STATE OF MISSISSIPPI

MISSISSIPPI ADVISORY COMMISSION ON MARINE RESOURCES

COMMISSION MEETING

Tuesday, October 20, 2026, 9:00 a.m.,

Bolton Building Auditorium

1141 Bayview Avenue, Biloxi, Mississippi 39530

COMMISSION MEMBERS:

Ronnie Daniels
Matthew Mayfield
Jonathan McLendon
Cam Roberds

ALSO PRESENT:

Joe Spraggins
Sandy Chesnut, Esquire
Steven Eckert, Esquire

REPORTED BY:

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JONATHAN MCLENDON:

All right. We'll now call this meeting of the Mississippi Advisory Commission on Marine Resources to order, Tuesday, October 20th, 2026.

Commissioner Daniels, can you lead us in the Pledge?

RONNIE DANIELS:

Yes.

(Pledge of Allegiance was recited.)

JONATHAN MCLENDON:

Director Spraggins, you want to lead us in prayer?

JOE SPRAGGINS:

Yeah. And before we go to prayer, you know, we need to think about our people -- our friends and family and the ones over in Louisiana -- I mean, excuse me, Alabama and Florida. They're still fighting after that storm. It was a bad storm. And there is a lot of recovery going on, so keep them in your prayers for -- okay. Let's go to the Lord.

(Moment of prayer.)

JONATHAN MCLENDON:

All right. Do we have any discussion on the previous minutes?

(No response.)

JONATHAN MCLENDON:

Do we have a motion to approve the minutes?

RONNIE DANIELS:

Motion.

MATTHEW MAYFIELD:

Second.

JONATHAN MCLENDON:

All in favor?

(Unanimous vote.)

JONATHAN MCLENDON:

Approval of the agenda. Do we have any discussion about the agenda?

RONNIE DANIELS:

Motion.

MATTHEW MAYFIELD:

Second.

JONATHAN MCLENDON:

All in favor?

(Unanimous vote.)

JONATHAN MCLENDON:

Executive Director Spraggins, your report, sir.

JOE SPRAGGINS:

Okay. All right. Well, we have the honor today of having the Wildlife and Fisheries Department here, and Adam Butler, who is the Deputy Director for the Wildlife Division, is going to be here with us today. And, Adam, we want to welcome you here and thank you for being able to be here today and look forward to your brief about wildlife for us.

ADAM BUTLER:

Thank you, General Spraggins. Thank y'all for having us here. On behalf of our commission, Chairman Mounger and Director Posey, I'm pleased to be able to give an update on the Department of Wildlife and Fisheries, our sister agency, Department of Marine Resources, down here. Glad to be the on Coast and appreciate, you know, you guys being host to our togetherness tonight and our commission meeting here tomorrow.

So just want to give a little update on what we do so you folks can see what we do on the land side of things to conserve the State's resources. The mission of the Mississippi Department of Wildlife, Fisheries and Parks can be summarized in our mission statement: To conserve and enhance Mississippi's wildlife, fisheries and

parks and provide quality outdoor recreation. As an agency, we were formed in 1932.

And as a long-time wildlife biologist myself, I can't hardly give a public presentation without somehow referencing Aldo Leopold, the father of wildlife management. And I think it's worth talking about him because, you know, he was from the midwest, had a career primarily in Wisconsin. And like a lot of great men, he become -- he became to doubt himself and doubt some of the things that he came up with. And in 1929, he decided that he wanted to come to the South and see if some of the ideas and theories that he had translated to other parts of the country.

In 1929, here in Mississippi, we were in dire straits in terms of wildlife. You know, deer were gone. Turkeys were gone. Bears were gone. Many of the species that we take for granted today had almost been completely eliminated. And so Aldo came here and he spent a good part of a year going all over the state, meeting with the citizenry of the state, people, landowners. Came down here to the Coast. Spent some time in Pascagoula.

And one of the quotes -- he put together a report that the original draft of which is still at our Museum of Natural Science today, and it's a great overview of what our state was like in 1929, you know, nearly 100 years ago, you know, and all the things that we were facing in terms of conservation issues and challenges. And there's a quote in there -- and I'm going to -- I'm going to butcher it. I can't say it word for word, but it really stands out to me. He says that in all of his travels all across the country, he had never been somewhere and met a people that were more passionate and enthusiastic and oriented towards the outdoors as what he experienced in Mississippi. It was a real testament to the citizenry of our state back then.

But he goes a little step further and says, even though they're the most passionate outdoors people I've ever met, they may be the most ignorant about conservation, that he -- at the time, he recognized that there were a lot of issues and challenges and there was good work happening in other parts of the country then that Mississippi had quite -- had not quite caught up to.

And I think about that quote a lot because I think there is still a lot of truth in that. I think our state, you know, whether we're out on the saltwater here or whether we're, you know, in a bottomland hardwood up on the Pearl River or in the Delta with ducks, Mississippians love the outdoors and they love the things that we work to try to conserve and take care of the heritage and traditions that we have. But have a lot of challenges, and I know you guys have those as well, you know, little different issues, but we're all facing the same sort of things. So it's good to address the Department of Marine Resources, a sister agency, in this fight to conserve the things that so many of our fellow citizens here in the state love.

If you look at our agency, basically our entire agency is broken into about seven different bureaus that all have similar yet distinct functions.

First would be conservation programs. It's a relatively recently formed bureau taken to house all of our efforts around hunter education, boater education, shooting sports. Our shooting ranges, I will touch on here in a second. A lot

of our outreach, youth outreach around shooting and education, so our programs like our AIMS program, Archery in Mississippi Schools, our scholastic shooting sports program, all of that is under conservation programs.

Our fisheries bureau, which would probably be the most familiar to you guys is tasked with managing fisheries on inland waters of the state, the big reservoirs up in the north part of the state, lakes and streams. Also do a lot of technical outreach to private landowners for pond management, those sort of things.

Our law enforcement bureau, by far our largest division within the agency in terms of personnel and probably our most visible to most of the Mississippi public. You know, we try to do have at least one conservation officer in every county. Usually try to have more than one where we can. That's always a challenge trying to keep that staffing up.

And, you know, as a biologist, I hate to say it, but game wardens are probably our most visible public servants that most of the people are going to see and be familiar with in their counties.

We have our Museum of Natural Science and it's both a museum and houses a lot of our non-game research programs. The museum gets hundreds of thousands of visitors every year there in Jackson at LeFleur's Bluff. Constantly wins awards, regarded as one of the finest museums in Mississippi, if not the South.

And then as I said, the research side, we do a lot of research, herpetology, ornithology. We have a huge collection of specimens from the state going back, you know, 150 years in some cases.

State parks, we've got 25 state parks and we've really, over the last couple of years, gone through a renaissance of revitalizing a lot of those parks. Really big thanks to the legislature. They've invested heavily over the last five-ish or so years, so we -- a number of those have been retooled. We've redone cabins. We put a lot down here on the Coast into Buccaneer. We kind of consider it one of our crown jewel parks in the state.

Support services, they do what they say, you know, HR, accounting, procurement, all of the things that have to happen behind the scenes to

make an agency run.

And then wildlife bureau, as General Spraggins said, I'm the deputy director of the wildlife bureau, so that's primarily all of our wildlife programs, WMAs, those sort of things. So terrestrial species on land is what we work on.

If you ask what it is we do, you can kind of break that down into sort of four broad objectives, I guess you could call them.

The first being education, so expand the knowledge base to better conserve our natural resources. We will not be successful in having deer and ducks and turkeys and things like that 50 or 100 years from now if the public is not aware of those things, the value of those things, the challenges they're facing.

Along with that, we are constantly involved in engagement and that's both in engagement of the public themselves through all kinds of media outlets, all sorts of avenues to try to tell people about the incredible resources we have here in the state, what it takes to conserve them, what they can do, how they can plug in, but also a lot of engagement with partners. We work with an enormous number of different

groups, NGOs, other government agencies, federal agencies, state agencies, to try to advance conservation enhancement.

So this is, again, wildlife bureau. This is the enjoyable parts of our job. This is out on the land riding a tractor, taking a drip torch, burning the woods, creating habitat, doing the things that it takes to manage habitats to make them better for wildlife.

And then protection, so protecting both the public and Mississippi's natural resources. So that's law enforcement. That's the things that it takes to make sure the resources are being used properly.

Just a few statistics, I mean, these are just a couple that I picked out. Could be a lot more, but just an overview of some of our specific programs. So up top there, the Mississippi Museum of Natural Science, again, there in Jackson right off Lakeland Drive at LeFleur's Bluff. We have 200 living specimens, so all sorts of things if you've been through the exhibits there, the aquarium, stuff like that, 100-gallon aquarium, 733,000 square feet of permanent and temporary exhibit space, so they're constantly rotating

different exhibits in and out of the museum itself. If someone hasn't been there, I'd highly recommend swinging by there. You can make a quick tour through the museum if you're ever in Jackson. Like I said, we -- our museum constantly wins awards for both best in Mississippi, if not within the Southeast and around the country.

Shooting facilities. We've got three -- currently have three public shooting facilities. McIvor in the north, Turcotte there in Jackson and then down here on the Coast, McHenry. We really see engaging the public in shooting as one of the best things we can do both for public education and outreach, but also those dollars play into the federal Pittman-Robertson funding and things like that that help fund our agency. So it's a great investment for both the public and the agency.

State lakes, we've got 21 state park lakes and 18 other state lakes around Mississippi. So 225,000 acres of lakes and reservoirs, boating access, quality fishing.

I mentioned our parks a minute ago. So we've got 25 state parks currently and have invested heavily over the last several years to update and revitalize a lot of those parks. I

would highly encourage y'all to go book a cabin at Roosevelt, book a cabin at Percy Quinn, some of the ones where we've revitalized some of those old CCC cabins.

And then our WMAs -- and actually this -- we have -- this slide says 53 wildlife management areas. That's now wrong. We now have 54 as of October 1st. We opened a new one in the north Delta, Alligator WMA. But we've got the 700,000 acres of public hunting land available here in Mississippi through our WMA system.

Just some pictures. So a picture is worth a thousand words, so I can't do it justice. Just an overview of some of our staff out on the land and on the waters doing different things. You see the black bear up in the top left. We've got a growing population of black bears up in the state and over the last couple of years, that's been a great interest to a lot of people.

Down in the bottom right, alligator surveys, we do those every year all across a lot of rivers and lakes here in the state to keep up with the alligator population. That's really a popular species that we've got to keep tabs on. Wood ducks, we band wood ducks every summer. That

feeds into population estimates of waterfowl and that translates into hunting seasons.

This is an example of just a lot of public engagement, different things. You see top left, we're doing fuel days with landowners about prescribed burning so that we can get more folks engaged there.

Bottom left, that's our AIMS program. We've got tens of thousands of kids now that shoot bows and arrows as part of scholastic shooting programs.

Wetland management down in the bottom right. That's really involved, being at the lower end of the Mississippi Flyway. We're a critical part of kind of managing North America's waterfowl population. You see our staff doing different training events and stuff like that to stay on top of our game.

There is the museum top left. Again, I encourage everybody to go, not just see the museum, but bottom left there, that's the trails behind the museum, the LeFleur's Park. LeFleur's Park Complex there behind the museum has a great network of trails and we're excited about opportunities that are going to expand both

further, and we've even announced a walkway across Lakeland that's going to connect the Ag museum and the sports museum, those sort of things.

The bottom right, that's an example of one of our cabins that have been revitalized. As I said, we've had a tremendous investment in state parks. A lot of those cabins were built in the 1930s and came with really specific challenges about updating them.

Fishing rodeos, we do a ton of that sort of stuff.

Some of our law enforcement guys out on the water protecting that recourse.

The top right, John Gruchy, our private lands coordinator doing what he does best, getting landowners in Mississippi engaged and active in habitat management.

Youth events, museum specimens. We've got a lot going on.

Habitat management, you see a skidder spraying herbicide. I think -- I actually think that was down here on the land between the creeks unit, a Pascagoula WMA. We've got a lot of cogon grass on there. That's a constant challenge fighting invasive species. I'm sure you guys do

that as well out on the water. I don't know the saltwater invasive species, but I'm sure they're there and I'm sure it's a challenge.

Prescribed fire. Wetland enhancement in the top right, trying to level out some of our moist soil units so we can better manage water, so a lot going on.

We appreciate the opportunity to address you guys and, you know, as a sister agency, want to do everything we can to create a better working relationship. And I'm sure today, tonight and tomorrow will be a great time to do that.

So with that, I will take any questions.

JOE SPRAGGINS:

Well, we thank you, Adam. And, you know, I appreciate that briefing about wildlife and, you know, we're pleased to be a partner with y'all. I know Director Posey and I worked hand in hand together on a lot of things and we appreciate everything that you are doing. And we see what they do.

And, you know, y'all stole a couple of our good ones. They stole May and they stole Trosclair from us and -- we'll welcome -- we're not like NIL. We'll take them back.

ADAM BUTLER:

Well, I appreciate that and thanks for the opportunity to be here.

JOE SPRAGGINS:

But we appreciate it. And AIMS, I do appreciate that too. For the ones that don't know about that, that is a -- it's going all over. And they have competed in the nationals and won very high up in the national rankings in, I think, this last year.

ADAM BUTLER:

Absolutely. It's a great program for kids that may not be necessarily the athletically gifted to represent their schools on a team and get out there, and it's just grown by leaps and bounds. Honestly, it's kind of hard to keep up with. There's so much interest from around the state and wanting to get that program in different schools.

JOE SPRAGGINS:

Yeah. And, I mean, we're hoping -- you know, I've been talking to them a lot about it and, hopefully, maybe one day we can do something to where we do archery and fishing, you know, and being able to do something with that. I know

it's -- the way it is, it's set up in the school system, but that would be great because, I mean, you know, we have quite a few people that do that and, you know, they fish that way.

And the museum, yeah, if you haven't been there, you need to go. I'll tell you that. It is fantastic. Might even see a dinosaur if you don't watch out. You know, you've got to watch out. There is a lot of stuff up there.

And the state parks, thank you so much for the one we have here on the Coast, you know. I know we've got several of them, but we have some good state parks down here and everything works out great and we're glad to be a part of every bit of that.

ADAM BUTLER:

Absolutely. Parks are not my division, so it's not one that I know a lot about, but I know Buccaneer down here on the Coast is usually one or two as far as the visitation and things like that, so we're glad to have it down here.

JOE SPRAGGINS:

We thank you so much and I appreciate it. Y'all have any questions for Adam?

RONNIE DANIELS:

Where is that museum? Where is it located at?

ADAM BUTLER:

When you're coming north on 55 and going to get off on Lakeland, basically take that Lakeland exit and it's kind of right there on the corner.

JOE SPRAGGINS:

It's right there.

RONNIE DANIELS:

I need to make a visit to it, it looks like.

ADAM BUTLER:

Right across from all the hospitals, basically.

JOE SPRAGGINS:

It's a beautiful place, and they've got a children's area there that's very nice too.

ADAM BUTLER:

Yeah. We just renovated -- or created a large outdoor playground that I couldn't throw out the number, but it's really impressive the number of people that come through that playground just on daily basis.

JOE SPRAGGINS:

We don't have a golf course there anymore, do we, or do we?

ADAM BUTLER:

Don't put me on the spot there. There is a golf course there.

JOE SPRAGGINS:

Going to rebuild it? Not going to rebuild it?

ADAM BUTLER:

Yeah. There is a golf course there and there is plans to enhance it, yeah.

JOE SPRAGGINS:

I know it's a nice area over there, right in downtown Jackson.

ADAM BUTLER:

Absolutely.

JOE SPRAGGINS:

And excellent to have that.

Any other questions for Adam?

JONATHAN MCLENDON:

No, sir.

JOE SPRAGGINS:

Adam, we thank you.

And tomorrow, for the ones who want to, Wildlife, Fisheries and Parks are having their

commission meeting here tomorrow.

ADAM BUTLER:

Correct.

JOE SPRAGGINS:

They wanted to come to the Coast one time a year and do it, and so they're going to be here tomorrow to have their Wildlife, Fisheries and Parks, and we're going to brief them about what we do at Department of Marine Resources. So thank y'all.

ADAM BUTLER:

Absolutely. Thank y'all.

JOE SPRAGGINS:

Okay. Going right along here. Let's see where I'm at here. Employment contracts. Get that pulled up.

Kyle Wigginton is promoted as far as Specialist II in Marine Fisheries. We've got -- Allison Faggard is an Environmental Natural Resource specialist. And let's see. We have Jacob O'Neal promoted to Law Enforcement Officer II, Corporal. And Reed Verdin is promoted to Law Enforcement III, Sergeant. Cameron Hodge is promoted to Law Enforcement Officer, Corporal, and that's II. And we've got a new hire and

that's Gabby Seal, who started out with law enforcement, and she is a cadet right now.

So we're glad to have those on board. We've got some new people coming in and we're tickled to death to have them on board, and thank you very much for being able to do that.

Senator, did I see my senator come in here? Senator Ladner, thank you. Anything you have you would like to say?

SENATOR LADNER:

No.

JOE SPRAGGINS:

Well, thank you for coming in here today. I appreciate it, Senator, out of Hancock County. And we appreciate you for coming here today and thank you for being here.

Let's see.

Agency updates. The Bolton Building, well, we're back in, having our first commission meeting in over a year, so this is great, you know, being able to be back here. We're tickled to death to be able to do that. I think if everything goes well, we will be back on the sixth floor the first part of next month and then the seventh -- the fifth floor is going to be right in

the same time frame.

And it's just a little bit -- they're working on a few little minor things, you know, that we're doing. As far as the majority of the work, the work has been done. The only thing that we will have to put up with a few more months is they're redoing the roof and so we're going to have that. And the roofers will still be doing -- and they're going to let us move back into the floors before we do that, but everything is working good.

We're going to come back into a refreshed building. It's not a new building, but it's as new as it can be because they have really been gutting it on the inside. We have -- all indications of everything I've seen, we'll be mold free and everything else will be great. They have went in and did all kinds of work on that and took all the walls out on the inside and redid the windows. They did a lot of work. I tell you what. It's been -- and the floors have been redone. The ceilings have been redone. The air conditioning systems have been redone. It's going to be a great deal.

So thank DFA for helping us with that

and getting our building back, and we will be back operational probably 100 percent some time next month.

Any questions on that?

(No response.)

JOE SPRAGGINS:

'19 and '20 Bonnet Carré, we're still just trying to close some loose ends on that. It looks like that most everything has been paid out. We do have a few things that are left over. We're trying to settle a few disputes that are going and some of them will wind up being in court, so we'll just have to let the court do that. But the majority of that have has been paid out.

Any questions on it?

(No response.)

JOE SPRAGGINS:

All right. September 28th through 30th, we'll be at Gulf Council -- we were at Gulf Council in Tampa and had a good meeting. Everything went good there. We were able to talk to the SSC. Trevor did a fantastic job. He's always doing a great job for us over there.

And, you know, we have brought it to the situation basically -- Trevor, you want to talk to

them a minute about that and tell them about what we're going to do with the -- as far as the red snapper?

TREVOR MONCRIEF:

Yes. So we saw an opportunity within the SSC meeting -- we had some open time and we thought it would be appropriate for us to bring up both MS Creel and the AL Creel programs to the SSC themselves. So we have already received federal certification through NOAA, as we've already provided to y'all. And, essentially, what we wanted to do was get the ball rolling on the conversation of how we're going to handle red snapper season in 2027 because as of that year, MS Creel will be the way we monitor and manage the fishery.

So in order to create a path forward, we thought it would be best to have the SSC review it and then we're going to bring it up at the Council, as well, for further discussion on essentially a common sense approach for us to take MS Creel, use it as our management survey for red snapper and attempt to get our full allocation back rather than being calibrated down 50 percent.

So it's another common sense

conversation we're going to try to have with them. We're going to provide our side of it, explain it to them exactly the situation we're in and how we got here and, hopefully, they understand and we come to some common ground.

JOE SPRAGGINS:

And this way, we'll have three states. It will be Louisiana, Mississippi and Alabama --

TREVOR MONCRIEF:

Yep.

JOE SPRAGGINS:

-- all under one program.

TREVOR MONCRIEF:

So the bigger picture is what we've always talked about. There's kind of three things going on at the same time. The one is our single allocation that we're trying to get back and trying to reduce the effect of calibration between those surveys.

Number 2 is the distribution between states, which if we can work out Number 1, the allocation between states kind of goes back on the back burner a little bit more.

Number 3 is creating -- essentially redoing the assessment, which they're trying to

work on now, including LA Creel, AL Creel and MS Creel as the currency that goes into the stock assessment to produce new management advice to the fisheries and go through the entire big-picture conversation about allocation splits and everything else like that.

So multiple things at once. The one we're going to do next week is the short-term solution to try to get this thing across the finish line and get a solution for us quickly.

The assessment side of things is more long-term, bigger picture for the entire stock of providing new management advice.

JOE SPRAGGINS:

Yeah. And this -- you know, that will leave only Florida that will be doing MRIP and because Texas has not done it for years. And it will be Mississippi, Alabama, Louisiana under one program, so it's hard for them not to justify it. And I think -- all the things that I saw in the SSC meeting that Trevor led was that -- I think the full SSC believes that this is a good program. And they believe in the program. They've just got to see the data, and I think the data is -- you know, they're scientists and that's what they look

at, but they're looking at data and where is the data at, but using the CHTS. Is that --

TREVOR MONCRIEF:

Yeah. So to clarify, we provided -- we've provided estimates. We've provided efficiency gains, comparisons between surveys. We actually had James, one of the finfish bureau staff, come and give a presentation. He did a great job. It was 45 minutes of work that we had tried to boil down and provide to them.

And really, the questions after that were just centered around precision thresholds and the amount of uncertainty. So in terms of MS Creel, its relative standard error, RSE, to essentially compare it directly to MRIP to see if we're gaining precision. Now, that's on the scientific level. Right? That's what the SSC desires, everything else like that for the most part. All of the estimates in the past, which has been one of our arguments, have been taken at face value and slapped with a 10 percent coefficient of variation, rather than truly looking at the standard error.

So we're going to provide that to them at the next meeting. We'll provide them more

information, whatever information we need to. We're just going to give another 45-minute presentation and let them deliberate, but at the end of the day, I think we've got every justification on our side and we have done our due diligence over the last two years to prove it.

JOE SPRAGGINS:

Our goal is to take it to the Gulf Council next week and bring it forward to them and see if we can't get them to step up and say that, hey, we believe in this and we want to support this. And if they do -- the SSC, that's what they're looking for. That's exactly what they're looking for; is that correct?

TREVOR MONCRIEF:

Yes. The SSC is not going to make the decision on calibration or allocation at this point. They feel that that's more of a management decision, which occurs at the Council. So this was a pass-off at the program saying it's better. It's doing what it needs to do and the Council gets to try to make a management decision on how to treat the fishery in 2027 and how to move forward with these programs.

JOE SPRAGGINS:

And we could come up with a lot more allocation next year if this works out, so thank you, Trevor.

CAM ROBERDS:

If it does go forward, what would the ACL -- what do you anticipate --

TREVOR MONCRIEF:

So our proposed -- our proposal right now is to treat us one to one, so the quota -- the ACLs are currently still in CHTS at the federal level and what we're saying is we want to treat MS Creel and CHTS as one to one, which would mean our quota would go up from 82,342 up to 162-, so that's a lot.

That's a substantial difference and that's going to cross a little bit of eyes, but at the same time, we made the point in the SSC, you have to understand that the base level we represent is .993 percent of the overall ACL for the entire Gulf. .993, so that impact is minimal in the grand scheme of the Gulf stock.

CAM ROBERDS:

We're hitting -- I mean, we're at the end of October. Have our neighbors wrapped up their ACLs?

TREVOR MONCRIEF:

Yeah. So Louisiana met theirs and closed after Labor Day. Alabama, I don't think is going to make theirs this year. Honestly, y'all have seen the pattern.

JOE SPRAGGINS:

Florida?

TREVOR MONCRIEF:

Florida, we won't know, so that's another point to make. We won't know about Florida until February of next year because of the delay in their surveys.

CAM ROBERDS:

They're taking four fish per person, so Louisiana --

TREVOR MONCRIEF:

Yeah. So Louisiana has met theirs. Texas is doing what they do. Alabama is likely going to trickle on. And y'all have seen in our fishery as well, once you get to Labor Day, you really drop off a lot of effort, you know, college football, school, everything else like that. Everything kind of tapers off with hunting season and then it trickles along. So if you're not at 80 to 85 percent by Labor Day, you've got a real

chance of just stretching that thing on out for a long time because you don't have the effort to keep it up.

JOE SPRAGGINS:

Florida has theirs set right now to go all the way to the end of the year and -- because they were almost 1 million pounds under last year and they was almost 1 million pounds the last two years prior to that. So they're hurting as far as being able to have the fishery to be able to do what they need to do.

TREVOR MONCRIEF:

Uh-huh.

JOE SPRAGGINS:

And that's another reason why we're trying to get them to understand that giving us another 80,000 pounds doesn't mean anything because it's not hurting the ACL of the whole Gulf and that's a big thing. The ACL of the Gulf is nowhere near being tested.

Okay. Thank you, Trevor.

TREVOR MONCRIEF:

Yep.

CAM ROBERDS:

Thanks for all the hard work.

MATTHEW MAYFIELD:

Thanks, Trevor.

JOE SPRAGGINS:

All right. Cruisin' the Coast, I hope you got to come to it last -- the first part of October. It was a great time, even though we did have a hurricane come in at the end of it, and -- but thank goodness, the Lord blessed us and didn't hurt us with it and didn't have any issues on this.

But we did have quite a few. We had -- set a new record 10,700-something. I forgot what the number is, so it seems Woody sets a record every year, and, you know, we just get better and better. The largest cruising in the world and that's amazing. I tell you what. It happens right here in South Mississippi. Over 100,000 people were here.

We had people stacked up waiting in line to be able to get the shrimp when we was cooking shrimp for them at the check-in station on Monday and Tuesday and then at the Town Green on Wednesday. There was people just lined up waiting to get them. I tell you what. And that's amazing, isn't it, because they was wanting to

have some of that Mississippi Gulf fresh shrimp.

And I think that is really going over big time with what we're doing. People are getting the word, and I think that's working fantastic, so thank all the team that worked so hard the whole week. I was gone about half the week, couldn't be here, but I appreciate everybody in what they did. Every one of them, you know, worked hard.

And I don't want to call out one name because if I did, I would miss a dozen and I'd mess up. But everybody did a fantastic job at working on Cruisin' and they were out there working for us and helping us, so thank you for that.

All right. On October the 7th, during Cruisin', I had to go speak to the state -- the judge's conference and I talked to them in Jackson about seafood labeling. And they were very interested in what we're doing because they're basically the ones that's going to make the rules when we send them -- a ticket to somebody, they're the ones that's going to have to enforce it.

And so they were very appreciative of us telling them exactly what we're talking about and

why that -- we are able to do and what we're -- I mean, what we're trying to do is help the people. You know, we're not trying to hurt them. If you get a ticket, it's because you didn't pay attention and it's because you're not trying to do what you're supposed to do. I will just give you that point.

If we give you a ticket at a restaurant or a seafood market or anywhere else for selling seafood wrong, it's because you did not try to do it. It's not because we didn't try to bend over backwards to help you because we're going to do that.

Any questions on that?

(No response.)

JOE SPRAGGINS:

October 8th, we had that -- speak at the hurricane conference at the IP, and that was a good conference there. Everything went good there with no problems. You know, once again -- it wasn't the IP. It was at the community college and -- that threw me offline when I saw IP there.

Anyway, long story short, we had -- Governor Barbour was there. We had the governor there. He talked to us about -- and we got to

talking -- we also had our congressmen there and we had quite a few others come from the state and we talked about what we did during Hurricane Katrina and what we learned in Hurricane Katrina and where we're going forward with it. So amazing that it happened the day before the hurricane hit in Florida, so isn't that -- you know, but it was a good eyeopener for us to be able to look at it and everybody to get their mind on it and understand what's going on.

And I always appreciate Governor Barbour. I tell you what, I just love to hear his stories. He's amazing, and we were lucky to have him.

Any questions on that?

(No response.)

JOE SPRAGGINS:

All right. Our task force meeting we had on October 12th. And just to give you an idea, we're working forward on that. Everything is going good with the task force, the seafood task force. We have the advertisement that if you come in to Mississippi on any major road during last week or so of September and first week of October, you saw a sign that said "From the Gulf

to our Table." And we're talking about our seafood, and that is -- there were billboards everywhere. And we were advertising that and we're advertising Mississippi Gulf fresh seafood. We're trying to do everything we can to get our fishermen as much as they can possibly get. And I want you to know that it's working and we're getting there. Everything is working very good on how we're going with that.

I'll just give you an idea too. We're going to be in the Rose Bowl Parade, so, you know, if you watch the Rose Bowl Parade on January 1st, when you see that Mississippi float, the very front of it is Mississippi seafood. And it's going to have the Mississippi seafood and it's going to have our lighthouse. It's going to be the Biloxi lighthouse. But we're going to have Mississippi seafood and that's going to be on the very front of that float out there.

I'm going to fly out that week before and we're going to have some meetings with a lot of different companies and talk to them about Mississippi seafood and how good it is. We're taking some chefs out to cook and they're going to cook for us, and we're going to be able to cook

Mississippi seafood in Los Angeles, California. So I want y'all to know we're doing everything we can to get the word out, Mississippi seafood and how great it is.

Y'all remember one time years ago we were the capital of the world. We're trying to get back there. Okay? So let's get back to Mississippi seafood. So any questions on that?

(No response.)

JOE SPRAGGINS:

I thank the task force. They're doing a fantastic job. Also, I can't help but thank Judy and Kendra and them with the Gulf Coast part of it. They're just doing a fantastic job and they're going out there fighting hard every day and getting us advertisement and doing things that we need.

Gulf States canceled because of the hurricane so we'll have a -- the Gulf States will be, I think, in March now. We're going to have a March meeting and then another major meeting in October.

So October 16th at the Fallen Oak, the College Invitational Golf Tournament, we did the cooking for them. Quite a few young men from

across the southern part of the United States got to eat Mississippi fresh seafood, and thank the team for doing that. That was a fantastic job. It's another way, just another way for us to get it out and for people to be able to talk about it. And I tell you what, if you ever eat one of those shrimp and eat some of that fish and eat some of them oysters and everything, it's just hard not to come back to it. I mean, it's hard not to.

Once again, we got the Wildlife, Fisheries, Parks Commission meeting here tomorrow at 9:00. We'll be doing our part at 9:00 and then their commission meeting starts at 10:00, so anybody, I think, is welcome to be able to be there.

October 28th, 29th Council meeting, once again, Galveston. We will get that. We will be there. Me and Rick and Trevor will be there and Jason will be there if he makes it back from overseas. But we will get everything taken care of and, hopefully, we'll get something done at this Council meeting to be able to work for us to our next year, and so we're going to fight for it. Trevor is coming to help us fight for it, so we appreciate it.

Veterans Day, we're going to be closed for Veterans Day, so obviously, I hope you tell -- if you see a veteran, shake their hand. Thank them. They're the reason we're having this meeting right here today. They're the reason that we have a Department of Marine Resources. They're the reason that we have a country that we live in that we can be free and do what we need to do, so if you see one, thank them because I tell you what, whether they fought in the war or whatever they did, they did everything they could to protect their country for you, so thank you very much for that.

Our next Commission meeting is going to be on the 17th and it will be back here at this building, so any questions on that?

(No response.)

JOE SPRAGGINS:

All right. Derelict vessels real quick. We've got 273 vessel cases that have been reported; 238 of them have been removed. So that's pretty darn good. And out of 273, 238 has been removed, 35 are pending removal and two are receiving court orders right now for removal. So hopefully, we'll be at 273 before long and have

them all out of here.

But that's a -- we've got a new program. They did give some more money in it on the federal side of it, so we're going to be in -- all five of the states are part of it again this year, so it looks like and hopefully -- and we're doing that though GOAA, so hopefully, everything will work there.

Let's see. Anything else on that?

All right. The other thing is actions update.

STEVEN ECKERT:

Good morning, Commissioners and Director. Discussed at the September 2026 meeting, the Commission recommended and the Director approved a motion that a notice of intent be filed with the Secretary of State for changes to Rule 8.1 under Title 22 for commercial size possession and catch limits for the spotted seatrout. The first change being under Rule 81-A.2, the total length would be moved from 14 inches to 15 inches.

And then under Rule 8.1.J., the annual total catch for commercial landings of the spouted seatrout would be moved from 50,000 pounds to

70,000 pounds. And, finally, under Rule 8.1.K., the amount -- the applicant selling at least $1,000 of finfish would be changed to $2,000. That would be changed for the trip ticket officer for validation through the trip ticket system.

Finally, there was a motion to recommend an approval of the saltwater finfish records. First, for conventional tackle, being a Spanish hogfish, a 1.64 -- one pound, 6.4 ounce record belonging to James Graham; a southern stargazer, of 7.2 ounces belonging to Scott Thibodeaux; and finally, a youth conventional tackle, a Spanish mackerel of five pounds 8.32 ounces to Riley Armes.

And that is all of the actions updates from our September meeting.

JOE SPRAGGINS:

Okay. Well, I appreciate that.

And Commissioner McLendon, I think that's all I have. Thank you very much.

JONATHAN MCLENDON:

All right. Thank you, Director.

Any of our commissioners have anything to report today?

(No response.)

JONATHAN MCLENDON:

All right. Moving on to you, Chief Wilkerson. Report on citations.

KYLE WILKERSON:

Good morning, Commissioners, Legal, Director.

JONATHAN MCLENDON:

Good morning.

KYLE WILKERSON:

Thank you, Director, for the presentation. We do work very closely with the law enforcement bureau. Also, I do consider Officer May and Officer Trosclair still my personnel.

JOE SPRAGGINS:

Taking them back tomorrow.

KYLE WILKERSON:

All right. So -- that's right. So September was a typical September. We wrote 71 fishery violations. Twenty-one boat and water safety violations and also 21 miscellaneous violations. A couple of them were alligator violations, possession of alcohol while hunting. That's a no-no. Other than that -- what's that?

JOE SPRAGGINS:

Can't shoot an alligator while drinking?

KYLE WILKERSON:

No, sir. No, sir.

Also, we've checked 1,271 people for September. Other than that, nothing jumps out at me. I will field any questions.

JONATHAN MCLENDON:

We're all good. Thank you for keeping us in order.

KYLE WILKERSON:

Y'all are all right. I like that.

JOE SPRAGGINS:

You know, it's not legal to get the alligator drunk?

KYLE WILKERSON:

No, sir. No, sir. Thank you.

JONATHAN MCLENDON:

All right. Next up, moving on to office of finance and administration, Ms. Leslie Brewer.

LESLIE BREWER:

Good morning, everyone. I'm presenting the financials for the month ending in -- I'm sorry, the quarter ending September 30th, 2026. At the end of September, our state revenue was 3.9 million. Our agency revenue was 6.2 million.

State net income was 2.1 million, and agency net income was a negative 4.6 million.

And after three months, we've got 97.2 percent of the budget remaining for operations, and Tidelands is at 89.5 percent.

Anyone have any questions?

JOE SPRAGGINS:

And to let you know, those negative numbers are only because of a couple of things, and explain that. One of them is because we don't get our budget -- our money from the state and the other one is because a lot of things come in at one time.

LESLIE BREWER:

Well, GOMESA and Tidelands are the big ones because we get our money in a prior fiscal year, so the revenue is never going to match the expenses. And then on the federal side, we have to wait for reimbursement, so it's always going to be in the negative like this. So the only time it turns around is when we actually get our GOMESA funding or our Tidelands checks, so -- and then it looks a little better, but we're not actually in the negative.

JOE SPRAGGINS:

We haven't overspent our $338 million?

LESLIE BREWER:

Right. No. We're good.

JONATHAN MCLENDON:

So we're getting our budget ahead of time. We're spreading it out.

LESLIE BREWER:

Yeah. We've got the money, but it doesn't show on here because it's cash. So whenever we're spending it is when you're going to see it or when we receive it is when you're going to see it, but it's not -- this doesn't line up basically, but, yeah, it's good. We have money.

JONATHAN MCLENDON:

All right. Any questions?

(No response.)

JONATHAN MCLENDON:

Next up, we've got Tidelands trust fund, Ms. Sonja Slater.

SONJA SLATER:

Good morning.

JONATHAN MCLENDON:

Good morning.

SONJA SLATER:

I'm Sonja Slater. I'm the Tidelands

coordinator for the DMR. I meet y'all about once a year to go over the Tidelands application process and what we have done with Tidelands money that we have received.

FY29's Tidelands schedule is going to be the same as it was last year, except this year, we start accepting applications May 27th. We stop accepting them on July 1st. They get reviewed between July and August. We do a merit review in September and October. We make recommendations to the CMR in November.

Typically, we have a legislative forum in December. In January, the projects go to the legislators for review and approval. The appropriation bill typically comes out in March or April, and then we normally get the checks sometime around October or November, so we're expecting our check soon. And then in December, we actually send out the grant agreements for the projects.

Our applications for FY28 have already been received, scored and merited and the books are being readied today to go to the legislature in January. We received 74 application submissions for the Tidelands project -- that

includes public and managed projects -- to the tune of $31.2 million.

We had 44 public access projects for the 22.9 million. Thirty managed projects for 8.3 million. And then it breaks down by city, county and miscellaneous projects. Our appropriations for FY27 were 12,360,000. We have not received that check yet, though.

The public access projects for the FY27, these are awarded in the House Bill by the legislators, so they awarded the cities in the six coastal -- three coastal counties 4.5 million. The Board of Supervisors' projects were 1.3 million. They had 375,000 in miscellaneous projects and 245 went to USM.

And then for our managed projects, typically, the Director does not award those projects until we receive the Tidelands funding, and he does that for many reasons. Mainly, we want to make sure we have the money and, two, sometimes the allocation comes in for more than what the check actually is and we have to do a proration so he prefers to hold off on managed projects until the check is received.

But it is already separated in this

House Bill that MDMR will get 3.8 million, 2 million to go towards the bond and we'll have 6 million in authority, not money. 6 million in authority for prior year expenses. We were allocated 3.8 million for managed projects under Tidelands through DMR.

And that's all I have. Y'all have any questions?

(No response.)

SONJA SLATER:

Thank you.

JONATHAN MCLENDON:

Thank you, Ms. Slater.

Next up, we have public affairs, Ms. Charmaine.

CHARMAINE SCHMERMUND:

Good morning. The Mississippi Department of Marine Resource had 29 media mentions since the September MACMR meeting. News items included red snapper season closing, oyster season opening, goats helping with vegetation at the Grand Bay NERR and the DMR's participation with the Reel Her In Fishing Tournament.

Director Spraggins and Captain Michael Strickland participated in the Porch Talk Session

at the Mississippi Public Service Commission's Coastal Hurricane Summit at MGCCC in Harrison County on October 8th.

COO Patrick Levine spoke at the American Public Works Association Mississippi Chapter's Lunch and Learn at Point Cadet in Biloxi on October 15th.

And the Office of Marine Patrol participated in Biloxi Community Festival Against Crime at Point Cadet on September 12th, the Night Out Against Crime in Waveland on September 26th, Fishing with Buddies in Pass Christian on October 13th, Diamondhead Police Department's National Night Out and North Bay Night Out at North Bay Elementary School on October 15th and Long Beach Police Report's Night Out Against Crime on October 16th.

The shellfish bureau's Harrison Pittman participated in Mississippi Science Fest at the Mississippi Museum of Natural Science in Jackson on September 19th.

At the Reel Her In Fishing Tournament on September 26th, Office of Marine Fisheries' biologist Emily Satterfield and Megan Flemming both participated in the panel, and Megan and

MaCayla Dixon both provided an MDMR booth for attendees.

Seafood Technology Bureau Director Kristina Broussard participated in the college and career fair at Purvis High School on October 13th.

Emily and the NERR's Brianna Andrews and Jennifer Cumbest set up education booths at the Science Saturday at the Walter Anderson Museum of Art on September 19th.

Emmett Carstens at the Grand Bay NERR participated in observer training for phenological monitoring at MGCCC in Jackson County on September 18th.

Brianna also provided the On the Road Program at the Kreole Elementary School and Escatawpa Upper Elementary School on September 22nd, Magnolia Middle School on September 23rd, HEARTS Christian School on September 28th and Saucier Elementary School on September 30th.

The Mississippi Gulf Coast National Heritage Area participated in Bug Fest -- maybe I have that -- there we go -- Bug Fest at Crosby Arboretum on September 25th and Paddle Paradise on September 26th.

The Agency sponsored the Biloxi Seafood Festival and featured a booth at the festival, which was held September 12th at Harrah's Great Lawn. We had visitors stop by and visit our staff who were handing out DMR publications and various items promoting the Mississippi seafood and National Heritage Area.

The Mississippi Seafood Marketing program provided either sponsorships or cooking team support for Hook'Em for Heroes in Pass Christian September 11th and 12th, the H16 International Championship on September 22nd, the Pearl River Community College football game in Poplarville on September 24th, the United Way CEO talent show on September 24th and the collegiate invitational at Fallen Oak on October 16th.

The agency's cooking team, as well as volunteers from various offices throughout the agency, took part in the 30th annual Cruisin' the Coast. The Mississippi Gulf Fresh Seafood Program sponsored Cruisin' the Coast for the fourth year and served as presenting sponsor.

During the week, the cooking team boiled 1,200 pounds of shrimp and samples were handed out to event attendees at Cruise Central located at

Jones Park in Gulfport. Samples were also given out throughout the day on Monday and Tuesday at Cruise Central. And on Wednesday, shrimp samples and promotional items were given out at the Biloxi block party.

To further promote Mississippi Gulf fresh seafood, promotional booths were set up at different Cruisin' events along the Coast. Hats, koozies, recipe cards, bags, coloring books and informational materials were handed out to event attendees on Thursday in Bay St. Louis and in Pascagoula. It was a busy month.

JONATHAN MCLENDON:

Thank you. That's first-class displays. I always like your presentations because I see all of the folks in the crowd and you actually get an idea of what it takes to get this place going, so thank you.

JOE SPRAGGINS:

And thank also Commissioner Gipson for showing up at Cruisin' with us and helping us serve shrimp.

RONNIE DANIELS:

I would like to tell the department, thank you, Chief, your guys did a great job at

Fishing with Buddies. We had a great event there in the Pass this year. We had -- I believe we had 57 participants. We had 31 people that -- no, 32 people that volunteered their boats and were able to take our participants out and have a good time.

JONATHAN MCLENDON:

All right. Thank you so much.

Next up, we have Office of Marine Fisheries oyster season update, Ms. Ellen Coffin.

ELLEN COFFIN:

Good morning, Commissioners, Director Spraggins and Steven and Sandy.

Okay. Here we go.

Okay. So we opened our 2026 oyster season at legal sunrise on October 1st, 2026.

We opened St. Joe, which is Area IB; Waveland and St. Stanislaus, which is Area IIB and it's tonging only; Henderson Point Area IIE and Biloxi Bay area, VA tonging only.

So, currently, our sack limits are 15 for tonging vessels and 20 for dredging vessels.

And, unfortunately, as quick as we opened, we closed October 4th for the rainfall but have since re-opened our areas.

Through -- I guess through yesterday's

harvest, 34 harvesters made 60 trips and landed 621 sacks, averaging 124 sacks per day. Henderson Point accounted for 452 sacks. St. Stanislaus was 91. St. Joe was 70, and Biloxi was eight.

DMR has issued 127 harvest licenses. 105 of them were resident and 22 were non-resident. Harvest has been limited due to the closure. Harvesters have found some market-size oysters on the reefs through -- though, we did have mortality events in June and late summer, but they were still finding plenty of oysters, but we have noted their comments and we will continue on monitoring reef conditions as the season progresses.

Any questions?

JONATHAN MCLENDON:

No, not right now. Thank you.

ELLEN COFFIN:

Okay. That was easy.

All right. We do have a public comment. Mr. Bill Bradley. You can come on up, sir. State your name and city for the record. You've got three minutes.

BILL BRADLEY:

Sure. My name is Bill Bradley. I'm

co-owner of Bradley Seafood in Pass Christian.

First of all, thank y'all for giving me the opportunity to speak, Mr. Spraggins and Commissioners.

I'm here today to talk about the limit and here to ask that you guys consider raising it. When we started talking about this oyster season, you know, we were told all the problems with oysters and we didn't have the sales and the conditions of the reef.

And we're excited about this year. My wife and I spent a lot of time in the off-season driving around our neighboring states and speaking to anybody that will talk to us about the sale of oysters. It was a real uphill battle. We met with shucking houses in Louisiana, Mississippi, Alabama and Florida. And we had a lot of doors slammed in our face initially and we just kept asking the questions. What is it going to take to get Mississippi oysters back in your shop? And we heard everything from Mississippi closes too much to the oysters are too big, the transportation costs. And we -- you know, at every step, we said we'll deliver them. We'll talk to the guys about bringing smaller oysters in. And give us a shot.

Where do we need to be?

We're excited to say today that I have the commitment of 2,800 sacks a week, which we cannot provide by the numbers. Even if you guys raised the numbers, I don't know that we could meet those numbers, but it's a step in the right direction.

The price of oysters is down, obviously, right now and I know everybody wants it higher, but what I would say to that is we have a plan in place to get the numbers up, but we need to get the buyers. Currently, there is only a handful of people willing to -- that we can support them with because of the numbers and I need to be able to diversify that.

I think when we get more buyers coming in and buying them, we can get that price up. And I think we can do that relatively quick, within the next 30 to 60 days, but we need to get the numbers up so we can bring more guys in.

I know there's concern about, well, if we raise the numbers, they're going to drop the price. My commitment is I want to raise the price, but I need more buyers so I can't have two guys coming together saying, well, Bill is

supplying both of us, so let's work together to keep that price down. If I have five guys buying from four different states, it gives me the opportunity to go to all of them and say, hey, guys, we have a want for our oysters. Now, you've got to pay for them, and so that's why I'm here today.

I am excited about the future of the seafood industry. We all hear the doom and the gloom, but I heard a couple of things. I heard conservation from the gentleman back here. I would like to be part of the conservation of the commercial fishermen and be a part of change.

And I think if you look at our history since 2022, we have done a real good job of trying to drive the price up of fish and crabs. And now we're excited. We've grown into the Pass Harbor this year and we're working real hard to drive the price of shrimp up for the fishermen and I think that's what we need to do. The fishermen need to make more money to be more successful, so our industry is sustainable.

I heard General Spraggins say we used to be the largest producer, Mississippi. I want to be part of getting back to that. I want to be a

part of more guys getting into the industry. I'm excited to say I'm a third-generation commercial fisherman, and I'm also excited to say the fourth and fifth generation is working inside of our company now. So I'm betting my family on the future of the seafood industry and I'm excited to work with you guys and be a part of that change.

JOE SPRAGGINS:

Thank you.

JONATHAN MCLENDON:

Thank you.

So real quick, how has the price of oysters changed since the initiation of the season? Like, what percentage would you say that the oyster prices went down?

MS. HILLEREN:

So last year, it's my understanding that the oyster sacks averaged $35 a sack. So when we went out before the season and was trying to get sales, we started at 35 tying to get these shucking houses in. And 100 percent, I was shut down everywhere I went, based on what they're paying in Louisiana for oysters currently.

So we tried a number of tactics before we lowered the price to get them in the market.

And so right now, it's $30 a sack to the boat, so we're about $5 dollars off from last year. But last year, guys worked two and three days a week. Right now, we have it where they can work six days a week. So now our goal is if we can get the numbers up, we can get the price to that $35 and, hopefully, before the season is over, above that.

And in the process -- we have large oysters in Mississippi. We all know that. We need to turn that reef over and get those oysters off the reef so by next year we're producing a better, cleaner, smaller oyster, which it should allow us to be more valuable.

JONATHAN MCLENDON:

What are they paying in Louisiana?

BILL BRADLEY:

So I've heard as little as 28 to as much as 40, but they're also having to be put on trucks and delivered to Mississippi and Louisiana.

JONATHAN MCLENDON:

So are you selling to shucking houses themselves or are you trying to market your product towards end users?

BILL BRADLEY:

Both.

JONATHAN MCLENDON:

Both. Okay.

BILL BRADLEY:

So my company is not just a dock. We are a wholesale distributor. We distribute to 167 to 170 restaurants and markets from Louisiana to Alabama to just south of Jackson, and we market in wholesale and retail and shucking houses.

JONATHAN MCLENDON:

Is this a holiday-related demand that you're looking to accomplish here or, I mean, do you think this is going to slow down in the spring? This isn't a consistent demand. The oyster supply peaks in the winter, correct?

BILL BRADLEY:

Well, obviously, Thanksgiving and Christmas is the peak demand for oysters. However, I see this demand -- I mean, I -- the biggest thing we fight is the closures we have and the limited season. I mean, if I had to hear one thing over and over and over it was, why do I want to buy your oysters when I can buy them from this guy year round? I mean, that's always going to be a battle that we fight.

But my contradiction to that is I'm

closer to you than Louisiana. I'm closer to you than Texas, so my transportation costs, which are high, is less than those states, so we do have some cards to play.

JONATHAN MCLENDON:

So you're tasked with going into a supplier who has a steady supply, let's just say in Louisiana, a shucking house, and you're trying to convince them to boot their current supplier out and replace them with you?

BILL BRADLEY:

Or give us a portion of it.

CAM ROBERDS:

And right now, you can't -- you have a demand that you can't keep up with?

MS. HILLEREN:

Correct.

CAM ROBERDS:

Because it sounds like there -- you know, you have the fishermen but not enough of them, a limited amount of fishermen. You need a higher quantity per day.

BILL BRADLEY:

Yeah. And Texas and Louisiana is going to come on here before too long and I'm sure

that's going to play a part in affecting us to some degree, but that was one of the reasons General Spraggins let us open early this year so we could get out there and get in the market before those other guys did and, hopefully, show them we have great oysters and they want our oysters over those other states.

JOE SPRAGGINS:

I think we're doing the right thing and, you know, obviously, you know, last year, we had the five- and six-inch oysters. This year, we're a little bit smaller. And, you know, we are having some, you know, half shell oysters that are coming off the tonging reefs and other things that are happening there. So that's working for us.

I think that we're getting what we need to move forward. I thank you for stepping up and -- you know, because that was one of the things that we had Jennifer and them -- which Crystal Seas was buying, but we didn't have anybody else buying. We didn't have anybody else out there, you know, that was really selling the oysters out in the market somewhere else. And Bill and his company have come in and jumped in and started doing that, so thank you for that. We

appreciate you stepping up and they have stepped up and been able to get some oysters going to other parts of -- Florida being a major part of it, I think, is what you're talking about and Alabama both. And that's helped us a whole lot.

And so if I can, Jason and Ellen, I think the process -- I mean, I know they are wanting to raise it. I think that our -- our oystermen are wanting to see if we can raise this limit. So, Trevor, you going to answer for that? I would like to see if we could -- the oystermen are saying that they would like to raise them to 25 for the dredge, 20 for the tongue.

TREVOR MONCRIEF:

Yeah.

JOE SPRAGGINS:

Is that an issue with y'all to do that and try that and see what we can do?

TREVOR MONCRIEF:

So it's not an issue, but I'll bring up, you know, three things for everyone to consider. One, the closure stuff got brought up. Given the time in which we have our traditional oyster season, given the conditions, that's always going to play a part. Right? Our reefs are in

proximity to civilization. That's part of it, so that's going to persist to a degree.

Two, right now, the fishery is -- a lot of them are still focused on white shrimp, right, because they're in. They're catching them. Getting a good price for them, so not the full fleet has really switched into the gear of oysters.

And then Number 3, I think -- yeah. It's definitely a consideration. As far as management goes, there is a 30 percent quota by the reef. Now their harvest can be dictated by the Executive Director with rules and everything else.

And I will say that if we increase it proportionally, you can expect some change in potential season lengths should we reach full capacity, but given that we didn't reach our quota last year, it likely will have a minor, if any, affect on the overall season.

So if the fishermen are good with it, the Commission is good with it and the Executive Director approves, I don't see where the impact will be too bad.

I will say that the time temperature

matrix shifts in -- November 1st. That will allow them more time to be able to harvest a larger sack limit. Right now, they're still constrained. So November 1st, given Mr. Bradley's 30- to 60-day timeline, might be one of those times where everything kind of works as an ideal time to be able to put this into place. But we can have those discussions with the fishermen and we can have them with everyone else as well before we make the final call.

JOE SPRAGGINS:

Well, I think so, and two things. Number 1, we can go -- I know some had looked at 30 and some -- but I think 25 -- 20 is what the fishermen are asking for, so let's -- if that's all right, we'll go with that on an interim start and start that immediately if that's all right with the Commission.

And then what we'll do with that is this will give us -- you know, we know in January the sales are going to back off a little bit. That's notorious, you know. It's always been there. In January, February, March, you know, the sales are backing off a little bit on the oysters. Right now, the peak is between now and the end of the

year. And the more that we can get on the market between now and the end of the year, the better off we are.

If we see that, you know, in the next week or so we can do something and we can just go ahead and -- with the Commission, if it's all right with y'all, to give us authority to be able to move forward and if we want to raise the sack limit above 25 and we see that we can do that, would y'all give us the authority to move that up to 30 if we needed to?

And -- but right now, I would like the Commission to be able to let us go to 25, 20 and that will still keep the out-of-state same as it was. And it will just be the in-state will be the 20 for the tonging unless you're from a state that has more than 20 for tonging. But if it's -- but as far as dredgers, it will be 25, 25, no matter what.

And so if that's all right with the Commission, I would ask if y'all would give us permission to do that.

JONATHAN MCLENDON:

Yeah. I certainly, you know, understand the difficulty of trying to, you know, grow your

seafood sales at a time where maybe some of the supply could be inconsistent. So, you know, some of our oystermen certainly have sales. We're dealing with a peak market coming up and the harvest supports it. I'm all for letting them sell. A lot of this stuff here, you never know what's going to happen next year with environmental conditions. And, you know, if we're able to maintain it, I'm all for it.

JOE SPRAGGINS:

Do we need to have a vote on that?

SANDY CHESNUT:

Yes.

CAM ROBERDS:

Yeah. To give permission to make the changes, yes, with the understanding that discussions will be had with the fishermen and all parties are on the same page, of course.

But I would make a motion to give the Director the approval for the raising of the 25 for the dredging and 20 to tong; is that correct?

JOE SPRAGGINS:

Right. And the ability to raise further if we need to.

CAM ROBERDS:

And the ability to move in another increment of five if required.

RONNIE DANIELS:

If this works out and this plan goes, I'm in agreeance for that as well, so I'd like to second the motion.

JONATHAN MCLENDON:

All in favor?

(Unanimous vote.)

JONATHAN MCLENDON:

Motion passes.

Thank you, Ellen. Thank you, Mr. Bradley.

Next up. Commercial speckled seatrout, Mr. Eric Gigli.

ERIC GIGLI:

We've got the final adoption of the proposed commercial spotted seatrout regulations from the past two meetings.

All right. So proposed changes were submitted to the Secretary of State, per administrative requirements. It hit the administrative bulletin for the Secretary of State, the DMR website, as well as the *Sun Herald* newspaper, and we received no public comments on

any of those.

JOE SPRAGGINS:

I did -- I got some public comment from the F.J. Ikey (ph). Did y'all see that?

RICK BURRIS:

Yes, sir. We did receive it. However, it was in the form of a question. It wasn't necessarily a public comment.

JOE SPRAGGINS:

But can we address what he said? I just want to bring it on the record.

RICK BURRIS:

The question was somewhere in the effect of I heard that the commercial spotted seatrout was being raised to 70,000 pounds and the season was closed for 2026. And that was the question, what the justification was, and I think we provided that in the last two meetings. But, I mean, Eric can chime in if you want to, but --

JOE SPRAGGINS:

Well, if we can, just for justification-wise, explain to the point that another 20,000 pounds is just a small, small, small percentage of the amount of speckled trout that are caught in the Gulf -- in Mississippi

waters and that the demand is there for, you know, the commercial side to be able to have it, to be able to sell because there is a market out there for it and people are looking for it. They're getting a good price for it and it will help our fishermen.

And that we're raising the limit to 15 inches rather than 14 inches. And on top of that, that, you know, we are raising the numbers from 1,000 to 2,000. Is that correct?

ERIC GIGLI:

I'd say you covered it pretty well there, Director.

In general, though, you're correct. The raise from 14 inches to 15 inches is in line with what we did with the recreational fishery years ago and it's based off hitting our SPR, our targets, increasing the number of fish that are able to spawn every year.

As far as the increase of 50,000 pounds to 70,000 pounds, the 20,000 pounds is a small amount compared to what we've got estimated through Creel and especially historically with MRIP for the recreational sector for spotted seatrout. It's at a level where it's well within

the fluctuations of what we would expect in Creel, as well as just the standard error that we could expect in any given year.

Just the same as red snapper, but we're operating in a small percentage of the total catch that we're estimating. So --

JOE SPRAGGINS:

If you can, what is the estimated ACL, I guess, of what we'll catch as far as with using MS Creel?

ERIC GIGLI:

So the numbers should land in any given year between 250,000 and 500,000 pounds, is going to be the general threshold. We have had really good years, and the anglers see it. We see it dockside where the boats are stacked up on the islands for three months straight. There's no fresh water rushing out and so they're all stacked and they can do some damage during that period of time, talking 100,000 pounds. But in general, we're going to be in that 300,000, 400,000 range.

JOE SPRAGGINS:

So we're talking less than 10 percent?

ERIC GIGLI:

Yes, sir.

JOE SPRAGGINS:

And the other thing, too, if I can real quick, if we did MRIP, it was over a million pounds that they would be saying that we were catching so that just tells you how good MS Creel is.

ERIC GIGLI:

1 million to 2 million.

JOE SPRAGGINS:

That tells you how accurate it is to get it down.

ERIC GIGLI:

Yes, sir. No. We believe the numbers. We believe that the numbers that we're seeing dockside, the effort information we're getting is accurate and precise and so it's something that we can really lean on, especially in a case like this.

But to cover the proposed changes, just to recap, we have got a shift from 14 inches to 15 inches total length for the commercial size limit. The total allowable catch from 50,000 to 70,000 pounds for the year, maintaining the season structure of 50 percent of that quota in the first half up to July -- up to June 30th, and then the

remaining 35,000 pounds in the second half of the year.

And then an increase in the finfish sales required to get an endorsement -- spotted seatrout endorsement from 1,000 pounds to 2,000 pounds either in the current calendar year or the previous calendar year, so all consistent with what y'all made motions for in the previous meeting.

And at this point, we would be looking for a motion to recommend the adoption of these regulatory changes to Title 22, Part 3.

RONNIE DANIELS:

I'll make the motion.

But I've got a question. Once we do this, does that go into effect today? Essentially, can we have some more commercial season this year?

ERIC GIGLI:

I believe it's going to be 60 days.

RICK BURRIS:

30 days from now.

ERIC GIGLI:

30 days from now, so there's a shot, yeah. The fish will have moved a little bit at

that point, so it will be a little less accessible. But if we stay warm for a couple -- keep a couple of cold fronts off of us, we've got a shot.

RONNIE DANIELS:

Yep. I would like to make the motion.

CAM ROBERDS:

I'll second that motion.

JONATHAN MCLENDON:

All in favor?

(Unanimous vote.)

JONATHAN MCLENDON:

Motion passed.

Next up, we have state saltwater finfish records, Mr. Josh Waters.

JOSH WATERS:

Good morning, Director, Commissioners. Just three records today, all conventional tackle.

Two of them are Mr. Barlow. Start with his first one. It's an Atlanta bonito. No previous records. The new record is four pounds, 13.53 ounces. Here's a picture of the fish. Here's Mr. Barlow holding the fish.

Second record is Mr. Barlow again, short bigeye. No previous record. New record is now

0 pounds 12.87 ounces. Here's a picture of the fish and here is Mr. Barlow with the fish.

This next record I would like to call the karma record for Mr. Moncrief calling me out for not attending the last Commission meeting. I had a prior appointment scheduled.

The old record was Mr. Moncrief's record, two pounds, 1.60 ounces. New record is now two pounds, 7.36 ounces. Angler is Jeremy Gunter. Here is a picture of the Gulf flounder and here is Mr. Jeremy holding the flounder.

And with that, motion to recommend to approve the state records.

CAM ROBERDS:

If the record only lasts like one or two months, is there like an asterisk next to it, like it just kind of doesn't count?

JOSH WATERS:

It was a full-on year. I mean, I think Trevor was September -- September 10 of 2025, 12 months to the date.

CAM ROBERDS:

A little asterisk or something.

JONATHAN MCLENDON:

You're in the books forever, though.

CAM ROBERDS:

You're there, but it's got just a little --

JOSH WATERS:

Right. Yeah. That's it.

JONATHAN MCLENDON:

All right. Do we have a motion to approve?

CAM ROBERDS:

I'll make the motion to approve.

MATTHEW MAYFIELD:

I'll second.

JONATHAN MCLENDON:

All in favor?

(Unanimous vote.)

JOSH WATERS:

Thank y'all.

JONATHAN MCLENDON:

Thank you, Josh.

Any other business we have today?

(No response.)

JONATHAN MCLENDON:

No public comments.

Can I get a motion to adjourn?

MATTHEW MAYFIELD:

Motion to adjourn.

CAM ROBERDS:

I'll second.

JONATHAN MCLENDON:

All in favor?

Unanimous vote.

(Adjourned at 10:17 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 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 10th day of November, 2026.



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