

STATE OF MISSISSIPPI

MISSISSIPPI ADVISORY COMMISSION ON MARINE RESOURCES
COMMISSION MEETING

Tuesday, March 17th, 2026, 9:00 a.m.,

D'Iberville City Hall,

10383 Auto Mall Parkway

D'Iberville, Mississippi 39540

COMMISSION MEMBERS:Ronnie Daniels
Matthew Mayfield
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 Tuesday, March
4 17th, Mississippi Advisory Commission on Marine
5 Resources.

6 Commissioner McLendon -- I mean, I'm
7 sorry -- Mayfield, will you lead us in the Pledge
8 of Allegiance, please?

9 (Pledge of Allegiance was recited.)

10 CAM ROBERDS:

11 Thank you, Commissioner.

12 Director, would you like to lead us in a
13 prayer?

14 JOE SPRAGGINS:

15 Sure. You know, before we go to prayer,
16 I'd like for all of us to, you know, just take a
17 moment and think about it. You know, we lost some
18 more of our military this last week over in the
19 war or battle that we're going on. And I'm not
20 sure they're calling it a war yet. I'm not sure
21 what it's called, but, you know, let's just
22 remember their families.

23 They were, some of them, from -- one
24 young man from Auburn, Alabama and a good young
25 pilot there, but then some others. And just think

1 about it, you know. We never know in the world
2 what's going to happen in these tragedies. And
3 even though this wasn't something that we were --
4 that they were shot down by an enemy, it was
5 something that happens in battle when you do that,
6 because when you get a lot of fatigue, and a lot
7 of work and a lot of things are happening, people
8 make mistakes. We're all human, you know. We're
9 not God. He's the only one. Jesus was the only
10 one that's perfect, not us. So remember them.

11 Let's go to our Lord's prayer.

12 (Moment of prayer.)

13 CAM ROBERDS:

14 Thank you, Director.

15 Do we have any questions on the minutes
16 from February 10th? If not, do we have a motion
17 to approve?

18 RONNIE DANIELS:

19 Motion.

20 MATTHEW MAYFIELD:

21 Second.

22 CAM ROBERDS:

23 All in favor?

24 (Unanimous vote.)

25 CAM ROBERDS:

1 Approval of the agenda. Has everybody
2 had an opportunity to review the agenda? Are
3 there any questions? If not, do we have a motion?

4 MATTHEW MAYFIELD:

5 Motion.

6 RONNIE DANIELS:

7 Second.

8 CAM ROBERDS:

9 All in favor?

10 (Unanimous vote.)

11 CAM ROBERDS:

12 All right. Moving on to the Director.
13 It's all yours.

14 JOE SPRAGGINS:

15 Okay. And before we get started, I do
16 have one special guest in the audience today, Beth
17 Zito. Beth is our -- she's our new executive
18 director for the Mississippi Wildlife, Fisheries,
19 Parks and Marine Foundation, which we're part of
20 now. And Beth, this is her first chance to be
21 able to come and meet with us, and she wanted to
22 come down and see what happens with the Department
23 of Marine Resources and also be able to talk to
24 some of the people and how we're doing things.

25 And I just wanted to welcome her, and

1 thank you, Beth, for coming. And we'll give you
2 time for you -- if you want to talk at any time,
3 we'll give you time, but just raise your hand.
4 Otherwise, I think you'll be all right. Thank you
5 a lot.

6 Okay. Employment contracts. Got this
7 thing up on the thing? Yeah. All right. We've
8 got a new hire who is David May, and he's an
9 Environmental and Natural Resources Specialist
10 III.

11 We've got some promotions, which we
12 always love to do those, and Brianna Andrews is
13 being promoted to Specialist III at the NERR.
14 Cameron Hodge is promoted to -- rank of cadet to
15 private in the Marine Patrol. Jacob O'Neal is
16 promoted from cadet to private in Marine Patrol.
17 Brian Dreiling is promoted from -- to sergeant
18 and -- Law Enforcement Officer III, Sergeant, in
19 Marine Patrol. Wyatt Webb is being promoted to
20 Master Sergeant in Marine Patrol.

21 So always great to have opportunity to
22 be able to give promotions and also through the
23 new-hires, so let's give them all a round of
24 applause.

25 (Round of applause.)

1 JOE SPRAGGINS:

2 As far as -- if you have any comments,
3 TJ's in the back. Feel free to give them to him
4 and we'll make sure we get them. And try to
5 put -- if you can, put it to what part of the
6 program it is in and we'll be -- and if it's just
7 something at the end, we'll bring it up then.

8 All right. Agency update. Our oyster
9 season update, our 2025-'26 season, we started on
10 October the 13th and we have a total of 39,058
11 sacks that have been harvested, averaging 438
12 sacks a day. Most of the harvest areas there are
13 II A and II F.

14 A total of 173 licenses have been sold
15 to date, including 10 recreational -- excuse me --
16 84 in-state commercial dredge, 34 in-state
17 commercial tong, 39 out-of-state tonging and six
18 out-of-state commercial dredge.

19 Most were able to reach their daily
20 quotas and, you know, everything is working pretty
21 good. Overall, the season is seeing a steady
22 participation and reliable landings.

23 We're closed right now due to what --
24 the water. I think -- I was talking to Rick on
25 the way here and I think that we'll have a -- the

1 Pearl River will crest maybe tomorrow, today or
2 tomorrow, and then we'll be able to test in a
3 couple of days after that and be able to open it
4 back up, hopefully, by the first of next week at
5 the latest.

6 So -- but, you know, just to give you an
7 idea, this 39,000, 40,000 sacks, that's the most
8 in 10 years, over 10 years that we've had, so --
9 and it's going pretty good. We're getting better.
10 Everything's coming together. Our team is doing a
11 great job. And I tell you what, Commissioners.
12 They're doing a fantastic job of being able to get
13 the oysters growing. And our biggest problem is
14 they're growing too big. And, you know, we never
15 thought we'd dream of that one, did we, but we
16 have them. Now they're really big oysters, but
17 that's okay.

18 We'll get through -- cull through them
19 here in this year, and, hopefully, then next year,
20 we'll be back to the normal size pretty much where
21 we're at. Any questions on that?

22 MATTHEW MAYFIELD:

23 No, sir.

24 JOE SPRAGGINS:

25 Okay. Our 2019-'20 Bonnet Carré, the

1 '19 Bonnet Carré, we had a job titled as Financial
2 Assistance to Mississippi Commercial Fishermen,
3 Seafood Dealers, and Charter Fishing businesses is
4 8.7 million. We have distributed 7.8 million of
5 that to -- direct payments to commercial
6 fishermen, charter captains, and seafood dealers.

7 Our grant program for New England -- New
8 and Emerging -- excuse me -- New and Emerging
9 Seafood Processing Technologies is about
10 3.7 million. Ninety-four percent of those funds
11 have been distributed to 24 different applicants.

12 Our commercial vessel safety program at
13 \$286,624 is -- project is complete.

14 Our restoration for Mississippi oyster
15 reefs at \$5.6 million is ongoing. We're still
16 working on it.

17 Our investigation of point source
18 pollution for shellfish growing of \$315,000 is
19 still working. We're doing cultch plant -- or
20 planting for this summer, so we'll be able to do
21 some this summer on it.

22 Expansion of the Mississippi Derelict
23 Crab Trap Removal Program of 315,000 has continued
24 to on-go -- ongoing.

25 The Bonnet Carré Spillway response for

1 Mississippi Western Sound Science Collaborative of
2 354,000 project funds to be reallocated because
3 the project was funded with another source. We
4 had put that in there to do it, and then it was
5 funded, I think, through the Coalition is what we
6 did. The Coalition did it, so we'll move that
7 funding to another source.

8 The Mississippi Seafood Market Program
9 of \$322,000 is continuing.

10 We also have an online commercial
11 fishing license purchase system of \$412,000, and
12 that is going well. We're working with Wildlife
13 to be able to do that, and I think we'll be able
14 to soon start being able to take, sell our
15 commercial license online. You know, that's
16 something we haven't been able to do, and Wildlife
17 didn't have a whole lot of commercial license.
18 And then we have commercial, so we need to be able
19 to sell them online and we're being able to work
20 that out. And I think that's -- and we are able
21 to take credit cards now. That's something we
22 haven't been able to do, you know, as far as when
23 you come to the Bolton -- not the Bolton building,
24 to the -- our new building. It's temporary. But
25 any time you buy your license, you can use a

1 credit card for that.

2 Our Commercial Fisheries Training and
3 Education program of \$274,000 is ongoing.

4 We also have an expansion and
5 enhancement of off-bottom oyster aquaculture for
6 \$1.7 million, and the project is funded to be
7 reallocated. The project was funded by another
8 source also. It was -- GOMESA funded it, and so
9 now we're going to be able to do that. We've got
10 1.7 for you guys, all right, so we're going to be
11 able to help you with -- another way.

12 And one of the things we're doing with
13 that is being able to put a barge, is what we want
14 to do, is put a barge out south of Deer Island
15 with a tumbler so people -- they don't have to
16 move them and bring them in and out. That's one
17 of the things we're working on with that right
18 now. And I think that would still be a good deal.

19 And, Commissioner, I think you have a
20 voice in that. Do you think that's still --

21 MATTHEW MAYFIELD:

22 I think it's a wonderful idea.

23 JOE SPRAGGINS:

24 Okay. Good deal. All right. We also
25 have a Development of Shellfish Harvesting

1 training video, which we've completed it, of
2 75,000.

3 So that was '19 Bonnet Carré.

4 In the '20 Bonnet Carré, we did
5 on-bottom oyster and shrimp fisheries assistance
6 of 2.2 million, and 235 of the 255 shrimp and
7 oyster fishermen have been paid a total of
8 \$1.6 million.

9 An amendment was approved by NOAA to do
10 a supplement, and what that supplement was for was
11 if you had more than one boat, we could pay you
12 for multiple boats now. So we're going to be able
13 to do that shortly, and that payment process is
14 getting in process right now.

15 So we're able to help a lot, and it is
16 something that was needed. Those things were
17 needed tremendously because of going five years
18 without a season, especially the oystermen. Going
19 five years without a season is tough. And the
20 shrimpers had that loss, too, and so being able to
21 help pay them -- and I want to tell y'all, we're
22 the only state. We're the only state in the Gulf
23 of America that does that.

24 Louisiana, Texas, Alabama, Florida, when
25 they get assistance, they do not direct pay their

1 fishermen. We're the only state that does that,
2 so I think that's something that we want to keep
3 -- we want to keep it at the top of us.

4 And another one is oyster reefs. We're
5 doing the cultch plants, as I said, this summer.

6 So any questions on what we're doing as
7 far as 2020 and 2019 Bonnet Carré?

8 (No response.)

9 JOE SPRAGGINS:

10 Y'all are very easy today.

11 All right. Legislative update. We've
12 got three or four of them. The one thing that --
13 the being able to pay reserve officers has gone to
14 the Governor. So the Governor, I think, has --
15 was supposed to have signed it by yesterday, so
16 maybe he did. We'll see if he signed it. I'm
17 pretty sure he did, but -- so that bill has gone
18 and that way we, can pay reserve officers in the
19 time of when we have like Fourth of July, Memorial
20 Day, things whenever we need more officers on the
21 water and this will help us to be able to do that.

22 I did not realize, but we're the only
23 state agency that has reserve officers. I thought
24 Wildlife and others had them. They don't have
25 them either. And so we're the only state, so this

1 is a big deal.

2 We're working on the oyster bill. I've
3 met -- I've been meeting with the chairman,
4 Delano, from the Senate and also Anderson from the
5 House. And I've been working with them and trying
6 to get that bill finalized. It's going to
7 conference, which will either be the end of this
8 week or next week, and so we'll be up here trying
9 to figure it out.

10 And it's basically to change it to where
11 it used to say that we could only keep 20 percent.
12 Now we can keep 50 percent for the state, and
13 that's a good thing for us because that helps us
14 with our oystermen to be able to keep our --
15 they're not natural reefs. I guess they would be
16 more a traditional reef, is what we would call it.
17 It's somewhere that we have put assets on. It's
18 something that the State of Mississippi that has
19 used either federal or state money to put assets
20 on to be able to keep it, and that's what we're
21 working on right now.

22 As far as the seafood labeling bill, it
23 has been finalized. It's going to conference just
24 because there was a couple of changes in the House
25 and -- when we made it to the last minute with

1 them, and I think it will come out with no
2 problem. Basically, saying that you can either
3 label it on the front of the menu or by the item
4 wherever you are -- you have it if it's a seafood
5 or either crawfish that you can label it one way
6 or the other as import or domestic and you can
7 also put down the country of origin if you want to
8 because some people want to do that because
9 there's certain things that have a name for it and
10 they'd like to do it.

11 But I think that's going to work, and
12 the COOL Act is going in -- we're following it for
13 everything that we're doing in -- as far as the
14 grocery stores and all because that's federal.
15 That's federal law and we can't supersede federal
16 law.

17 But I'm missing one. Which one am I
18 missing? It doesn't matter. Whatever it is,
19 we'll bring it up in a minute.

20 But anyway, Legislature, hey, we've got
21 two more weeks, this week and next week, so we'll
22 see if we can live through it. All right?

23 Gulf States delegation trip to
24 Washington, D.C., we had a real good trip. Rick
25 and I went up. We got to meet with -- I think it

1 was about a total of 12 Congressmen and Senators,
2 and so it was a very good event to be able to talk
3 about what we need. I had a very good meeting
4 with NOAA. NOAA and Wildlife and Fisheries, both
5 of those, we had a very good meeting for them, and
6 everything as far as our MS Creel is moving
7 forward. They're on board with us to move it
8 forward, so, hopefully, we'll get that done and
9 we'll be able to finalize it this year to be able
10 to implement it by the first of next year.

11 And what this will do will change our
12 allocation. We don't know the number yet, but
13 we're estimating -- where's Trevor -- I saw him
14 somewhere here -- what, 120-, 140,000 pounds,
15 something like that?

16 TREVOR MONCRIEF:

17 That's what we'll -- that's what we'll
18 try to end up with.

19 JOE SPRAGGINS:

20 Yeah.

21 TREVOR MONCRIEF:

22 See how --

23 JOE SPRAGGINS:

24 If we do that, we'll be fine.

25 TREVOR MONCRIEF:

1 Yeah. I mean, there's some unknowns
2 there as far as the relationship between what the
3 current ACL is in, which is CHTS versus FES and
4 how that compares to ours. That whole ball of
5 math exists at the federal side, and we're going
6 to try to do our best on our side to make sure
7 it's documented. And essentially -- looks like
8 we're going to be prioritizing or fighting for
9 essentially the exact same treatment that LA Creel
10 got and the calibration factor that they exist
11 under. So that will probably be one of the
12 priorities we go down.

13 CAM ROBERDS:

14 Well, if you can get 140,000, I will
15 tell you there will be some happy fishermen on the
16 Mississippi Coast for sure from 82-.

17 TREVOR MONCRIEF:

18 I think we'll be happy as well.

19 CAM ROBERDS:

20 Yeah. Thank you.

21 JOE SPRAGGINS:

22 Well, we're working another thing that
23 we were talking with and we thought we could get
24 it in this year, but it didn't work. It just
25 takes too long to get things through Washington.

1 But one of the things is that, you know,
2 the states can reallocate. And we were looking at
3 a reallocation and we were talking about what we
4 could do and be able to reallocate. And I think
5 that's another option, that if we don't get to
6 where we need to be, that we can get that option
7 in there.

8 But I think that if we get to around
9 140,000 pounds, that's about where we'd like to be
10 as far as talking to the fisheries department.
11 That way, we'll be able to stay open maybe 80 days
12 or something like that, 80 to 90 days, somewhere
13 in that neighborhood, and that's a good season.
14 That way, we can do two seasons. In other words,
15 we can do one in the summertime like we're doing,
16 and then we can come to the fall and do another
17 one, and -- when a lot of people would like to
18 come in and do it.

19 As far as our charter boats and other
20 things like that, maybe we can even, you know,
21 give them a little bit of help of being able to
22 charter things later during the season and be able
23 to do that. But we're getting there, and they
24 understand.

25 As I told them the other day, this is

1 their last chance, and I told them out in
2 Washington. I told NOAA to their face. This is
3 your last chance. You either get it right or
4 we're going Texas on you. And --

5 CAM ROBERDS:

6 Nice.

7 JOE SPRAGGINS:

8 And I don't know if you know what "Texas
9 on you" means, but Texas kind of runs their own
10 program.

11 CAM ROBERDS:

12 Yeah.

13 JOE SPRAGGINS:

14 But, hopefully, we won't have to do it.
15 Thanks, Trevor.

16 CAM ROBERDS:

17 Thanks, Trevor.

18 JOE SPRAGGINS:

19 All right. Seafood task force meeting,
20 we had it on March 9th. We just talked about
21 that, so it's not -- The Seafood Expo, I was in
22 Boston this last weekend, and Francesca and
23 Charmaine are still there.

24 I tell you what, I got my eyes opened.
25 I got my eyes opened to -- there was 36 rows in

1 that convention area and about 600 feet long, each
2 row, of just vendors. And I'm talking everywhere
3 in the world. And got to meet a lot of people.
4 Got to talk to a lot of people about our oysters
5 and about our shrimp and what we can do with it.

6 And I tell you what, it's an ongoing
7 thing in America. It's not just South
8 Mississippi. It's an ongoing thing that we're
9 having troubles and people are doing -- it seems
10 to -- you know, obviously, if you wanted to meet
11 somebody from a foreign country, that was the
12 place to be because there were plenty of them.
13 And it just tells you how much that they are
14 bringing into America and how much foreign seafood
15 is coming into America.

16 I took just a handful of the hats that
17 say "Make Seafood American Again." I bet I could
18 have sold them for \$100 a piece. And, you know,
19 there was people just begging for them, and I
20 said, no, but, you know, we can get you some. But
21 the point I'm getting at is they loved it. People
22 loved it. Make Seafood American Again, and, you
23 know, they're loving the idea. Of course, some of
24 the Chinese and others didn't like it that much,
25 but, you know -- but that's okay.

1 But we met a lot of people.
2 Hopefully -- I spent a lot of time with some --
3 you know, we had Jennifer Jenkins up there and we
4 had Arnie and -- Gollott and Wally Gollott and
5 their groups. And we met and we talked a lot
6 about different things and what we can do. And
7 they talked to a lot of different vendors and are
8 talking to more vendors this week.

9 And, hopefully, we'll be able to pick up
10 some more, especially for the oysters. We're
11 trying to find a way to sell the meat oysters,
12 and, hopefully, we'll be able to pick up some more
13 buyers from that.

14 And it was interesting. It opened my
15 eyes. I tell you what. Big event. And I think
16 that's where Jonathan's at right now, so I just
17 didn't see him. He must have got there after I
18 left, and I just didn't see him up there. But
19 anyway, big deal.

20 All right. Mississippi Seafood Task
21 Force meeting is April the 13th. All right -- or
22 14th. We're working on it.

23 The next Commission meeting is scheduled
24 for April 21st at 9:00 a.m. We'll do it here
25 unless something changes. Is that okay with

1 everybody?

2 All right. The Governor's Fishing
3 Classic is coming up 22 to 23 June. We --
4 hopefully, we will be able to have a bigger event
5 than we had last year, which was fantastic for our
6 first year, and so we're lucky to have that.

7 David Machado is here with us today, and
8 David is the reason that event was successful.
9 And David went out and -- he owns his own boat
10 and -- the Gun Powder, which is a little small,
11 what, 70-foot Viking?

12 DAVID MACHADO:

13 Sixty-eight.

14 JOE SPRAGGINS:

15 But, you know, just a little small one,
16 you know. That's a beautiful boat. I tell you
17 what.

18 But anyway, he goes out and he knows all
19 the boat owners and others around the Coast here,
20 and he was able to put together six boats last
21 year on a very short notice. And we were able to
22 sell those boats out to be able to raise money for
23 the Foundation for the marine side of it.

24 And he's working with us again this year
25 to maybe expand that to eight boats, and we're

1 going to try to do that. And so that's going to
2 be fantastic.

3 And anybody who wants to be a part of
4 the Mississippi -- the Foundation, it will be the
5 Governor's Saltwater Classic, is what it's called.
6 So anybody that wants to be a part of that, we
7 will be going -- glad to have you. And, you know,
8 if you want to buy a boat, we'll be more than glad
9 for you to buy one. It costs \$30,000 to be able
10 to purchase the boat to be able to use it.

11 And let me tell you what happens with
12 that. Those boat owners don't get the \$30,000.
13 Those boat owners donate their boat, donate their
14 fuel and donate their crews to the event at no
15 cost. You don't get that hardly anywhere in
16 America. I don't know of anywhere that I've seen
17 something like this. That's how much they want to
18 help the Foundation. That's how much they want to
19 help what we're doing in the Foundation and what
20 we're doing in the Marine Foundation part of it.
21 And they're there to do it. And I just want you
22 to know, we appreciate them so much because what
23 they have done -- without them, we couldn't do
24 this. This is the meat of the whole thing and
25 without it, we couldn't do it. And to be able to

1 take -- last year was 36 people. This year may be
2 48 people out saltwater fishing and -- we mainly
3 do snapper and grouper, but -- or not grouper.
4 What is it?

5 RONNIE DANIELS:

6 Cobia.

7 JOE SPRAGGINS:

8 It was cobia. We would do grouper if we
9 could find one, wouldn't we? We're not going --
10 we're not going to keep them from catching it.
11 How about that? It might not be in season. I
12 don't know, but we'll have to look at that.

13 But anyway, last year was a great event.
14 A lot of fish caught. I think, what, big
15 20-something pounds was the one that won it. And
16 so it was a good deal.

17 Well, today, David's here, and he has
18 Jonathan Holder with him, also who was one of the
19 boats -- Heads and Tails. But I want to just, if
20 you can, David, I want you to come down. And,
21 Beth, if you'll come up with us, and I'd like to
22 just give them a plaque for what they did and a
23 little gift.

24 And what we want to do with this is I
25 just want to give them a gift to tell them thank

1 you. It's not anywhere near what they're worth,
2 but it's something to tell them thank you for what
3 they have done and thank you for supporting us.
4 And we hope that they will support us in the
5 future. Thank you for supporting us.

6 And that's the -- I've got Heads and
7 Tails right here. What we're going to do -- I'll
8 show the group if that's all right.

9 We had some glasses made that says
10 "Mississippi Gulf Governor's Saltwater Fishing
11 Classic" and we will also have the plaque there.
12 So we will get one of these out. David, come up
13 here.

14 DAVID MACHADO:

15 All right.

16 JOE SPRAGGINS:

17 Beth, you're part of the Foundation.
18 You get right there and here. You can hold that
19 and we'll take a picture for that.

20 David, if you've got anything and,
21 Jonathan. He was with the Tails and Scales.

22 DAVID MACHADO:

23 Heads and Tails.

24 JOE SPRAGGINS:

25 Heads and Tails. I've got Tails and

1 Scales on my mind.

2 DAVID MACHADO:

3 I'll be real -- I'll be real brief.

4 This -- for y'all that may not be familiar because
5 I wasn't super familiar, I got put -- appointed to
6 the Foundation for Department of Wildlife,
7 Fisheries and Parks about three years ago.

8 Shortly thereafter, we were lucky enough
9 to bring on Department of Marine Resources, which
10 is near and dear to my heart, because as,
11 Mr. Chairman, you know, I'm way more of a
12 fisherman than a hunter, so it gave me a purpose
13 on the Foundation.

14 This event is in the spirit to emulate
15 the Governor's hunt, if anybody's familiar with
16 that. That's our largest fundraising event that
17 we've done for many years as a foundation, and so
18 we're trying to emulate that and grow it.

19 We had a lot of help last year, a lot of
20 great local boat owners here that are good
21 friends. We've had the Miss Malay, which is Greg
22 and C.M. Williams, Nathan Fayard, you know, local
23 businessmen here. We've got a really nice boat.
24 Perseverance, Dr. Michael Diaz. Heads and Tails,
25 Dr. Vince Pisciotta, who Jonathan fishes with a

1 lot and is on his crew. And then -- who am I
2 missing over there? I got one more? Oh, Sweet
3 Melissa. Sweet Melissa, which is Mr. Keith
4 Saucier. He owns Keith's Superstores here all
5 around Mississippi.

6 And all of those folks were generous
7 enough to donate their boats, donate fuel, donate
8 the crew and we had a really successful event and
9 look forward to keeping it going. And that's the
10 most important thing to me, is sustain it for as
11 many years as the Governor's hunt has gone on,
12 so --

13 JOE SPRAGGINS:

14 Your boat and don't forget Unconquered.

15 DAVID MACHADO:

16 Yeah. My -- right. And Unconquered is
17 actually another one of the commissioners -- I'm
18 sorry, one of the Foundation board members that --
19 he put his boat. It's actually out of
20 Tallahassee. He brought it over for that, so Chris
21 Kuras. So, yeah, we had a lot of help and it was
22 a successful event and we look forward to keeping
23 it going. Thank y'all.

24 JOE SPRAGGINS:

25 Thank you very much.

1 DAVID MACHADO:

2 Yep.

3 (Round of applause.)

4 CAM ROBERDS:

5 Inside joke for David, that will go good
6 next to that, that fais do-do wooden speckled
7 trout from St. Bernard Parish.

8 DAVID MACHADO:

9 We would have won a tournament.
10 Mr. Chairman didn't want to spend \$25.

11 CAM ROBERDS:

12 Yeah. Very true story. Many moons ago,
13 many moons ago.

14 JOE SPRAGGINS:

15 And then we've already got -- we've
16 given theirs to them, Chris.

17 David, if you will take these.

18 DAVID MACHADO:

19 Yes. I'll handle getting those to --
20 several of them, as you heard, are doctors and
21 they are in surgery and whatnot this morning, so
22 they weren't able to make it. But still got a lot
23 of support about this. It will be a good event
24 this year. We'll keep it going.

25 JOE SPRAGGINS:

1 Thank you.

2 DAVID MACHADO:

3 Yes, sir.

4 JOE SPRAGGINS:

5 Get the Marine Patrol guys to help you
6 get this in there.

7 DAVID MACHADO:

8 All right. Thank you.

9 JOE SPRAGGINS:

10 Thank you. Jonathan, thank you so much
11 for coming too.

12 JONATHAN HOLDER:

13 Thank you.

14 JOE SPRAGGINS:

15 All right.

16 CAM ROBERDS:

17 Awesome.

18 JOE SPRAGGINS:

19 All right. We couldn't do it without
20 them and thank them again. Once again, that's a
21 fantastic thing. And if you want to be a part of
22 it this year, if you know anybody that has
23 something that they would like to donate that we
24 can raffle off or anything else, all the proceeds
25 go straight to the Foundation.

1 And just to give you an idea, this year
2 we're going to give -- we're working out, we have
3 five scholarships for \$5,000 a piece that we're
4 going to be able to give. And what's amazing
5 about that is they must be an employee, a
6 member -- a family member, or something of the
7 DMR, and that's amazing to be able to do that
8 because normally they won't let people in the
9 agency do it, but that's the way the Foundation
10 wanted to do this. And they're doing the same
11 thing with Wildlife.

12 And so someone's children or someone in
13 DMR that would like to go and further their
14 education, we can give them up to -- we're going
15 to have five, \$5,000 scholarships to be able to do
16 it. And it will mainly be for marine science,
17 marine biology, but we're also going to look at
18 other things, too, because, you know, Marine --
19 Department of Marine Resources is not just those
20 two agencies. We have law enforcement. We also
21 have the accounting and the finance and HR and
22 other things that we do, so we'll be able to apply
23 for all of those.

24 And then we're also going to marry up
25 with some -- the CCA and some others, and they

1 gave us another 25,000 to be able to do more kids
2 fishing, teaching them how to fish and teaching
3 them all about fishing.

4 So that's just the start of where we're
5 at -- we will continue to go forward with that.
6 Any questions?

7 CAM ROBERDS:

8 That's a huge investment for those guys
9 with those boats, so I'm just -- I think
10 they're -- what a great program.

11 JOE SPRAGGINS:

12 Oh, it is. It's amazing. And that just
13 tells you -- just tells you what -- the people,
14 that's what I tried to explain to the Commission
15 when we first got in. The people who fish are a
16 different breed than the people who hunt, and I'm
17 not saying anything against either one of them
18 because I do both. Okay?

19 But the big saltwater fishermen put a
20 lot of money into saltwater fishing. They put a
21 lot of money into it and so they're willing to be
22 able to help make it better and that's what they
23 want to do. So we appreciate that.

24 All right. We'll move right along real
25 quick. I've taken up almost all morning.

1 Derelict vessels. We've got 238 cases
2 that have been brought to us; 208 have been
3 removed; 34 are pending removal; and one is in
4 court order right now for removal.

5 And any questions on that?

6 (No response.)

7 JOE SPRAGGINS:

8 And the last one is the actions update.

9 STEVEN ECKERT:

10 Good morning, Commissioners and
11 Director. During the February 2026 meeting, the
12 Commission recommended and the Director approved
13 the following three motions: First, a no-wake
14 zone for residential canals and bayous in Garden
15 Isle area of Bay St. Louis. Second, a permit to
16 Marti Cockrell to construct a living shoreline
17 consisting of nine breakwaters and native plants
18 in the Mississippi Sound off of Ocean Springs.
19 And, third, there was a certificate of waiver to
20 TGHP, LLC to extend piers, construct additional
21 piers, install pilings, and receive an
22 after-the-fact certification for piers, pilings,
23 and canal excavation with a commercial facility on
24 Bay St. Louis and Mallini Bayou in Pass Christian.
25 And that concludes the actions update.

1 JOE SPRAGGINS:

2 Any questions, Commissioners?

3 CAM ROBERDS:

4 No, sir.

5 JOE SPRAGGINS:

6 If not, unless -- Beth, do you have

7 anything you would like to say to the -- okay.

8 All right. Well, we'll move forward. That's my
9 report, sir.

10 CAM ROBERDS:

11 Great report, Director. Thank you for
12 the updates.

13 Do any of the commissioners have
14 anything to report on today?

15 MATTHEW MAYFIELD:

16 No report.

17 RONNIE DANIELS:

18 No report.

19 CAM ROBERDS:

20 Good. Trevor already answered my
21 question earlier, so I'm good.

22 Moving on to Chief Wilkerson for the
23 Marine Patrol.

24 KYLE WILKERSON:

25 Good morning.

1 CAM ROBERDS:

2 Good morning.

3 KYLE WILKERSON:

4 Everybody is staying warm this morning,
5 hopefully. It will be 80 degrees, so we'll be
6 back on top.

7 The report itself -- sir, the report
8 itself is pretty cut and dry. There are a few
9 oyster violations that are still pending. We're
10 looking at zero boat accidents for the month of
11 February through the diligence of Marine Patrol and
12 the public of the State of Mississippi. Hopefully,
13 we continue that during the summer.

14 But other than that, I will field any
15 questions.

16 CAM ROBERDS:

17 Any questions?

18 MATTHEW MAYFIELD:

19 I'm good.

20 CAM ROBERDS:

21 All right. Thank you, Chief.

22 KYLE WILKERSON:

23 Thank you.

24 CAM ROBERDS:

25 Appreciate the report.

1 KYLE WILKERSON:

2 Thank y'all.

3 CAM ROBERDS:

4 All right. Moving down to Coastal
5 Resources Management. Looks like we have Katie
6 Nelson.

7 KATIE NELSON:

8 Good morning. Is this --

9 CAM ROBERDS:

10 Morning.

11 KATIE NELSON:

12 Oh, it is. Probably don't need it very
13 much, but, hopefully, y'all can hear me.

14 So I actually have two projects to
15 discuss this morning. The first is a request for
16 a certificate of waiver by CSX Transportation,
17 Inc.

18 The project is located in Grand Plains
19 Bayou near the Pearl River in Hancock County. The
20 project is located within the Preservation Use
21 District. Assisting the applicant with their
22 permitting process is HDR Engineering, and a
23 representative is here today in case you all have
24 questions that I cannot answer.

25 The purpose and need for the project is

1 to provide public and environmental safety by
2 ensuring existing rail infrastructure is safe,
3 reliable and properly maintained.

4 The applicant is proposing to expand the
5 existing railway bridge from a single-track to a
6 double-track railway. They're expanding it from
7 120 feet by 40 feet to 144 feet by 44 feet. They
8 are also requesting to place .0481 acre of riprap
9 in unvegetated coastal wetlands for shoreline
10 stabilization.

11 And here is the project location way out
12 in Hancock County, east of the Pearl River in
13 Grand Plains Bayou.

14 This slide shows the project diagram
15 that details the impacts including the existing
16 footprint of the bridge in black. The new
17 footprint of the expansion is in red. The orange
18 shows the proposed riprap placement locations.

19 There is also excavation and other
20 riprap placement as part of this project, but it
21 will take place in uplands. Therefore, it does
22 not need to be included in this request for
23 certification.

24 This diagram also shows the approximate
25 location where the barge will be within the

1 waterway during construction.

2 For the project area, the applicant is
3 requesting a use plan change from Preservation
4 District to a Special Use District S6 for
5 restoration and enhancement areas.

6 The applicant justifies this request by
7 stating that there are no significant
8 environmental impacts that would occur if the
9 project was allowed. There's no feasible or
10 alternative sites in the use designation being
11 requested that are available.

12 The general public and governmental
13 entities were notified of the activity and there
14 are no significant conflicts with surrounding uses
15 or public access to coastal wetlands that would
16 occur, and the activity does not adversely affect
17 the public interest in protecting coastal
18 wetlands.

19 Staff also determined that there was
20 likely a mistake in the original drafting of the
21 coastal wetlands use plan. The existing railway
22 path should have been excluded from the
23 Preservation District whenever the use districts
24 were designated.

25 For the public and agency notices:

1 Notification of the proposed project appeared in
2 the *Sun Herald* on October 26th, 2025, as well as
3 February 15th, 22nd, and March 1st of 2026.

4 Notification of the project also appeared on our
5 website October 23rd through November 10th of '25,
6 as well as February 13th through March 2nd of '26.

7 No public comments were received. We
8 also received no comments from DEQ. MDAH did
9 request that a condition be included in our permit
10 that all ground disturbance be monitored by a
11 qualified archaeologist.

12 Secretary of State said the project area
13 is located on public trust tidelands and submerged
14 lands. The bridge falls within an area authorized
15 for use as an easement by the authorities above.
16 Therefore, the activities to upgrade, repair and
17 maintain the easement are authorized by law.

18 After staff conducted a thorough
19 evaluation of the project, based on the decision
20 factors in our Mississippi Coastal Program, the
21 project would serve a higher public interest by
22 providing public and environmental safety, by
23 ensuring existing rail infrastructure is safe,
24 reliable, and properly maintained.

25 Therefore, staff requests a motion that

1 the Commission recommend to the Executive Director
2 to approve the requested use plan change, as well
3 as approve the certificate of waiver as they have
4 requested.

5 Do you guys have any questions?

6 CAM ROBERDS:

7 It looks very minimal of a change in an
8 area bridge, in my opinion.

9 MATTHEW MAYFIELD:

10 Yep.

11 JOE SPRAGGINS:

12 And this is an additional bridge, right?

13 KATIE NELSON:

14 No, sir. There's already one existing.
15 This is --

16 JOE SPRAGGINS:

17 Yeah. I mean, but my understanding is
18 that they're going to build another bridge beside
19 it, is that right, or is this just expanding that
20 one bridge?

21 KATIE NELSON:

22 Expanding the existing. That's the way
23 I understood.

24 RONNIE DANIELS:

25 It looks like it's going to be a whole

1 new bridge.

2 JOE SPRAGGINS:

3 Yeah. I thought it was a whole new
4 bridge. All right. I'm confused on that.

5 CAM ROBERDS:

6 A new bridge that just encompasses a few
7 more feet in length and another couple feet in
8 width; is that correct?

9 KATIE NELSON:

10 Yeah, let me see if I can go back. Let
11 me show you.

12 CAM ROBERDS:

13 On what's existing?

14 KATIE NELSON:

15 Yeah. So it's a one-track right now,
16 and they're looking to expand it to a two-track.

17 JOE SPRAGGINS:

18 Yeah. That would be another bridge.
19 That's the reason I'm saying that.

20 KATIE NELSON:

21 Okay.

22 RONNIE DANIELS:

23 Whole new bridge.

24 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER:

25 Replacing the existing bridge.

1 JOE SPRAGGINS:

2 Huh?

3 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER:

4 Replacing the existing bridge with a new
5 bridge.

6 JOE SPRAGGINS:

7 So you're going to take the existing
8 bridge that's there and replace it, just make it
9 wider and longer?

10 CAM ROBERDS:

11 Can you state your name real quick?

12 DANIEL LAIRD:

13 Oh, sorry. My name is Daniel Laird with
14 HDR.

15 CAM ROBERDS:

16 Thank you.

17 Director.

18 JOE SPRAGGINS:

19 Okay. Because I'm confused, because we
20 talked about this a lot of times in the -- and I
21 got two different statements on it. All right?
22 What -- Jennifer, you're pointing to something.
23 Talk to me, because me and her have been around
24 and around on this.

25 JENNIFER WITTMANN:

1 They are taking the existing bridge that
2 has one track and removing it, replacing it with a
3 new bridge that will have two tracks.

4 JOE SPRAGGINS:

5 So they're going to take out a whole
6 bridge?

7 JENNIFER WITTMANN:

8 And put in another one that has two
9 tracks.

10 JOE SPRAGGINS:

11 So they're going to actually disrupt the
12 operation for a while, then?

13 JENNIFER WITTMANN:

14 And he can speak to timelines.

15 DANIEL LAIRD:

16 Yeah. I think our current estimate is
17 about one month that the channel will be closed.

18 JOE SPRAGGINS:

19 Amazing how quick they can build a
20 bridge. I'll tell you what.

21 DANIEL LAIRD:

22 But that is an estimate at this point,
23 depending on the contractor's schedule.

24 JOE SPRAGGINS:

25 Okay. I thought you was building a new

1 bridge right beside that one.

2 DANIEL LAIRD:

3 No, no, no. The old bridge will be
4 removed and the new bridge will be constructed in
5 its place.

6 JOE SPRAGGINS:

7 But the foundation of the old bridge
8 will stay?

9 DANIEL LAIRD:

10 I believe the pilings will be removed,
11 the existing pilings, and replaced.

12 CAM ROBERDS:

13 That's a quick 30-day project.

14 RONNIE DANIELS:

15 If y'all throw that one up that quick,
16 can y'all throw one up on Highway 90 over there,
17 too, while you're at it?

18 CAM ROBERDS:

19 Yeah. Well, I think with -- the length
20 is -- it might be some of it. Some of it might be
21 just prefabricated and set in place or is it cast
22 in place actually?

23 DANIEL LAIRD:

24 I don't have that knowledge on me at
25 this time.

1 JOE SPRAGGINS:

2 I know after Katrina they were ready to
3 rebuild their bridges long before we got ours
4 rebuilt, as far as the passenger -- you know,
5 people driving, but it was amazing how quick they
6 could rebuild those bridges, especially over, you
7 know, Bay St. Louis and areas because they was
8 able -- it's amazing.

9 CAM ROBERDS:

10 It looks like all the agencies had
11 opportunity to comment and commented. And the
12 actual area is minimal from what's existing, so --

13 JOE SPRAGGINS:

14 And we're not taking up really anything
15 to amount to anything. A couple of feet one way
16 or the other is all you're talking about, so it's
17 not -- it's not like we're impacting a whole new
18 area.

19 DANIEL LAIRD:

20 No.

21 KATIE NELSON:

22 No, sir. Most of it is going to occur
23 on uplands. Like, the expansion, I think it's
24 from 120 feet. That's what's existing in length.
25 And it's, I believe, 40 feet in width. And it's

1 just going to 144 in width and 44 in length.

2 JOE SPRAGGINS:

3 They're going to make it to where it's
4 two rails, instead of one?

5 KATIE NELSON:

6 Yes, sir, that's my understanding.

7 JOE SPRAGGINS:

8 What's this going to benefit? How's it
9 going to do it? I mean, I'm curious. I don't
10 know. Your money. You're spending it. I mean, I
11 just --

12 DANIEL LAIRD:

13 Actually, I can't say I know that at
14 this time.

15 RONNIE DANIELS:

16 I'm pretty sure there's a double track
17 just to the east of that right there where I'm
18 assuming y'all -- they do transfers. I spent a
19 lot of time down there as a kid. We had a camp.
20 I've caught a lot of fish under that bridge, so
21 I'm pretty sure just to the east of that, they
22 have a double track, so I'm assuming --

23 CAM ROBERDS:

24 So maybe connecting it.

25 RONNIE DANIELS:

1 Yeah, that's what --

2 JOE SPRAGGINS:

3 Okay. I didn't know if it was something
4 to do with, you know, being able to pull a train
5 off to this side and then let another one go
6 through or something. I didn't know. I see that
7 all the time. I didn't know. Okay.

8 WILLA BRANTLEY:

9 I believe you're right, Director, that
10 they said they would be able to have a little bit
11 longer trains pass each other now.
12 They can do some trains on the part that is already
13 double track and close to that area, but now
14 they'll be able to have a longer train pull over to
15 the side and pass each other.

16 JOE SPRAGGINS:

17 Probably help Amtrak a little bit.

18 CAM ROBERDS:

19 For sure, yeah.

20 WILLA BRANTLEY:

21 They didn't say which one specifically,
22 just longer trains.

23 JOE SPRAGGINS:

24 Okay. Yeah. Well, they're pretty short
25 but, I mean -- but it might help them as far as

1 being able to get through something.

2 CAM ROBERDS:

3 All right. Any other questions? If
4 not, do we have a motion?

5 RONNIE DANIELS:

6 I'll make the motion.

7 MATTHEW MAYFIELD:

8 Second.

9 CAM ROBERDS:

10 All in favor?

11 (Unanimous vote.)

12 CAM ROBERDS:

13 All right. Thank you, guys. Appreciate
14 it.

15 KATIE NELSON:

16 Well, I have another one so --

17 CAM ROBERDS:

18 You're back up again?

19 KATIE NELSON:

20 -- not going anywhere.

21 CAM ROBERDS:

22 All right, Katie. What you got next for
23 us?

24 RONNIE DANIELS:

25 Don't confuse the Director again.

1 JOE SPRAGGINS:

2 It's not hard to do, I mean --

3 KATIE NELSON:

4 Well, it's not hard to confuse me
5 either. So I apologize for my part in that.

6 JOE SPRAGGINS:

7 I just know that they don't like to
8 disrupt that movement at all.

9 RONNIE DANIELS:

10 Yeah, I know.

11 JOE SPRAGGINS:

12 I thought they was building another
13 bridge.

14 KATIE NELSON:

15 So for -- my second project is
16 Mississippi Department of Environmental Quality.
17 They have requested a -- they have submitted a
18 request for a permit for a project located within
19 St. Louis Bay near Diamondhead in Hancock County.

20 The proposed project area is located
21 within the General Use District. The agents
22 assisting DEQ is Anchor QEA, and we also have a
23 representative here today in case you guys have
24 any further questions.

25 The purpose and need for the project is

1 to restore natural resources injured by the
2 Deepwater Horizon Oil Spill, to enhance benthic
3 secondary activity -- or productivity, excuse me,
4 and reduce shoreline erosion by wave attenuation.

5 MDEQ is requesting to fill 17 acres of
6 unvegetated coastal wetlands for the construction
7 of a living shoreline breakwater structure. The
8 breakwaters will be approximately 11,500 linear
9 feet along the existing shoreline in 500-foot
10 segments with 30-foot gaps between each segment.

11 The breakwaters will be made of rock
12 and/or bioengineered materials, and crest
13 elevations should not exceed plus three feet mean
14 lower low water.

15 The project is located along the North
16 Shore of St. Louis Bay in Diamondhead, and the
17 proposed project is expected to be 11,500 feet
18 along the existing shoreline.

19 And as stated -- excuse me, as stated
20 previously, the breakwater living shoreline
21 structures could be constructed of rock and/or
22 bioengineered materials.

23 On the left side of the screen is an
24 example of the rock placement that might be used
25 as part of this project. Additionally, the two

1 diagrams on the right side are examples of some of
2 the bioengineered materials that might be used in
3 this project. Specifically, the ones they
4 included in their application are wave attenuation
5 device breakwaters or stacked oyster ring
6 breakwaters that -- again, that might be used.
7 These are just examples that they provided.

8 The proposed project is allowable within
9 the General Use District, but the applicant is
10 requesting a change to the coastal wetlands use
11 plan in the footprint of the proposed project to a
12 Special Use District S6 for restoration and
13 enhancement areas.

14 DEQ justifies this request by stating:
15 There is a significant public benefit in the
16 activity. Impacts to public access and adverse
17 environmental impacts have been minimized.

18 The general public and governmental
19 entities were notified of the project and a public
20 hearing was held.

21 DEQ is requesting a variance to one of
22 the requirements for regulated activities.
23 Permanent filling of coastal wetlands below the
24 ordinary high water mark is not authorized.
25 They're justifying this variance request by

1 stating that impacts on coastal wetlands would be
2 no worse than if the requirements were followed
3 because of -- the filling of coastal wetlands is
4 being conducted to support ecological restoration,
5 which will provide an overall net positive
6 environmental impact.

7 For the public notices and hearing:
8 Notification of the proposed project appeared in
9 the *Sun Herald* on February 8th, 15th, and 22nd of
10 this year. Notification of the project also
11 appeared on our DMR website from February 5th
12 through the 23rd of this year. No public comments
13 were received, and we did hold a public hearing on
14 the evening of Thursday, February 26th, in Bay
15 St. Louis. No comments were received on that
16 either.

17 For the agency comments, no comments
18 were received from DEQ.

19 For MDAH, they requested a submerged
20 cultural resource survey, and it was completed and
21 submitted to MDAH. MDAH stated that they have no
22 objections as long as areas with potential
23 resources were avoided, and DEQ designed the
24 project to avoid any potential resources.

25 Secretary of State stated that a

1 rent-exempt lease is required.

2 After -- excuse me -- after staff
3 conducted a thorough evaluation of the project,
4 based on the decision factors in our Mississippi
5 Coastal Program, the project would serve a higher
6 public interest by restoring benthic secondary
7 productivity for bivalve mollusks, annelid worms,
8 shrimp, and crabs, reducing the shoreline erosion
9 and protecting coastal salt marsh habitat by wave
10 attenuation, and increasing recreational and
11 commercial fishing opportunities.

12 Therefore, staff requests a motion that
13 the Commission recommend to the Executive Director
14 to approve the requested variance, approve the
15 requested use plan change, approve the permit as
16 requested and condition the permit to contain the
17 following: Submission of an adaptive management
18 plan to be reviewed by MDMR staff prior to
19 construction, coordination with the US Coast Guard
20 for necessary navigational aids -- navigational
21 aids at the project location, and the project area
22 should be inspected for presence of SAV during the
23 growing season -- the growing season prior to
24 implementation of the project. The survey should
25 be submitted to MDMR wetlands permitting staff at

1 least 30 days prior to project commencement. If
2 any SAV is found in the area, a final review and
3 approval of the DMR staff should be required prior
4 to project commencement.

5 That's a lot.

6 CAM ROBERDS:

7 Yeah, that's a quite -- quite a project.
8 Is that like two miles of -- assuming that there's
9 been quite a bit of erosion over the years in that
10 area that's been tracked, I guess.

11 RONNIE DANIELS:

12 It's -- I'm sorry.

13 CAM ROBERDS:

14 It's your neck of the woods.

15 RONNIE DANIELS:

16 Yeah, it's kind of my backyard. So,
17 essentially, this is going to be the same thing
18 that we've got south of Bayou Caddy in Hancock
19 County?

20 KATIE NELSON:

21 Is she shaking her head?

22 RONNIE DANIELS:

23 Yeah, she is.

24 I love that project and I'm happy to see
25 this coming to the bay back there because, yeah,

1 it does catch a beating with south winds on that
2 north side of the bay. It's a big shallow flat
3 that will provide some really good habitat once we
4 get that in there.

5 I would like to correct one thing that
6 I'm seeing here. At the bottom of the staff
7 recommendations is that it will increase
8 recreational and commercial fishing opportunities.
9 There's no commercial fishing back there because
10 we're north of CSX. I just -- I don't want us
11 to --

12 JOE SPRAGGINS:

13 Better not be.

14 RONNIE DANIELS:

15 Don't want to have -- don't want
16 somebody to say, y'all said it.

17 KATIE NELSON:

18 Sorry.

19 RONNIE DANIELS:

20 So I'm in favor of it.

21 KATIE NELSON:

22 That's also my fault. I included that
23 part.

24 CAM ROBERDS:

25 How is these -- and you would know,

1 Ronnie, on the other one, I guess, but as far as
2 markings for nighttime, maybe nobody goes that
3 direction because it's so shallow already. I'm
4 not sure.

5 RONNIE DANIELS:

6 So they're already on all the charts,
7 and they do have poles and signs down there in
8 Hancock County.

9 CAM ROBERDS:

10 Okay.

11 RONNIE DANIELS:

12 Number 1, this is a very low boat
13 traffic area. It's not near anything that's
14 navigable for people transversing the bay. It's
15 the north end of it. It's a very shallow flat,
16 quite a ways out in front of where they're going
17 to be placing this. So if you're running in
18 there, you're more than likely coming down to idle
19 speed before you ever get anywhere near it.

20 CAM ROBERDS:

21 Got ya. Okay.

22 KATIE NELSON:

23 And there is existing marsh habitat.
24 Like, it's a big area.

25 RONNIE DANIELS:

1 Oh, yeah. Yeah.

2 KATIE NELSON:

3 They're basically just trying to
4 protect -- protect that, as well as, you know,
5 provide habitat.

6 JOE SPRAGGINS:

7 And from my understanding, the Coast
8 Guard tells us what we have to put there as far as
9 any type of lighting or any type of marking and
10 all, so I'm sure we'll follow that 100 percent,
11 whatever the Coast Guard says.

12 KATIE NELSON:

13 Yes, sir. DEQ will.

14 CAM ROBERDS:

15 Okay. Do we have a motion to take the
16 staff's recommendation?

17 MATTHEW MAYFIELD:

18 I'll make the motion.

19 RONNIE DANIELS:

20 Second.

21 CAM ROBERDS:

22 All in favor?

23 (Unanimous vote.)

24 KATIE NELSON:

25 Thank you.

1 CAM ROBERDS:

2 Are you up again or that's it?

3 KATIE NELSON:

4 Yes, that's it for me. Sorry.

5 CAM ROBERDS:

6 It looks like Alyssa. Okay. Thank you,
7 Katie.

8 ALYSSA TIMBS:

9 Good morning.

10 CAM ROBERDS:

11 Morning.

12 ALYSSA TIMBS:

13 Mine should be much more straightforward
14 and simpler than Katie's.

15 All right. So today, I'll be discussing
16 a request for a certificate of waiver by the City
17 of Ocean Springs. This project is located on
18 Front Beach in -- Front Beach Drive in Ocean
19 Springs on the Mississippi Sound.

20 The use district is C, for commercial
21 fishing, recreational marina, and dockside gaming.

22 The agent for this project is Cypress
23 Environment and Infrastructure, and there are
24 representatives from both the City and from
25 Cypress here if y'all have any hard questions.

1 So the purpose and need of this project
2 is to utilize a long-vacant site to enhance
3 recreational opportunities as a waterfront park
4 for the coastal community.

5 So what the applicant is proposing to do
6 is replace the existing bulkhead and place
7 approximately 4,626 square feet of riprap within
8 unvegetated coastal wetlands and remove debris in
9 the form of derelict pilings and bulkhead
10 remnants.

11 So like I said, this project is located
12 on Front Beach -- Front Beach Drive. The project
13 site was previously used for the commercial
14 fishing industry and has historically had an
15 armored shoreline. And the whole project -- well,
16 the site is uplands, and then, you know, just the
17 shoreline is what they're proposing to have any
18 impact on.

19 So here is the site plans. So the
20 existing bulkhead, you can see in like a yellow
21 line, that will be replaced. A portion of it will
22 be placed in exactly the same footprint, while
23 some will be placed waterward, but directly
24 abutting the existing bulkhead. And the riprap
25 will be placed along the east and west shorelines

1 of the property. And so the portion of the riprap
2 placed below mean high water on the west side is
3 approximately 1,873 square feet. The portion on
4 the eastern side that's below mean high water, but
5 also along the sand beach portion is 2,753 square
6 feet. And then remnants of old pier pilings and
7 bulkhead will be removed from the surrounding area
8 right next to the shoreline.

9 So this project is allowable within the
10 current use district of C.

11 And then due to the quantity of riprap
12 that's proposed, the applicant has requested a
13 variance to the Mississippi Coastal Program rule
14 that permanent filling of coastal wetlands is not
15 authorized. They've selected the justification
16 for the variance request as the activity requires
17 a waterfront location. There is a public benefit,
18 and a public hearing was conducted.

19 The agent stated that the width of the
20 riprap is based on site engineering and the amount
21 of material needed to properly and safely
22 stabilize the site and support site development.
23 And the redevelopment of this vacant property will
24 eliminate safety hazards, protect against shore
25 erosion, and provide opportunities for public

1 recreational use.

2 The public notice of this project was
3 published in the *Sun Herald* on January 11th, and
4 it appeared on our website from January 6th to
5 January 26th. And no public comments were
6 received. We also held a public hearing on
7 January 27th, and we received no public comments.

8 MDEQ, MDH, and MDMR Fisheries did not
9 submit any comments. And the Secretary of State's
10 office stated that a rent-exempt lease is
11 required.

12 So after evaluation of the project with
13 our decision factors, it would serve a higher
14 public interest by relieving safety concerns
15 associated with the property as existing,
16 preventing erosion, and providing access to a
17 waterfront park for recreational use.

18 Therefore, the staff recommends -- or
19 requests a motion that the Commission recommend to
20 the Executive Director to approve the variance as
21 requested and approve the certificate of waiver as
22 requested. Any questions?

23 MATTHEW MAYFIELD:

24 I'm excited to see that parcel cleaned
25 up. I'm kind of curious on what's the time frame

1 from start to finish.

2 ALYSSA TIMBS:

3 I'd have to let Mark or Lindsey or
4 Sarah --

5 MARK FOSTER:

6 Yeah, sure. Mark Foster with Cypress.

7 The City will be going to bid pretty
8 quickly once we go ahead and get the permit on
9 this thing, and we would anticipate that this
10 summer that construction would begin on this
11 thing. I would expect that by this fall, the site
12 will be stabilized, bulkhead replaced, and then
13 the City will be moving on to cleaning up the rest
14 of the interior of the site and all that.

15 Just right now, the bulkheads are at
16 risk of falling down and then the whole site could
17 evulse off into the Sound. So it's one of those
18 where we've got to get the shoreline stabilized
19 and then they'll be able to go ahead and make a
20 nice park there on Front Beach.

21 MATTHEW MAYFIELD:

22 Appreciate it.

23 RONNIE DANIELS:

24 Didn't we just approve something similar
25 to this in that same area?

1 CAM ROBERDS:

2 That was right on the east side of the
3 entrance to the harbor, Inner Harbor. This is --
4 it's definitely vulnerable. I mean, the way it
5 looks. I mean, it looks like it needs to be done.

6 JOE SPRAGGINS:

7 Yeah. This is -- if I'm not mistaken,
8 this is the area that they were looking at before
9 that was going to be a harbor area, and now
10 they've turned it back and they're just going to
11 basically redo the bulkhead around it and open it
12 up and make it more recreational for everybody to
13 be able to utilize it. It's right across from, is
14 that Jackson, I think, that comes in --

15 MARK FOSTER:

16 Yeah, that's Jackson.

17 JOE SPRAGGINS:

18 Yeah. And, you know, we have the
19 Reynolds' property across the street from there,
20 so that's the property that we own there.

21 But anyway, long story short, I think
22 it's a way of stabilizing that area and being able
23 to do it. And the City's already moving stuff in
24 there. I know they haven't done any work.

25 CAM ROBERDS:

1 Yeah.

2 JOE SPRAGGINS:

3 I know that. They haven't done any
4 work, but they already moved --

5 CAM ROBERDS:

6 I saw some equipment and some storm
7 drain pipe, I thought, already on the site for
8 something -- another project.

9 JOE SPRAGGINS:

10 Yeah.

11 MARK FOSTER:

12 Yeah. It's a staging area for some
13 other projects that are ongoing throughout the
14 city.

15 CAM ROBERDS:

16 Yeah. And I can tell you, that place,
17 it gets hit hard, so it's going to need some
18 serious protection to last a little while so --

19 JOE SPRAGGINS:

20 I think it'll be great for the city and
21 for the community.

22 MARK FOSTER:

23 Yeah. The existing bulkhead is very old
24 and tiebacks are rusted out and exposed on the
25 surface and it's -- it definitely needs a little

1 TLC to get it back where it needs to be.

2 CAM ROBERDS:

3 All right. Thank you, Mark.

4 Any other questions? If not, do we have
5 a motion?

6 MATTHEW MAYFIELD:

7 I'll make the motion.

8 CAM ROBERDS:

9 All right.

10 RONNIE DANIELS:

11 Second.

12 CAM ROBERDS:

13 All in favor?

14 (Unanimous vote.)

15 CAM ROBERDS:

16 Thank you.

17 ALYSSA TIMBS:

18 Thank you.

19 CAM ROBERDS:

20 All right. It looks like down to Rick.

21 Rick, you're filling in for Ms. Charmaine today.

22 Man, this is exciting. What you got?

23 RICK BURRIS:

24 It's exciting, yeah, that's right.

25 Yeah, they're at the Boston Seafood Show, and so

1 they dug deep into the bullpen to get me to
2 present the Public Affairs report, but we'll give
3 it our best shot.

4 All right. So the Department of Marine
5 Resources had 16 media mentions since the February
6 meeting. News items included MDMR accepting
7 applications for the Aquaculture Advanced Seed
8 Program -- excuse me, Advanced Seed Production
9 Training Program, boater safety tips when a storm
10 strikes and the Mississippi Senate looking at
11 updates to the state seafood labeling law.

12 You'll see here on this slide, Marine
13 Patrol participated in the Past Christian Middle
14 School Career Fair on February 13th, and there's
15 Officer Payne there for the Office of Marine
16 Patrol. They also did the 4-H Ghost Fishing event
17 in West Hancock Elementary School on February 23rd
18 and the Long Beach Touch-A-Truck on March 14th.
19 There's Lieutenant Payne again with his truck and
20 his vessel.

21 On February 11th, the Finfish Bureau
22 hosted Cooper Wrightson for job shadowing, where
23 he was able to participate in various roles held
24 by finfish staff. You can see him pulling a seine
25 on the beach. They're working up the samples they

1 caught, so I'm sure he had a good time and learned
2 a lot.

3 Ellen Coffin and Kat Glover with the
4 Shellfish Bureau both participated as guest
5 speakers for the Bay High School marine biology
6 class on February 24th.

7 Becky Hargrove in the Seafood Technology
8 Bureau, who's actually our microbiology lab
9 director, served as a speaker for the American
10 Society for Clinical Laboratory Science Conference
11 held at the Mississippi Gulf Coast Community
12 College Hospitality Campus in Biloxi on March 2nd.

13 The Artificial Reef Bureau's Courtney
14 Walker participated in a reef coordination project
15 with CCA at St. Patrick's High School on March the
16 3rd. Hatchery Bureau staff assisted Ocean Springs
17 High School's Aquaculture Program with striped
18 bass release on March the 10th.

19 And Shellfish Bureau Director Jason
20 Rider participated in the Gulf Blue Navigator
21 Cohort meeting on March 11th in Gulfport.

22 Coastal Resource Management's Kaitlyn
23 Payne and Allison Faggard participated in
24 Homeschool Wednesday, Water at Infinity Science
25 Center on March 11th.

1 Brianna Andrews at the Grand Bay NERR
2 participated in the Ocean Guardian School Program
3 at Woolmarket Elementary School on February 23rd.
4 The NERR's Emmett Carstens participated -- excuse
5 me, provided observer training for phenological
6 monitoring in Gulf Shores on February 27th. The
7 NERR staff also participated at the Kids 101
8 Mobile Boat Show, February 28th and March 1st.

9 At this year's Mississippi Regions 1 and
10 6 Science and Engineering Fair held at USM's Gulf
11 Park Campus on March the 6th, Seafood Technology
12 Bureau's Raul Anzola and Ralph Terry, and the
13 NERR's Jennifer Cumbest, Brianna Andrews, Cassy
14 Porter and Jeneil Patel served as judges for the
15 science fair.

16 During the steward -- I mean, during the
17 awards presentation, I presented the MDMR's
18 Excellence in Marine Science Awards to Jace
19 Holmes, who's a fourth grader at Oak Grove
20 Elementary School. His project was: "Defend the
21 Dirt." And then Colin Murphy on the right, he's a
22 junior at St. Patrick's High School for his
23 project "Spatial Variations of Fecal Coliform."

24 The Mississippi Seafood Marketing
25 Program sponsored seafood at the Gumbo Fest for

1 the City of Gulfport on February 21st and the
2 Camper Caucus Legislative Reception in Jackson on
3 March 11th.

4 And then as I mentioned, Public Affairs
5 is currently promoting Mississippi Seafood at the
6 Boston Seafood Show.

7 And then we would also like to invite
8 everyone to join us for Celebrate the Gulf,
9 Celebrate the Gulf Marine Education Festival on
10 Saturday, April 11th at War Memorial Park in Pass
11 Christian. The event will be held from 10:00 a.m.
12 until 3:00 p.m. It will feature over 35 coastal
13 resource exhibits, live animals, artists, teacher
14 resources, and the student science showcase.

15 Y'all have any questions?

16 CAM ROBERDS:

17 I don't think you guys could get
18 involved in any more. I mean, that's a lot.

19 RICK BURRIS:

20 We're working on it.

21 CAM ROBERDS:

22 It's fantastic.

23 RICK BURRIS:

24 We're working on it.

25 CAM ROBERDS:

1 Great. Love seeing that. Thank you,
2 Rick. Impressive.

3 All right, Trevor. Looks like we got a
4 follow-up here on the filet possession.

5 TREVOR MONCRIEF:

6 Yeah. It's from the conversation we had
7 last month.

8 I will say from our earlier
9 conversation, all three of those pathways are
10 still being pursued that we had discussed
11 previously, so the calibration hopefully gives us
12 a few more pounds. The state-by-state allocation
13 at the council level, the Director's been doing a
14 good job of trying to bring that one home.

15 And then you've got the assessment side
16 of producing new management advice for the fishery
17 as a whole. All that is dependent on MS Creel,
18 which has been -- had a lot of great progress I
19 mentioned last time.

20 Eric's in the crowd, Eric Gigli. He's
21 actually been the point person for us on MS Creel,
22 and it's been going quite well. And we're
23 expecting that news to come with certification
24 hopefully within the month. We've certainly done
25 our part when it comes to that.

1 But back to the item at hand, which is
2 just an update on filet possession. If this one
3 goes through, it might be the shortest regulation
4 change we've ever made. Here's the language. I
5 know it takes a lot to read that because it's a
6 lot of language, but, essentially, it alters Rule
7 5.1 and simply adds: "Any charter or recreational
8 boat fishing within or outside of Mississippi
9 territorial waters over 24 hours before returning
10 to land and following a float plan can possess
11 filets."

12 So it's what we talked about that last
13 time, the simple change is just including the
14 "within or outside," and that would be the gist of
15 the rule.

16 CAM ROBERDS:

17 That's perfect.

18 JOE SPRAGGINS:

19 Question.

20 TREVOR MONCRIEF:

21 Let's hear it.

22 JOE SPRAGGINS:

23 If I'm out there for two days or
24 whatever, can I filet the first day and then bring
25 the second day in whole?

1 TREVOR MONCRIEF:

2 So the way the regulation states, you
3 can't have more than a single day's possession
4 limit on the boat.

5 JOE SPRAGGINS:

6 Okay.

7 TREVOR MONCRIEF:

8 And then, you know, obviously, we've got
9 the final destination definition, which helps
10 govern all that kind of stuff. It's essentially
11 the place where the fish are no longer transported
12 by vessel is deemed as the final destination.
13 Those two coincide with one another is usually how
14 this thing goes down, but you cannot have more
15 than a single day's possession limit based on the
16 current regulation.

17 CAM ROBERDS:

18 And it sounds like this is applicable to
19 anybody that's out more than 24 hours. If you
20 were camping or, you know, out at one of our
21 islands or however you're out with -- over that
22 24-hour period, it's still -- whether you're in a
23 camp, whatever, it's still -- it's all the same.

24 TREVOR MONCRIEF:

25 Yeah. I think it's important to state

1 here it certainly doesn't apply on the federal
2 side. Right?

3 CAM ROBERDS:

4 Right. Yeah.

5 TREVOR MONCRIEF:

6 It's within the state fisheries, the
7 state species, stuff like that. The federal side
8 has their own rules and governances when it comes
9 to landing fish whole, all that kind of stuff. We
10 have the flexibility to be able to establish this
11 for state species.

12 CAM ROBERDS:

13 Got ya.

14 TREVOR MONCRIEF:

15 So yes, the islands, everything else
16 like that.

17 RONNIE DANIELS:

18 So, and this is across all species.

19 TREVOR MONCRIEF:

20 For -- yeah, for the state species, the
21 non-federally managed species, yes.

22 RONNIE DANIELS:

23 So I'm just asking this because I know
24 the question is going to come up. State-seasoned
25 snapper, is that since those --

1 TREVOR MONCRIEF:

2 Those will still fall within the federal
3 realm when it comes to federally-managed species.

4 While we do have state management, it's still
5 overall governed as a federal species, so --

6 RONNIE DANIELS:

7 So they're a no-go?

8 TREVOR MONCRIEF:

9 No.

10 RONNIE DANIELS:

11 Okay. Just for clarification.

12 TREVOR MONCRIEF:

13 Yeah. Absolutely --

14 CAM ROBERDS:

15 Good question.

16 TREVOR MONCRIEF:

17 -- because that's certainly one that's
18 going to pop up in the future.

19 CAM ROBERDS:

20 Yeah.

21 TREVOR MONCRIEF:

22 Yeah.

23 CAM ROBERDS:

24 Well, man, that's great. Any questions?

25 TREVOR MONCRIEF:

1 All we need is just a recommendation to
2 move forward and we'll start with the notice.

3 CAM ROBERDS:

4 Yeah. Do we have a motion to recommend?

5 RONNIE DANIELS:

6 I'll make the motion.

7 CAM ROBERDS:

8 All right.

9 MATTHEW MAYFIELD:

10 Second.

11 CAM ROBERDS:

12 All in favor.

13 (Unanimous vote.)

14 CAM ROBERDS:

15 Thank you, Trevor. I appreciate it.

16 TREVOR MONCRIEF:

17 All right.

18 JOE SPRAGGINS:

19 Hey, Trevor, and one other thing that
20 we're doing, too, in the allocation stuff, we're
21 also putting something forward with the Gulf
22 Council. And, Trevor, if there's anything you can
23 talk about this, but it's to be able -- the Gulf
24 of America has an allocation for recreational
25 snapper and if any one state goes over their

1 allocation and there's under from another state,
2 we will have the authority -- and that's what
3 we're trying to get through, which will probably
4 come next year -- to be able to donate to that
5 other state.

6 In other words like last year, Florida
7 was a million pounds under and if Mississippi had
8 been 10,000 over, they could have gave us the
9 10,000 pounds and not be a payback.

10 CAM ROBERDS:

11 What is the -- and I don't know this.
12 That's why I'm asking the question. Is there a
13 cutoff date or does it just go all the way through
14 the end of the year for all the states?

15 TREVOR MONCRIEF:

16 So each state can dictate its own season
17 based on the allocation that they have. The
18 pattern we've been seeing across the Gulf,
19 especially the eastern side at least at this
20 point, is that the seasons have extended longer
21 and longer and less and less fish are being caught
22 so there's a decrease in efficiency of their fleet
23 whether that be just the season ongoing, the fish
24 getting beat down and simply just the catchability
25 decreasing or some declines in the actual

1 abundance in the nearshore reefs and stuff like
2 that. There's been a lot of discussion of people
3 having to go out further to catch those fish,
4 everything.

5 We're not seeing that in our waters, but
6 that conversation has led to essentially, if
7 you've got a state like Florida who's harvesting
8 50 percent or less of their ACL a year, and you've
9 got us who might go over 5- to 10,000 pounds, our
10 10,000 pounds is a drop in the bucket compared to
11 the half a million pounds that they're leaving on
12 the table. So the individual state requirements
13 and paybacks should likely be alleviated in that
14 scenario if we're using the gulf-wide fishery
15 logic for that species.

16 JOE SPRAGGINS:

17 And we're following the rule the
18 Atlantic did with this, and they're allowed to do
19 that in the Atlantic and so we were able to follow
20 that. So I think it will go through Commerce with
21 no problem once we get it all, but it's just a
22 matter of getting the wickets done, and it just
23 takes a long time.

24 TREVOR MONCRIEF:

25 Yep.

1 CAM ROBERDS:

2 It's all exciting news.

3 JOE SPRAGGINS:

4 Hey, we're trying, I tell you what.

5 CAM ROBERDS:

6 Well, you guys are -- I mean, I've
7 always --

8 JOE SPRAGGINS:

9 Trevor's doing a fantastic job on the
10 SSC over there. He's the chairman, you know, so
11 we are lucky to have the chairman of the SSC
12 sitting in the --

13 CAM ROBERDS:

14 Yeah. The whole department, you know,
15 fighting for our snapper is a big deal, so thank
16 you, guys.

17 TREVOR MONCRIEF:

18 Trying to push logic back into federal
19 fisheries management is not a simple task.

20 CAM ROBERDS:

21 That's it.

22 RONNIE DANIELS:

23 Good luck.

24 CAM ROBERDS:

25 Thank you.

1 I don't believe we have any public
2 comments.

3 JOE SPRAGGINS:

4 No. I do have other business, if I can.

5 CAM ROBERDS:

6 Okay.

7 JOE SPRAGGINS:

8 I just want to let you know a couple of
9 things -- excuse me -- that we received in the
10 Foundation a million dollars this last -- it was
11 about a month ago, and it's a million dollars that
12 was donated to us in a grant from Washington, and
13 it came through Cindy Hyde-Smith and Congressman
14 Ezell pushing hard to be able to do this, our
15 Senator and our Congressman. And it's for oyster
16 restoration and also workforce enhancement and so
17 that million dollars will be coming down. It's
18 already approved. It's signed by the President of
19 the United States, so it's already coming. And so
20 it's another million that we'll be able to do --
21 that Beth will be helping us work with that on.

22 She's going to Washington next week to
23 talk to Congressman Ezell and Senator Cindy
24 Hyde-Smith and some other legislators about a
25 \$5 million grant, and the \$5 million grant is

1 going to be for invasive aquatic plant species.

2 And what we're talking about that is,
3 y'all know how much we have a problem here with
4 giant salvinia and the areas that we're doing and
5 a lot of the things that's there. Well, we're
6 going to basically split that with Wildlife and
7 they'll get about 2 and a half million, we'll get
8 about 2 and a half million to be able to do that
9 through the Foundation, if this works out, to be
10 able to go and help basically control it. And if
11 not -- you know, I don't think we'll ever get rid
12 of it totally, but we can control it and be able
13 to do some stuff.

14 And so Beth's going to fight for us next
15 week on that, and she's going to be up there
16 fighting. So I just want y'all to know that, you
17 know, this is -- there's some things that are
18 coming down through the Foundation that is really
19 going to help us a whole lot, and so we appreciate
20 that.

21 And the last thing is, if you look at
22 the oysters and what Mississippi's doing and what
23 Louisiana's doing, we're both using a lot of --
24 we're doing spat on shell and other things that
25 are working, and both of us are having an

1 abundance of oysters. Florida and Alabama have
2 hardly any oysters. Texas is declining. So what
3 we're doing is working.

4 And I was just told the other day that
5 Alabama, I think, is fixing to jump on board and
6 Florida doing the same thing because they're
7 seeing what we're doing and they're seeing how
8 that -- Mississippi's doing it and how Louisiana's
9 doing it. And because of that, we went from zero
10 oysters in 2019 to where we've got about 300,000
11 sacks possibly of oysters out there now. And
12 we're only going to harvest 30 percent of them, so
13 it's not like we're going to take them all
14 300,000, but that's amazing in a short period of
15 time. So I just wanted to bring that out.

16 And the staff is doing a fantastic job
17 with that, and I mean, they are out there working
18 every day to do it, but for us to be able to bring
19 that back that quick. In Florida, when they had
20 the big crisis about six years ago, seven years
21 ago, they still haven't got it back in the
22 Apalachicola area. And, you know, so it's just,
23 if you look at it, and Alabama has been going
24 every year. It's just not there. And so they're
25 all looking at it right now, as to say, hey, we

1 need to do what Mississippi's doing and we need to
2 do what Louisiana's doing because it's working.

3 CAM ROBERDS:

4 Is there any future assurance or any
5 headway on the Bonnet Carré for alternate routes
6 for a high river flood?

7 JOE SPRAGGINS:

8 Well, there's always --

9 CAM ROBERDS:

10 I know you guys were -- I mean,
11 everybody was working diligently to come up with
12 other -- to work with the State of Louisiana and
13 come up with alternate methods to move the water.

14 JOE SPRAGGINS:

15 Yeah. You know, we had given the Corps
16 of Engineers \$25 million to be able to do a lower
17 Mississippi River study. Well, then all of a
18 sudden, when the shutdown happened last year, that
19 got shut out. That got dropped. And so now we've
20 got our legislators in the Senate and House, both
21 in Washington, they're saying, wait, wait, wait,
22 you know, the money's still there, Corps. What
23 did you do with my money? And we need you to go
24 ahead and move forward with this.

25 And so I think it's starting back now,

1 and we're even looking at giving them a little bit
2 more money to be able to do some more studies.
3 And one of -- and two of the studies that we're
4 looking at is the Aca and the Union Diversion, and
5 that's the one you've heard me talk about. One is
6 to the east and one's to the west. And they're
7 both between the Bonnet Carré and the Morganza,
8 which is Baton Rouge to New Orleans.

9 And each one of them, if they were
10 opened, could divert as much as 75,000 cubic feet
11 per second if both of them were open. And that
12 would -- to the east and the west into a cypress
13 forest that would really -- just from the
14 scientists that have looked at it and talked about
15 it so far that we've seen the study, it could have
16 took anywhere from 25 to 40 days off of what --
17 being open in 2019, which would have been huge to
18 us if we'd have been able to do that. And so
19 we're looking at that.

20 They're also looking at changing the Old
21 River Structure where now 30 percent of the water
22 goes down the Old River Structure every day,
23 70 percent comes down the Mississippi and -- the
24 Old River going to the Atchafalaya. And they're
25 looking to change that to 40 percent and be able

1 to have it to where it can go to 40 percent. And
2 we're not talking 40 percent year round, we're
3 talking 40 percent from like January to April, May
4 time frame when the main part of the rains are
5 coming in the Mississippi and through the
6 Mississippi. And that's also the time frame when
7 you get the melt of the snow from the northeast
8 and the central part of the United States, which
9 31 states all feed into the Mississippi. So
10 you've got to understand that. When all that
11 melts and all the snow that they've had, it has to
12 go somewhere and it comes to the Mississippi.

13 But anyway, they're looking at being
14 able -- the Corps is all on board with this. They
15 just need to get Congress to give them approval to
16 do it. And we're working hard to get that done,
17 and that could be huge. I mean, just thinking --
18 you know, during the time right now, just say that
19 we had a massive flooding coming from the north on
20 the Mississippi, then they could open that to
21 40 percent, which may stop it to the point that
22 we'd not have to open up the Bonnet Carré, and
23 that's amazing, you know, if we could do some
24 little things.

25 But they're working hard with us. I can

1 tell you the Corps is not going to open the Bonnet
2 Carre' unless they absolutely have to. It's going
3 to be something they have to do, and they can't do
4 anything about it because they're fighting with
5 us. They want it as much as we do, and, you know,
6 they want to make this work. So I think we're
7 getting there. That's just like anything else.
8 It's a slow process.

9 CAM ROBERDS:

10 Yeah. Well, y'all have kept the
11 pressure on them and that's what -- it will keep
12 them on their toes for sure.

13 JOE SPRAGGINS:

14 Yeah.

15 CAM ROBERDS:

16 All right. Anything else, Director?

17 JOE SPRAGGINS:

18 No. Y'all have run me over time.
19 You're 30 minutes over. I don't know what you're
20 doing.

21 CAM ROBERDS:

22 Do we have a motion to close?

23 RONNIE DANIELS:

24 Motion.

25 MATTHEW MAYFIELD:

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Second.

CAM ROBERDS:

All in favor?

(Unanimous vote.)

CAM ROBERDS:

Thanks, everyone.

(Adjourned at 10:27 a.m.)

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 15th day of April, 2026.

Melissa Burdine-Rodolfich



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