 documentation. If you can't do it online or
19 through the computer, you're more than welcome to
20 bring it to the agency and we'll scan it, make
21 copies and we'll put it in your file. We're
22 trying to work with the applicants as best as
23 possible and make it as easy as possible for them
24 to apply for acreage this year.

25 As you can see, some of the questions

1 are -- are going through. You're just going to
2 need to work through. This would be the area that
3 you put your coordinates in, and then you would
4 type in your coordinates that you got from the map
5 viewer beforehand.

6 And then one other thing that we do have
7 with the application process is your financial
8 stability, so you would submit all this
9 information. You would check this box on your
10 financial stability and then you would actually
11 submit the application. But one of the five
12 processes for us to grade applicants on is their
13 financial stability.

14 We did contract with an accounting firm
15 and all of that information will be sent directly
16 to an accounting firm and will be reviewed and
17 scored by the accounting firm. The Agency is
18 allowing them to take those documentations, review
19 them and score them and then send us the score
20 back.

21 So what will happen, you will submit
22 this application online. You will get a follow-up
23 e-mail with another link that you can submit your
24 documentation directly to the CPA firm.

25 So this is the total application. Where

1 is it at here?

2 And Step 5 is your -- you would provide
3 your financial documentation. At that point, once
4 you have your application submitted and your
5 supporting documentation turned in, the Agency
6 would score and review them and coordinate with
7 applicants on their leases and hopefully identify
8 the area and work with them to execute subleases.

9 At this time, I think I covered
10 everything, but Director, do you have anything to
11 add?

12 JOE SPRAGGINS:

13 No. Just that, as you said, there is
14 five areas and they was -- that was put in our
15 legislation that -- the five areas that we would
16 grade and those things are graded equal, 20 points
17 equal. That's what you get. And according to
18 where you grade in those five areas is what your
19 overall grade will be.

20 And as far as the financial part of it,
21 we will not see anything that you send us as --
22 you know, you won't send us anything as far as
23 your financials. It will be sent to a certified
24 accounting department and they will have that
25 information, so it's not something that's going to

1 be publicized or anything else. It will all be
2 very well protected through them. And then they
3 will give us the grade that you get financially.
4 So if they have any questions, they will work with
5 you on it, and they will talk back and forth about
6 your financial capabilities of doing it.

7 And the major things, Number 1, we want
8 to lease it, as Jason said. We want to get the
9 most use that we can get, and we want to do it the
10 best way we can do to lease each piece of property
11 and how we can do that to be able to do it for the
12 State of Mississippi to get the best benefit out
13 of it.

14 And I think this is the greatest thing.
15 It's going to be fantastic. We will get it right.
16 I'm sure there will be a glitch somewhere, you
17 know. Nothing is ever perfect, but we'll work
18 through those glitches and do what we need to do.

19 But if you -- the one thing, if you have
20 any questions, always come to the staff and ask
21 them. They will help you. They will bend over
22 backwards to help you any way. They'll help you
23 fill out your application. They'll sit down with
24 you and go over everything that you need to do.
25 So don't take the -- you know, don't feel like if

1 you don't know what you're doing that you're left
2 out. No. You can come to them and talk to them
3 and they will help you.

4 And I think this will work out. The
5 team has put together a lot of effort in this and
6 I'm hoping that it works out and I hope that
7 everybody is satisfied. Everybody is not going to
8 be happy because somebody is going to want the
9 same piece of property that somebody else wants,
10 but that's just part of life. And, you know, what
11 we're going to do is do it by the best ability
12 that we have to give it to the most deserving, and
13 so that's what we'll do, is the one that can do
14 the best for the property.

15 CAM ROBERDS:

16 It looks like a very fair, thought out
17 evaluation, vetting process.

18 I have got one quick question, Jason, if
19 you --

20 JASON RIDER:

21 Sure.

22 CAM ROBERDS:

23 So if you -- say, September 1st is when
24 you guys start receiving the applications, and I'm
25 not really sure -- I know it's going to be new --

1 how long it's going to take to actually award.
2 But once they're awarded, is there anything -- any
3 timelines to hold, you know, the leaseholders
4 accountable for actually starting a cultch or --
5 JASON RIDER:

6 So yes, part of the updated regulations
7 that we passed earlier this year, they do apply
8 cultivation requirements and propagation
9 requirements and we actually have them outlined
10 here, but they do have metrics that they have to
11 meet 50 percent -- they have to meet a certain
12 percentage of the acreage they lease. They have
13 to develop it by certain years.

14 So yes. It is -- so that is not a
15 situation where they can take acreage and never
16 use it. We want them to use it.

17 CAM ROBERDS:

18 Yeah.

19 JOE SPRAGGINS:

20 Yeah. These are 15-year leases, so the
21 one thing about it is, you know, I think it's
22 50 percent the first five years; is that right?

23 JASON RIDER:

24 It's 50 percent in the first two
25 years -- or I'm sorry.

1 JOE SPRAGGINS:

2 I'm five years. So if you go and you
3 lease 500 acres, then you're going to have to
4 cultch at least 250 of that acres in the first
5 five years and you're going to have to be able to,
6 you know, make sure that it's workable.

7 The idea with that is there is some
8 areas out there -- and I will just be up front
9 about it. There is some areas that's got oysters
10 on it and we don't want somebody just to go in
11 there and try to lease it and then go get all the
12 oysters off and not do anything about it.

13 AUDIENCE MEMBER:

14 It's going to happen. You watch.

15 JOE SPRAGGINS:

16 Well, we're going to try to keep that
17 from happening. All right? That's one of the
18 things that we're going to keep from happening.

19 AUDIENCE MEMBER:

20 (Inaudible.) I seen this coming in
21 Louisiana. It's going to happen.

22 JOE SPRAGGINS:

23 And once again, sir, I know that nothing
24 is perfect. Right? We're going to give it every
25 effort we can to make sure that it doesn't happen

1 that way and -- because we want to make sure that
2 when a person goes in and the person says that
3 they want to lease this acreage, that they can
4 financially and then they have the knowledge to be
5 able to maintain it, because it's not going to be
6 something that we're just going to let somebody
7 come in and do a fly-by-night thing as much as
8 possible. We're hoping we're going to be able to
9 stop that, and I think this is the best way we
10 know how to do it. And, you know, once again, we
11 may learn a lesson here, but we'll learn it, okay,
12 and we will move forward. But right now, this is
13 the best way that we can do it and be able to say
14 that you can be able to take care of what you're
15 doing.

16 JASON OSBORNE:

17 If no one has any further questions, I
18 think that's completed. Thank y'all.

19 CAM ROBERDS:

20 Thank you, Jason.

21 JOE SPRAGGINS:

22 I would like, if I could, Sandy, I think
23 if I could get a motion for the Commission to
24 accept this process.

25 CAM ROBERDS:

1 Gentlemen.

2 JONATHAN MCLENDON:

3 I will make the motion -- Jonathan
4 McLendon -- for the Commission to accept this
5 process.

6 JASON OSBORNE:

7 Jason Osborne. Second.

8 CAM ROBERDS:

9 All those in favor?

10 (Unanimous vote.)

11 JOE SPRAGGINS:

12 Thank you.

13 JASON RIDER:

14 Thank y'all.

15 CAM ROBERDS:

16 Thanks, Jason.

17 Ooh, Trevor, you have got your work cut
18 out for you this month. Must have been a good
19 month of fishing.

20 TREVOR MONCRIEF:

21 Yeah. Coming in wide for this year --
22 this month.

23 All right. So eight records today.

24 Start off with my favorite of the
25 barracudas, the guachanche barracuda. It's a new

1 record. We don't see these very often, 1 pound,
2 3.36 ounces. Angler was Maison Hallman. There is
3 a picture of the fish. There is a picture of the
4 angler with the fish.

5 Had a golden tilefish record. The old
6 record was 20 pounds. This one knocked it out of
7 the water. It was 28 pounds, 8.96 ounces. That
8 was for Dustin Conway. There is a picture of the
9 fish, and there is Mr. Conway with that fish.

10 We had an all tackle record for
11 whitebone porgy. The old record was 2 pounds,
12 5 ounces. The new record is 3 pounds, 8 ounces.
13 The angler is Mr. Garrett Jones. This is a
14 picture of the fish, and there is a picture of
15 Mr. Jones with that fish.

16 We have a couple of fly tackle
17 records -- or one. It's a silver perch. It's a
18 new record. A whopping 2.4 ounces. Angler,
19 Mr. Alan Williams. There is a picture of the
20 fish. There is Alan with that fish.

21 Had a youth conventional tackle. That
22 was a blacknose shark, 16 pounds, 10.24 ounces.
23 That's a new youth record. Mr. Braxton Necaie.
24 That's a picture of the shark. There is Braxton
25 with that shark.

1 And then we have Rodie Armes show back
2 up. He's got the next three. We've got an
3 Atlantic silverstripe halfbeak, a whopping
4 2.24 ounces. There's Mr. Rodie Armes. There is a
5 picture of the fish, and there is a picture of
6 Rodie with the fish. No idea how it fit the hook,
7 but it happened.

8 We've got a youth fly tackle record. We
9 have got two of them. First one is crevalle jack.
10 It's a new record, 25 pounds 10.24 ounces. There
11 is a picture of the fish. There is Rodie with
12 that fish. Then he came back in and wanted to
13 knock out a bluefish one, so it's also a new
14 record, 2 pounds, 4.0 ounces. This is Rodie
15 again. Picture of the fish, and there is Rodie
16 with the fish.

17 So we've got eight of them, so we just
18 need a motion to approve all of those.

19 CAM ROBERDS:

20 Rodie is back at it.

21 If we don't have any questions, I would
22 like to make motion to approve the adoption of
23 these state records. Cam Roberds.

24 Do we have a second?

25 JASON OSBORNE:

1 Jason Osborne. Second.

2 CAM ROBERDS:

3 All those in favor?

4 (Unanimous vote.)

5 TREVOR MONCRIEF:

6 Thank y'all.

7 JOE SPRAGGINS:

8 Hey, Commissioners, I saw something the
9 other day out of West Virginia that they had a
10 state record that was for a crappie and it had
11 been there for years that this state record had
12 been there at 2.75 or 85 pounds or something like
13 that. You know, it was a number, which was a
14 pretty good sized crappie. Right.

15 Well, then, all of sudden, this guy
16 catches one and he breaks the state record by an
17 ounce or something like that, a half an ounce or
18 whatever it was, an ounce that breaks it. He is
19 just the happiest in the world because he's done
20 this and less than 24 hours later, it gets broken
21 again. And I said, so he didn't get to keep it
22 long, but he got it on there.

23 CAM ROBERDS:

24 Good stuff.

25 Grand Bay National Estuarine Research

1 Reserve, Ayesha Gray.

2 AYESHA GRAY:

3 Good morning, Director, Commissioners,
4 Legal.

5 JOE SPRAGGINS:

6 Pull that mic down a little bit.

7 AYESHA GRAY:

8 All right. Great. Good morning,
9 Director, Commissioners.

10 It's been a busy spring and summer at
11 Grand Bay and so I wanted to share some of our
12 highlights. One of the things we do every year is
13 work on teacher professional development
14 workshops, so this is part of the NERRs -- the
15 national NERRs program, but we will also add our
16 own creativity into this.

17 So the Teachers on the Estuary, they
18 call it the TOTE, that's part of the national
19 NERR's programming, and this year we did a
20 workshop called, Enkindled in Ecology: Igniting
21 Habitat Restoration. And we brought teachers out
22 for three days and we did a variety of programming
23 with them out in the habitats, in the classroom
24 and also sent them back to their classrooms with
25 curriculum.

1 In addition, we worked on two other
2 workshops that we did as one-day workshops, so we
3 did four additional teacher development workshops,
4 and this is in response to our community of
5 teachers who have asked for shorter workshops
6 and -- and things that they can learn and take
7 back to their classroom, but they didn't -- when
8 they weren't able to commit three days to the
9 actual TOTE.

10 So we did two of those. One is called,
11 Let's Get Batty, where we learned about bats on
12 the Mississippi Gulf Coast and also built bat
13 boxes that they could build in their classrooms or
14 at their schools.

15 And we did another one called Fun with
16 Frogs, same kind of thing where we learned all
17 different kinds of frogs on the Mississippi Gulf
18 Coast. And then we built this thing -- you can't
19 really see it very well, called the Amphibi-Inn,
20 and so it's a pretty simple design. It's just a
21 pot that you might buy from a hardware store
22 filled with soil and rocks and then it will -- if
23 you look down in it, these PVC pipes are pushed in
24 there and little frogs go in and they sit in
25 there. It's like a little refuge for them. It's

1 a little dark for you to see it, but -- I don't
2 know if you can see the frog in there but --
3 AUDIENCE MEMBER:

4 We can see it back here.

5 AYESHA GRAY:

6 Oh, you can see it back here. Oh, good.

7 Additionally, we did all -- like we do
8 every year, we went to all kinds of different
9 community events and we had booths and talked
10 about what we do and what the DMR does. Our DMR
11 intern this year was Ashley Fuentes. She's from
12 Texas, and this is her at the Stay Safe and Play
13 event, which was in Biloxi.

14 We also did summer library programs, so
15 we went to libraries in George County, Ocean
16 Springs, Vancleave, St. Martin, Gautier,
17 Pascagoula and Moss Point, and we talked about
18 having safe and fun outdoor adventures with kids
19 in libraries.

20 And this is a really good highlight. So
21 we have this program which is an external program
22 that we got from the National Academy of Sciences
23 and we call it BRACKISH, but biodiversity,
24 relationship, aquatic, chemistry knowledge in
25 saline habitats.

1 And we had a field trip with Moss Point,
2 and so we had kids from Moss Point Middle School
3 come out on May 8th, and they had one of the most
4 epic field trips that we have ever had when a pod
5 of 30 dolphin followed the Miss NERR all around
6 during the time that they were sampling water
7 chemistry. So it was a really great experience
8 for a lot of kids that often don't get on boats
9 and don't get near the water, and so -- but now we
10 have very high expectations that are coming
11 through the community. People are expecting to
12 see dolphins every time they come to the NERR.

13 Finally, I want to tell you about
14 National Estuaries Day. We do this every year.
15 It's part of a national celebration at all of the
16 NERRs across the country and ours is called,
17 Seaside with a Scientist, so we invite you to come
18 out and you're going to meet our scientists, our
19 water quality scientists, our bird scientists, our
20 restoration ecologists, and you can tour the water
21 of the reserve as you see the work that they're
22 working on.

23 And it's Saturday, September 30th.
24 There is boat rides from 8:00 to noon, but we also
25 have the building open from 8:30 to 2:00 and you

1 can meet some of our partners and see some of the
2 other activities that we have around. And that is
3 the website where you can sign up and it goes live
4 on Friday. Tickets go fast.

5 That's all I have.

6 CAM ROBERDS:

7 Thank you very much. Impressive, the
8 educational aspect of everything you guys are
9 doing over there.

10 Great job. Thank you.

11 All right. Moving on, do we have any
12 other business at this time?

13 If not, we do have one public comment.

14 Mr. Greg Cenac.

15 GREG CENAC:

16 Last time I came I had to show what a
17 cockroach was. Right? So I just wanted to bring
18 an update on the cockroach. We're going to be
19 moving it to the Schooner Pier within days, maybe
20 a week, so y'all be able see it over there on the
21 beach. We're going to park it there for a good
22 week and try to do a couple little more
23 fundraisers for the Mississippi Gulf Fishing
24 Banks, which I'm representing here.

25 One thing I did want to talk about, last

1 time we talked about something, kind of, hey, I've
2 got something coming. I didn't want to really
3 bring it out in front of the cockroach, is -- you
4 may have seen it on WLOX. I think I have some
5 pictures of it. The university worked together
6 with some -- a lot of volunteers and we built a
7 living shoreline with a lot of oyster shells and
8 new biodegradable bags that's out there. And we
9 have a lot of volunteers.

10 And I gave the write-up that *Sun Herald*
11 did for you guys to read through because it gives
12 a lot of recognition to people. The one thing it
13 did not recognize, nor did WLOX recognize -- and
14 that was on TV -- is DMR. You guys did a lot of
15 work in this behind the scenes, and permitting
16 particularly. The permitting group just really
17 needs to get a hand for this because it made it
18 happen a lot quicker.

19 We put all this out there. We had
20 oyster shells that came from Las Vegas versus our
21 own individual oyster shells. So if people are
22 throwing oyster shells, we could have used them on
23 this reef, but the artificial -- and in -- this
24 section here is the remote setting, the new bag.
25 You can see the old ones all crumbled up there.

1 This is a new biodegradable bag coming from Spain.
2 It's new. It has some pellet in it. It's for our
3 hotter waters. All of the other bags are being
4 bought from the north, colder waters.

5 So can you hear me? Now I'm a lot
6 better. Let's start over again. My name is Greg.
7 No. We're not going to go through this again.

8 But we're going to be doing this a lot
9 more. Mississippi Gulf Fish Banks is known for
10 building reefs offshore, sinking ships, we're
11 doing a lot more with that. But the CCA is
12 working with us. They want to give us money to
13 build reefs, so we're going to be doing a lot more
14 of this artificial living shorelines and doing
15 some oyster reefs and possibly taking some of
16 those Tier IIIs and building some oyster reefs
17 with the money that they have.

18 And these are some of the people that
19 have donated. Will Ladner's daughter was there, I
20 think, Cecelia Cenac, and then Jerry is on the
21 Board of Directors of Fishing Banks. So they
22 donate a lot of time.

23 Again, going back to the people that
24 were not recognized, it was the permitting DMR
25 guys, so we want to thank those guys. Thank you.

1 JOE SPRAGGINS:

2 And we want to thank you for, you
3 know -- he sponsored -- well, your wife sponsored,
4 I think. She owns the company, right?

5 GREG CENAC:

6 Yes, sir. Yes, sir. I just clean the
7 pool.

8 JOE SPRAGGINS:

9 Sponsored some oysters that we --
10 grilled oysters and oysters on the half shell for
11 our event the other night. And we thank you very
12 much. We had great reviews of that and everybody
13 thought they was some of the greatest things in
14 the world.

15 And, you know, the off-bottom oysters
16 are doing pretty good and it's looking great. And
17 I know that we have a long process going with
18 that, and we appreciate it.

19 Greg, you know, came back here from
20 Colorado, wasn't it, a few years ago.

21 GREG CENAC:

22 Yes, sir.

23 JOE SPRAGGINS:

24 And I think your wife was a long-time
25 resident of here years ago and so they came back

1 to be able to give back to the community. And
2 they're doing a lot. I'll tell you what, we thank
3 you so much. We appreciate what you're doing for
4 us, and we do notice it and we see what you're
5 doing. And we thank you and we appreciate your
6 help on here.

7 GREG CENAC:

8 Well, thank you. Appreciate it. And
9 give it to Alec, because actually the oysters you
10 were eating were Eagle Point Oysters. So we work
11 with all the farmers, you know, even though we
12 have French Hermit Oysters.

13 CAM ROBERDS:

14 Excellent. Thanks, Greg.

15 That was good stuff. All right. Great
16 meeting.

17 I guess if nobody else has any questions
18 or comments, then --

19 JOE SPRAGGINS:

20 Just one thing. Congratulations,
21 Officer Comstock. We thank you so much for what
22 you did for us. And to all the other officers and
23 everyone in the department, we thank you for
24 everything you do.

25 CAM ROBERDS:

1 All right. Do we have a motion to
2 adjourn?

3 JONATHAN MCLENDON:

4 Jonathan McLendon. I make a motion.

5 JASON OSBORNE:

6 I second. Osborne.

7 CAM ROBERDS:

8 All those in favor?

9 (Unanimous vote.)

10 (Meeting adjourned.)

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CERTIFICATE OF COURT REPORTER

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

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

15 Witness my signature and seal, this the

16 _____ day of _____, 2024.

17
18 _____
19
20 Melissa Burdine-Rodolfich
21 My Commission Expires 4/03/28
22
23
24
25