

STATE OF MISSISSIPPI

MISSISSIPPI ADVISORY COMMISSION ON MARINE RESOURCES
COMMISSION MEETING

Tuesday, September 16, 2025, 9:00 a.m.,
Biloxi City Hall, Second Floor,
140 Lameuse Street, Biloxi, Mississippi 39530

COMMISSION MEMBERS:

Ronnie Daniels
Jonathan McLendon
Matthew Mayfield
Jason Osborne
Cammack "Cam" Roberds

ALSO PRESENT:

Joe Spraggins
Sandy Chesnut, Esquire
Steven Eckert, Esquire

REPORTED BY:

Melissa Burdine-Rodolfich
mburdine@sbmreporting.com

1 CAM ROBERDS:

2 Good morning, ladies and gentlemen. I
3 want to welcome everybody to the Mississippi
4 Advisory Commission on Marine Resources for
5 Tuesday, September 16th, 2025.

6 And I will lead us in the Pledge of
7 Allegiance.

8 (Pledge of Allegiance was recited.)

9 CAM ROBERDS:

10 Okay. Director, would you like to lead
11 us in a prayer, please?

12 JOE SPRAGGINS:

13 Yeah. And if we could, let's just go to
14 the Lord in prayer.

15 (Moment of prayer.)

16 CAM ROBERDS:

17 All right. It looks like we have the
18 minutes here from August 19th. Do we have any
19 questions for the approval of the minutes?

20 If we don't have any questions, do we
21 have a motion?

22 JASON OSBORNE:

23 I make a motion.

24 JONATHAN MCLENDON:

25 I'll second.

1 CAM ROBERDS:

2 All those in favor?

3 (Unanimous vote.)

4 CAM ROBERDS:

5 Has everybody had an opportunity to look
6 at the agenda and if so, do we have any questions?

7 If not, do we have a motion to approve
8 the agenda?

9 MATTHEW MAYFIELD:

10 Motion to approve the agenda.

11 RONNIE DANIELS:

12 Second.

13 CAM ROBERDS:

14 All those in favor?

15 (Unanimous vote.)

16 CAM ROBERDS:

17 All right, Director.

18 JOE SPRAGGINS:

19 Okay. Let's see where I'm at here.

20 All right. First thing up on -- is
21 employment contracts.

22 All right. We have a new hire and
23 promotion. I can't read it from here, so maybe
24 y'all can. There it is. Well, I thought it was.
25 It ain't pulling up.

1 Anyway, y'all see who they are, but
2 anyway, we welcome McCayla on and also glad to
3 have a promotion for Lindsey. Okay.

4 All right. Next up, we've got -- we
5 have no contracts, I don't think.

6 All right. Agency update. Well, we've
7 got seafood labeling laws that we're working on
8 right now. And we have a meeting on this
9 Thursday, and we're having our first meeting of
10 the task force and so, hopefully, we'll have some
11 better understanding of which way to go with
12 things and how to give a better understanding for
13 the restaurants, the dealers, the supermarkets,
14 the processors, everybody, what we can do.

15 So hopefully we'll have a little bit
16 better idea of which way we're going. It's
17 probably going to take us a little time, so we
18 just ask everybody to be with us. And if you can,
19 do the best that you possibly can to be able to
20 label what you're selling, whether it is either
21 domestic or import. That's all we ask you to do.
22 Try to do as much as you can right now.

23 I'm not asking you to go out and spend a
24 bunch of money redoing all your menus and
25 everything else until we get the things lined up.

1 But whatever you're trying to do, we'll help you.
2 We're here to help you, and we're here to be able
3 to help you with any advice if there's anybody
4 that needs any on any of that.

5 Any questions on that?

6 (No response.)

7 JOE SPRAGGINS:

8 All right. On-bottom oyster lease
9 program, it's -- obviously, it's been put on hold
10 with the judge's ruling where he gave us a
11 temporary -- it's a temporary injunction against
12 being able to do anything. So what we're doing
13 right now, I think that our lawyers may have done
14 something to file for a motion to reconsider, I
15 think. Is that right, Sandy?

16 SANDY CHESNUT:

17 Yes.

18 JOE SPRAGGINS:

19 And so we'll see what happens with that
20 with the State, with the Attorney General's
21 office.

22 But right now, we're -- as planned,
23 we're going to -- you know, the on-bottom, as far
24 as any leases, we are not allowed to do any leases
25 on the on-bottom right now until we get something

1 further with this.

2 So if you're thinking about the
3 possibility of could you lease the properties that
4 were not there -- that were there prior to the
5 other bills, no, because they've all been included
6 in the new bill now and because they're included
7 into it and they're also included into our rules,
8 then we cannot lease any of those.

9 If you already have them leased, then
10 you can keep them, but if we're -- we're not going
11 to be able to do any new leases until we find
12 something different about what comes out of this
13 ruling.

14 Patrick, you look like you wanted to
15 tell me something.

16 PATRICK LEVINE:

17 No, you're good. You're good.

18 JOE SPRAGGINS:

19 But anyway, they -- I just want you to
20 understand. So we cannot -- it doesn't do any
21 good to put in for a lease under the old
22 properties that we had because they're all part of
23 the new properties. Okay?

24 So if you have the old properties, you
25 can still continue to operate.

1 All right. Any questions on that?

2 (No response.)

3 JOE SPRAGGINS:

4 All right. 2020 -- '19 and '20, Bonnet
5 Carré, basically we have no -- nothing much to
6 update on the '19 and '20. We're still working on
7 it right now. I think we have like 275
8 applications submitted for it and, hopefully, we
9 will get that out soon, which please bear with us.

10 If you don't know, we've moved
11 buildings, you know, and that's been a big chaos
12 for the last month almost about what we could do
13 and couldn't do and how we could operate, so
14 that's really put a little delay on what we're
15 being able to do. So just give us time. We'll
16 get there, and I promise you, the team is working
17 at it. The team is working very hard at it.

18 Tracy and them are doing a very good job
19 and they're trying to work from home doing it.
20 Now, hopefully, we'll be back in a location this
21 week. So if you don't know where our new location
22 is, it is -- if you know where E-Fitness used to
23 be, if you just come down Cedar Lake Road all the
24 way till it dead ends and take a right, E-Fitness
25 is on your left and we're behind E-Fitness. But

1 you'll have to go down to the four-way stop, turn
2 left, not -- don't turn into E-Fitness. Go down
3 and turn left like you're going to the A.J.
4 Holloway ball fields and all, that complex. And
5 then when you get to it, turn left and it will
6 take us -- right to us and you'll see it on the
7 left there.

8 So we'll be there. We're waiting to get
9 everything operational right now. We have the
10 building operational. We're waiting on internet.
11 And we've got the internet. They had it hooked up
12 last night. Everything was fine and then we had a
13 break between us and somewhere else, so we're
14 trying to fix it. But, hopefully, we'll get
15 something done and we'll be back operational this
16 week there and just bear with us.

17 Any questions?

18 (No response.)

19 JOE SPRAGGINS:

20 All right. Gulf Council Meeting, 24th
21 through 27th in San Antonio, was fine. We've
22 already talked -- we can talk a little bit about
23 it, but, you know, nothing big. We didn't have
24 any major things that came out of it.

25 The Gulf Council is going to be here the

1 first week in November, so I think it's the 3rd
2 through the 7th, I think is the dates. So if you
3 are -- we'll be at the Golden Nugget, so it will
4 be a meeting there. And we welcome anyone that
5 wants to come and listen.

6 Let's see. 2025 oyster season
7 stakeholder meeting we had on September the 2nd.
8 Had a great meeting over in Bay St. Louis.
9 Finally was able to get together. We got the task
10 force together. The people were there working
11 with us. We had a lot of people show up. We had
12 a good meeting.

13 It was very beneficial overall because
14 now I think that the oystermen feel about it more
15 like they're bought into what's going on, which I
16 hope they do, because we want them bought in. We
17 want 100 percent buy-in with them on what they're
18 doing.

19 And I think that with this meeting with
20 the Council, we're going to meet about once a
21 month, you know, or try to.

22 And right now, we're looking at the
23 season, and I'll wait for Jason to do his briefing
24 about the season. But we are going to be able to
25 open the season very soon and, hopefully, we'll be

1 able to make -- I was very impressed. Let's put
2 it this way. I was very impressed when I saw the
3 oyster briefing that was done by our Shellfish
4 Bureau. And I was very impressed with what we
5 have and where we're at, and I'll just wait and
6 let them tell you what it's all about when they do
7 their briefing.

8 Any questions?

9 (No response.)

10 JOE SPRAGGINS:

11 All right. Let's see. Our next
12 Commission meeting is going to be October 21st.
13 It's got 9:00 a.m., but I thought y'all said
14 10:00 a.m. Which one is it?

15 CRYSTAL MATTA:

16 It's 9:00.

17 JOE SPRAGGINS:

18 9:00 a.m. Okay. Because I saw two
19 different things conflicting there, but it's going
20 to be at Jackson County Board of Supervisors.

21 Is that a problem with anybody getting
22 there by 9:00? Can you get that -- can you get
23 over there across the line by then?

24 JASON OSBORNE:

25 I think so.

1 JOE SPRAGGINS:

2 You think you can get that far? I think
3 you've got the furthest to come, right, you and
4 Ronnie, I guess, would be the two, and if y'all
5 can make it there -- all right. So we'll be at
6 the -- you know, we should do that anyway every
7 year. We ought to go to Jackson County and we
8 ought to go to Hancock County and have a meeting.

9 So we -- this is great. And I think we
10 may do -- Crystal just whispered November may be
11 Hancock County. So at least we'll be able to get
12 some of this done while we're out of the building
13 and be able to go other places.

14 Any questions on that?

15 (No response.)

16 JOE SPRAGGINS:

17 All right. Derelict vessels update,
18 we've got 216 vessel cases that have been reported
19 since we started tracking; 188 of them have been
20 removed; 28 vessels are pending removal; and five
21 have received court orders.

22 That's pretty good. I'll tell you,
23 can't hardly argue with that. If you go across
24 the Coast, across the Gulf of America, you will
25 find out that Mississippi is about five times

1 faster than anybody else doing it, probably 10
2 times to 100 times, because, I mean, most places
3 are just -- they've got maybe 10 percent or
4 15 percent of theirs removed and we're sitting
5 here at almost 90 percent, 80 percent of ours.

6 RONNIE DANIELS:

7 Joe, I've got a question for you.

8 If -- like, Pass Christian, we've got
9 two that are down in there and have been for a
10 while. If they're inside of a harbor, do we
11 still -- can we handle those?

12 JOE SPRAGGINS:

13 We can look at it. If they're in the
14 harbor, we can look at it. Just tell them to get
15 with Steven and them, talk to them about it. Roy,
16 I don't know if Roy is here, but Roy and Steven
17 are the ones that's handling it. But if you will
18 just get that information to us, we'll look at it.

19 RONNIE DANIELS:

20 Okay. Thank you.

21 JOE SPRAGGINS:

22 We have removed them from harbors. Let
23 me just say that. Okay?

24 All right. Any questions on that?

25 (No response.)

1 JOE SPRAGGINS:

2 If you have any public comment, T.J. is
3 in the back. If anybody has any public comment,
4 get it to him.

5 But other than that, let's just move
6 forward unless y'all have got any other -- any
7 other thing for the agency update, we'll move
8 forward with the actions update.

9 STEVEN ECKERT:

10 Good morning, Commissioners and
11 Director. Discussed at our August 2025 meeting,
12 the Commission recommended and the Director
13 approved a motion to approve a permit and
14 requested variance for Jackson County's
15 installation of a box culvert and riprap between
16 Canty Street and the Communy Avenue. This also
17 incorporated the covering of some coastal wetlands
18 and unvegetated water bottoms.

19 Also included was the motion to
20 recommend an approval by the Director for a
21 finfish record for conventional tackle for Brandon
22 Hogue's 30-pound, 2.24-ounce conger eel.

23 And that concludes our actions update.

24 JOE SPRAGGINS:

25 All right. Any questions on that?

1 (No response.)

2 JOE SPRAGGINS:

3 All right. Just one last thing. I
4 would like to thank everybody in the Department of
5 Marine Resources, the staff for your outstanding
6 work. I tell you what, you talking about a bunch
7 of people working hard over the last couple of
8 weeks. They have worked hard. They have really
9 put out the effort to do the things to try to help
10 us.

11 You don't realize how hard it is to move
12 175 people, but when you're trying to move offices
13 and everything else and labs and do the things
14 that we've done, I just want to thank each and
15 every one of them.

16 Can we give them a round of applause?

17 (Round of applause.)

18 JOE SPRAGGINS:

19 That's my report.

20 CAM ROBERDS:

21 Yeah. It's hard enough to get things
22 done when you're settled in, much less relocated
23 like that.

24 All right. Moving down to
25 Commissioners' report. Do any of the

1 Commissioners have anything to report on?

2 JONATHAN MCLENDON:

3 I did just want to say, you know,
4 throughout my travels in the state here in the
5 past few months, it seems like on the country of
6 origin labeling laws like all of your, you know,
7 national and multistate organizations are really
8 playing ball. And even up in North Mississippi,
9 in Jackson, I have seen excellent participation
10 out of the locally-owned businesses, so I think
11 that everybody is doing a great job getting that
12 word out.

13 CAM ROBERDS:

14 That's good to hear.

15 All right. Chief Wilkerson, report on
16 citations.

17 KYLE WILKERSON:

18 Let's try this seat again.

19 JOE SPRAGGINS:

20 Raise your right hand.

21 KYLE WILKERSON:

22 I don't know anything about a jetty.

23 All right. So August was a -- I
24 wouldn't say it was a light month, but it was --
25 it was a little slower than July, which is always

1 good.

2 There is a few citations that are
3 question -- not questionable, but if you have
4 questions, I have answers. I'll try to lie to you
5 as much as I can, you know.

6 In saying that -- but there is one that
7 kind of jumps out. There was a charter that had
8 no -- had a violation. That was in Biloxi. He
9 let his license lapse, so we didn't -- it was not,
10 you know, a current license.

11 But other than that, everything looks
12 pretty self-explanatory. 1,300 stops this month.
13 It's going down a little bit, as June and July, it
14 was in the 2,000 range, so everybody is starting
15 to slow down, get back to school, waiting for
16 Christmas.

17 So I can answer any questions if you
18 have any.

19 CAM ROBERDS:

20 Appreciate the update, Chief.

21 Any questions of Chief?

22 (No response.)

23 CAM ROBERDS:

24 All right. Appreciate it, sir. Thank
25 you.

1 KYLE WILKERSON:

2 All righty.

3 CAM ROBERDS:

4 All right. It looks like we're moving
5 all the way down to Charmaine, Public Affairs.

6 CHARMAINE SCHMERMUND:

7 Good morning. The Mississippi
8 Department of Marine Resources had 23 media
9 mentions since the August MACMR meeting. News
10 items included the case with the oyster reef
11 private lease, gag fishing season, DMR calendar
12 photo contest, shrimp season and our seafood tech
13 scientists who recently visited North Woolmarket
14 Middle School.

15 Brianna Andrews from the Grand Bay NERR
16 presented the On the Road Program at Central
17 Elementary School in Lucedale on August 27th. The
18 NERR's Emmett Carstens participated in the Gulf
19 Coast Sierra Club Meeting on August 27th, and the
20 Hancock County Master Gardeners meeting on
21 September 10th.

22 CSO Rick Burris and Coastal Resources
23 Management Director Jennifer Wittmann attended the
24 fall College of Forest Resources career fair at
25 Mississippi State University on September 11th

1 with a booth representing the DMR.

2 Willa Brantley in Coastal Resources
3 Management gave a Wetlands 101 workshop
4 presentation on September 10th at the Pascagoula
5 River Audubon Center.

6 The Seafood Technology Bureau's Becky
7 Hargrove and Raul Anzola both visited Woolmarket
8 Middle School September 11th to give a lesson in
9 microbiology and marine science.

10 And the Agency sponsored the Biloxi
11 Seafood Festival and featured a booth at the
12 festival, which was held September 13th. We had
13 hundreds of visitors at our booth where DMR staff
14 handed out our publications, fish ruler stickers
15 and various items promoting Mississippi seafood in
16 the National Heritage Area.

17 And we launched our annual photo contest
18 where the winning photos will be used in the
19 Agency's 2026 calendar, so we ask that submitted
20 photos depict an aspect of the marine resources
21 available in the Mississippi Gulf Coast, including
22 recreational and commercial fishing, coastal
23 preserves, marine, plant and animal life, marsh
24 areas, boating and Mississippi seafood. The
25 deadline to submit entries is Friday, October 17th

1 and they can be e-mailed to

2 publicaffairs@DMR.ms.gov.

3 JOE SPRAGGINS:

4 All right. Hey, one thing.

5 Yeah, hey. Cruisin' the Coast, I forgot
6 to mention it. Tell them where we're going to be
7 at.

8 CHARMAINE SCHMERMUND:

9 So Monday and Tuesday of -- I believe
10 it's the 6th and the 7th, we are going to be at
11 Jones Park and that's where we're going to be
12 giving out shrimp samples. It's going to be right
13 outside the pavilion at Jones Park.

14 And then on Wednesday, we're going to be
15 here in Biloxi for their -- in the morning for
16 their -- I can't remember the name of their
17 event --

18 JOE SPRAGGINS:

19 Town Green.

20 CHARMAINE SCHMERMUND:

21 -- but it's Biloxi's event. We're also
22 doing shrimp samples and promotional items.

23 On Thursday, we will be in Pascagoula
24 and Bay St. Louis and we're going to have two
25 different teams out there giving out promotional

1 materials.

2 And then on Friday, we will be in Ocean
3 Springs in front of Deedy's giving out promotional
4 materials, so we will be all over the Coast.

5 JOE SPRAGGINS:

6 All right. Yeah. So, you know, if you
7 get a chance, come by and see us. We're going to
8 be set up in a lot of locations. And this is a
9 big thing for the Department of Marine Resources
10 and it's mainly for the seafood because that's how
11 we do it. We do it for seafood marketing, and
12 this is all for -- to publicize seafood.

13 When you get 10 -- well, you know,
14 you've got 10,000 cars, but you've probably got
15 100,000 people that will be down here. And
16 100,000 people and a lot of them are not from
17 South Mississippi and for us to be able to sell
18 what our seafood is all about and tell them about
19 our seafood and tell them where -- the places they
20 can buy it and what they can do and to buy Gulf of
21 America, that's what we're trying to do.

22 And I tell you what, this is a big thing
23 for us, so we appreciate anybody that gets a
24 chance to come by and see us and we -- hopefully,
25 we'll be able to get a lot of word out to a lot of

1 people.

2 CAM ROBERDS:

3 It absolutely does. I can say from my
4 experience just the marketing you guys have and
5 the packets that every cruiser -- what, 10,000
6 pick up, that's pretty good information, so all
7 right. Well, I appreciate that.

8 Any questions for Charmaine?

9 (No response.)

10 CAM ROBERDS:

11 All right. Moving down to a 2025-26
12 oyster season update by Jason.

13 JASON RIDER:

14 Good morning, everyone. As it was
15 mentioned, I will be giving a quick update on the
16 2025 and 2026 oyster season. We'll go over the
17 reefs assessments, and then we will talk about
18 some recommendations for the upcoming season.

19 So first off, this is a recap from last
20 year's season. Opened on November 12th and closed
21 on the 26th of April. Approximately 8,900 sacks
22 were harvested. We had 156 licenses sold, and
23 approximately 80 harvesters had licenses that day.
24 The average person per day was 12 tongers and 12
25 dredgers, so we had good participation overall for

1 that season, even though we hadn't had a season
2 previously in a couple of years. So it was
3 encouraging to see people come out and want to
4 harvest oysters.

5 This is a map, an overview of what we
6 sampled this year, so just real quick. It's hard
7 to see up here, but every point on there or
8 triangle is a location that we sampled. As you
9 can see, most were on cultch plants, but we did
10 hit all reef complexes.

11 We did 133 one-minute dredge tows. We
12 did 303 square meter samples, which totaled 606
13 total samples, so this is a good representation of
14 everything we looked at. This is just in the
15 Western Sound. We did do Biloxi. We're not going
16 to speak much about that today.

17 Quick overview of where we planted since
18 2017. Every polygon that you see on the map up
19 there is a spot that we planted. And as you can
20 see, we have pretty good coverage over at Pass
21 Marianne, Henderson Point and Pass Christian
22 Reefs. The total acreage planted since 2017 is
23 927 acres.

24 So now we'll go into each reef complex
25 and we'll talk about it and break it down, just a

1 brief overview to show where it's landing and how
2 it's progressing.

3 So St. Joe, approximately 473 acres.
4 We've planted 169 of those acres. Most of the
5 material is on the cultch plants. As you can see
6 on the chart on the left, we do see good seed,
7 spat and decent markers of market-size oysters on
8 there. That's a reef that shows progress. Shows
9 that the cultch plants are working down there.

10 And if you look on the image on the
11 right, it shows you spat sizes and it shows that
12 it's trending all about the same, but in the last
13 couple of years, we've had -- we've seen good
14 growth and good recruitment.

15 Next, Telegraph, Telegraph is a reef
16 that -- honestly, it's about 900 acres, but it's
17 really tough down there. The salinity has
18 changed. We're not seeing great -- we see decent
19 recruitment, but into market-sized oysters, we're
20 not seeing much growth there. That's happened in
21 the past, as you can see in the chart on the left.
22 We don't see much. We haven't seen much in many
23 years, so we are going to continue to monitor
24 that, but right now, that's not our main focus for
25 cultch plant.

1 Pass Marianne, about 2,300 -- 2,400
2 acres. Approximately 100 percent of the
3 market-sized oysters that are on 280 acres of
4 cultch plants, but we are seeing that -- we put
5 out cultch plants in this area and we're growing
6 oysters. Everything is coming in nicely. We have
7 a lot of seed there and we expect to see that seed
8 transition into market-sized oysters in the
9 upcoming years so next year and after that.

10 We did see a spat set in August, but we
11 hope that grows in as well. Overall, oysters are
12 on cultch plants. And I keep saying this, but
13 that's what we're seeing. We put out the cultch
14 material and oysters are growing in the areas that
15 we put out the cultch material.

16 Henderson Point Reef, about 1,300 acres
17 and 94 percent of the market-sized oysters are on
18 about 325 -- 26 acres of cultch plant. There is a
19 lot of oysters in a small amount of area. What
20 that means is they're thick on those cultch plants
21 there. That's great, but that means it's a large
22 area and oysters are focused heavily on our cultch
23 plants. We need to diversify that and spread them
24 out.

25 Recruitment we saw increased in August,

1 and September, spat set. That's always good for
2 us to see. And the oysters per square meter on
3 the reef are very good on Henderson Point. We're
4 seeing spat at almost 14 per square meter -- 14
5 oysters per square meter, and then market-sized
6 oysters we're seeing about seven oysters per
7 square meter, which is a great overall. Oysters
8 remain heavily concentrated on the cultch plants,
9 but the seed class we do want to see come in and
10 expand out.

11 Pass Christian, about 1,800 acres.

12 Again, 95 percent of market-sized oysters are on
13 463 acres of the cultch plants. We see a healthy
14 distribution of singles to four-inch clusters.
15 This reef is going good. This is -- that box in
16 the top right would be our tonging box. We're
17 seeing a lot of oysters in that, and then the
18 areas to the south are expanding. Overall, it's
19 progressing nicely, and we expect to see -- with
20 the conditions this summer and this fall, we
21 expect to see recruitment in both continuing next
22 year.

23 So this is a quick overview of where
24 we're at as a -- in the Mississippi Sound and
25 everything together. As you can see, we have

1 about 275,000 sacks that we're estimating that's
2 out there on the reefs. And then if you look at
3 the breakdowns, the percentages below, the
4 30 percent, which we traditionally recommend is
5 right at 82,000 sacks of oyster.

6 We -- if you look at the reefs
7 independently, Henderson Point is doing very well
8 and Pass Christian is doing well for its size.
9 St. Joe is coming in also.

10 We did -- if you look back at the
11 graphs, the reason for the jump is because we
12 sampled state-owned reefs in those past years and
13 then this year, we did span outside of that.

14 So getting into recommendations for the
15 2025 and '26 season, we wanted to show this to get
16 an idea of where we were at last year and what we
17 could do this year.

18 So last year, we were open for 42 days.
19 We started in November, of course, and ended in --
20 we went as long as we could. We were open for
21 42 days.

22 This year, if we open in October and can
23 go to March, we can hopefully get available days
24 to around 150, so that's where we're at now.

25 And then the time/temperature matrix

1 that we displayed below, this just shows when the
2 harvesters are allowed to go out and how much time
3 they have to harvest those oysters. So we are
4 bound by some regulations that say in different
5 months, they have to be back at the dock and
6 landing in certain time periods.

7 In October, it is five months (sic)
8 which is relatively restrictive, but then in
9 November through March, it goes to 18 months (sic)
10 so we wanted to make sure everyone was aware of
11 that. We can accommodate those harvesters with
12 those time frames, but we want to make sure that
13 everybody understands the requirements.

14 Proposed daily harvest, we're showing
15 this at 50, if we had 50 harvesters out there
16 harvesting oysters, and the sack limits are in
17 blue across the top. So for the first box, it
18 would be a sack limit of 15 sacks per tonger and
19 20 sacks per dredger per day at 82,000 oysters.
20 They would have about 96 days to harvest oysters.

21 And as you can see, if you scale it up,
22 your days go down, but we did want to display this
23 so y'all could understand where we're at and what
24 we're trying to project out for the season.

25 This is a quick overview on our

1 sampling. We had a lot of questions last year
2 about how we sampled and where we sampled. This
3 is just the rainfall closure. If rainfall exceeds
4 the threshold for a given area before 4:00 p.m.,
5 the area closes the same day by 4:00 p.m. If
6 rainfall exceeds the threshold for a given area
7 after 4:00 p.m., the area closes by 4:00 p.m. the
8 next day, and we begin sampling about two days.

9 The map does demonstrate the river
10 stages that we close on, the thresholds that we
11 close on. So Area I-B will close at one inch of
12 rain or 10-foot river stage. So that's just the
13 chart that we showed to the industry and had a
14 discussion about.

15 This is a new thing we have from Bonnet
16 Carré, from the Bonnet Carré program. We were
17 able to take some Bonnet Carré funding and develop
18 a video for anyone that is in need of a license.
19 Every time they need a license, which is every
20 five -- every time they buy a license every five
21 years, they have to watch the video or come talk
22 with us and get training on how to harvest
23 oysters.

24 In the past, they would come to the
25 office. We would sit down with them and go over

1 it. Now, they can go online, watch a video, take
2 a quiz and do it at the convenience of their time
3 and location. We think this is going to be very
4 beneficial for the harvesters to get it done and
5 then go buy a license after that.

6 Digital harvest map, so if you're
7 harvesting oysters, this year, we do encourage
8 everyone to use the harvest map, which is
9 available on your phone, computer, laptop, or
10 whatever it is and it shows what area is open.

11 The red and green -- it's a simple map.
12 If it's green, it's open. If it's red, it's
13 closed. You are able to turn on your location
14 services on your phone and it will show you on
15 this map where you're located so you know if
16 you're harvesting in the correct area. We, of
17 course, will have the hotline available still, but
18 this is just another resource for people to have
19 to use to make sure that they're making the right
20 decisions.

21 This is the contact information. The
22 oyster hotline is still available, as I said. And
23 then this year, we are going to work to do a text
24 message and send notifications if a season opens
25 or closes. We would like to notify the harvesters

1 of that -- those changes through text message. If
2 the sack limit changes, we will notify anyone that
3 signs up through our text messaging program, so we
4 welcome anyone to give us their number and we'll
5 put you on the contact list. And that's all the
6 contact numbers below.

7 So where are we at with our
8 recommendation? As Director Spraggins said, we
9 did meet with the industry at the beginning of the
10 month. We had a long discussion about those
11 numbers and the reefs, what's appropriate harvest
12 for our area and the season that we have this
13 year.

14 And this recommendation was in
15 partnership with the industry that we developed
16 here. And we recommend that -- the staff
17 recommends to the Executive Director that the
18 agency open Area II-A, Area I-B, Area II-B, Area
19 II-E, Area II-F, Area II-G, Area II-H and Area
20 II-I in the Western Mississippi Sound for oyster
21 season.

22 The season will open on October 13th.
23 The daily sack limit will be set at 15 sacks per
24 day per vessel for tongers and 20 sacks per day
25 per vessel for dredgers. As I mentioned, we did

1 develop that in conjunction with the industry and
2 we think that's a good place to start.

3 But if y'all have any questions, I would
4 love to answer them or take the next steps.

5 RONNIE DANIELS:

6 Don't we have some reefs to the east?
7 Didn't we relay oysters to right off of Ocean
8 Springs a few years ago?

9 JASON RIDER:

10 So we do have a reef in Biloxi Bay. We
11 are monitoring that. It's showing good growth,
12 but it needs a little bit more work for us to open
13 the season there this year. And it's very limited
14 on the thresholds that you can harvest from, so
15 with those two things, we would like to hold off
16 on it a year or two.

17 CAM ROBERDS:

18 Jason, when you say "industry," you're
19 speaking of who you guys --

20 JASON RIDER:

21 So we held a stakeholders meeting, as
22 the Director mentioned, on September 2nd, and we
23 brought in anyone that was interested in
24 discussing the 2025 and 2026 season as well as
25 members from the previous task force. I gave this

1 same presentation. We had a lot of questions
2 about it and discussion about how to harvest and
3 when to harvest.

4 The season, they would like to see it
5 open a little bit earlier this year, so that's why
6 we're looking at October. We feel like there is a
7 resource there and we are able to do that this
8 year, so we wanted to allow as much flexibility as
9 possible. And the recommendation was something
10 that we came up with together as a group.

11 JOE SPRAGGINS:

12 I know Mr. Livings is here.

13 Do you have anything you would like to
14 say?

15 He's the head of our task force.

16 JOHN LIVINGS:

17 No.

18 JONATHAN MCLENDON:

19 So I'm looking at the 2024 sacks. It
20 was only 8,900, is what we ended up with.

21 JASON RIDER:

22 That's correct.

23 JONATHAN MCLENDON:

24 So we're opening it up and we're going
25 to end up roughly nine times where we were in

1 2024.

2 JASON RIDER:

3 So that one thing -- that's a great
4 question. So one thing that we looked at last --
5 in the last couple of years, is we were only
6 sampling state-owned reefs, so we were only
7 harvesting from those areas. That's a limited
8 area.

9 And if you take the numbers as a whole,
10 our numbers increase drastically, and it is
11 fairly -- it's a fairly substantial increase over
12 one year, but those oysters were out there last
13 year. We just didn't sample them and include them
14 in our estimate for our harvest quota.

15 JONATHAN MCLENDON:

16 So like your communications with the
17 industry, just because it is such a big jump like
18 spreading it out among the most possible days,
19 then, you know, you're confident that they can
20 keep the price up and get a good value for the
21 product?

22 JASON RIDER:

23 So we did speak with -- and I spoke with
24 John about that yesterday and I think we are open
25 to working with them. If there's changes that are

1 needed in the future, we can adjust up the sack
2 limit, lower the sack limit. Right now, they feel
3 confident that they can get a decent price for
4 that product.

5 JONATHAN MCLENDON:

6 Okay. Thank you.

7 JOE SPRAGGINS:

8 You know, we could have possibly opened
9 earlier, but I think it was a lot to do with the
10 processors. Some of the processors just didn't
11 have the staff to be able to do what needed to be
12 done.

13 And this is going to help us a little
14 bit because we will be two weeks ahead of Texas,
15 so that will help us a little bit there because we
16 open two weeks ahead of Texas. And Alabama, I
17 think, opens on the 6th, if I'm not mistaken, so
18 we're a little bit behind Alabama, but -- and, of
19 course, Louisiana is open right now, I think, so
20 they're pretty much -- you know.

21 But the ones that we're looking at --
22 and then something I didn't realize was Virginia
23 and when Virginia opens. And Virginia doesn't
24 open -- they open around the same time we're
25 opening, so that will help us a little bit to be

1 able -- and the idea was, you know, how many sacks
2 to do and how to keep the market.

3 Like he said, if we see that we have a
4 lot of bad weather and we're not able to get what
5 we need to do, then we'll work with John and them
6 and we'll talk with them and say, hey, what do
7 y'all want to do? Do you want to change the
8 limit? Do you want to do something else? What do
9 you want to do to be able to do it?

10 And then that will also depend on the
11 processors. Can they take it, you know, and what
12 can we do?

13 So I think we've got something working
14 now. I think we have something working to where
15 that the people that are out there busting their
16 butt every day doing this and getting and
17 harvesting these oysters, that they have a lot of
18 buy-in and they're with us and they're telling us
19 what they would like to see done and so we can
20 help.

21 We're going to look at it, too, and, you
22 know, we're going to talk about cultch. We're
23 going to have cultch in the near future and we're
24 going to have some funds to do that with. And
25 we'll work with them on that. Where do you think

1 we need it the most? And let's work with it.

2 And our staff is going to do a great job
3 on that. And I want to commend Jason and his
4 staff. They bent over backwards, you know.
5 They've been -- it's kind of like you're on
6 probation or something. They have been that way
7 for the last two years and -- two to three years
8 where they didn't know what they could do. They
9 didn't know what they were going to have. They
10 didn't know what they was going to be able to
11 maintain. They didn't know anything until we had
12 some kind of an understanding, and so they were
13 only able to do what they could and they wasn't --
14 and, you know, it's hard to go out and spend State
15 assets on something that we don't know the State
16 is going to control anymore, so they did a great
17 job of trying to do what they could.

18 And then they -- once they found out
19 that we could be able to open the rest of this for
20 at least this year and then, hopefully, some more,
21 then they went over and they busted their rear end
22 to get out there and do an assessment. They
23 really got out there quick and did everything they
24 could to get their assessment out there.

25 So Jason and the team, thank y'all. We

1 appreciate you.

2 CAM ROBERDS:

3 All right. Any more questions for
4 Jason?

5 Man, I really appreciate it. Very, very
6 easy to read and understand. Thank you. Very
7 well put together.

8 Do we need to make a motion?

9 JOE SPRAGGINS:

10 Yeah. You make a motion to approve the
11 staff's recommendation.

12 CAM ROBERDS:

13 Okay. All right. Do we have a motion
14 to approve the staff recommendation for the
15 openings of the oyster season?

16 JASON OSBORNE:

17 I make a motion.

18 MATTHEW MAYFIELD:

19 I'll second.

20 CAM ROBERDS:

21 All in favor?

22 (Unanimous vote.)

23 CAM ROBERDS:

24 All right. Thanks, Jason.

25 All right. Trevor, you're up.

1 MS Creel.

2 TREVOR MONCRIEF:

3 All right. I'll take the stand here.

4 All right. So we've got a little bit of
5 a dense presentation here, but it's multifold. So
6 one is just to let y'all get a little bit more
7 detailed look of what the program is and what it
8 does, give you an idea of really how we got here,
9 what's going on, let you know and ask questions
10 about the process, the program and where it's
11 going.

12 I'll start off by saying that, you know,
13 I've been here for -- it's going on almost a
14 decade, but this has been something we've dealt
15 with, recreational estimates, for a long time.
16 It's been well before me, and I feel like a lot of
17 my time has been dedicated to it.

18 This program represents what we view as
19 the solution, and make no mistake about it, this
20 is a fundamental shift in how fisheries will be
21 managed at the federal level so all
22 federally-managed species. This is a huge change.
23 This will be probably an asterisk that you look
24 back to decades from now. This is just the start
25 of a new way to be able to estimate removals and

1 how they're both going to work together as far as
2 that aspect of fisheries management.

3 So just a little bit of a background, so
4 on the Creel side of things, trying to produce
5 fisheries estimates, it's difficult to maintain an
6 accurate mandatory catch reporting program across
7 the board. We did it with a single species with
8 Tails and Scales for a constrained fishery that
9 operates in a constrained area, and it was proven
10 to be successful.

11 But doing this across the board means
12 that you're essentially monitoring over 100,000
13 anglers, many of which might fish less than five
14 times and access through multiple different modes
15 and areas and everything else across the board.
16 Because of that and fluctuations in the fishery as
17 a whole, right -- not every fisherman targets the
18 same species; they don't go to the same place
19 every month; they don't fish for the same thing;
20 they don't undergo the same tactics -- everything
21 shifts, so it's a fluctuating population.

22 So the solution for these large
23 populations is to use survey-based methods, where
24 essentially we interact with a small portion of
25 the population. The need here is that the portion

1 of the population that you are interacting with
2 and getting answers from is representative of the
3 entire fleet. That's one of the fundamental
4 aspects of all this. And then you scale the
5 observations that you have to the entire fleet.

6 So because of this, you have to go about
7 the estimates in a couple different ways, so one
8 is that not only do we have to interact with the
9 fleet at the dock to get a representation of what
10 they're catching, but we also need to figure out
11 how often they're fishing. Because, essentially,
12 what this all boils down to, there at the bottom,
13 is catch times effort is essentially the harvest
14 estimate.

15 And because the individuals that we
16 interact with at the dock oftentimes are those who
17 represent a group that has a higher affinity or
18 fish more often, if we ask effort specifically of
19 those individuals, we'll likely get an
20 overinflation of what our effort truly is. So,
21 therefore, we split, you know, essentially effort
22 and catch into two different -- two different
23 programs.

24 Some of the unique challenges we face
25 when it comes to a fisheries-based survey is, one,

1 understanding the scope and make-up of this
2 universe. This program relies on our licensed
3 universe in order to be able to get a gauge on how
4 many folks are out there fishing and how many
5 folks are licensed. You'll see where that
6 represents a fundamental change.

7 And then, two, is maximizing efficiency
8 and encounters while minimizing bias. This gets
9 into our site pressures and probability-based
10 sampling, which we'll go over in a table in a
11 minute.

12 And I underlined this last one because
13 it seems to be, to me, one of the most important
14 things when it comes to fisheries managers,
15 biologists and, really, anyone working with the
16 industry, is knowing the fishery. Right?

17 Oftentimes, we interact with individuals
18 at different levels on the federal side and
19 everywhere else that don't know the fishery in and
20 out. They don't know how it interacts. They
21 don't know why they target what they target. They
22 just see numbers on the computer screen and make
23 decisions off of them.

24 We made it a purpose, especially with
25 our staff, on fishery surveys and everything else,

1 get out, you talk with folks. You ask questions.
2 Try to understand the motives of the fishery, what
3 they're doing at a specific time because all that
4 informs the fishery program that we've been
5 developing.

6 All right. So some background.
7 Obviously, we're all familiar to a degree with the
8 Marine Recreational Information Program, MRIP.
9 It's a federal survey that really started in the
10 1980s, 1980 to be specific.

11 It's had multiple phases and revisions
12 so it started out as MRFSS. It went to APAIS,
13 which is the Access Point Angler Intercept Survey,
14 the CHTS, Coastal Household Telephone Survey. And
15 it's worth noting that there were issues all along
16 the way that were fixed over time. Right?
17 There's been changes in how the survey was
18 conducted. That's representative of all these
19 different acronyms.

20 The one that truly exacerbated the
21 entire thing was FES, which is the Fishing Effort
22 Survey. It represented a shift from the Coastal
23 Household Telephone Survey to gauge effort into a
24 mail-based survey that essentially was sent out
25 every month to be able to -- to anglers to

1 determine how many times they fished. This
2 essentially had our estimates of fishing effort
3 increased by three to five times across the board,
4 and it was that way for really everybody in the
5 Gulf and the South Atlantic. And it's really been
6 the true issue brought to the surface for
7 everything that's been going on for the last few
8 years.

9 Let's see. So, currently, MRIP is the
10 main currency that is used in federal and for --
11 largely for a lot of state assessments. We
12 actually implement the dockside portion of this
13 survey, and then the federal side does the other.

14 There has been some shifts for species
15 like red grouper, even yellowtail snapper, things
16 that are really centric to one state, and that's
17 Florida, where they've used the Florida-based
18 survey in replacement of MRIP in to order assess
19 and manage the species. And that's essentially
20 where we're going to try to get to with these
21 programs as well.

22 So here is MS Creel. You're all
23 familiar a little bit, as we've been discussing,
24 but we essentially adopted the methodology from LA
25 Creel and tailored it to our state specifically.

1 Our effort sampling began in 2024 with
2 call-outs, and we implemented the full program
3 starting this year. And we have been running this
4 program side by side with MRIP during the entirety
5 of this year without any gaps or anything like
6 that.

7 And the entire estimate process from
8 dockside sampling, effort call-outs and producing
9 estimates is done in-house by our staff. Now, we
10 have gotten aided by Louisiana. We have
11 interacted with the other states, but this program
12 is fully conducted in-house.

13 All right. So I know there's a lot in
14 this table and this is the meat of the
15 presentation here. But I'm going to try to go and
16 essentially lay out the program-by-program
17 differences and why, in our view, what we're doing
18 with MS Creel is to be correct -- better.

19 So, one, the first part is the effort
20 section, and the way that the surveys are
21 delivered for FES were through the mail, like I
22 mentioned earlier, and for MS Creel, it's a
23 phone-based survey with an e-mail option.

24 Now, this wasn't uninformed. Right? We
25 did copy what LA Creel did, but our staff

1 undertook an effort in 2019 to do an independent
2 survey that used multiple different modes of
3 communication with anglers to determine how their
4 responses would look, given call-outs, e-mails and
5 mail. And what you saw was that the responses
6 from all three of those looked as if they came
7 from completely different populations.

8 And what we saw is that for the
9 phone-based portion, we had a higher proportion of
10 low-level responses because when you get somebody
11 on the phone and ask them how many times they
12 went, they could tell you, I didn't go at all; I
13 only went once; I only went twice.

14 But if you send them something in the
15 mail, our assumption is that a lot of individuals
16 are receiving this and if they had no stake in the
17 activity whatsoever, didn't engage in the
18 activity, that mail was simply thrown away, so you
19 don't have the representation of those who only
20 went zero, one or two times, right, so you're
21 missing that portion of the population.

22 E-mail was actually the second most
23 preferred, so I think our combination of phone and
24 e-mail has served us well for the effort side.

25 Frequency, MRIP as well is every two

1 months. It's waves. That's how they produce
2 their estimates.

3 This one actually can get all the way
4 down to weekly, and we can collapse the estimates
5 as needed. But, obviously, we can understand that
6 more timely estimates on a weekly fashion can
7 likely help us understand what the fishery is
8 doing, especially the season-based fisheries like
9 we've been dealing with on the federal side.

10 And then the population pool,
11 demographic strata and the sample size, so MRIP in
12 their revision, I think, post-2013, the goal was
13 to produce an -- unbiased estimates for the
14 entirety of the population. That means licensed
15 and unlicensed individuals within the license
16 frame and outside of the whole population of
17 Mississippi was considered for this one.

18 Now, there is a couple of issues that
19 arise here. Number 1 is the reliance that you're
20 truly matching individuals that are within your
21 license frame to those that aren't, that you're
22 getting from the postal sides of things. And then
23 the other is that, you know, whatever prevalence
24 or affinity you're getting from an unlicensed
25 population is represented.

1 And what we saw with these estimates, we
2 questioned a lot. We had calls. I mean, we went
3 back and forth on this subject with them and never
4 could get a good answer, but we had what looked
5 like eight times the amount of effort in the
6 Coastal unmatched strata as we did in the Coastal
7 matched strata, which essentially means that
8 80 percent of the effort that they were coming up
9 with was from an unlicensed or non-compliant
10 population.

11 MS Creel alters that by essentially
12 relying on the fishing license system for the most
13 part across the board. Right? We're focused on
14 those individuals that have licenses. Of those
15 that are licensed, they're separated into four
16 demographic strata, which is Coastal, non-Coastal.
17 Coastal is the lower two counties across the
18 board. All right. So we have the three, the ones
19 above them and that's it. Everything else is
20 non-Coastal.

21 You've got out of state for those folks
22 who are out of state, and then you have the ROLP,
23 which the regulation was passed a little while
24 ago, but that's the Recreational Offshore Landing
25 Permit. It essentially segments off what can be

1 considered individuals with a higher prevalence
2 for fishing, that fish more often, to be in their
3 own universe so that they're not locked in with
4 the greater population that doesn't interact in
5 the fishery the same way that they do.

6 And then the adjustment is made on the
7 back end for non-compliance. Because just like a
8 driver's license, just like anything that has
9 existed in the regulatory framework, as far as
10 licensing goes, our fishing licenses have over
11 90 percent compliance. We only have a couple of
12 instances where there isn't a requirement for a
13 license, those that are under 16 or those that are
14 fully disabled. Even our over 65 has a lifetime
15 license assigned to it of a one-time cost.

16 So the assumption is, is that we will
17 get as much as we can from the licensed universe
18 and then make adjustments for non-compliance
19 because that's common sense, not try to produce an
20 estimate outright for those that are unmatched in
21 our license frame.

22 And we have the consistent sample size
23 across the board. Whereas, theirs is a little
24 bit -- it's more variance based and essentially
25 allows more sampling effort in Mississippi as

1 compared to other states. But what we've seen is
2 that regardless of that increased sample size,
3 we're not getting precise or accurate estimates
4 from the effort survey itself on the MRIP side.
5 On our side, we're seeing things come out a little
6 better, and I'll you show those in a minute.

7 So on the catch-based side of things, so
8 we conduct nine surveys a week. We really took
9 out a lot of the probability-based or the
10 equation-based way that things are derived and
11 tried to operate with some level of consistency
12 across the board. That's easier for our
13 scheduling. That gets us out in the field more.
14 That gets us representatives in the times where
15 there is lower pressure, which is where we seem to
16 have the biggest issues, Waves 1, 2, 5 and 6. So
17 it gets us out there and gets us -- it gets us
18 interacting with the anglers throughout the entire
19 year.

20 For mode, we selected, you know, one
21 shore, one charter, seven private. Private is
22 where we've had all the issues. That's where our
23 management is focused.

24 We've got a good handle on our charter
25 effort for the most part.

1 Our shore-based effort, while there is a
2 lot, there is not a lot of catch there. So we've
3 been allocating a lot of effort to a group that
4 doesn't have that much catch, which is why the
5 decision there has been made.

6 Whereas, on the others, it seems like,
7 oftentimes, we're pushed to lot of these charter
8 operators, we're pushed to a lot of these
9 shore-based areas, got surveyors sitting there for
10 six hours at a time getting one to two surveys,
11 sometimes none. Our goal is efficiency here and I
12 think we've gained that efficiency in the way
13 we've designed it.

14 Same thing with the day type.

15 And then survey length, I don't know if
16 any of y'all have gotten interviewed or have heard
17 of anybody getting interviewed, but, essentially,
18 we went down from what was a two-page, two-column
19 questionnaire with MRIP down to a half-page
20 questionnaire that is done by party.

21 MRIP is done by each individual, so if I
22 had a boat of six folks come in, I would sit there
23 and have to go through a two-page survey with six
24 people the entire time. Now there is ways to make
25 that more efficient and our folks have done them,

1 but by the manual, that's exactly how MRIP is
2 supposed to be done.

3 This one is by party. You select the
4 representative from the party -- usually, it's the
5 one that's running the boat -- ask them about
6 their day, what they caught, everything else.
7 You're in and out within a minute or two. That
8 allows you on busy days, in places like West
9 Beach, to interact with individuals, get more
10 detailed catches, so you're not missing and making
11 assumptions about people you're not seeing. So
12 that's a benefit.

13 And then site selection pressure, MRIP's
14 site frame was essentially done categorically, so
15 it was one, two, three, four and five. Each one
16 of those represented various levels of effort that
17 you would encounter throughout the day.

18 It's important to note here that a lot
19 of these decisions were made out of pilot testing
20 in places like Florida and North Carolina, not in
21 smaller states. They had higher throughput. That
22 means that in our categories for all of our sites,
23 we're essentially constrained to one or two and
24 the range goes all the way up to six. So a lot of
25 our sites, a lot of our pressure categories

1 matched across the board, which means the
2 selection probabilities were almost identical,
3 which means we were going out to areas that we
4 shouldn't have been in in certain times of the
5 year and getting a lot of zeros.

6 This one, with MS Creel, we're able to
7 move that into a continuous, right, so the exact
8 number that we expected to see, which then spread
9 it out and then allowed our selection
10 probabilities to really be more representative of
11 the overall fishery, and we'll be able to show
12 that in the figures as well.

13 So this is the results of the effort
14 survey from 2024 and 2025. As you can see here
15 when he started, we see dome shape and the higher
16 affinity for not only offshore, which is in that
17 yellow color, but also the barrier island fishing
18 occur in the middle parts of the year. All right.
19 So we see that little bit of dome shape with a
20 tapering off in the colder months.

21 And then here in 2025, we got the
22 program going. Everything is done, all of our
23 testing, all of our changes, everything else.
24 We've got this program well and going, and you can
25 see it's falling exactly how we'd expect it to go.

1 Offshore effort occurs in the
2 summertime. We have island effort that occurs in
3 the summertime, but we see a taper off in effort
4 on Waves 1, 2, 5 and 6, which is January through
5 April and then the back end of the year.

6 All right. This is -- if you don't take
7 anything out of what I've presented so far, this
8 is the one of the parts to understand. So
9 MS Creel effort is on the left in blue. MRIP
10 effort is on the right in green. You can see the
11 dome-shaped effort where you have higher effort
12 estimates in the summertime. Waves 3, 4 and 5,
13 you see a dropoff. MRIP has a little bit of an
14 increase in Wave 5, but the main thing to pay
15 attention to here is the scale.

16 The max estimate of effort for MS Creel
17 is 100,000 trips. The max effort for MRIP is
18 1.2 million. It's a tenfold difference across the
19 board. That means we've still got a fundamental
20 difference between the surveys, and a lot of it is
21 going to exist right here in effort. And we're
22 going to the next one to show you that it doesn't
23 exist anywhere else for the most part.

24 Here is the dockside pressures. So I
25 mentioned it earlier. We think we're doing a

1 pretty good job with representation. You can
2 essentially see that on the right in blue is our
3 assigned pressures down the line.

4 Here on the left, you can see it overall
5 matches the pattern. There is a couple that stick
6 out. Right? Those are Point Park, Gulfport Small
7 Craft, Long Beach. Everybody here, y'all have
8 interacted with a lot of those places. You've
9 seen them. Those places can get crazy certain
10 times of the year, certain weekends, stuff like
11 that. That's what's driving these differences,
12 are single-day interactions that are going above,
13 but for the most part, we are matching what we
14 observed in the field to what we calculated as far
15 as our site pressures go, which means we're doing
16 a pretty good job on the selection side.

17 All right. So interacting dockside,
18 surveys and everything else, this slide is meant
19 to show you MS Creel is in blue; MRIP is in green.
20 You've got the four most common in-shore species.
21 In reality, right, we're interacting or observing
22 similar counts of these species on each one of
23 these surveys.

24 When you get into the minutia of it,
25 there's a little bit of difference, but for the

1 most part, the dockside portion remains relatively
2 the same. We're seeing a similar amount of
3 species. We're getting more anglers, but the
4 make-up of the catch isn't changing that much.

5 The difference is in the application
6 when it comes to producing a final estimate. So
7 if you pay attention, let's say, to spotted
8 seatrout, all right, for January and February, it
9 was almost the same. March, April, MRIP observes
10 more. May, June, MS Creel observes more.

11 But if you look at the figure on the
12 right, which is the harvest estimates that are
13 produced, in every one of those instances, MRIP is
14 multifold higher. Right? That's not the dockside
15 portion. That's not what we're observing at the
16 dock making the difference. It's the effort
17 portion that I described earlier. That's where
18 the difference has always lied. That's where we
19 continue to see these differences that --
20 regardless of the program that we input.

21 All right. So in summary, once again,
22 that effort is the primary driver. That's the
23 part to take home. We've done our best with it.
24 It seems like what we're observing is relative to
25 the fishery. It's consistent. It's logical. It

1 matches the license frame. It's realistic. We're
2 still not seeing the same on the other side.

3 Our regard, the results from MS Creel is
4 overall positive. I've tried to do my best to
5 illustrate that today. It seems like in every
6 aspect of the program, we're outperforming the
7 federal side and producing a more accurate and
8 precise result.

9 The good thing about this program is
10 that it will have continued improvement. So in
11 the past, we've made suggestions for the MRIP
12 program. We'd like to be able to do this. We'd
13 like to see us not go to as many sites that
14 produce zeros. We want to put our folks out where
15 they're being more efficient and interacting with
16 more anglers. All of that wouldn't result in a
17 change because it's a federal program. It doesn't
18 have the flexibility to change on a whim, and
19 there is a little bit of refusal for them to be
20 able to do so.

21 With MS Creel, we can make those
22 changes. We can update our site pressures. We
23 can re-evaluate the program. We make those
24 changes that aren't fundamental changes to the
25 program that make it into a different one, but

1 simply increase its ability to produce precise and
2 accurate estimates, and that's one of the benefits
3 here and I think it's going to benefit us overall
4 across the board.

5 I think we talked about spotted
6 seatrout. We use index-based monitoring at the
7 moment. This kind of action will allow us to
8 incorporate catches to get another side of the
9 picture. I think overall it would be a benefit to
10 the state.

11 Our next step is essentially submission
12 to the program for certification for NOAA. We've
13 gotten together our preliminary documentation.
14 We've coordinated with Alabama. We've had
15 Louisiana help us out multiple times. We've
16 coordinated with Gulf States, and we've even sent
17 stuff over to NOAA for them to look at. We're
18 likely going to send all this stuff within the
19 month once it's improved internally and everything
20 else. Then it will go to them for review.

21 We're hoping it's going to be swift.
22 It's similar to Louisiana. We're going to match
23 up to Alabama exactly, so I'm hoping it will be
24 somewhat expedient. I'm hoping it will be, you
25 know, a little bit quicker than what we've dealt

1 with in the past.

2 And then this is the first part. I hate
3 to be the person who's looking too far forward.
4 Right? I would love to get this passed and, you
5 know, say a good job. But the next step is that
6 upon certification, there will have to be a
7 concerted effort on not only transition, there's
8 going to be talks of calibration and then the
9 fundamental changes to Gulf-wide assessment and
10 management of federal species.

11 That is going to be a big hurdle. It's
12 one we've been talking about for the last
13 three years, last four years really with all these
14 programs and what we've been doing. But when the
15 rubber meets the road, there is going to be a lot
16 of tough conversations, a lot of changes and
17 there's going to be a lot of disagreement. I'm
18 just hoping that the momentum that we've built
19 will allow us to carry forward and continue to
20 make changes that will continue to benefit our
21 anglers as a whole.

22 Didn't want to get through this
23 presentation without at least acknowledging, you
24 know, my staff and really everybody in Marine
25 Fisheries that's helped us across the board. My

1 staff have been doing MRIP and MS Creel on top of
2 all their duties and everything else. It's been a
3 tough year for them sacrificing a lot of weekends
4 out there doing their job and everything else, so
5 I give a lot of credit to them for doing it.

6 And then other states for helping us as
7 well, Louisiana and Alabama specifically. We've
8 been interacting with them pretty consistently on
9 this and trying to move out in stride. Gulf
10 States has been an amazing contributor for us.
11 They've been helping to secure funding, helping
12 with discussions between us and the federal side
13 of things, help bolster it.

14 And even Gulf Council and NOAA, you
15 know, they're on board with it. They've been
16 helping us along the long process. I think, you
17 know, even at the director's level, there has been
18 a lot of communication there as far as where we're
19 going with the program.

20 But I will take any questions y'all have
21 on this topic.

22 RONNIE DANIELS:

23 So does this mean we're going to catch
24 snapper in October?

25 TREVOR MONCRIEF:

1 I'm not saying that on the public record
2 just yet. Now, the goal is, right -- so I talked
3 about it in a previous meeting. There is a couple
4 of different directions here. You know, one is
5 the direct interaction with -- as far as state
6 allocation and everything else that will come out.

7 The other one is management advice being
8 produced for the stock. There hasn't been a stock
9 assessment for a while because we've been trying
10 to use FES and figure out ways to combine between
11 all these different programs and it just hasn't
12 been a product that's, to me, to move forward.

13 With us moving to MS Creel, AL Creel,
14 LA Creel, essentially there will be a pathway in
15 which there will be a new currency across the
16 board in recreational fishing and red snapper
17 catch. And a lot of that's going to come with
18 some assumptions about the past that are going to
19 have to go away. A big part of it is assuming
20 that all of our removals are active because, at
21 this point, we've proven that record to be not
22 true. We haven't known our landings in that
23 specifically, which means we need to undertake
24 some level of multiyear averaging and essentially
25 smooth out the time series in order to be able to

1 put into an assessment to produce management
2 advice. A lot of that stuff is years.

3 All we can do on our side and what we
4 plan to do is present our argument, present what
5 we've done, say how it backs up what we've been
6 saying for the last little while and really
7 illustrate the point that we've been doing our
8 part and we've been partnering in this process,
9 but it seems like we've been scrutinized every
10 step of the way, every time we've made a point or
11 every time we've taken a step. And in reality, we
12 should have never calibrated to begin with because
13 of how inaccurate the MRIP survey operates in our
14 state.

15 So we'll see where that falls, but if
16 not, there is the other long-term things that are
17 going on now and into the future for the next few
18 years.

19 JOE SPRAGGINS:

20 Trevor, I know that having that offshore
21 permit has really helped us a lot, even with MRIP
22 because, I mean, they can't look at the 80,000
23 now. They have to look at what the offshore
24 permit is; is that correct?

25 TREVOR MONCRIEF:

1 I would say that they have to recognize
2 that it's there for sure and then compare their
3 estimates to what is truly being -- the population
4 that's truly out there.

5 JOE SPRAGGINS:

6 How many offshore permits do we have
7 right now? Do you know?

8 TREVOR MONCRIEF:

9 It sits right around a few thousand
10 every year. We had a slight increase this year.
11 I think that's just more folks aware of the
12 program and everything else.

13 The key, I think, is that -- I spoke to
14 it earlier. There's been a lot of times where
15 we've pushed for change with the MRIP program. We
16 have. I mean, it's not like we're sitting back
17 and just complaining. Right? We're not sitting
18 back and saying, this is wrong, this is wrong.

19 We are coming to them. We've had these
20 conversations at multiple levels of we think this
21 change would help us. We think this change would
22 help us. All these things would aid in the
23 program overall, but because it's a federal
24 program, because of the regulations that surround
25 it and because of, you know, I guess the

1 operational momentum that they've had for decades,
2 they're just not willing to make those changes.

3 And, really, for a state like ours, I
4 think it's so low on the totem pole that
5 oftentimes it just kind of gets pushed to the side
6 until a true problem comes up.

7 JOE SPRAGGINS:

8 Well, I can tell you, Gulf Council now
9 is getting to see a little bit more because
10 amberjack, just to give you an idea, you know, to
11 tell you how broke MRIP is -- and he showed you
12 the numbers here that would say that we caught
13 57,000 against 2,000. Come on, you know. That's
14 the numbers. That's what's so crazy about it
15 because of the way that they do their system.

16 Just to give you an idea, we can land
17 two amberjack that are about 40 pounds a piece
18 here in Mississippi and close the season for the
19 Gulf of America.

20 TREVOR MONCRIEF:

21 Yep.

22 JOE SPRAGGINS:

23 Does that tell you something? Because
24 it would tell us instead of that 80 pounds, we
25 would be about 800,000 pounds. And that's how bad

1 MRIP is broken and that's how bad this system is,
2 but you cannot get them to understand that.

3 And, you know, the hardest thing in the
4 world with NOAA is to get them to change because
5 they don't like the word "change." And it's hard
6 to get them to understand that and we're trying
7 hard to get them to understand it.

8 And just, you know, this is perfectly --
9 Louisiana did this and it worked. We're doing it
10 with Alabama and I think it will work. I hope it
11 works, because if it don't, you going to -- I'm
12 going to have a different attitude about what
13 we're going to do.

14 But if it doesn't work, you know, I
15 don't know. Maybe I can go Texas on them and, you
16 know -- but that's what I keep telling them all
17 the time. I'm going to go Texas on you if you
18 keep messing with me, because, you know, Texas
19 don't care. They just do what they want to and --
20 but I'm not saying they're not doing it right.
21 I'm just saying that they've got it figured out.

22 But the point I'm getting at is, we've
23 had it and we've took it long enough in
24 Mississippi. There is no doubt that we shouldn't
25 be at the 150,000 pounds in snapper. There is no

1 question about it. If you don't believe it right
2 now, go out there and look at the commercial
3 fishermen and they go out and catch what they want
4 to any day right now, you know, because -- you
5 know, but they can do it. It's there. The
6 snapper are there. We had to close our season
7 because of MRIP and because of the way that they
8 did it.

9 How does this match up to Tails and
10 Scales, the MS Creel?

11 TREVOR MONCRIEF:

12 So far, I mean, the data points are
13 small, but we've been within 10 percent of the
14 overall estimate for both the years, and, really,
15 we've been somewhat closer every now and then. So
16 it matches up in magnitude and it matches up in
17 observation, similar to what the Tails and Scales
18 program has produced, so to us, it's just another
19 check box that what we've been doing has been
20 right.

21 JOE SPRAGGINS:

22 And it's -- you know, it's amazing the
23 way that things are going right now and, obviously
24 like I said, to get them to understand.

25 But I will tell you something that we do

1 have in Mississippi. We have Trevor Moncrief
2 sitting on the SCS, and Trevor has made a heck of
3 an impression to the people there. I have not
4 talked to a single one of them that told me any
5 different other than they thought that you was
6 probably one of best that they've ever had.

7 I don't know if you're the chairman or
8 not, but you ought to be. But you are -- you have
9 made an impression. You have made an impression
10 on them and they understand this.

11 And we appreciate it, and we appreciate
12 your team working as hard as they've worked on
13 this. We know that y'all worked hard with this.
14 We know you've had to do a lot of extra work, but
15 we stepped up to the plate.

16 The -- you know, they stepped up and
17 said, hey, we're going to do this for a year.
18 We're going to see if we can't make Mississippi
19 come out better in this deal, and thank you very
20 much for your help and your whole team.

21 TREVOR MONCRIEF:

22 Thank you.

23 CAM ROBERDS:

24 Yeah. I was just going to say that's
25 the best play, is you have the neighboring states

1 so if the scrutiny is coming down, then you've got
2 to scrutinize all three states. Right?

3 TREVOR MONCRIEF:

4 That's right.

5 CAM ROBERDS:

6 And the only other comment I had was, I
7 don't -- what's the sample size of the 10,000 or
8 whatever license holders do you feel like you guys
9 are reaching to phone call-wise or e-mail? What
10 was that? Do you remember?

11 TREVOR MONCRIEF:

12 If I remember right -- I don't know if I
13 had it on a slide, but a couple thousand every
14 week.

15 CAM ROBERDS:

16 Yeah. Okay. That makes sense. I've
17 had a few phone calls, very painless, one minute
18 or less. I mean, it's quick, in and out, and
19 makes me feel I haven't fished enough whenever I
20 get that call.

21 TREVOR MONCRIEF:

22 Yes. At its max, it's around 1,000,
23 especially during snapper season, so we're
24 covering pretty good.

25 And I'll tell you, so the benefit about

1 doing it weekly, too, if I didn't say this, if we
2 got out and observe during the week, regardless if
3 we get a low sample size issue or some outlier or
4 anything else, typically it's constrained by what
5 we observe. So if we get a low sample size that
6 produces a high effort estimate, but we're out
7 there at the docks and we're not seeing anybody
8 because it's 11:30 and everyone is out, then that
9 effort estimate is essentially canceled out, so it
10 works out both ways and that's what Louisiana has
11 seen too.

12 JOE SPRAGGINS:

13 You know, and the reason, too, I was
14 told that NOAA cannot do phone calls anymore,
15 because the federal government will not allow them
16 to do phone calls. They can only do the mail-in.
17 They used to use phone calls years ago and then
18 they went away from it because of something to do
19 with some rule. I don't know what it was.

20 TREVOR MONCRIEF:

21 They were doing household telephones and
22 it was -- what was it? There was some term they
23 had for it, but essentially it was that everyone
24 was transitioning out of household phones and
25 moving on to cell phones.

1 Good thing about this is it's directly
2 from the license database, so most folks are
3 giving cell phones. We're calling cell phones.

4 JOE SPRAGGINS:

5 Yeah. And it was something to do with a
6 violation of calling cell phones. I don't
7 remember what it was.

8 TREVOR MONCRIEF:

9 Yeah.

10 JOE SPRAGGINS:

11 But anyway, we can do it. They can't do
12 it.

13 TREVOR MONCRIEF:

14 Better for us, I guess.

15 CAM ROBERDS:

16 And keeping it in-house is a good play
17 too. Then you know what you're getting.

18 Thank you.

19 MATTHEW MAYFIELD:

20 Thank you.

21 CAM ROBERDS:

22 That's amazing, Trevor. Appreciate it.

23 TREVOR MONCRIEF:

24 Got one more for me.

25 CAM ROBERDS:

1 You've got another one coming up.

2 TREVOR MONCRIEF:

3 All right. We've got a few records,
4 three to be exact.

5 We've got one conventional tackle. It's
6 a wenchman snapper. We've actually had a few of
7 these landed, but we finally had one submitted for
8 a record. It's 4.8 ounces. Angler is Mr. Chris
9 Barlow. There is a picture of the fish, and there
10 is Mr. Barlow with that 4.8-ounce fish.

11 And then we've got an all tackle
12 record -- or two all tackle records. The first
13 one is yellowedge grouper. The old record was
14 41 pounds. That new record is 44 pounds. The
15 angler is Holt Gammel. Picture of the fish.
16 Mr. Gammel with the fish. That's a fairly
17 impressive yellowedge there.

18 And then we had another one, southern
19 hake. The old record was one pound even. The new
20 record is two pounds, eight ounces, and this is
21 from Cooper Wrightson. He is actually a youth
22 angler, but his catch qualifies as the overall all
23 tackle because it meets those specifications and
24 it meets the overall.

25 JOE SPRAGGINS:

1 He gets both of them.

2 TREVOR MONCRIEF:

3 Yep.

4 All we need is just a recommendation to
5 approve those state records.

6 RONNIE DANIELS:

7 Motion.

8 MATTHEW MAYFIELD:

9 Second.

10 CAM ROBERDS:

11 All in favor?

12 (Unanimous vote.)

13 CAM ROBERDS:

14 Thank you, Trevor.

15 MATTHEW MAYFIELD:

16 Appreciate it.

17 CAM ROBERDS:

18 Do we have any other business or public
19 comments? We didn't receive any public comments,
20 did you?

21 JOE SPRAGGINS:

22 No, I don't.

23 But I would like to bring up one thing
24 real quick. There has been some questions about
25 some stuff with the menhaden and all. And I was

1 talking to Jeff and them a while ago about this,
2 and we was talking about what we're doing there in
3 the area and everything else.

4 And, you know, people will put out
5 pictures. They see something. They'll put out
6 something and it makes it look like it's a little
7 different than what it is. But I talked with them
8 and, obviously, if you want to brief anything on
9 it, you can. Y'all -- either one of y'all, we'll
10 be glad to do that.

11 But, you know, one of the things that
12 was brought out the other day was about them
13 catching some fish and basically saying that
14 they -- the fish that they had caught, that
15 they -- they were dead. No. They were all turned
16 back alive, and, you know, it was some things that
17 was brought out.

18 But I think, you know, some of the times
19 you get the fishermen out there that are -- they
20 see something. They take a picture and sometimes
21 it's not 100 percent true.

22 So would one of y'all like to speak to
23 any of that at all? But I just wanted to bring it
24 up so the fact -- I want the people to know the
25 facts about what you do every time, if you could.

1 CAM ROBERDS:

2 While he's walking up, I'll say that the
3 comments and the calls that I received haven't
4 really been about dead fish. I think it was the
5 guys that were out there fishing in a pocket of
6 tarpon, and then it was the -- I think some of the
7 boats came in on them. They had some conversation
8 on the radio, and they came in and -- I mean, it's
9 a -- it's a -- we'll call it a honey hole on the
10 south side back there. I think that was the
11 biggest complaint that I heard was just the --

12 JOE SPRAGGINS:

13 I think they've got an answer to that.

14 ANDY SCHMITZ:

15 Yeah. Basically, I talked to the
16 captains. They actually called me probably 20 or
17 30 minutes after this happened and reported it
18 themselves, and what they told me was that they
19 were about a half a mile away from these fishermen
20 when they did get some tarpon in the net. And
21 then these fishermen came up to them.

22 They got the tarpon out. There were no
23 casualties to the fish at all. They were all
24 rolled out and then swam away alive.

25 They did get harassed from these

1 gentlemen on the radio. They told me that they
2 didn't really respond to them much, but they did
3 hear them and they were talking about we're going
4 to go around and we're going to find some dead
5 fish. And they were never able to find any
6 because like I said, they all swam away.

7 But we did get statements from the
8 captains. This worked its way up the food chain
9 with Omega Protein and Ocean Harvesters pretty
10 quickly, so we wanted to get ahead of it and see
11 what we got.

12 And from everything that we -- that we
13 were able to discover, there were no dead fish
14 whatsoever. You're going to catch some stuff in
15 nets occasionally. It's just part of it, but, you
16 know, all of the fish were on the net and
17 nothing -- there was no casualties of the fish at
18 all.

19 RONNIE DANIELS:

20 So just for clarification, the tarpon
21 that were released, how did y'all get them out?
22 My understanding has always been that everything
23 gets vacuumed out. Then they run through whatever
24 and they get spit out the other side.

25 ANDY SCHMITZ:

1 Well, sometimes it works that way,
2 Ronnie, but a lot of times, what they'll do is
3 they'll pull the corks down on the nets and
4 basically roll them out of the net or they'll swim
5 out over the net so that they can get them out
6 that way. You're not going to get everything
7 through. You've got devices on the end of those
8 hoses that won't allow everything. If you saw the
9 video of that tarpon, it was a pretty big fish
10 that was jumping in the net.

11 RONNIE DANIELS:

12 Yeah. And so that's common practice?
13 If they spot something like that, especially, a
14 tarpon they're going to make an effort to get that
15 fish out of the net without going through the
16 vacuum.

17 ANDY SCHMITZ:

18 Absolutely.

19 CAM ROBERDS:

20 Yes. I think in the -- I don't -- I
21 didn't hear of any fish kills. I don't know who
22 brought that up. I think the biggest complaint
23 that I heard was just the -- you got two -- a
24 guide fisherman. I think it was about seven or
25 eight boats and then, of course, the pogy boats

1 and that's just kind of a battle for territory, I
2 guess, you know, in that one area.

3 ANDY SCHMITZ:

4 Yeah. And from my understanding from
5 both of the statements I got from the captains,
6 Cam, the -- one of the boats was about half a mile
7 away and one was about three-quarters of a mile
8 away, when they made those sets, from those
9 fishermen.

10 CAM ROBERDS:

11 10-4.

12 Any other questions?

13 JOE SPRAGGINS:

14 No. I just wanted to bring it up
15 because, you know, once again, we get the calls.
16 I get -- and look at it and we look at everything.
17 But, you know, we need to get both sides of the
18 story and that's all I'm asking, you know. We get
19 both sides of the story on there and let everybody
20 have the honest truth about what's going on.

21 ANDY SCHMITZ:

22 Thank you.

23 CAM ROBERDS:

24 Thank you.

25 All right. Well, okay. Any other

1 business or any other comments?

2 If not, I guess, do we have a motion to
3 close?

4 JONATHAN MCLENDON:

5 I'll make the motion.

6 RONNIE DANIELS:

7 Second.

8 CAM ROBERDS:

9 All in favor?

10 (Unanimous vote.)

11 CAM ROBERDS:

12 Thanks, everyone.

13 (Meeting adjourned at 10:19 a.m.)

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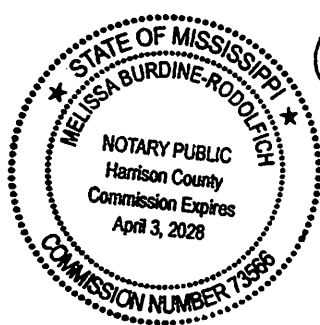
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CERTIFICATE OF COURT REPORTER

I, MELISSA BURDINE-RODOLFICH, Court Reporter and Notary Public, in and for the County of Harrison, State of Mississippi, hereby certify that the foregoing pages, and including this page, contain a true and correct copy of my stenotype notes and/or electronic tape recording of the public meeting, as taken by me at the time and place heretofore stated, to the best of my skill and ability.

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

Witness my signature and seal, this the 13th day of October, 2025.



Melissa Burdine-Rodolfich

Melissa Burdine-Rodolfich
My Commission Expires 4/03/28