

STATE OF MISSISSIPPI

MISSISSIPPI ADVISORY COMMISSION ON MARINE RESOURCES
COMMISSION MEETING

Tuesday, November 18, 2025, 10:01 a.m.

City of Biloxi, City Hall Second Floor

140 Lameuse Street, Biloxi, Mississippi 39530

COMMISSION MEMBERS:Ronnie Daniels
Jonathan McLendon (Via Teams)
Matthew Mayfield
Jason Osborne (Via Teams)
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 All right. I want to welcome everybody
3 to the Mississippi Advisory Commission on Marine
4 Resources meeting for Tuesday, November 18th,
5 2025.

6 Let's see here. Commissioner Mayfield,
7 will you lead us in the Pledge of Allegiance,
8 please?

9 (Pledge of Allegiance was recited.)

10 CAM ROBERDS:

11 I want to make mention that Commissioner
12 McLendon and Commissioner Osborne are -- both
13 joined the meeting via Teams.

14 And, General, do you want to lead us in
15 a prayer, sir?

16 JOE SPRAGGINS:

17 Yeah. And before we get started, we --
18 you know, I want to thank everybody for what
19 you're doing, and, you know, this country is in a
20 great place and we're moving good forward. And I
21 tell you what, I had a great thing this morning
22 with the legislators and so it just tells us that
23 our legislators are looking at us and everybody is
24 looking at what we need to be doing. So we're
25 very thankful for God to be able to let us do

1 this. Let's go the Lord, please.

2 (Moment of prayer.)

3 CAM ROBERDS:

4 Thank you, Director.

5 We have the approval of the minutes from
6 October 21st. Are there any questions on the
7 minutes from October 21st?

8 If not, do we have a motion?

9 MATTHEW MAYFIELD:

10 I'll make a motion.

11 RONNIE DANIELS:

12 Second.

13 CAM ROBERDS:

14 All those in favor?

15 (Unanimous vote.)

16 CAM ROBERDS:

17 All right. Moving on to the approval of
18 the agenda. Does anybody got any questions on the
19 agenda? If not, can we get a motion to approve?

20 RONNIE DANIELS:

21 Motion.

22 MATTHEW MAYFIELD:

23 Second.

24 CAM ROBERDS:

25 All those in favor?

1 (Unanimous vote.)

2 CAM ROBERDS:

3 All right. Director, it's all yours.

4 JOE SPRAGGINS:

5 All right. We've got it on now.

6 Okay. First off, if you have any public
7 comment, TJ, I think, is in the back back there,
8 so make sure you get it to him.

9 We have one right here. I think it
10 doesn't -- it's not anything to do with what's on
11 the agenda.

12 All right. Let's see. Oyster season
13 update. Right now, I just got this in, it says
14 our daily sack limits are 15 for tonging and 20
15 for dredging. We opened the area on the 13th of
16 October and we have, 11,379 total sacks have been
17 harvested, averaging 367 sacks per day. 142
18 licenses have been sold to date, 74 resident, 31
19 dredging, 31 resident tonging, 23 non-resident
20 tonging, five non-resident dredging and nine
21 recreational.

22 Most of the harvest activity is
23 occurring in areas II A and II F, and
24 harvesting -- harvesters are reporting dense
25 oyster clusters with a wide range of size. Most

1 are able to get their daily quota with a moderate
2 effort, and no culling was needed.

3 We -- the next thing is the on-bottom
4 leases, but what we'll talk about with that, if
5 you just -- you know, the oyster leases, right
6 now, everybody seems to be wanting to fish one
7 area and that's because it's the closest thing and
8 it has plenty.

9 But Henderson Point, tell me if I'm
10 right, Rick, has got about 40,000 oysters -- sacks
11 of oysters that we can harvest off of Henderson
12 Point that has had hardly any harvest off of it.

13 RICK BURRIS:

14 (Nods head affirmatively.)

15 JOE SPRAGGINS:

16 So there's plenty of room for them to
17 move. If they want to move to Henderson Point,
18 they can move to Henderson Point and do it. There
19 is a lot of questions about closing some areas in
20 II A and II F, but if we close one part, we'll
21 have to close it. So I think what we'll do is
22 leave it open and tell them to use their judgment.
23 And, Erik, am I right with that?

24 ERIK BROUSSARD:

25 Yes, sir.

1 JOE SPRAGGINS:

2 We can -- we'll leave the whole area
3 open and let them use their judgment as where to
4 go. They know, you know, if their oysters are
5 getting smaller and they're having to cull too
6 much. Then they'll go somewhere else and they'll
7 figure it out, so that's where we're at.

8 Any questions on that?

9 CAM ROBERDS:

10 No.

11 JOE SPRAGGINS:

12 But right now, 11,000 of the 82,000 that
13 we have projected, so we're doing good. We're
14 doing the best that we've done in a long time
15 already. We've already exceeded last year, so --
16 you know, with this just one month, so that's
17 pretty good. And I think that we'll see more and
18 I think that -- provided the good Lord gives us
19 decent weather and no more -- and nothing major as
20 far as rains and stuff, because every time we get
21 a lot of rain, it does, you know, close a lot of
22 those areas, but, hopefully, we'll get some area
23 to be able to continue.

24 Any questions on oysters?

25 (No response.)

1 JOE SPRAGGINS:

2 Okay. On the on-bottom oyster lease
3 program, one of the things that we're doing there
4 is I talked with the Senators and -- this morning
5 and the House members, and I talked to them about
6 what we're doing and how we need to look at it.

7 And because of the judge's ruling that
8 it was unconstitutional to do it the way it was,
9 we've got to look at it, and so they're amenable
10 to do that. And I don't remember which Senate
11 bill it was, but we will be able to take that
12 Senate bill and -- that's one of the things I gave
13 to the Governor's office the other day, that we
14 want to modify that Senate bill, and we're going
15 to look at it. We'll sit down with the
16 legislators and see what we can do with it.

17 Our goal is to try to keep as much as we
18 possibly can of what we call traditional reefs
19 because they seem to be plentiful and we're having
20 them and we're using them and the people are
21 harvesting them. And so if that works, that's
22 great. But we do have some reefs that we would be
23 willing to look at to be able to lease and
24 everything else, and so let's see where we go with
25 it. Let's just talk with the Senators and the

1 House members and we'll see where we're at with
2 that.

3 Any questions?

4 (No response.)

5 JOE SPRAGGINS:

6 2019 Bonnet Carré, we're moving right
7 along. Out of the grant for -- program for New
8 and Emerging Seafood Processing Technologies, we
9 had three point -- right at 3.7 million.

10 92 percent of those funds have been distributed to
11 23 of the 24 applicants, so everything is good.
12 We're moving forward and so we're getting that.
13 And that's to be able to put some new technology
14 in and some other things there, especially a lot
15 of the processors and all being able to update
16 what they have. And so that helps us a lot to be
17 able to do that.

18 Any questions on it?

19 CAM ROBERDS:

20 No.

21 JOE SPRAGGINS:

22 All right. As far as 2020 Bonnet Carré,
23 we -- \$3 million and we're working on it right
24 now. Applications opened on May 2nd and closed on
25 June 30th. We -- all necessary payments,

1 information has been submitted to Finance for
2 eligible wild harvest oystermen to receive \$10,000
3 and shrimp fishermen to receive 7,500. There's --
4 275 applications were submitted. 255 payout
5 agreements have been sent to applicants, and 200
6 recipients have signed agreements to receive their
7 payment. We have one appeal in the process right
8 now.

9 We're looking at -- one of the things is
10 also that there will probably be a supplemental to
11 this, and it will be where -- that if -- we'll try
12 to -- instead of just paying per license that we
13 pay per boat and -- you know, with a license. And
14 so we're trying to be able to do that and that
15 will come out as quick as we can. I know that
16 Traci and all of them are working hard on that
17 and, hopefully, we'll be able to give some more
18 money to the fishermen themselves.

19 Any questions?

20 (No response.)

21 JOE SPRAGGINS:

22 Okay. Moving right along.

23 Seafood Task Force meeting, we had a
24 task force meeting on the 10th of November and it
25 was a good meeting. We talked about what we're

1 going to be able to do. We're still trying to get
2 an idea of exactly how to label the seafood. In
3 other words, one of the things is exactly what do
4 we do and what do we tell the Senate and House to
5 put in the bill, in House Bill 602, to be able to
6 update it to say that you've got to -- if you have
7 a restaurant, this is how you have to do it, so we
8 only do it one time and not make these restaurants
9 keep doing it over and over and over changing
10 their menus and costing a lot of money.

11 So hopefully, we'll get there. We've
12 had some concerned citizens that thought that we
13 wasn't enforcing it enough. Well, we understand
14 their thoughts and we're trying to enforce it
15 and -- but the point is, I don't want to enforce
16 something on one person and turn around and find
17 out we're going to do it different a month later.
18 That's not the way to do business. I want to make
19 sure that we're doing it right, so what I want to
20 do is give them an opportunity to let us get this
21 put together.

22 The House bill, when it was signed, we
23 knew it was a bill that would take some time to
24 get everything just right on and that's why they
25 put the task force together, to be able to do it.

1 So give us time, and I appreciate
2 everybody's help. And if you're out there in the
3 restaurant, seafood business in any way, do your
4 best. Do your best you can to make sure that you
5 tell people whether it is import or domestic.
6 That's all we're asking you to do right now, and
7 then we will give to you -- get with you as soon
8 as we can and get you exactly the details.

9 Some of the things we're looking at is
10 there is some federal bills that we've got to look
11 at and find out, you know, especially when you
12 buy -- talking about frozen seafood that comes
13 into the seafood restaurants and stuff. We've got
14 to be able to figure how to make sure because it
15 says that you can label it by the country and you
16 don't have to put import or domestic on it and it
17 also says that you can label it with little-bitty,
18 small letters compared to big letters.

19 But now, Cindy Hyde-Smith, Senator Cindy
20 Hyde-Smith has a bill in the Senate right now that
21 she's putting forward to say that we're going to
22 change that to everybody across the country, all
23 across America that if you have seafood that way,
24 it has to be labeled. It can use the country of
25 origin, but it's got to be the size of what it is.

1 If it says "shrimp," it's got to be the same size.
2 So she's trying to do that for us and we
3 appreciate her efforts on it.

4 Any questions on it?

5 (No response.)

6 JOE SPRAGGINS:

7 Okay. We'll have another meeting, I
8 think, on the 8th; is that right? Yeah, 8th of
9 December, so we will hopefully get some stuff
10 together and be able to get that to the House and
11 Senate the first part of the year.

12 GOAA meeting last week in Sandestin -- I
13 mean, in October in Sandestin was good. We did
14 good. We -- basically, things are moving forward.
15 We're just trying to make sure that we keep the
16 estuaries going.

17 They're trying to help us some more with
18 some more derelict vessels, and so there's another
19 couple of million dollars sitting out there that
20 we can probably get part of to help us with
21 derelict vessels. And I can tell you -- we'll
22 talk about that in a minute -- but derelict
23 vessels, Mississippi is doing pretty good. We're
24 a long ways in front of everybody else.

25 Any questions on that?

1 (No response.)

2 JOE SPRAGGINS:

3 SEAFWA was a fantastic meeting. We had
4 a great meeting with SEAFWA October 25th through
5 29th. Being a part of that was great. We're
6 lucky to have had a chance to do that. It was
7 about 600 people from 15 different states and got
8 to meet a lot of the directors from the 15 states
9 and got to talk to them and talk to them about
10 what they're looking at with their agencies.

11 And we do appreciate Lynn Posey, the
12 Director of Wildlife, for inviting us to be a part
13 of that, and we'll look at it in the future.
14 They, Wildlife, thinks we need to be a part of it
15 forever. I've got to figure it out. I haven't
16 figured -- there's only four states that are
17 separated like we are and that's -- and I know
18 three of them. That's us, Florida and North
19 Carolina and I'm not sure who the fourth one is,
20 but there's four states that do that, that have
21 Marine Resources separated from Wildlife. Most of
22 them are all under one bundle, whether it's the
23 Commission of Natural Resources or whatever like
24 Alabama or Louisiana and all. They have one,
25 but -- and Texas is the same way.

1 But we'll see what happens and we'll
2 look into it in the future and see what -- how we
3 think and see whether we need to be a part of it,
4 but we do appreciate it.

5 And got to give a lot of people a lot of
6 good seafood from South Mississippi, and so there
7 is some people from all over the southern part of
8 the United States going home talking about
9 Mississippi and about our great seafood. So I
10 thank the team that did the hard work there and
11 y'all did a great job. Thank y'all, the cooking
12 team.

13 Any questions?

14 (No response.)

15 JOE SPRAGGINS:

16 Gulf States annual meeting, we had it on
17 the 27th through the 30th, and everything's fine
18 there. Once again, we're moving forward. Gulf
19 States is doing a great job. We're trying to do
20 the -- now that the government is back open, we
21 can not have to worry about the situation. We
22 were concerned at one time as to whether or not we
23 were going to be able to do the side-by-side as
24 far as our MS Creel and we were concerned about
25 that because we were concerned that they was going

1 to have the funds. And we worked out something
2 with Gulf States to be able to handle that and to
3 make sure that they didn't have to stop doing it
4 for while we were -- while the government was shut
5 down.

6 And this worked out and, you know, we
7 were able to find them a little bit of money and
8 they'll turn around and give it right back to us
9 now because it's coming back and it's -- as soon
10 as they can get it, their pay voucher stamped in
11 Washington, they'll bring it back to us. But it
12 didn't stop anything, so we were able to continue
13 to do what we were doing and we'll continue to be
14 able to finish that.

15 And we can ask Trevor when -- I don't
16 know if he's up in a little while, but if we
17 don't, we'll get him back up. But we can ask him
18 if we've got any questions on that. So if you
19 have any now, I'll ask Trevor to come up.

20 Do you have any questions on it?

21 MATTHEW MAYFIELD:

22 No.

23 CAM ROBERDS:

24 No.

25 JOE SPRAGGINS:

1 All right. Trevor, you're off the hook
2 that time.

3 Next Commission meeting -- Gulf Council
4 was 3 through 6. I tell you, we've been in a lot
5 of meetings in November. And we just had it, and
6 it was a good meeting. Everybody was tickled to
7 death. We got big accolades once again because of
8 everybody, and we thank y'all for helping us with
9 the -- some of the beverages. Thank you for that,
10 and, you know, we appreciate the help on it.

11 And we also appreciate the help of the
12 cooking. We had some great cooking and we
13 appreciate that. There is a lot of people that --
14 and I tell you what, they went home again, saying
15 nowhere ever we go can top what Mississippi does.
16 Mississippi always shows them the best food and
17 the best hospitality.

18 I'm not sure any of them won any --
19 well, there is a couple of them that won some
20 money in the casino, so they're real happy. But,
21 you know, there was probably more unhappy than
22 there were happy. I'll just put it that way, but
23 they had a good time.

24 All right. Any questions?

25 (No response.)

1 JOE SPRAGGINS:

2 All right. Next meeting, we're going to
3 try to do on December 16th in Jackson County
4 and -- unless something changes it. It seems like
5 every time we pick one off in the -- in another
6 county, something comes up and we have to be in
7 Biloxi that morning and so right now, we're good.

8 Is that good with everybody,
9 December 16th in Jackson County? Okay. It will
10 be in the Board of Supervisors boardroom.

11 Derelict vessels, we have 222 derelict
12 vessels that have been reported; 194 have been
13 removed; 28 are pending removal; and three are in
14 court order.

15 I tell you what, that's pretty good. If
16 you want to ask anybody in the world, that is
17 about as good as you get when it gets to something
18 with the derelict vessels and what we're doing.
19 And so we want to thank Steven and Roy about it
20 because they -- Roy and Steven are the two that's
21 been the catalyst behind this the whole time, but
22 thank y'all for that.

23 Any questions on that?

24 (No response.)

25 JOE SPRAGGINS:

1 All right. Employment contracts. We
2 don't have any, I don't think, do we?

3 And we don't have procurements.

4 All right. How about an actions update
5 from the prior meeting?

6 STEVEN ECKERT:

7 Good morning, Commissioners and
8 Director. Discussed at the October 2025 meeting,
9 the Commission recommended and the Director
10 approved a motion to recommend the approval of the
11 re-issuance of the pre-approved variance for
12 projects meeting the parameters and limitations of
13 MDMR's waiver for living shorelines in the
14 Mississippi Coast wetlands.

15 In addition, there was a motion to
16 recommend approval of the following state
17 saltwater finfish records: Under conventional
18 tackle, there was Trevor Moncrief's two-pound,
19 1.6-ounce gulf flounder; Marshall Slay's
20 14.4-ounce anchor tilefish; Scott Thibodeaux's
21 two-pound, three point -- 13.6 ounce silk snapper;
22 and, finally, under all tackle, Cooper Wrightson's
23 12.8-ounce Spanish flag.

24 And that's all the actions update we
25 have for today.

1 JOE SPRAGGINS:

2 Okay. Any questions?

3 CAM ROBERDS:

4 No, sir.

5 JOE SPRAGGINS:

6 All right. We don't need any motion or
7 anything on any of those, right?

8 STEVEN ECKERT:

9 No, Director.

10 JOE SPRAGGINS:

11 We're good.

12 Well, other than that, I think that's
13 everything that I have, and we wish you all a
14 Happy Thanksgiving.

15 CAM ROBERDS:

16 Thank you for the update, Director. I'm
17 excited that you guys were able to keep everything
18 moving along with the Creel stuff. That's good.
19 I would hate to get delayed on that, so -- all the
20 work that's been involved in it.

21 Do the Commissioners have anything to
22 report?

23 RONNIE DANIELS:

24 Not really a report, more kind of a
25 question, I think. Earlier this year, we had

1 discussed being able to buy commercial and/or
2 charter licenses online. I had a charter boat
3 captain call me the other day. His expired,
4 thought he was going to be able to buy it online.
5 Ended up having to drive to down here and all
6 that. I'm just wondering where we're at with
7 that.

8 JOE SPRAGGINS:

9 We are in the process. Rick, do you
10 have an update on it? I know we're in the process
11 of trying to get online license for commercial.

12 RICK BURRIS:

13 Yeah. So we presented it to the
14 Commission a while back. We got awarded with
15 those Bonnet Carré funds. Included in that, the
16 2019 money, there was about \$400,000 that we
17 allocated specifically to build an online
18 license -- an online commercial license and
19 charter-for-hire license, also recreational crab,
20 oyster and shrimp license. Currently, right now,
21 the only place you can get those is at our office,
22 as you mentioned.

23 So we have the funds available. I know
24 that Brian Sherwood with IT has been working to
25 try to figure out a way to do it. We were -- my

1 recollection is that we were trying to piggyback
2 off of park and -- Wildlife, Fisheries and Parks
3 when they updated their system. I don't know if
4 you're familiar with all of the snafus they've had
5 with theirs.

6 RONNIE DANIELS:

7 Yep.

8 RICK BURRIS:

9 It's been pretty significant. So we
10 opted to kind of sit back and see where that is
11 and where that's going. But I'm not sure of the
12 specifics as to why we can't just hire somebody up
13 and get a -- get a system going. It seems -- to
14 us, it seems pretty simple, but I know there is a
15 lot of things in the IT world, procurement with
16 the state contracts, that we may not really fully
17 understand.

18 So we are working on it. It's taking a
19 lot longer that we want it to. We got awarded
20 those funds, like I said, two and a half years
21 ago. I really wanted to do it at that time, but
22 we're trying to get that done. We just keep
23 hitting snags as far as I know.

24 RONNIE DANIELS:

25 It's going to be a big improvement, you

1 know. You've got a guy all the way over in
2 Hancock County or even us right there in Pass
3 Christian, for us to drive to Biloxi, get
4 everything together, drive to Biloxi, I mean, it's
5 the better part of a morning or an afternoon for
6 sure. So being able to do it online is going to
7 be a big help.

8 RICK BURRIS:

9 And what people don't realize or a lot
10 of people don't realize, when you have things like
11 a recreational crab license and shrimp license --
12 I'm not going to say oyster license because those
13 are -- you have to be pretty dedicated to get one
14 of those.

15 But a recreational crab license, anybody
16 that has a camp down here can just come down here
17 for a weekend vacation. If they don't get to our
18 office by the time we close on Friday, they're not
19 going to get a license, and then that's one of
20 those things -- a \$5 license. That's one of those
21 things that we're trying to -- you know, there's
22 7- or 800 of those licenses out there, so that
23 affects a lot of people.

24 And I think some of the problems that
25 we've encountered, there's a lot of fees attached

1 to it. So when you have a \$5 license, but you
2 attach at \$3 fee to it -- I mean, it is a
3 convenience fee. We're trying to work out some of
4 that stuff.

5 RONNIE DANIELS:

6 Okay. Just curious.

7 JOE SPRAGGINS:

8 Well, I talked to Lynn Posey with
9 Wildlife the other day about this and he thinks
10 that the kinks are about worked out with what
11 they're doing. I mean, anytime you go to a new
12 program, you're going to have kinks and he thinks
13 that he's got them pretty much worked out.

14 I don't know, you know -- once again,
15 like Rick said, there is a fee, but I think that
16 no matter what we do, we're going to wind up
17 having a fee and the fee is going to be tacked to
18 it. And once you buy something like that, you
19 know, they're going to put extra money on it. I
20 don't know how we're going to get around that.

21 The other thing is -- that I've got a
22 concern is -- you know, getting somebody to write
23 a program is one thing. Maintaining it is
24 another, and being able to maintain that program
25 and have the funds to be able to do it, we've got

1 to have a mechanism to show that, how we're going
2 to maintain that.

3 Where, if we go in with Wildlife -- and
4 the problem with Wildlife, too, is they have very
5 little commercial, you know, and that's the thing
6 that's hard for them to be able to adjust to
7 because they're all recreational. They have just
8 a small amount of commercial.

9 So what we -- what we're trying to do is
10 trying to find a way to get into that to where --
11 I still think that if we can do it with Wildlife
12 that would probably be the best way to do it
13 because there's a program already set and we would
14 just add to a program, rather than invent a
15 program. But there's programs out there, too,
16 that other states are using that we could probably
17 piggyback off of. And I understand.

18 And there may be something, Rick, that
19 we can look at, especially during the time of when
20 we have the mass amount of people buying licenses,
21 that we set up something like in Pass Christian at
22 the check station to buy a license also at the
23 same time, that we double stack people so that
24 we -- the people don't have to drive all the way
25 to Biloxi every time to buy a license.

1 And until we can get something -- it
2 seems like 80 -- probably 80 percent of them are
3 coming out of the -- Hancock, West Harrison
4 County, and so that might be something that we
5 could look at and that might be something that we
6 could do, which it's usually around, what, April?

7 RICK BURRIS:

8 April the 30th is when those commercial
9 licenses --

10 JOE SPRAGGINS:

11 Yeah. Somewhere around the -- you know,
12 so we can maybe put somebody over there from the
13 middle of April to the middle of May or something
14 like that, you know, and help a little bit, and --
15 but that's not going to eliminate the issue that
16 we have with the person driving in.

17 RONNIE DANIELS:

18 You know, I know a \$3 or \$5 fee on a \$5
19 license sounds exorbitant, but I can tell you if I
20 had to pay \$10 and I didn't have to take two or
21 three hours to drive over here and take care of
22 all that, I can't imagine you're going to have a
23 whole lot of complaints there.

24 If we could work \$2 a license in to help
25 fund the maintenance of the website, I wouldn't

1 have a problem with that.

2 JOE SPRAGGINS:

3 Well, I can tell you, Commissioner,
4 everybody doesn't have that same opinion. And,
5 you know, paying \$3 extra on a \$5 license and they
6 -- rather than spend \$4 worth of gas, they will
7 see it as a negative.

8 RONNIE DANIELS:

9 Well, they can still drive down here.
10 Even if they have it online, they could still
11 drive down here.

12 JOE SPRAGGINS:

13 They could. We'll look at it and -- you
14 know, I agree with you, you know. In the world
15 today, we ought to be able to do something. We've
16 got funds in the program to be able to do it and
17 we ought to get it done.

18 And I think the biggest thing that's
19 been held up is trying to wait on Wildlife. And
20 let's see where we can go with that, Rick, and
21 let's put it on the -- in process.

22 We've been trying to get this money out
23 there to everybody right now, so that's been a
24 priority.

25 RICK BURRIS:

1 Yeah. That has been the priority for
2 the overall grant, but just know that it's been
3 our priority since before we got this money.
4 That's why we asked for the money, to get this --
5 to get up to the 21st Century and get these online
6 licenses going.

7 RONNIE DANIELS:

8 Yeah.

9 RICK BURRIS:

10 So we're trying and we want it just as
11 much as stakeholders do. I can assure you.

12 RONNIE DANIELS:

13 Thank you, guys.

14 JOE SPRAGGINS:

15 I stay on them every day about getting
16 these funds out for the fishermen right now and
17 funds out for these processors for people to
18 update their process and all because I feel like
19 that's the most important part. And so it's
20 probably my part -- my fault because I haven't put
21 as much emphasis there. But with the amount of
22 people we have, I'm trying to make sure people get
23 paid first and then I'll --

24 RONNIE DANIELS:

25 That's absolutely the problem.

1 CAM ROBERDS:

2 All right. Appreciate it.

3 Looks like we're moving down to Office
4 of Marine Patrol, report on citations.

5 WILL FREEMAN:

6 Hey. Good morning. I'm Will Freeman.
7 I have been tasked with answering any questions
8 you may have regarding this month's report.

9 RONNIE DANIELS:

10 I am curious about one thing. What is
11 unapproved towing during oyster season?

12 WILL FREEMAN:

13 The --

14 JOE SPRAGGINS:

15 Will, I think what he's talking about --
16 he's talking about when the -- somebody towed an
17 oyster boat in that broke down.

18 WILL FREEMAN:

19 That's correct. That activity is
20 prohibited on the reefs during the open season.
21 And the officer was not given any notification
22 that the vessel broke down, and, essentially, the
23 fisherman committed a violation.

24 RONNIE DANIELS:

25 So if somebody breaks down, they can't

1 be towed in?

2 WILL FREEMAN:

3 They can be, and the normal -- the
4 custom there is that they notify the officer at
5 the check station that they're having mechanical
6 issues. We'll assist if we can. But if they're
7 getting towed in by another vessel, we like to be
8 notified. Otherwise, it's going to be a
9 violation.

10 JOE SPRAGGINS:

11 Will, explain that to them. I think
12 Chief tried to explain it to me and y'all can
13 explain it to them. Basically, what it amounts to
14 is if you don't know what's going on out there and
15 you see two boats still working out there --
16 especially in this time. It was when we closed it
17 at noon, I think, and this was after that time,
18 you know, when it's closed -- they don't know if
19 they're fishing. They don't know what they're
20 doing at that point, and they're trying to -- I
21 mean, I kind of remember what he was talking
22 about.

23 WILL FREEMAN:

24 The regulation that is in question here
25 prohibits a vessel from being towed in or towed

1 out on the reef. Now, the reason for it being
2 towed is irrelevant involving the violation.

3 But we've had vessels that have been
4 towed in or towed out that were -- that broke
5 down. Mostly towed back in to the harbor, but we
6 have been given plenty of notice that that was
7 happening.

8 Historically, we've had some vessels
9 that were towed out to go fishing that were not
10 mechanically sound. They weren't functioning.
11 That's a violation in the regulation.

12 RONNIE DANIELS:

13 Okay. I can see where that would be a
14 safety issue as well, towing a broke down boat. I
15 was just curious. I had never seen this before
16 and I saw it on the report here.

17 WILL FREEMAN:

18 Yes, sir. There is a lot of people that
19 are new to the industry this year, a lot of new
20 faces, and it's a learning curve for a lot of
21 folks.

22 RONNIE DANIELS:

23 Okay. So if they have a problem, they
24 just need to contact y'all and let y'all know
25 what's going on?

1 WILL FREEMAN:

2 It's highly advised they notify the
3 check station and they'll notify the enforcement
4 officer on duty.

5 RONNIE DANIELS:

6 Obviously, within reason, we're not
7 going to leave them bobbing out there. It's okay
8 to help them as long as they let y'all know?

9 WILL FREEMAN:

10 No. I've towed in countless of oyster
11 boats in 20 years.

12 RONNIE DANIELS:

13 Okay. Like I said, I was just curious.
14 I've never seen that before.

15 CAM ROBERDS:

16 Captain, I've got a quick question and I
17 think it can be directed to you guys or Rick, one
18 or the other, but as far as like a recreational
19 fisherman, I know the float plans are available
20 for the hired charter guys.

21 Do recreational guys, do they have the
22 same opportunity to file a float plan if they're
23 doing an overnight trip?

24 WILL FREEMAN:

25 Yes. They have an opportunity, but

1 there is no legal requirement for it on a
2 recreational trip.

3 CAM ROBERDS:

4 Okay. So with the float plans, if it's
5 a multiple night trip and say they're cooking some
6 of the -- you know, the catch and they're bringing
7 some filets back and they have a float plan filed,
8 is that legal to be able to bring it back if they
9 have it filed that way?

10 WILL FREEMAN:

11 You're talking about just a regular Joe
12 Blow off the street corner, not hook and line
13 fish?

14 CAM ROBERDS:

15 Just a recreational license.

16 WILL FREEMAN:

17 Recreational license, yes.

18 CAM ROBERDS:

19 Yes. Making a multiple-night trip.

20 WILL FREEMAN:

21 Yeah.

22 CAM ROBERDS:

23 Okay. Cool.

24 JOE SPRAGGINS:

25 I can promise you that the officers are

1 out there doing every day everything they can to
2 keep everybody safe as possible. And, you know,
3 if you making a mistake and you didn't know it,
4 that's one thing. And they try to work with you
5 and try to teach you how to make -- not make that
6 mistake again.

7 And so a lot of these people -- but no
8 matter what, it's just like them driving down the
9 Interstate 10 right now. There's some people will
10 go 90 miles an hour, even though the speed limit
11 is 70, so it doesn't matter. Okay? And there is
12 some that's going to do that every day. That's
13 what they are doing out there. And our officers
14 are doing a fantastic job of doing what they can
15 to go out there and keep people in line and as
16 safe as possible. So we appreciate you.

17 CAM ROBERDS:

18 Thanks, Captain.

19 WILL FREEMAN:

20 Any other questions?

21 CAM ROBERDS:

22 Any other questions for Captain?

23 (No response.)

24 CAM ROBERDS:

25 Thank you, sir.

1 WILL FREEMAN:

2 Appreciate it.

3 CAM ROBERDS:

4 Appreciate it.

5 Ms. Charmaine, Public affairs.

6 CHARMAINE SCHMERMUND:

7 Good morning. The Mississippi
8 Department of Marine Resources had five media
9 mentions since the October MACMR meeting. News
10 items included oyster season opening, fish records
11 and an update on the aquaculture hatchery.

12 The Office of Marine Patrol participated
13 in National Night out for Hancock County on
14 October 22nd, the Fall Festival at Westminster
15 Presbyterian Church and the Long Beach Police
16 Department's Night Out Against Crime, both on
17 October 25th, the Fire Prevention Month Touch a
18 Truck at the Lyman Community Center on
19 October 30th, the National Night Out Community
20 Expo in Bay St. Louis on November 1st and the
21 Spanish Trail District Cub Scout Safety Fair in
22 Woolmarket on November 15th.

23 Marine Patrol and the Shrimp and Crab
24 Bureau both participated in the Fall Festival at
25 St. Martin North Elementary School on

1 October 31st.

2 The Seafood Technology Bureau's Kristina
3 Broussard and Jillianne Craft participated in the
4 College and Career Fair at Lumberton High School
5 on October 22nd. Courtney Walker of the
6 Artificial Reef Bureau served as speaker for the
7 Lunch & Learn: Circle of Life at the MGCCC
8 Jackson County campus on November 13th. The
9 Shellfish Bureau's Ellen Coffin, Madison Parker
10 and Jason Rider and the Finfish Bureau's Megan
11 Fleming participated in the Freshmen Marine
12 Aquaculture event at GCRL's Cedar Point Campus
13 last Friday.

14 Allison Faggard, Kaitlyn Payne and
15 Alicia Carron with the Office of Coastal Resources
16 Management visited Delisle Elementary School on
17 October 22nd to highlight the importance of
18 Coastal wetlands.

19 From the NEER, Dennis McGury served as
20 the virtual speaker at the Port Aransas Tourism
21 Conference on October 22nd, discussing grant
22 writing. Brianna Andrews brought the On the Road
23 program to Biloxi High School on November 7th.
24 NEER Director Ayesha Gray served as a speaker on
25 art and science programming at the Association of

1 National Estuary Programs Annual Meeting in Mobile
2 on November 12th. Jessica Woodall served as a
3 guest lecturer for Washington College's Marine
4 Conservation Class on November 13th.

5 And then here, we have the Agency's
6 cooking team cooked for the Mississippi Aerospace
7 and Defense Symposium at Ocean Enterprise on
8 October 23rd, the Southeastern Association of Fish
9 and Wildlife Agencies Reception in Biloxi on
10 October 26th, the Junior Jubilee Fishing Rodeo
11 Banquet at the Biloxi Maritime and Seafood
12 Industry Museum on November 1st and the Gulf
13 Council Reception also held at the museum on
14 November 4th.

15 CAM ROBERDS:

16 Any questions for Ms. Charmaine?

17 (No response.)

18 CAM ROBERDS:

19 All right. Thank you. We appreciate
20 it.

21 Tidelands application update.

22 SONJA SLATER:

23 Hi. I'm Sonja Slater, the Tidelands
24 coordinator.

25 For 2026, our applications -- well, let

1 me tell you what the schedule is going to be. I'm
2 sorry. I got the slides out of line.

3 But the schedule for 2028 applications,
4 we're going to be accepting them in May 2026, and
5 they will be reviewed in the Legislative Session
6 in January of 2027.

7 For 2027 applications -- it's the cycle
8 that we just finished -- we received 89
9 applications. 59 were for public -- or excuse me,
10 50 were for public access and 39 were managed
11 projects.

12 We received a total number of funds
13 requested of 34 million. We were appropriated at
14 FY26 6.3 million in Tidelands funds. The
15 Legislature decided not to award public access
16 projects for this 2026 cycle, so I don't have any
17 update to give you on those.

18 And managed projects, we were awarded
19 3.8 million. We were given a million in prior
20 year expenses, and we have 1.5 in bond money.

21 I do not have the managed projects
22 broken out for you because we have yet to award
23 those at this time also.

24 Any questions?

25 (No response.)

1 SONJA SLATER:

2 Thank you.

3 CAM ROBERDS:

4 Appreciate the update. Thank you.

5 JOE SPRAGGINS:

6 One thing real quick, you know, with
7 the -- as there's no public access awarded this
8 year, and it's a little over 5 million, right
9 around 5 million, I think, something like that
10 that they have. And I think we'll probably get
11 similar to the same amount next year so that --
12 the Legislators all thought this morning that they
13 will get this back in line, that it will get back
14 in line where the GOMESA and Tidelands will be,
15 you know, distributed again this year.

16 So for the projects that were put in for
17 last year, we'll have them, plus this year's, so
18 we'll look at them and make sure we get with the
19 Legislators. It will just be -- we'll give out
20 twice as much.

21 CAM ROBERDS:

22 Was the -- did the Department receive
23 any of the GCRF funding that was just awarded?

24 JOE SPRAGGINS:

25 No, we didn't. And, you know, it's kind

1 of hard for us to ask for GCRF funding when we get
2 the funds that we do with GOMESA and other things.

3 CAM ROBERDS:

4 Right. Right.

5 JOE SPRAGGINS:

6 And really, we didn't have a project
7 that would fit into that. That's more for
8 economic development, and so that's --

9 CAM ROBERDS:

10 Yes, sir. All right. Thank you.

11 Trevor, it looks like we've got a few
12 finfish records. I don't see your name on there
13 this week. Must have been busy with other stuff.

14 TREVOR MONCRIEF:

15 Yeah. Didn't find an eight-point this
16 time.

17 JOE SPRAGGINS:

18 You're going to have --

19 TREVOR MONCRIEF:

20 Yeah.

21 To touch on my colleagues answering your
22 questions, so that -- that overnight float plan
23 question has popped up a lot more in the last year
24 and a half, two years, and it really -- it's
25 kicked off with Louisiana lowering their spotted

1 sea trout bag limit because now those individuals
2 that are transiting and back and forth to
3 Chandeleur and everything else have been asking
4 more.

5 So I would encourage you, if you've got
6 somebody that wants more details or anything, they
7 can reach out to the office. It will either get
8 to me or the recreational fishing hotline, and
9 we'll answer all the questions they have.

10 CAM ROBERDS:

11 Okay. Thanks.

12 RONNIE DANIELS:

13 On that, do we have any -- is there
14 something on the website that details the process
15 for that or anything like that?

16 TREVOR MONCRIEF:

17 Yeah. So we've got -- we've got it on
18 our regulations side. It's in the brochure. The
19 PDF, the magazine pamphlet that goes out, it
20 details all of that. But given the amount of
21 questions we got in last year, it might be good
22 for us to put some specifics down on the page
23 itself for folks planning on taking a multi-day
24 trip or something else like that.

25 RONNIE DANIELS:

1 That would be good to get that
2 information out there.

3 TREVOR MONCRIEF:

4 Yeah. We'll work on that.

5 CAM ROBERDS:

6 So if that was -- you had mentioned
7 Chandeleur, you were asked some questions about
8 that, you know, Louisiana waters.

9 But Mississippi waters as well,
10 Louisiana guys, would they have to file their
11 float plan with Louisiana as well or would it just
12 be --

13 TREVOR MONCRIEF:

14 So for our folks leaving out of here,
15 they just have to file them here.

16 CAM ROBERDS:

17 Right.

18 TREVOR MONCRIEF:

19 We don't really deal too much and I
20 don't think any of our fishermen deal with the
21 Louisiana side with their stuff. Their
22 regulations that are built on the multi-day
23 possession limits are based on essentially record
24 of receipt or stay at a given camp and a launch
25 from any area in Louisiana south of Highway 90.

1 So they have to have an area they launch. They
2 have to launch within the state and they have to
3 have a receipt of charter or show them that
4 they've stayed at a camp overnight. That's how
5 the regulations work.

6 CAM ROBERDS:

7 Okay.

8 TREVOR MONCRIEF:

9 All right. Finfish records. So we've
10 got a conventional tackle record. It's a rock
11 hind. This one was actually broke recently, but
12 the new record is four pounds, 4.8 ounces. The
13 angler is Nick Lewelling. This is a picture of
14 the fish, and there is Nicholas with that fish.

15 We've got some youth conventional tackle
16 records. The first one is a silver perch.
17 Weighed in at a whopping 3.52 ounces. Angler is
18 Cresson Vancleave. They've started to pick these
19 up over in Bay St. Louis at night for a while, so
20 that's where the record came in. There is a
21 picture of the fish. There is Cresson with that
22 fish.

23 And the last one is a gulf hake. This
24 is from that deep dropping crew that's been going
25 out, so we don't see this very often, but this one

1 was a giant at six pounds. The angler is James
2 Williams. There is a picture of the fish.
3 Obviously, not the prettiest one in the world, and
4 there is the picture of the angler with the fish.

5 And all we will need is a motion to
6 recommend the approval of the state records.

7 CAM ROBERDS:

8 When they get deep like that, Trevor,
9 they just kind of turn into some odd-looking fish,
10 right?

11 TREVOR MONCRIEF:

12 Yeah. The good thing about it is most
13 of them taste good. 90 percent of what you catch
14 down that far tastes good.

15 CAM ROBERDS:

16 Okay. Any questions on the records?

17 RONNIE DANIELS:

18 Now I know what to call a silver perch.
19 I never knew what they were called. We catch them
20 every now and then.

21 TREVOR MONCRIEF:

22 Yeah. They've got about five different
23 names, I'm pretty sure.

24 RONNIE DANIELS:

25 I just usually make something up.

1 People go with it.

2 TREVOR MONCRIEF:

3 Yeah, the old yellowfin croaker,
4 anything else like that.

5 RONNIE DANIELS:

6 Yeah.

7 I'll make the motion.

8 MATTHEW MAYFIELD:

9 Second.

10 CAM ROBERDS:

11 All in favor.

12 (Unanimous vote.)

13 TREVOR MONCRIEF:

14 All right. I've got one more plug. So
15 you'll be seeing some information come out on our
16 Facebook page and our website. December 4th,
17 we're going to have a Sport Fish Restoration
18 workshop. This has occurred over at the Gulf
19 Coast Research Lab for the last few years.

20 We're going to -- MDMR is going to take
21 over hosting it. It's going to be at the Seafood
22 Museum starting at 5:30. It covers all of our
23 Sport Fish Restoration projects, some of the noted
24 ones that we've completed over the last few years.

25 We're going to cover the triple tail

1 movement, the satellite tagging studies that we've
2 been doing. We've got some basically Gulf-wide
3 movement of triple tail, first of its kind to be
4 able to highlight. We've got preliminary findings
5 from our cobia movement project that we've been
6 working on.

7 And we'll have a talk from USM on the
8 tag and release and safe handling and a
9 presentation from Dr. Marcus Drymon from
10 Mississippi State on degradation in the Gulf of
11 America. So it should be a good time, very
12 educational and we've got a lot of topics that are
13 very pertinent to our recreational fishermen.

14 RONNIE DANIELS:

15 What's that date again?

16 TREVOR MONCRIEF:

17 December 4th, 5:30 at the Seafood
18 Museum. Like I said, we'll be putting more
19 information about that on social media and the
20 website and all that stuff, so we're hoping to
21 draw a crowd and let folks know what we've been
22 working on.

23 JOE SPRAGGINS:

24 Maybe we can get a public notice out on
25 it too.

1 CAM ROBERDS:

2 Cool. Thanks, Trevor.

3 Let's see. Update on the 2025 Star
4 Party, Ms. Ayesha.

5 AYESHA GRAY:

6 Good morning, Director, Commissioners.

7 This is really just an invitation to our
8 Star Party. It's coming up on December 13th,
9 5:00 to 9:00 p.m. We have a lot of -- it's our
10 big -- it's the biggest event of the year. It's
11 an open house at the NERR, and there is a lot of
12 activities. So we take folks on a hayride so that
13 they can go down to the end of the -- at Bayou
14 Herron and look for stars. It's during the
15 Geminid meteor shower, so we hope to see some
16 meteors. We usually don't, but everybody has a
17 lot of fun anyway, but, hopefully, the weather
18 will be clear.

19 We've got crafts. There is Santa Claus.
20 You can get your picture made with your family.
21 You can see the Reserve and hot soup, cookies. So
22 it's a really good time and I hope you find a --
23 able to come with your families.

24 JOE SPRAGGINS:

25 I like the idea that if the stars are

1 not shining, y'all just make them shine inside.

2 AYESHA GRAY:

3 Yeah. That's our -- that's our light
4 tunnel.

5 JOE SPRAGGINS:

6 You take them inside and show them stars
7 are really there.

8 AYESHA GRAY:

9 Yeah. Yeah. So yeah -- that was --
10 we've been adding things kind of every year. We
11 have an owl walk and this year, we're going to
12 look at moths also.

13 And then we also have a special guest
14 this year who's -- who we've added, so there is
15 another special -- so we'll talk about what
16 happened when I'm back on -- in December, 16th.

17 JOE SPRAGGINS:

18 Can you announce the special guest?

19 AYESHA GRAY:

20 I can. You want it to be a surprise?
21 So we're going to have Mrs. Claus, and she is
22 going to be reading stories by the fire, the
23 visual fire on the screen.

24 JOE SPRAGGINS:

25 That fire is the same as them stars.

1 AYESHA GRAY:

2 Yeah. We're not going to have a fire,
3 but we are going to have story time with
4 Mrs. Claus. And then she's going to get her
5 picture taken with Mr. Claus -- with Santa as
6 well.

7 CAM ROBERDS:

8 Sounds like a great party.

9 AYESHA GRAY:

10 Yeah. It's a lot of fun.

11 CAM ROBERDS:

12 Well, we appreciate you.

13 Any questions for Ms. Ayesha?

14 AYESHA GRAY:

15 Yeah. Any questions?

16 RONNIE DANIELS:

17 Sounds great.

18 AYESHA GRAY:

19 Thank you.

20 JOE SPRAGGINS:

21 Hey, if you haven't been out there, you
22 know, you need to go see it, you know. Ayesha and
23 them are doing a great job. They're doing a
24 fantastic job. And it's just kind of a hidden
25 secret sitting here in South Mississippi right on

1 the Alabama line, and, you know, it's something
2 that -- especially if you've got kids or grandkids
3 or whatever, you know, it would be something to
4 take them out there to be able to see these things
5 because they -- they teach them a lot about nature
6 that other people are not talking about and it's
7 something that's more than just fishing.

8 CAM ROBERDS:

9 All right. We do have a public comment
10 but, first, is there any other business?

11 RONNIE DANIELS:

12 I don't think so.

13 CAM ROBERDS:

14 All right. We will start with
15 Mr. Richard Hebden.

16 RICHARD HEBDEN:

17 Good morning. Yes, sir.

18 CAM ROBERDS:

19 All right. Richard, would you mind
20 stating your city and your full name, please?

21 RICHARD HEBDEN:

22 Richard Hebden. I'm from St. Martin.

23 But I have been in the commercial
24 fishing industry here for over 20 years now. I
25 have roots here in Biloxi. They extend over

1 100 years in the fishing industry. My
2 great-grandfather came off of a little island off
3 of Brac called the -- Brac off the coast of
4 Yugoslavia at the time.

5 And my father, he was born here in
6 Biloxi. He was a military man just as you. Thank
7 you for your service, sir, so is my grandfather,
8 my father's father.

9 But I just have some concerns. I'm a
10 spotted sea trout endorsement holder and have been
11 since its existence. And I have noticed lately --
12 I've heard from -- Darrin Stewart told me that
13 y'all are allowing more people to come into the
14 spotted sea trout endorsement program.

15 Now, it was capped off after Katrina.
16 You had to do \$5,000 in sales of speckled trout
17 prior to Katrina to get in this program. Now
18 y'all have lowered it to \$1,500 of any fish being
19 sold to get a speckled trout endorsement.

20 Now, from what I heard from Darrin,
21 there is over 70 -- well, the last time I checked
22 a few months back, there's over 70-something
23 people that's applied for this now and gotten into
24 it. Prior to this, there was only like
25 20-something that was grandfathered in after

1 Katrina.

2 I have a lot of concerns about this.
3 Are you -- we flooding the market now? My
4 speckled trout season was closed down. That's my
5 main staple. That's what I sell. That's my
6 Number 1 fish. That's what I sell and have been
7 for 20 years. That's what got me into selling
8 here on the Coast. But anyways, again, just
9 concerns, worries that it's going to be
10 overfished.

11 Our speckled trout, we finally had one
12 year since Katrina, BP Oil Spill, freshwater
13 intrusions, other storms that's come through that
14 disrupts our ecosystem out here, and it's just
15 troublesome that -- you know, what's going on in
16 this industry today.

17 And now that you've shut my season down,
18 I've been without work, because I fish mainly for
19 speckled trout, for five months now, going into
20 the holiday season, you know. I just -- I just
21 want to know the fairness of this.

22 I was denied on your -- what you say,
23 the fishermen gets monies. I got the first
24 installment, yes, sir, of \$7,500, where other
25 people, oystermen and shrimper men, got 12-,

1 \$14,000, whatever it was. It was way more, double
2 my amount.

3 But, yeah, again, I was not eligible for
4 the second go-round for some reason. They said
5 because us fin fishermen, speckled trout made too
6 much money. I haven't made over \$5,000 this year
7 selling speckled trout. Granted, this is one of
8 the best years I've had in over 20 years probably
9 since -- in the speckled trout.

10 And, again, I just -- I'm worried and
11 concerned. Are we flooding the market with more
12 fishermen that's going to shut my season down even
13 earlier now? And that was another thing. I
14 thought we were supposed to shut the season down
15 in two seasons, from January to July, then from
16 July -- or June and July to December. Well,
17 you've shut it down six months on me. There was
18 indication that you were even going to -- there's
19 no word that we were going to be shut down for
20 this long. It just blew me away.

21 CAM ROBERDS:

22 This is based off of limit, the catch
23 limit, correct?

24 RONNIE DANIELS:

25 It's a quota --

1 CAM ROBERDS:

2 Pounds and weight limit?

3 RONNIE DANIELS:

4 It's a quota issue.

5 RICHARD HEBDEN:

6 But it's just -- again, my concerns, is
7 there a cap on this? Are y'all only going to
8 allow so many commercial fishermen to have the
9 spotted sea trout or is all the businessmen in
10 Biloxi and lawyers and doctors, are they the only
11 ones getting these licenses so they can go out and
12 take their buddies?

13 I looked on social media and these guys
14 are slaughtering the trout at the islands. You
15 can look every day this past year. It's just
16 unreal the amount of trout that's been caught and
17 brung in to our Coast here. And to me, I think
18 the recreational fishermen are having an impact on
19 our commercial fishing. I believe -- I know for a
20 fact. I know people that's selling fish on the
21 side and making money off speckled trout and --
22 you know. I know that y'all don't have enough
23 people out there to control and, you know, stop
24 everyone from doing it.

25 But it's just the fact that, again,

1 you're limiting my -- to what I can do in a year's
2 time. You're shutting me down. I was denied. I
3 made an appeal even for the second go-round and
4 y'all denied me. I just -- again, I don't get
5 your reasoning here.

6 CAM ROBERDS:

7 I think that requirement reduced during
8 a time frame that we were having a hard time
9 getting the catch limit.

10 RONNIE DANIELS:

11 We had a number of years where the quota
12 was not --

13 RICHARD HEBDEN:

14 Yes. Prior to. You used to have
15 gillnetting or trammel nets, is what y'all
16 consider another name for gillnetting. To me,
17 gillnetters, they raped our seas out here. They
18 destroyed anything that got in those nets, whether
19 it was turtles, dolphins, sea turtle, anything,
20 you know. But thank God y'all got rid of that
21 because that helped us endorsement holders,
22 trout -- speckled -- spotted sea trout endorsement
23 holders to make money and a living through the
24 year.

25 Now you're shutting me down because I

1 had one good year and all this trout just showed
2 up. Like, we had gillnets again. It just blows
3 my mind. I just -- I don't -- I just -- I need
4 some more information out of y'all. What is going
5 on because I have nothing.

6 And I've tried several -- through the
7 years, back when Matt Hill was the finfish
8 director, I have tried several years trying to
9 contact him, left messages, as well as you,
10 Mr. Commissioner, and I've gotten no response back
11 from any of y'all. And, again, I'm just always
12 left in the dark and just --

13 JOE SPRAGGINS:

14 I'm sorry if I didn't respond because I
15 usually try to respond to people.

16 RICHARD HEBDEN:

17 I had to come today. I've had enough
18 for 20 years of being suppressed that I had to say
19 something today.

20 JOE SPRAGGINS:

21 Yeah. I usually try to respond. I'm
22 sorry if I didn't. I don't know how I missed that
23 because I usually try to --

24 RICHARD HEBDEN:

25 Yes, sir. I have done it several times.

1 JOE SPRAGGINS:

2 But here's a couple of things. Back
3 several years ago, we wasn't catching anywhere
4 near the quota and that is when we looked at it
5 and that was when it was brought to us about the
6 possibility of changing the amount that you had to
7 catch. And so we decided, well, we're not
8 catching anywhere near the quota, so why don't we
9 do this. Well, sometimes, you know, it's just
10 like anything else. When you do something, it
11 gets good and then a lot of people get in it and
12 then the quota got caught. This has been one of
13 those years where the quota got caught real quick,
14 and there is a lot of people fishing.

15 And I think that it had to do with a
16 couple of things. Number 1, the amount of
17 fishermen; Number 2, the weather that we had,
18 being able to allow people to go out and do it. I
19 have talked with staff about a possibility of
20 adding more quota because, you know -- what's
21 it -- 60,000 pounds -- 50,000 pounds?

22 RONNIE DANIELS:

23 50-.

24 RICHARD HEBDEN:

25 50-.

1 JOE SPRAGGINS:

2 50,000 pounds. And I think that we
3 could look at that and see if we could add some
4 more quota to it because it's hard to take back
5 once you've given somebody something, and so we've
6 got to look at how do we make that work and that's
7 what we're going to do. We're going to look at
8 it.

9 If it means that we need to change the
10 requirements, yes, we'll look at that, too,
11 because, you know, the idea was to catch the
12 quota. Now we're catching the quota. Now let's
13 figure out what we need to do to maintain that and
14 keep people fishing year round and do it and
15 that's what we need to do because we need to fish
16 year round. We don't need to do four months out
17 of the year.

18 RICHARD HEBDEN:

19 We need local trout, not imported trout
20 coming to our seafood places here in town.

21 JOE SPRAGGINS:

22 Yeah. We need that.

23 RICHARD HEBDEN:

24 We have no fresh speckled trout here on
25 this Coast for the last five months.

1 JOE SPRAGGINS:

2 And as far as your second round, we
3 wasn't allowed to give anything but shrimp and
4 oysters, so if you didn't have a shrimp boat or an
5 oyster boat, the second round, NOAA did not allow
6 us to have any of that money go to anybody but
7 those two fisheries.

8 RICHARD HEBDEN:

9 I just don't think that's very fair to
10 me on my --

11 JOE SPRAGGINS:

12 Yeah. Because finfish, according to
13 NOAA, they rebuilt -- had rebounded enough and --
14 in the 2020 season and so they --

15 RICHARD HEBDEN:

16 I wonder where they're getting their
17 results from because on my end, it's not.

18 JOE SPRAGGINS:

19 And I'm just telling you where we're at.
20 And, you know, when we sent it in, they told us we
21 can only qualify for these two, and so we got what
22 we could. And I'm sorry about that.

23 And I'm going to go back and again tell
24 you that we're the only state in the Gulf of
25 America that pays the fishermen straight out, so I

1 want you to know that. You know, Florida doesn't
2 do it. Louisiana doesn't do it. Alabama doesn't
3 do it and Texas doesn't do it. They only pay you
4 back for what you spend if you want to go buy some
5 modification for your boat or something. That's
6 all they pay you back.

7 So we are trying. We're trying every
8 way in the world to give you everything we can,
9 and we're the only state that does that.

10 And as far as the -- let's see. There
11 was one other -- I just forgot.

12 RICHARD HEBDEN:

13 Like if I was a farmer in Mississippi,
14 there is implements -- supplements that help out
15 farmers when they have bad seasons and stuff. So
16 like, I'm a farmer of the ocean, not the sea.

17 JOE SPRAGGINS:

18 Yeah. And that's called insurance and
19 that's what they do --

20 RICHARD HEBDEN:

21 You know, they should help us out.

22 JOE SPRAGGINS:

23 No. I mean, the farmers -- we have the
24 farm bills and all them have insurance against
25 their crops and have insurance that are federally

1 funded helping them to do that.

2 And there is bills that go forward and,
3 yes, you know, we used everything that we could.
4 Like I said, with the 2019 and 2020, we used
5 everything we could to help pay any fishermen at
6 all and that was one of the things that we wanted
7 to do. And we did what NOAA gave us the
8 privilege, you know, about what we could do.

9 And I mean, I understand. I understand
10 when you can't catch it, but also, you know, most
11 of our fishermen are not just one-dimensional.
12 They don't catch just one fish.

13 RICHARD HEBDEN:

14 Oh, believe me. I try. I go out there
15 every day and I can't catch a redfish like I do
16 speckled trout. I can't catch flounder like I do
17 speckled trout. It's just I don't know the places
18 and I've been all over. I go from one end to the
19 other of the Coast and fish.

20 My boat's in need of repair right now.
21 I'm going to have to bring it to Crown Leisure
22 because my motor is running bad because a lot of
23 the running around that I have to do now just to
24 try to even make a living and I haven't sold fish
25 in five months.

1 RONNIE DANIELS:

2 So, Joe, if I could, just a couple of
3 points. If you remember, not very long ago, about
4 the time that we fought the net battle -- and I
5 was very involved in that -- we put the speckled
6 trout endorsement in place to protect people such
7 as you, actual commercial fishermen --

8 RICHARD HEBDEN:

9 It's not helping.

10 RONNIE DANIELS:

11 -- because there were a lot of guys
12 buying a simple \$100 commercial license and
13 essentially running recreational trips and being
14 able to sell speckled trout.

15 RICHARD HEBDEN:

16 Yes, sir.

17 RONNIE DANIELS:

18 So we put that in place to protect
19 y'all.

20 Number 2, one of the things that I've
21 heard you mention is that you had no idea the
22 quota was about to close. You've got DMR's
23 website. Speckled trout, flounder and redfish are
24 all updated. You can keep up with that quota and
25 see where you're at there.

1 RICHARD HEBDEN:

2 All I know is trout were closed.

3 RONNIE DANIELS:

4 And my --

5 RICHARD HEBDEN:

6 But, again, they were supposed to be
7 shut down prior to us reaching that 50,000 pounds.
8 You -- we reached it that at July and you shut it
9 down for the rest of the season. It's supposed to
10 have been separated. I mean, if we would have got
11 to 25,000 pounds, you should have shut it down
12 when we reached 25-, not 50,000. So now we're
13 going through the rest of the year with no income.

14 RONNIE DANIELS:

15 My last two points, years prior,
16 whenever we weren't reaching the quota, you're
17 right. Our restaurants didn't have the -- I can't
18 stand to eat at a restaurant on the beach and know
19 I'm eating fish --

20 RICHARD HEBDEN:

21 That's right.

22 RONNIE DANIELS:

23 -- from another country, right, which
24 goes back to our labeling. That's a great thing
25 to help our local fishermen. But if we weren't

1 reaching the quota, that's because we didn't have
2 the effort. Now we're reaching the quota and we
3 can get fresh fish.

4 RICHARD HEBDEN:

5 But one year since the trammel nets have
6 been dis-cluded (sic).

7 RONNIE DANIELS:

8 And, lastly, as a charter boat captain,
9 I've told people this year was exceptional. This
10 is the best speckled trout year I've ever seen.

11 RICHARD HEBDEN:

12 Because usually it takes six years after
13 the storms or anything for our ecosystems to
14 rebuild themselves. It's just -- it's Mother
15 Nature healing itself. It takes that long for it
16 to heal itself.

17 RONNIE DANIELS:

18 But if I base my business --

19 RICHARD HEBDEN:

20 And if there's any interruptions in
21 between that, it sets it back further.

22 RONNIE DANIELS:

23 If I base my business on one species,
24 I'm not going to make it through the year.

25 RICHARD HEBDEN:

1 I should be able to.

2 CAM ROBERDS:

3 How many years -- what? Twelve years
4 ago, ten years ago, anybody could walk in for 100
5 bucks and buy --

6 RONNIE DANIELS:

7 I don't think it was --

8 JOE SPRAGGINS:

9 Five years.

10 RONNIE DANIELS:

11 Yeah. It was less than 10.

12 CAM ROBERDS:

13 So there was -- at least it's, you know,
14 it's reducing anybody and everybody off the
15 street. I get it that's it -- it did lessen some,
16 but I can't see that -- you know, I don't know if
17 you switch it and do a -- two seasons, an early
18 and a late. I don't know. Is that --

19 RICHARD HEBDEN:

20 That's how it was divided, 25 for each
21 half.

22 CAM ROBERDS:

23 Is that something that you guys --

24 RICHARD HEBDEN:

25 That's how it's supposed to be. That

1 wasn't done.

2 THE COURT REPORTER:

3 Y'all are talking at the same time. You
4 cannot do that.

5 JOE SPRAGGINS:

6 Huh?

7 THE COURT REPORTER:

8 I said they're talking at the same time
9 and cannot do that.

10 JOE SPRAGGINS:

11 Okay.

12 THE COURT REPORTER:

13 I mean, I finally had to speak up.

14 JOE SPRAGGINS:

15 Okay. We got in trouble. We've got to
16 speak one at a time.

17 RICHARD HEBDEN:

18 Yes, sir.

19 THE COURT REPORTER:

20 Especially that. That microphone does
21 not work well, so you've got to speak up when you
22 do speak.

23 RICHARD HEBDEN:

24 Yes, ma'am.

25 JOE SPRAGGINS:

1 Okay. All right.

2 But anyway, yes, we'll re-address it.
3 Once again, we'll re-address it. We've got time
4 and -- you know, before really the season starts
5 back for next year. We've got time to look at it.
6 And Rick and Trevor and them, us three, will
7 address this and see where we're at.

8 Once again, we wasn't catching anywhere
9 near the quota a few years ago, and that was one
10 of the reasons.

11 RICHARD HEBDEN:

12 Yes, sir.

13 JOE SPRAGGINS:

14 And as far as the ones selling them
15 without the proper license, I can tell you, what,
16 these two gentleman and those other 35 or 40 of
17 them out there, are trying every day to catch one
18 of them. And if they catch them, we'll take care
19 of it. I can promise you that. And, you know,
20 we're not going to -- they do everything they can
21 to try to stop that. But it's just like that
22 interstate and that highway patrol, he can't catch
23 every one of us doing 90, right?

24 RICHARD HEBDEN:

25 Yes, sir. Yes, sir.

1 JOE SPRAGGINS:

2 He can only get a handful of them. But
3 that's what they're doing. They're trying hard.

4 But I wish I could tell you something
5 about, you know, the supplemental. I don't think
6 you're going to be able to -- because -- you know,
7 the appeal for that, I don't think it's going to
8 help you any because the NOAA did not give us the
9 funds to be able to.

10 RICHARD HEBDEN:

11 I was denied, yes, sir.

12 JOE SPRAGGINS:

13 And they just didn't give us the funds.
14 They told us what we could do and this is the only
15 two that we could do, was shrimp and oysters and
16 that's why we're there at that point and -- but we
17 will look at it. I can promise you that. We will
18 look at what you're talking about, and I apologize
19 for not getting back to you.

20 RICHARD HEBDEN:

21 Yes, sir. Thank you.

22 JOE SPRAGGINS:

23 And if you -- please, you know, get my
24 e-mail. We will -- I will give you a card here in
25 minute if I've got one in my pocket. It's got my

1 e-mail and everything. You just call that -- you
2 know, send it straight to me. Okay?

3 RICHARD HEBDEN:

4 Yes, sir.

5 CAM ROBERDS:

6 All right.

7 RICHARD HEBDEN:

8 Appreciate it.

9 CAM ROBERDS:

10 Thank you, sir.

11 RICHARD HEBDEN:

12 Thank you.

13 CAM ROBERDS:

14 All right. I want to check back with
15 the Commissioners on Teams. Commissioner Osborne,
16 do you have any comments?

17 BRADY SMITH:

18 He dropped off already.

19 CAM ROBERDS:

20 Okay. Commissioner McLendon?

21 JONATHAN MCLENDON:

22 No, sir, I'm good.

23 CAM ROBERDS:

24 All right. We appreciate you.

25 I guess that's a wrap. Do we have

1 any -- a motion to close?

2 RONNIE DANIELS:

3 Motion.

4 MATTHEW MAYFIELD:

5 Second.

6 CAM ROBERDS:

7 All in favor?

8 (Unanimous vote.)

9 CAM ROBERDS:

10 Thank you.

11 (Meeting adjourned at 11:01 a.m.)

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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 hearing(s), 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 9th day of December, 2025



Melissa Burdine-Rodolfich

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