COMMISSION ON MARINE RESOURCES

COMMISSION MEETING

Tuesday, March 22, 2016
10:00 a.m.
Gautier City Hall
3330 U.S. Highway 90
Gautier, Mississippi 39553

Commission Members:

Richard Gollott, Chairman

Shelby Drummond, Vice Chairman

Steve Bosarge

Ron Harmon

Also Present:

Jamie M. Miller, Executive Director DMR
Sean Morrison, Esq., Assistant Attorney General

Lucille Morgan, CSR 1251
COURT REPORTER
(228) 396-8788

COMMISSIONER GOLLOTT: I would like to welcome everybody to the meeting today. Looks like we've got a pretty good crowd here. Glad to see everyone.

First thing on the agenda is the Pledge of Allegiance. We will ask Steve Bosarge to lead us in the pledge.

(Whereupon, the Pledge of Allegiance was recited.)

COMMISSIONER GOLLOTT: Next we need approval of the agenda, or if there are any modifications.

COMMISSIONER DRUMMOND: So moved, Mr. Chairman.

COMMISSIONER GOLLOTT: We have a motion.

Do we have a second?

COMMISSIONER BOSARGE: So seconded.

COMMISSIONER GOLLOTT: We have a motion and a second.

Everybody in favor say aye.

(All in favor.)

COMMISSIONER GOLLOTT: Opposed?

(None opposed.)

COMMISSIONER GOLLOTT: Motion carries.

Next is the Executive Director's report.

JAMIE MILLER: No report.

COMMISSIONER GOLLOTT: Next is Office of Marine Patrol.

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RUSTY PITTMAN: Good morning, Mr. Chairman, Commissioners, Director Miller, Mr. Morrison.

If you don't mind, I would like to ask for a moment of silence for those in Brussels, Belgium, this morning that went through that terrorist attack.

(Moment of silence.)

RUSTY PITTMAN: Thank you.

On our report this morning, if you will notice, we have a few violations that resulted in our trip up north for JEA patrol where we checked seafood shops for compliance. Chief Davis is going to give an update on that, with a presentation, after I get through.

Any questions, after looking through the report that y'all have?

COMMISSIONER BOSARGE: I do have one question, Rusty.

RUSTY PITTMAN: Yes, sir.

COMMISSIONER BOSARGE: I see where we have a gill net violation.

RUSTY PITTMAN: Yes, sir. That was in Jackson County.

COMMISSIONER BOSARGE: Just to kind of clarify one point, these were little short gill nets?

RUSTY PITTMAN: They were.

COMMISSIONER BOSARGE: Multiple gill nets?

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RUSTY PITTMAN: The officer stopped the vessel with the two occupants on the vessel that were running a fifty-foot monofilament net, and we do believe that there were probably more nets somewhere out there hidden in the marsh.

COMMISSIONER BOSARGE: They were not, basically, commercial fishermen.

They had no commercial license?

RUSTY PITTMAN: They had no commercial license, or recreational fishing license.

COMMISSIONER BOSARGE: They had little small sports nets, basically?

RUSTY PITTMAN: Right.

COMMISSIONER BOSARGE: Thank you.

RUSTY PITTMAN: Yes, sir.

At this time, I will turn it over to Chief Davis so he can give a presentation.

COMMISSIONER GOLLOTT: Okay, Rusty.

KEITH DAVIS: Good morning Commissioners, Director Miller, attorney.

I'm going to ask Investigator Patrick Carron to step forward as he coordinated this detail for us. I want to make sure that he can be here, if you have any questions about what we are going to talk about.

We told you last year that we were restarting

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our patrols throughout the State of Mississippi checking seafood shops and roadside vendors.

If you remember, we did one last summer, and that proved to be pretty productive, when we did that.

One of the things that came out of that inspection was the legal seafood dealers were happy to see that we were starting to do this across the state, mainly because there were other dealers operating in their backyards that did not have the proper license and were not following the rules as they were. They welcomed the Marine Patrol to come up and, actually, provided us information on those who were not in compliance.

Let me just, for the record, say that Marine Patrol is authorized to do these inspections under Section 49-15-28 of the Mississippi Code.

Prior to us starting these inspections across the state, we sent letters to each of the dealers that we were aware of, identifying who the DMR is and put them on notice that we would be coming by to visit their locations.

This is just a snapshop for your personal knowledge of the economic impact, should our seafood industry be impacted by those who are selling seafood in the State of Mississippi without the proper inspections and compliance that DMR requires.

As you know, I came onboard about June 2014. We recognized that we were checking seafood shops, but we were concentrating from Hattiesburg south.

In discussions with the Executive Director, myself and Chief Pittman, we saw the need that if seafood shops are in business from Hattiesburg south and there were seafood shops north of Hattiesburg, then, we are probably going to see the same violations that we are seeing in south Mississippi. So we decided that we needed to start checking those as well.

As I said, we sent letters out identifying who we were and that we were coming.

We did a total of twenty-eight inspections and wrote twelve actual citations, and I will talk about the citations in just a little bit.

In 2016, last month, we did twenty-five inspections and wrote thirteen citations.

So far this detail has identified two hundred and twenty-eight licensed seafood dealers statewide. Of those two hundred and twenty-eight, a hundred and forty-eight are in the three coastal counties, fifty-three dealers north of the three coastal counties and, as I said, we have visited about half of those so far, and we are identifying others that are in business, but do not have the proper license, but these seafood inspections

that we are conducting educates them and gives them information, and a lot of them are coming into compliance with the regulation.

Of the eighty-nine coastal licensed dealers, only thirty-six have been inspected by MDMR, at this time, but we do plan to complete this, do a complete inspection.

This is just another graph of where we were prior to January 2015. As you notice, the light color is north of the three coastal counties and, as of January 2015, we had done none. June, we did, as I said, twenty-eight, and we did some more in September and, of course, in February 2016.

These photographs are basically what officers are finding. As you can see, across the State of Mississippi seafood dealers are ranging from trailers to brick and mortar, to some just basically putting refrigeration on trailers and going around selling seafood.

As you can see, there are no markings on this one. This was probably one that was identified for us by one of the legal seafood dealers in the north part of the state.

These citations have been adjudicated in court. As you can see, Vicksburg, Toney's Seafood received a citation for no seafood dealer's license.

Let me pause right there. The first trip that we took we didn't actually write real citations, unless there was an egregious violation involved; miss branded oysters, scratching the dates off of oysters and selling them with new dates written on them. That was the reason they would have gotten a no seafood dealers license on our first visit because we wanted to embrace the seafood dealers and say, we are glad that you are in business in the State of Mississippi, but you have to get a license to sell seafood.

Toney's Seafood received a no seafood dealers license and no repacker certification of oysters.

I won't go through all of these, but I do want to highlight that the case in Vicksburg was actually dismissed. The dealer did show up in court and was able to provide the Judge documentation that he had come in compliance with DMR's regulation, and the Judge dismissed his charges.

We have since talked to the prosecutor in Vicksburg and explained to them that there are more things involved and it probably would behoove the court to call us to testify, to provide testimony on those cases in the future.

Since that case, we can't talk specifics because it is still pending in court, but there are seafood

dealers in Vicksburg that have received additional citations. We are working with the court to work through that process, just to educate them.

If you have any questions about any of these others, we will be glad to answer all those questions.

COMMISSIONER DRUMMOND: Chief.

KEITH DAVIS: Yes, sir.

COMMISSIONER DRUMMOND: Did you have to have special authorization to conduct these inspections in those northern counties?

KEITH DAVIS: No, sir. If you go back to 49-15-28, it is embedded in there authorizing us to do that.

COMMISSIONER DRUMMOND: Okay.

Where do you take people to court, or send them to court?

KEITH DAVIS: The respective jurisdiction. If you are in Vicksburg, you would go to Justice Court in Vicksburg -- I'm sorry. In the county, not the City. It is all county court. As a State agency, we run our citations and charges through the local county courts.

COMMISSIONER DRUMMOND: That takes some time going back and forth up there, doesn't it?

KEITH DAVIS: Yes, sir, but luckily we have identified, through our JEA, that JEA will pay for this. In fact, NOAA wants us to be involved in these types of

inspections across the state.

COMMISSIONER DRUMMOND: Thank you, Chief.

COMMISSIONER BOSARGE: Just wondering. I see a lot of oyster violations. Now, in Mississippi, we have a trip ticket system in place.

Were you able to trace any of the seafood and make sure that it had been through the trip ticket system, if it was produced here in the State of Mississippi?

KEITH DAVIS: Without getting too much into that, yes, sir, we did, and we were able to trace a lot of stuff back to the Mississippi Gulf Coast.

COMMISSIONER BOSARGE: I know, in a lot of the different states that I go to, the trip ticket system goes all the way down to the last end user.

KEITH DAVIS: Yes, sir. I'm going to end this presentation with some information that speaks directly to that.

COMMISSIONER GOLLOTT: Chief, I have a question for you.

KEITH DAVIS: Yes, sir.

COMMISSIONER GOLLOTT: The expiration date on oysters. I had a customer call me and was complaining about some oysters in the back of his shop were seized because they were frozen and he was planning on taking them to his camp, but they had no date on them.

What is the reasoning for putting a date on frozen oysters?

What section of our regulation is that in?

KEITH DAVIS: I'm going to defer to the smart man, Rusty Pittman, on that.

COMMISSIONER GOLLOTT: Okay.

RUSTY PITTMAN: Mr. Chairman, actually, that is under our regulations that y'all set up, the Commission laws.

For instance, say today is the last day, if they want to freeze them, they have got to put the date frozen on there, and that's the way it is in the law. I guess, if they want to sell them to a restaurant, or whatever, they can see that it was date frozen before they expired.

COMMISSIONER GOLLOTT: But you can thaw them out and sell them?

RUSTY PITTMAN: A restaurant can thaw them out and fry them and sell them.

COMMISSIONER GOLLOTT: But a retail shop could thaw them out, and, then, sell them?

RUSTY PITTMAN: They can't sell them, after they have been frozen, but they can be sold to a restaurant.

COMMISSIONER GOLLOTT: I was just wondering about that. Thank you, Chief.

KEITH DAVIS: You stumped me, Chairman.

Thank you for doing that.

RUSTY PITTMAN: Yes, sir.

KEITH DAVIS: Any more questions about the cases, in June 2015?

(No response.)

KEITH DAVIS: Here are some photographs of some of those cases that were made. As you can see, these oysters were just placed in a Coca-Cola cooler and you know there is a required temperature in our regulations that their oysters must maintain, and this cooler is open to their customers and customers are in and out of that cooler all day. It is impossible for that cooler to maintain the adequate temperature for those oysters.

This is Vicksburg, repack, no dates on them, and this cooler, if I remember correctly, was right by the bathroom. It is located next to the restroom.

Here are the enforcement actions for February 2016. We can't mention the names of the dealers because it is still pending in court, but these are all of the areas that were issued citations.

Does the Commission have any questions on those?

JAMIE MILLER: Chief, what is the cost of a dealer license?

KEITH DAVIS: It's one hundred dollars.

This is just telling you what we seized during

the three inspections that we have done; eleven gallons, twenty-two quarts, thirty-one pints and ten sacks across the state.

To Mr. Bosarge's question earlier, I have learned through the Office of Marine Patrol and our Shellfish Bureau that, in 2009, there was a major recall of oysters in the State of Mississippi, and working with them and the investigators from Marine Patrol, the State estimated the cost of that recall at one point three million dollars roughly.

It is important that these inspections are carried out across the state because, as you said, they do make it outside of the state, and, if it is traced back to the State of Mississippi that we are selling bad seafood, then, obviously, it is going to impact us economically. It is very important that these checks are carried out, and that we form partnerships with the other agencies that are responsible for these checks, as well as our own seafood bureau and we are working with them very closely, as we conduct these checks.

Any questions?

COMMISSIONER BOSARGE: I agree because the fishermen here, they have to jump through a lot of hoops to make sure that that is a quality product, and we want to be sure it stays that way right on through to the end.

KEITH DAVIS: Yes, sir. One of the things, when I first got here, a seafood dealer approached me and actually brought this to my attention that we really focus on them here on the Coast, but there are other people across the state that are selling seafood as well and haven't been required to jump through those hoops. We want to make sure that we share the wealth with them.

COMMISSIONER GOLLOTT: Chief, what is the temperature that you have to hold oysters, just curious?

KEITH DAVIS: Forty-five degrees.

COMMISSIONER GOLLOTT: Forty-five?

KEITH DAVIS: Yes, sir.

COMMISSIONER GOLLOTT: That's a little warm, really. My personal experience is that if you keep them in ice, it holds them at thirty-two degrees and that is ideal and they won't sour nearly as quick.

KEITH DAVIS: Yes, sir, but, as you can see, there is no way that cooler is going to keep those oysters at forty-five degrees.

Thank y'all so much for indulging me.

COMMISSIONER GOLLOTT: Thank you, Chief.

Next we have Mr. Joe Jewell. I think they call it Joe's Show.

JOE JEWELL: Good morning, Commissioners, Director Miller, Mr. Morrison.

I appreciate that introduction, Commissioner Gollott.

Before we get into the agenda items for Marine Fisheries, I would like to give the Commission an update on a few items. First, I would like to give an update on the commercial quotas.

As you know, red drum, the quota is set at sixty thousand pounds through three seasons separated into twenty thousand pound segments. The first quota season for red drum is January through April. Our current quota is right around seventeen, or eighteen, thousand pounds. We are probably going to reach the first twenty thousand pound segment later this week and we will close down. We are anticipating that sometime Friday. We will be sending out that notice to the public shortly.

The next update I would like to give the Commission is on the Conservationist. As you know, that was our flagship boat for the DMR. We lost the Conservationist. It sunk in October of 2014. We recovered the Conservationist on the following day, on October the 3rd. The same day we began salvaging and degreasing the vessel. We conducted a hull survey to ensure the integrity of the vessel, on October the 27th.

We signed a contract with Bay Marine to restore the vessel. That contract is July 14th, 2015, through July

14th, 2016.

Additionally, we signed a contract with Johnson Diesel to provide engines for the Conservationist. That contract is August the 1st, 2015, through July the 31st, 2016.

We are estimating, right now, that the Conservationist is about sixty percent complete. Most of the work that has been completed so far is specialty work. We have had to do a lot of welding and sandblasting.

The winch system on the old Conservationist is being redesigned to an off-deck design.

We are anticipating the work to be completed on schedule, but to speed up.

Finally, I have an update on the current oyster season. I will give you an outline of how we started and we are.

As the Commission should recall, we had a very short special season to relay some legal size oysters between November the 3rd through the 7th. Fishermen were allowed to keep the legal size oysters, but all other oyster material was to be relayed to a special area we had designated.

We, then, opened the regular oyster season on November the 10th, with the tonging limit at seven sacks and a dredging limit at ten sacks.

At the November Commission meeting, the Commission met and set a quota of thirty-five thousand sacks and changed the sack limit for tongers to ten sacks and dredgers to fifteen sacks.

Then, on December 11th, we closed the season as a precaution for the red tide event that was occurring. At that point, we had harvested thirteen thousand five hundred and thirty sacks of oysters.

Then, on December 4th, the Commission met in special session and gave the DMR Executive Director authority to do three things; to set the 2015 sack limit, to set the 2015-2016 oyster quota, and, then, to close areas that are deemed to be over harvested.

The Bonnet Carre spillway opened on January the 10th and was closed on February the 1st, 2016.

We, then, conducted an oyster relay program January the 18th through the 20th, 2016. That was for three days. As you may recall, we relayed just over thirty-nine thousand sacks of oysters and just under a hundred fishermen participated in this event.

We, then, reopened the regular oyster season on March 3rd, after we received positive results from the ELISA test and the mouse bioassay test.

When we reopened, we set the tonging limit at fifteen sacks and the dredging sack limit at twenty-five

sacks.

Again, we had to close the oyster season on March 11th, due to river stage and rainfall. At that point, we had harvested fourteen thousand seven hundred and twenty-five sacks.

For the 2015 oyster season to date we have harvested twenty-eight thousand two hundred and fifty-five sacks.

In comparison, last year, the 2014-2015 season, we harvested a total of twenty-six thousand and fifty-five sacks.

An update of where we are, right now, last week we sampled three days, Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday. All those test results have come back bad, negative.

We sampled Monday, yesterday. We are out sampling again today. We should have the Monday results back sometime this afternoon. We intend to sample pretty much every day this week.

If you have noticed, the Pearl River has not quite crested. It probably will crest later this week. We do intend to sample the rest of this week, until conditions prevail so that we can reopen the oyster season.

Are there any questions?

COMMISSIONER GOLLOTT: Joe, I'm just trying to

get it straight in my mind. We have actually done better this year than we did last year. I know it has been an up-and-down season, a lot more openings and closings and everything, but it sounds like, with the relay program and with the amount of oysters the fishermen have caught, they have done considerably better this year than they did last season.

Is that correct?

JOE JEWELL: It has been a difficult season for the oyster men because it has not been consistent because of rainfall and river stage. There has been a lot of openings and closings. We have had the opening of the Bonnet Carre spillway. We have had the red tide event. There have been a lot of mitigating factors that we haven't had a lot of consistency. If you are a working person, you need a lot of consistency. The fishermen haven't had that consistency, what they so desperately need, but your assessment is correct.

So far to date, we have had just over twenty-eight thousand sacks of oysters, and last year we had just over twenty-six thousand. We are on mark to have a pretty good year this year. We just need mother nature to cooperate with us.

COMMISSIONER GOLLOTT: Does anybody have any questions for Joe?

COMMISSIONER BOSARGE: I have one.

As far as average being landed per vessel, how are we doing with the fifteen sack limit on tongers and twenty-five sack limit on dredgers?

Are they getting their limit?

JOE JEWELL: They are close to it. It varies because we have changed the sack limit two, or three, times through the year, but, right now, they are getting pretty close to it, but not quite at it.

COMMISSIONER BOSARGE: Thank you.

COMMISSIONER GOLLOTT: A lot of that has been the fishermen themselves. One of the last days the season was open, I had one call me at eleven thirty. He said he was already home. He had gotten his limit of twenty-five sacks and was home by eleven thirty that day. A lot of it depends on the fishermen themselves.

JOE JEWELL: There have been a lot of mitigating factors. When we reopened, it was only open nine days, but, of those nine days, there was a lot of bad weather that was occurring and the fishermen, because we've been open in such a limited way, they are trying to make a living. They are trying to get out there in whatever conditions they can. We have had a lot of bad weather, during the nine-day period the season was open.

With that being said, we are going to move into

the main agenda for Marine Fisheries. First up is Ms. Kristina Broussard who is going to give an update on the DMR weather stations.

JAMIE MILLER: Kristina, before you begin, I just want to remind everybody that if you would like to make a public comment, we have public comment forms. I think they may just be outside this door. If you choose to make public comments on a particular agenda item, then, we need to have that piece of paper up here so that we can make sure you get your chance to speak at the appropriate time. Otherwise, if you don't indicate exactly what agenda item you want to speak to, you will be carried over to the end of the agenda which is public comments.

If there is anyone who would like to make public comments during an agenda item, please fill out the form and bring it up here. Thank you.

KRISTINA BROUSSARD: Good morning. Today I'm going to update you on the Marine Fisheries Shellfish Bureau's weather stations.

Currently, we have five weather stations throughout the Mississippi Gulf Coast. We just completed the fifth weather station in the Kiln.

These weather stations were funded through the Emergency Disaster Recovery Program.

The goal of these weather stations are to

provide high-resolution data coverage of weather events where there is not a significant station of this quality available.

Currently, there are many government and privately-owned weather stations that are reporting in Mississippi, and our stations are placed where there is a gap in that data.

The data from these weather stations will be used to correlate rainfall and water quality conditions.

Data will be reported to the Mississippi Mesonet which is a division of Jackson State University, weather underground for public access, and we are also working with IT to get this data on our MDMR website.

Here is a map of the locations of our five weather stations. Again, remember that we placed them in a location where there is a gap in the data. Most of them are on the western portion of the Mississippi Gulf Coast.

Jackson County has several weather stations that are run by the University of South Alabama and, also, Grand Bay NERR has a weather station.

Our primary goal for the weather stations is for precipitation data for opening and closing of oyster reefs.

There are several secondary goals, including readily available weather data for MDMR employees' daily

boating activities, an internet site to archive and display the graphical data, used to predict environmental conditions for various species and how inland rainfall would impact fisheries and water quality, especially including our shrimping season, and, then, public access to the weather data.

You can see on the photo on the right-hand side, a photo of our weather station at Red Creek. Each station consists of a four-foot deep concrete foundation, a thirty-foot tower with three guide wires, a cellular modem and a data logger, a twelve volt batter and a charging regulator all powered by a solar panel, and, then, you can see there is a crossarm at two meters and also at ten meters. There are wind meters, temperature probes and humidity probes on the crossarms, and, then, we have two rain gauges off to the side.

There are five locations for our weather stations.

The first station which was installed in Waveland is at the Hancock County Utility Authority site, the wastewater treatment facility.

The second station is in Picayune at the Walkiah Bluff Water Park. This station was put here because it is directly next to the Pearl River which is important for our oyster reefs.

The third station is in the Kiln at the Hancock County Emergency Management Agency headquarters.

The fourth station is in Gulfport at the Mississippi Forestry Commission District office on County Farm Road.

The fifth station is in Perkinston at the Red Creek Wildlife Management Area Headquarters on Wire Road.

There are several people that I would like to thank, especially Mai Dang, John Mitchell and Officer Roy Lipscomb.

David Rose, Michael Holliman and Joshua Lambert from the Lyman Fish Hatchery poured the cement base for all five of the towers.

Scott Gordon and Kim Cressman at the NERR helped us. She currently has a weather station at the NERR.

Then, our Shellfish crew, Andrew Barrett, Charley Robertson, Michael Brochard, Wade Hardy, Jessica Rankin, and Brian Sherwood from IT is working on the data.

COMMISSIONER GOLLOTT: Are you telling us that Scott Gordon was pouring concrete?

KRISTINA BROUSSARD: No. That was David Rose at the Hatchery.

Any questions?

COMMISSIONER BOSARGE: Yes.

Do you see this data being incorporated into the

opening and closing of the oyster season?

KRISTINA BROUSSARD: We do. We currently use stations from Weather Underground and from University of South Alabama. The goal of this is to have our own stations that we can make sure are calibrated properly and we know the data.

COMMISSIONER BOSARGE: Are they hurricane proof?

KRISTINA BROUSSARD: Yes, they are. They will stay up during a hurricane. I'm not sure what the max wind they can sustain is, but it is hurricane proof.

COMMISSIONER BOSARGE: Thank you.

KRISTINA BROUSSARD: Thank you.

JOE JEWELL: Thank you, Kristina.

Next up is Mr. Rick Burris. He is going to give an update on the Crab Restoration Program.

RICK BURRIS: Good morning Commissioners, Director Miller, counsel.

Today I'm going to give the Commission an update on the Crab Restoration Program.

As you are all aware, we received NOAA funds from the 2011 opening of the Bonnet Carre spillway which had a significant impact on our oyster and blue crab fisheries.

As we have done previously with other disaster grants, we proposed on implementing a daily crab trap

removal program, by utilizing eligible commercial crab fishermen.

Just for some background, State Statute gives the Commission the authority to close the crab trap season for no less than ten days for the sole purpose of removing derelict, or abandoned, traps.

The State Statute is up on the screen, but you also have a copy of it. I won't read the whole statute, but that is a summary of it.

What is a derelict trap?

Well, a derelict trap is defined as a lost trap which is typically un-buoyed, or unmarked, and not actively fished, and this can happen from a wide variety of circumstances; high water, storm surge, theft is involved at lot, and, then, just from propellers cutting the rope on the cork line.

They pose navigational hazards, as you can see this trap wrapped around this guy's propellor here. He wasn't having a good day (indicating photograph).

The main problem is that once they are in the environment and they are not being actively run, they do continue to ghost fish. While they are out there, all the crabs and fish and other organisms that may get in there, they can't get out because somebody is not actively running them.

Whether that be on the land, or on the water, it is a problem. You can see this trap was on the land and it had some crab carcases in it that had deceased, but it also has a bird in it (indicating photograph).

We want to get crab traps out of the water, as well on the land, to not only help the environment, but help the fishery as well.

Another problem is causes is user-group conflicts. It's an eyesore and nobody wants these in the environment. We do what we can to get them out.

Just to go over some of the success of the program. It has been very successful. Through the help mostly of commercial crab fishermen, we have removed over nineteen thousand derelict crab traps, since 1999.

The program is the first of its kind in the Gulf. We started the program and other states followed suit.

Since then, it has won two EPA Gulf Guardian awards for these efforts, and, like I said, it could not have been accomplished by anybody but the commercial crab fishermen. They have helped us out a lot.

You can see some of these dates that have very high numbers are cleanups that involved only commercial crab fishermen. Some of the ones with low numbers are staff effort, but all the success is determined by our

help from these fishermen (indicating slide).

As mentioned earlier, the project is NOAA funded and, as stated in the grant, there are eligibility requirements. The first part of that requirement is that they held a commercial crab trap license from the 2011-2012 season, as well as a commercial crab trap license from one of the following seasons: 2007-2008, 2008-2009 and 2009-2010.

What we would propose, with the approval of the Commission, is that we would like to have a crab trap closure from April the 5th to the 14th.

Per State Statute, the first seven days of that closure would be for all fishermen in these closure areas -- and I will go over that in a minute -- to be able to move their own traps out of that closure area, and, then, the last three days, April the 12th through the 14th, registered program participants will be able to remove any trap left in the closure area and turn it into the MDMR.

If it is approved, we will notify all licensed commercial and recreational crab fishermen about this closure to give them time to be able to move their gear.

Here is a map of the proposed area we would like to close. After consultation with the Crab Task Force, they propose that we close all waters south of Interstate 10 out to a hundred foot of the main shoreline. What this

will do, it will leave the Mississippi Sound completely open for commercial and recreational crabbing, but it will close down our bays, rivers and bayous which we suspect have the majority of the derelict crab traps.

I will go county-by-county to kind of zoom in a little bit. I know this is a busy map, but this is showing pretty much all the watersheds in this area.

In Jackson County, we will be closing Grand Bay and the Pascagoula River system, over here at Graveline Bayou and Davis Bayou, and, then, Biloxi Bay.

In Harrison County, the same, Biloxi and all the rivers associated with it. The Bay of St. Louis in Harrison County.

In Hancock County, the west side of Bay St. Louis, those river systems up there, and, then, all the bayous that go from Bayou Caddy to the Pearl River.

With that, we would like to request approval, from the CMR, to close the season for the use of crab traps in all waters south of Interstate 10 out to a hundred foot from the main shoreline from April the 5th to the 14th for the Derelict Crab Trap Removal Program.

COMMISSIONER GOLLOTT: Rick, have you made an assessment of how many of these traps are out there?

Do you have any idea?

We have done a lot of cleanups.

Are there still a lot of traps?

RICK BURRIS: It is hard to do so, with so many traps in the environment. Once the ones that are being actively fished are removed, then, you can see the ones that are derelict, but we have seen some in these areas that we are talking about, the bayous and rivers and whatnot.

COMMISSIONER GOLLOTT: The only other thing I have to say is I think we ought to close outside the Ocean Springs bridge, all that whole area in there. I came through there the other day in my boat and I like to not have gotten through there with all the crab traps. Surely, there has to be some derelict crab traps there, too.

RICK BURRIS: This closure area, like I said, it was a recommendation from the Crab Task Force.

COMMISSIONER GOLLOTT: Basically, it is all the areas that are closed to commercial fishing, now, isn't it?

RICK BURRIS: Let me go back to this map.

COMMISSIONER GOLLOTT: You cannot commercially fish inside of the CSX bridge.

RICK BURRIS: This is the CSX, right here. You can barely see it on this map, but all these areas right here are south of the CSX around Bayou Caddy, and, then,

the Pearl River, and, then, over here, all these bays and bayous over here are not closed to commercial fishing. There is the potential to have some derelict crab traps in these areas (indicating map).

JOE JEWELL: This doesn't preclude future derelict crab trap removal programs where we can incorporate larger areas. We are just working in conjunction with the task force, and this is their recommendation for this particular event.

RICK BURRIS: And it leaves a lot of areas still open for them to continue to fish, as well as the people an opportunity to participate in the program.

COMMISSIONER GOLLOTT: I still have strong feelings about the Biloxi Bay and I consider that part of the Biloxi Bay and there is a lot of crabbing going on there. I think we ought to close that area.

Does anybody else have anything to say?

COMMISSIONER BOSARGE: During the Crab Task Force meeting -- I'm a member of the panel -- we had that discussion, in trying to figure out, and we never defined it at the meeting.

How did you define going across the mouths of the bays?

RICK BURRIS: The CSX railroad bridge.

COMMISSIONER BOSARGE: A hundred feet off the

shore to the CSX and across?

RICK BURRIS: Yes.

COMMISSIONER BOSARGE: The only other way would be maybe point-to-point. We just don't want to get it too confusing.

RICK BURRIS: It gets to a point where it does get confusing writing that language because if you were to close an area that wasn't necessary, it is real hard to figure out and you could lose some traps that were, or were not, in that area, in the closure area. We think this is a well-defined area and easy to enforce, relatively easy to enforce.

COMMISSIONER BOSARGE: Hopefully, we will have a second cleanup effort.

Is that okay with you?

RICK BURRIS: Yes.

COMMISSIONER BOSARGE: We will concentrate more on those areas, at that point?

RICK BURRIS: We can definitely do that, preferably in the winter. It would be a lot easier to close that area down then.

COMMISSIONER BOSARGE: I see we've got a lot of fishermen here. You guys have been working hard to try to make this happen, and I appreciate it. You have spent a lot of effort.

Crabbing has been tough. We've got fishermen in the audience, and these last three months have been tough. For whatever reason, there hasn't been much production. The sooner this happens the better.

RICK BURRIS: Yes, sir.

COMMISSIONER GOLLOTT: Would you like to make a motion?

COMMISSIONER BOSARGE: I will make the motion to close the season for the use of crab traps in all waters south of Interstate 10 out to one hundred foot from the main shoreline from April 5th through the 14th, 2016.

COMMISSIONER GOLLOTT: We have a motion.

Do we have a second?

COMMISSIONER DRUMMOND: I'll second the motion, Mr. Chairman.

COMMISSIONER GOLLOTT: We have a motion and a second.

All those in favor, say aye.

(All in favor.)

COMMISSIONER GOLLOTT: Opposed?

(None opposed.)

COMMISSIONER GOLLOTT: Motion carries.

RICK BURRIS: Thank you.

JOE JEWELL: Just to be sure, if there was anyone who wanted to address the Commission, or make

public comments, on this agenda item, please raise your hand, or bring your piece of paper up, now.

ROBERT METZ: (Indicating).

JAMIE MILLER: Mr. Metz, do you want to come to the microphone?

ROBERT METZ: I don't think I need to come. I can probably be heard.

I just want to express my appreciation for the Commission and the DMR working with the fishermen over this issue. Thank y'all very much. I think we're done here, now.

COMMISSIONER BOSARGE: It works both ways. You guys have come out and told us what you need, and we have tried to work with you as best as can, and we appreciate the effort, both sides.

ROBERT METZ: Yes, sir.

JOE JEWELL: I want to thank Mr. Burris and his staff. The whole intent was to provide relief to the crab fishermen as quickly as we could. We understand that they are suffering the first two, or three, months. It has been pretty tough on them.

If there are no other questions from the Commission, that concludes Marine Fisheries.

COMMISSIONER GOLLOTT: Thank you, Joe. We appreciate it.

Coastal Resource Management has no presentation.

Office of Finance.

KACEY WILLIAMS: Good morning Commissioners, Director Miller and Mr. Morrison.

These are our financial results as of February 29th, 2016 (indicating slide).

At the end of February, we had a State revenue of five point seven million.

Total Agency revenue is twenty point eight million.

Our State net income is negative five hundred and forty-one thousand.

Our Agency net income is two point nine million.

After eight months of this fiscal year, we are in good shape. We still have sixty-seven point six percent of our Operating Funds budget remaining and we have forty-eight point seven percent of our Tidelands Funds remaining.

Any questions?

COMMISSIONER GOLLOTT: Thank you, Kacey.

KACEY WILLIAMS: Thank you.

COMMISSIONER GOLLOTT: Office of Coastal Restoration, George.

GEORGE RAMSEUR: Good morning Commissioners, Director Miller, counsel.

I wanted to give you-all an update on the increased level of coordination that is going on between DEQ, DMR and, in some cases, the Corps and the ports, as more money becomes AVL through Restore, NFWF, NRDA and other monies related to the Deep Water Horizon spill.

A major example of that is the Round Island Project which Chairman Bosarge and Mr. Drummond went to, I guess, June of last year. We had a good trip out there, but that project is going to start coming out of the ground this week, and that is funding through NFWF, and, then, Corps monies will be used to dredge and fill that project.

An important step is increased coordination was taken back in November, when Director Miller helped put together what we call The Restoration and Coordination Team. That is a meeting we are having twice a month in the office of Coastal Restoration and Resiliency. It pulls in all the other offices in the agency to work together on making sure the projects coming in are more closely aligned with DMR management plans and goals.

I particularly want to thank Joe Jewell and Jan Boyd and Brian Sherwood for lending their staff to this effort on a regular basis. We are really starting to make some headway in this sort of thing.

The objective really is to make sure that with

all this money and interest and activity going on, that we, number one, avoid conflicts between restoration and other projects, but, really, the goal is to make sure that we look at opportunities to leverage money and resources and get Mississippi the best bang for the buck that we can out of this spill money.

That's really all I wanted to say about this restoration and restore coordination, at this time. It is growing rapidly, and I think it is going to be an effort that bears fruit for us in the long run.

There is another thing I wanted to let you know about that we are working on. Hopefully, you got a copy of the save the date, but, if not, consider this an official invitation to attend our second annual conference which will be May 10th and 11th at the Golden Nugget Casino. We've got a really good agenda fleshing out at this point. We had a lot of fun with this last year, and it is looking like even a more robust event this year. We really want to encourage you-all to attend and hope you can do that.

That's really all I have, unless you have any questions.

COMMISSIONER BOSARGE: I see the equipment being put together to get ready for Round Island.

I recall somewhat that the plans are to make the berm area bigger, in anticipation of being able to use

some of the dredge spoils as fill, the dredge spoils from the widening and deepening of the ship channel.

I guess that project is still ongoing for the Pascagoula ship channel?

GEORGE RAMSEUR: Right. They are very closely aligned and, really, this project, I'm still amazed because we were able to get DEQ, MDMR, the Corps, and the Port of Pascagoula to come together, basically, inside of about a month and sign an MOA that would make this thing move forward.

A critical part of it is that the protection, the sand berm is going to be built with NFWF funds, but, as soon as that is done, they are coordinating very closely with the start of that channel dredging so that, unlike in the past where we have built the berm and kind of had to wait for it to be filled up, this should take place in a much more organized fashion.

The footprint we saw was sort of the remains of an initial seventy acre effort, and this is going to be about two hundred, now, and should be largely complete before the end of the year.

COMMISSIONER BOSARGE: It's amazing to go out by boat and see land where there was water. I guess, if you are old enough, you can imagine where there was land there before, but it is gone, now. It's a good project. It

looks good.

GEORGE RAMSEUR: Very exciting for us.

COMMISSIONER GOLLOTT: Thank you, George.

GEORGE RAMSEUR: Thank you-all very much.

COMMISSIONER GOLLOTT: Melissa, you are up next.

MELISSA SCALLAN: Good morning Commissioners, Director Miller, Mr. Morrison.

The Mississippi Department of Marine Resources was mentioned fifty-one times in local, state and national media since the last CMR meeting.

Some of the items of particular interest were the forest fire near the Grand Bay NERR and the reopening of oyster reefs.

I had to update this, this morning because of the rescue we had over the weekend with Marine Patrol. The Chief and I did some interviews on Sunday, and we are glad to report that four people were rescued from the Mississippi Sound on Saturday afternoon; two teenagers on a catamaran in Ocean Springs and two people from the Mississippi Sound near Long Beach who were in kayaks who turned over.

The female who was rescued on Saturday called me last night and said that she was grateful to Marine Patrol, that she was making her peace with God and, had they not shown up, she believes that she would have died.

It was very serious, and she said Marine Patrol deserves all the credit for saving them. We are very glad about that.

Seafood Marketing participated in the North American Seafood Expo in Boston earlier this month. There were four processors from the Coast who attended, and we talked to people from all over the world about Mississippi seafood, and all of the processors said that it was successful for them, that they talked to a lot of people, got some new business, and they were grateful for that.

Our Marine Patrol has had one boater safety class, since the last CMR meeting, with six students. So far in fiscal year 16, Marine Patrol has had eleven classes and certified two hundred and three students, and that is up some from last year, also.

They also participated in several special events in February; the night Mardi Gras parade in Biloxi, the D'Iberville Mardi Gras parade and the Pass Christian Mardi Gras parade.

Officer Matt Kasovich participated in career day at St. Martin High on February 4th.

All of the officers recently went through a defensive tactics and weapons retention class.

On April 2nd, MDMR and the Grand Bay NERR will host the 25th annual Celebrate the Gulf Marine Education

Festival. We invite you-all to attend that. It is going to be from 10:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. at War Memorial Park in Pass Christian. It is held in conjunction every year with Art in the Pass, and we are going to have a lot of good events there.

On that note, I'm going to ask Jennifer Buchanan to come up and introduce the winner of the Celebrate the Gulf Poster Contest.

JENNIFER BUCHANAN: Thank you, Melissa.

Good morning everyone. This year we are proud to announce that Ms. Grace Bennett of Long Beach who attends Long Beach High School has won the poster contest this year.

Every year we try to see how we can incorporate art into our festival because we are partnered with the Art in the Pass Art Festival. Last year, we started this contest for those that are sixteen and above.

Last year, we had a senior citizen win the contest, and this year we have a young lady who is winning the contest.

This is her poster over here, if you want to go over there and stand by it (indicating Grace Bennett).

What we do is we turn that into this print. This is just a mockup. We think this is going to be a beautiful print this year that we make would available.

That would be, of course, full size. That is just a very small picture (indicating).

Ms. Grace will kindly join us, and she will be signing those for everyone that is in attendance and would like a poster.

Grace, do you want to come up and just say a couple of words?

I want to congratulate Grace.

GRACE BENNETT: Thank you so much. I'm just grateful for this opportunity that the MDMR has blessed me with. I learned about the contest through my school's scholarship opportunities.

I'm glad to be here to sit in on what y'all get to do. It has been very interesting and exciting to learn what the MDMR is all about.

Again, I'm just so thankful for your support. I'm excited to see what Celebrate the Gulf has in store. Thank you, again.

JENNIFER BUCHANAN: I will add that there is a two hundred and fifty dollar award that goes with her honor. Thank you.

Any questions?

COMMISSIONER GOLLOTT: Thank you.

JENNIFER BUCHANAN: Thank you.

COMMISSIONER GOLLOTT: Before we go any further,

let me apologize to everyone. I think I missed getting the approval of the minutes. Let's go back and do that just to make sure.

Do I have a motion to approve the minutes?

COMMISSIONER DRUMMOND: So moved, Mr. Chairman.

COMMISSIONER GOLLOTT: We have a motion.

Do we have a second?

COMMISSIONER HARMON: So seconded, Mr. Chairman.

COMMISSIONER GOLLOTT: We have a motion and a second.

All those in favor say aye.

(All in favor.)

COMMISSIONER GOLLOTT: Opposed?

(None opposed.)

COMMISSIONER GOLLOTT: Motion carries.

Now we move to other business, Mr. Randy Bosarge.

RANDY BOSARGE: Thank y'all, the Commission, and Director Miller and the staff for allowing me to be on the agenda today.

I am Randy Bosarge. I am the Supervisor for District 5 Jackson County which encompasses east Ocean Springs all the way over to about east beach in Ocean Springs. I have a pretty big area along the Coast.

I'm here for several reasons today. Number one

is the Board of Supervisors passed a resolution, at our meeting at the first of the month, reflecting the one-mile limit for the --

COMMISSIONER GOLLOTT: (Interposing) Let me interrupt you right there. It's not on the agenda and we are not going to take it up today.

RANDY BOSARGE: I'm just telling you what we did.

COMMISSIONER GOLLOTT: We just don't want to go into it.

RANDY BOSARGE: We are asking your support on enforcing the one-mile limit, and there was another resolution that we passed in reference to a bill that had already died, but I felt like we needed to go ahead and pass it, our support on limiting the red fish back catch, also, by the menhaden boats.

Also, I'm here today to ask your support in restoring our oyster reefs here in Jackson County.

Back in the day, even when I was a child, Jackson County was known for its oyster industry. As a matter of fact, some say that Jackson County was the best oyster along the Gulf States. Since the early nineties, we have lost that.

We have had some development issues that caused one of our main oyster reefs, Graveline Bay, to falter and

not be able to harvest oyster anymore, and, then, Bayou Heron shortly after that.

What I'm here today to tell you is give you an update that you might not know, or you might know, but it is very important for me to get this out today.

Graveline Bay is basically where I grew up, and my grandfather and two of his brothers had oyster shops, and I grew up out there tonging oysters and shucking and opening and shoveling the oyster shells around and stuff, and I can tell you back in the day -- that was in the sixties and seventies -- the oysters were so good that I would eat most of them before I would put them in the bucket, until I got full. That's how great they were.

What I'm here to ask y'all today is to consider, with the BP restore money, looking at restoring our oyster reefs in Jackson County, and let's make Jackson County more productive with oysters, along with the other areas along the Coast.

Graveline has come a long way, since it was shut down. Number one, there is a bridge that was built going over Graveline Bay, after Hurricane Katrina.

Yes, there was an earthen road that went across there with a couple of huge culverts in it and it restricted the flow. I'm not a scientist. I'm just a local guy that remembers all of this, but it restricted

the flow of the water and, at one time, yes, that was part of the reasons why the oysters weren't cleaning up well.

Since Hurricane Katrina, there is a new bridge that goes across there. It is elevated above the marsh and now it allows the whole back end of that bay to flow. The water is flowing through there at a much better rate than what it was previously.

Number two, there is a centralized sewer system that has been completed. Part of the problem back in the day was all the development going on in the St. Andrews-Fontainebleau area, the Graveline Point area. It was all under septic tanks, and those septic tanks more than likely were leeching into the bay. I'm not going to doubt that a minute.

This year, there is a centralized sewer system that is online, and part of that centralized sewer system -- and the reason why I know about it is because I served on the Jackson County Utility Authority for eight years until I was elected Supervisor -- involves taking the existing septic tanks and they have to pump them out and they have to fill them with sand, before they put the lid back on them. All the existing septic tanks are being eliminated. Eventually, that should limit the flow of any nutrients, or whatever, into the bay and lake area.

Number three is I have been working on some

dredging projects in the Graveline Lake-Graveline Bay area and, also, I'm working on a project that is going to hopefully deepen the mouth a little more and be able to get on out a little further.

There has already been some dredging done at the mouth, but I'm working with some engineers to try to get some more dredging done because I feel like we need more flow in and out of there.

My point here today is I would really like to be able to get your help and let's restore the oyster reefs in Jackson County.

As a board member, I would work any way I could to help y'all in making that happen, and our share of the restore money I want to put toward oyster reefs, not only oyster reefs, but some more inshore fishing reefs. Oyster reefs make great inshore fishing reefs.

Like I said, we would go catch oysters in the morning, and, then, in the afternoons, go back and fish out there and catch some of the best fish around.

Not only the Graveline Bay area, but the mud lump area and Bayou Heron. There are a lot of things that have been cleaned up over the years, and I would really like some more focus on that, if possible. I would really like y'all to consider that.

I'm willing to help in any way. I will even

help you test the water. It doesn't matter to me. That's how important it is for me to see Jackson County get back into the oyster business, plus it helps all the oyster fishermen out here because it gives them more options. It's not just limited to one area. Now, they have more options that they can come out and oyster on. Maybe it's bad here one day and they can go over here and oyster. Let's give them some more options, and I'm willing to help any way I can.

I would like to thank y'all for having your meetings here in Jackson County every so often, and I open the Jackson County Boardroom up to you. If you ever want to have a meeting there, feel free to be my guest to have a meeting there.

I thank y'all for listening to me today, and anything I can do, please let me know.

COMMISSIONER GOLLOTT: Randy, hold on a minute.

We are just glad to hear you say this because we have been working on Graveline for about twelve years. The fecal coliform counts are running high.

How often do we run samples, Joe, on Graveline?

JOE JEWELL: We run monthly samples in that area.

COMMISSIONER GOLLOTT: The Board of Supervisors and the Jackson County Utility Authority can really make a

big difference in this, and we are glad to hear you are working on it.

RANDY BOSARGE: Yes, sir. Part of my campaign for supervisor was to get our oyster reefs back and I'm going to stick to my word.

COMMISSIONER GOLLOTT: We will be calling on you.

RANDY BOSARGE: Please. I will be glad to help, and I still have some connections at the utility authority and they would love to help, also, but I can tell you that that system is almost a hundred percent up and running, and all of that sewer is collected and it runs up to the West Jackson County facility there on Seaman Road. There is no outfall anywhere in the Graveline Bay area, Graveline Lake area. It all goes north.

COMMISSIONER GOLLOTT: Recently, when it rains really heavy like we had last week, the thing is overloaded real bad and they can't process it at the Jackson County Utility.

RANDY BOSARGE: That's the Seaman Road facility. When it rains too much, all the facilities have such an influx of water, or sewage, that it just takes them a little while to process it, but, in the cities, you do have some areas that the manholes get overloaded and they will relieve themselves, but we are working on that.

Believe me all the cities are doing a fantastic job in rerouting some of their lines and patching their lines, and they have been able to come up with some monies to help them do that, and, also, the county is assisting them any way we can.

We are working on cleaning this up, and we hope to use some restore money to help take care some of that stuff, also.

I know the utility authority has applied for some restore funds to also help with some stormwater and sewage infiltrations.

COMMISSIONER GOLLOTT: We appreciate your help on this. We would love to get Graveline going.

RANDY BOSARGE: I'm at y'all's disposal. Please call me.

COMMISSIONER DRUMMOND: Randy, I remember when, too.

RANDY BOSARGE: Yes, sir.

COMMISSIONER DRUMMOND: I was out fishing a couple of weeks ago out in Bayou Cumbest, and there are a lot of oysters sticking up out of the mud at low tide, and I started to go in there, but I didn't.

RANDY BOSARGE: And what concerns me about Bayou Heron is right over there in Dauphin Island, they are catching all the oysters they can and right over on our

side, we can't harvest them.

Like I said, I'm just a layman here.

COMMISSIONER DRUMMOND: You are in Alabama waters, when you go out Bayou Heron.

RANDY BOSARGE: Exactly. I'm kind of wondering why we can't go back and get our oysters.

COMMISSIONER GOLLOTT: They could call it home cooking.

RANDY BOSARGE: Yes, we could call it home cooking.

I would like to see more of our Mississippi oysters in Mississippi than the enforcement staff having to go after all these guys that are bringing the imports in.

I would love to see more Mississippi oysters being consumed in Mississippi for sure.

Thank y'all very much.

COMMISSIONER BOSARGE: Getting back to the sewer treatment facilities, are there any plans to move the Pascagoula facility?

RANDY BOSARGE: Yes, and it's the three hundred and fifty million dollar question, where is that going to come from.

As a matter of fact, it is a multiple phase project, but the utility authority is working on the

planning stage of it, right now. Actually, before I left the authority, they hired an engineer to start studying that because it is going to cost anywhere from three hundred and fifty million to four hundred million just to move that plant.

Now, that plant will always be there, but what will happen is when a new plant is built, that plant turns into a pumping station because it would cost us a billion dollars to really move that plant, but that plant will become a pumping station and the sewage will still go there, but it will be rerouted to the new plant which is the cheaper more sensible alternative.

COMMISSIONER BOSARGE: And that plant would be where it still had an outfall into the Pascagoula River system?

RANDY BOSARGE: Well, that's what happens. Because of DEQ and EPA regulations, they will never allow you, more than likely, to ever move that outfall. That would always stay there. It will have to go to the plant, be treated and come back and discharged at that discharge point. That is one of the things they have really gotten strict on is where you outfall. Pretty much anywhere north of I-10, now, you can't outfall sewer into the river. It has to be close to the mouth of the river so it gets out into the Gulf faster.

COMMISSIONER BOSARGE: The major oyster areas we have in Jackson County, before your time and mine, have been closed.

RANDY BOSARGE: They have been closed that long?

COMMISSIONER BOSARGE: Oh, yes, and we have been working, this whole group and MDMR trying to come up with a management plan where we can open some of these areas at specific times of the year when water quality meets all the standards. Hopefully, we can get some of that area, that west river reef area open.

Some of the Commissioners and myself have made trips out there, and I have made, I guess, three trips this year doing surveys, looking, seeing what is there and, hopefully, looking at maybe bringing this area down to just this smaller area that we could actually get open for harvest.

This is nothing new. We have been working on it for quite some time.

RANDY BOSARGE: I can tell you I'm here to help and help expedite the mission. I can assure you. That's what I'm here for.

I thank y'all very much.

COMMISSIONER BOSARGE: Thank you.

COMMISSIONER GOLLOTT: Next we have Mr. George Storrs.

GEORGE STORRS: I just want to thank you guys for letting me come up and speak after Randy. I had spoken to him on the phone and we talked about things that we have in common, and one of those things that we had in common was Graveline Bayou, and I have gotten trapped in the mouth of Graveline Bayou before with a load of oysters, when they were taking them out of there several years ago.

We need that part dredged out for sure, and I know you guys have probably been knowing that, but that needs to be a priority for that water flow to get in and out of there because there are good things that are going on north of that, but, we need the southern end fixed where the water will flow and get those nutrients in and get those nutrients out.

All I can do is echo what Randy had to say. I'm glad that there is somebody that is in a higher position than me that would say what we actually need. We agree on things that we need as fishermen, oyster fishermen and actual fishermen. I can only echo that.

I've got another topic I want to speak on maybe during public comment, unless you want me to do it, now.

COMMISSIONER GOLLOTT: We are in public comment. So go ahead.

GEORGE STORRS: Well, let me get right to the

point.

Is that camera on me?

I want to say this. I want all of Mississippi to hear this. Our oyster plan is crap. It is unfriendly to the oyster fishermen. That is why the oyster industry is down the way it is. We've got to tweak that thing. We've got to get the rainfall changed. We've got to also get that river stage changed.

As long as you play around with that thing like you've been playing with it, the staff, everybody goes along with this thing and we go by that plan -- the word starts with an S and ends with a D -- we are not going to do well. We are never going to do well.

The other states have used our plan. It was written way back. A guy named John Soreno (phonetic) wrote this thing, along with a couple of other people on the staff who have been gone forever and Rick Laird (phonetic) who was a fabulous director. He was a good director, but the FDA had their finger in it, then.

DMR made the plan and it was template. It was a great template for the other Gulf states. Well, they took our plan because the FDA made them have a plan, but they tweaked it. They made it where everything is friendly to the fishermen.

They didn't make it friendly here. All we did

was set up a big brick wall against everything that we were doing to begin with that made our lives easier. Now, all it is, is a brick wall and a high road. We just can't hardly deal with it anymore.

That's the reason I said what I said about the plan. It needs to be reworked. It needs to be changed. It is just a horrible plan for the fishermen.

As far as the tongers go -- I know I'm running out of time. I'm going to hurry up and say this -- we didn't get in on that eight hundred thousand dollars that happened over there, when we had to move those oysters out. I thought we were going to move something between the bridges to the tonging reef, and we didn't get to do that.

I was just going to tell you guys, why don't you just write me a check for my part of that because there was money that was supposed to be used. All fishermen were supposed to be involved.

I know the crabbers are a separate entity, and they got some money cut out for them.

The tongers, it looks like, are just getting cut out of everything. Maybe you should make us a separate entity so that some of that big money that is involved, we get to work with. We get to work on it, too.

I don't have anything against people making

money, but I want to be part of it. That's my living, too.

I appreciate your time, and I probably said things that made people mad, but that's tough. That's just the way I feel. Thank you.

COMMISSIONER GOLLOTT: Thank you, George.

RAYMOND McCALL: (NO RESPONSE.)

COMMISSIONER GOLLOTT: One more time, Raymond McCall.

(No response.)

COMMISSIONER GOLLOTT: Brian Rice.

BRIAN RICE: Good morning.

I did some research at Jackson County, at the law library, and just to touch on a few things, it says in this book here that each county is supposed to have a reef open throughout the season, but it's not specifying which reef. So it doesn't have to be up near shore where this discharge is coming, but there are reefs farther out, too, that could be utilized.

One of the questions I had for you is if this legislative law is there that we are supposed to have a reef open in each county throughout the season, why can't we utilize that and why can't we follow the laws that are here because there are other options besides just near shore?

We fish deep water in Harrison County. That's a place for the reef.

The law says not to over fish any of these places, and we've been fishing over in Harrison County since I've been here, and that's ten years.

When all of this other stuff is out there, why can't the Commission, the fishermen and the Department get together and make this happen?

We are fighting each other. It feels like to me that we are fighting each other, and these laws are here for us. These laws are here for you to make it easier for you to open these oyster reefs for us. They weren't written for our future. This is already happening.

Mississippi is already doing this, the oyster fishermen and the Commission. It's already happening so they made a law to protect that way of life. Not to change it, but to protect it.

The shells were going back on the reefs, the oyster retention program was happening, Mississippi was producing as much as we could possibly produce, and it was better than anybody else, by my reading.

My quick question is, when do we get to see these laws enacted to keep a reef open in each county?

COMMISSIONER GOLLOTT: Brian, let me see if I can answer that.

BRIAN RICE: Yes, sir.

COMMISSIONER GOLLOTT: Every oyster reef that is allowed to be open -- and Federal law does supercede State law -- the Federal Government will not let us open these oyster reefs with the fecal coliform counts that are in there, now. We have to clean them up, before we can open them, and we have been trying to do this. This Commission, ever since I've been on here, has been trying to do this.

No matter what the law says, if you put people's health in jeopardy, you can't open a reef.

BRIAN RICE: Well, I sure don't want to hurt anybody. That's not my option, just to force the opening. That's not what I'm trying to do.

What I want to know is, if this is happening, there is cleanup to be done out there, there is money here for it that was allocated to clean it up, and we have tons of fishermen here that are just waiting to go out and do something, and we can rake those reefs and clean those reefs.

These older fishermen know where those reefs are offshore in deeper water, and we can clean those just as much as anybody else. We can probably clean them better. We are more interested in the future of those reefs than most people are.

There are millions and millions of revenue being missed out by Mississippi, right now, by not putting the fishermen to work cleaning those reefs up, or anybody else.

COMMISSIONER GOLLOTT: Thank you, Brian.

BRIAN RICE: Thank you.

COMMISSIONER GOLLOTT: Harold Hudson.

HAROLD HUDSON: Hello. My name is Harold Hudson. I've been a fisherman all my life, and I just don't understand why Mississippi, Alabama, Louisiana and Texas -- we have a big sack basket, and I want to know why we can't be competitive with the other states.

Is there any way we can vote on that?

JAMIE MILLER: What is your question?

HAROLD HUDSON: An oyster sack here is a big sack. In Alabama, it's like two five-gallon buckets, but, in Mississippi, it's three five-gallon buckets. In Louisiana, it's two five-gallon buckets, and they get as much for their oysters as we do for ours.

COMMISSIONER GOLLOTT: The measurement is set by laws and it's a champagne basket and it gives you the measurement. They have the same measurements in Louisiana, but a lot of times the fishermen in Louisiana short sack them and put them in bushels.

We don't have any way to measure it, but by the

sack, and we go by State law.

If you would cut it in half, they would cut your price in half.

HAROLD HUDSON: Well, a champagne basket is a champagne basket.

COMMISSIONER GOLLOTT: That's true. That'S a sack.

HAROLD HUDSON: Well, you weigh a Mississippi sack and a champagne sack, they are different.

COMMISSIONER GOLLOTT: I don't believe it, unless their law -- say Louisiana has the ability to set up their own measurements on their champagne, I haven't looked at it.

HAROLD HUDSON: An average sack in Alabama weighs, like, seventy-five pounds. Louisiana is about seventy pounds.

COMMISSIONER GOLLOTT: Well, it is square inches. It has nothing to do with pounds.

HAROLD HUDSON: Well, our square inch basket is a hundred and twenty pounds. That is the difference.

That's all I want to comment on.

COMMISSIONER GOLLOTT: Thank you.

HAROLD HUDSON: Thank you.

COMMISSIONER GOLLOTT: Mr. Catfish Miller.

JAMES MILLER: James Miller. I just know that

the DMR down here needs to be more friendly to the fishermen, with the water quality and putting us to work.

Restructuring our reefs, I think we need to be utilized to do that. I feel big contractors are going to step in and take our restore money in the future. Our industry has been devastated by the floods, Katrina and BP.

I feel like Mr. Randy out here is the only one that spoke on behalf of a fishermen's part in life about opening his door for y'all.

I think we need to utilize the oyster reefs to the east here in Jackson County. Wouldn't be a bad idea, when we are having bad times down in Harrison County and Hancock County.

I just think we need to work more to put us to work. We are struggling in this industry; not only me, but my fellow citizens.

I understand y'all are trying to do the best y'all can for Jackson County, but we're not doing enough because I've been doing this all my life, and, as a kid, I looked beyond. I used to steam stock at Weems factory, and I look at today and I laugh. We would come in with a thousand sacks of oysters on the deck of our boat, and today we are limited to fifteen, ten, twenty-five.

If we are overworking areas, maybe we need to

transfer some oyster down to the west, put us fishermen to work so we can purge these oysters and catch them in our future.

If you don't start utilizing the fishermen, we are practically going to have to get out of this business.

I know y'all hate to hear me get up here and preach and preach, but it's the truth. It's the gospel.

I don't hate y'all. I just want to be a voice for the fishermen and let you know that we need people like Randy with positive thoughts for our future.

I'm overwhelmed that we are not working no more than we did this year. I think we worked fourteen days total.

How can you pay your bills, your mortgage, your insurance, run your household, boat fees?

It's hard, and, then, y'all throw in the glitch that we need insurance to work in these programs.

There is something our Commission needs to figure out for us and our governor. We need this restoration money, this BP money that is going to be handed down, and we need to be a part of it as a community to rebuild our community. If you don't give us some of the pie, we are going to starve to death.

I feel like our oyster reefs are not on recovery. We are not on the right road. We're not

because I'm still not working, and I'm sorry I've got to sit here.

I don't want to put down the Commission and the governor, but something has got to be done.

I'm just a fisherman with a voice and I see what is happening to my industry, and I'm saddened. Things, hopefully, in our future will change and maybe we can be involved in some of these recovery plans in the future.

I love y'all and I just want you to hear my voice that is a concerned voice. It truly is.

Mr. Gollott, I know my time is up. Gotta go.

COMMISSIONER GOLLOTT: You're right.

That ends public comments.

I think we need an executive session?

COMMISSIONER BOSARGE: Yes, sir. I would like to make a motion to go into closed session to discuss going into executive session to discuss personnel issues.

COMMISSIONER GOLLOTT: We have a motion.

Do we have a second?

COMMISSIONER DRUMMOND: I'll second the motion.

COMMISSIONER GOLLOTT: We have a motion and a second.

All those in favor say aye.

(All in favor.)

COMMISSIONER GOLLOTT: Opposed?

(None opposed.)
COMMISSIONER GOLLOTT: Motion carries.
MEETING STANDS IN RECESS
COMMISSIONER GOLLOTT: I would like to call this meeting back to order.
SEAN MORRISON: Mr. Chairman, just to announce the actions that were taken in the executive session, at 11:26 a motion was made by Commission Bosarge to go into closed session to discuss the need for an executive session to discuss personnel matters. That motion was seconded by Mr. Drummond.
In the closed meeting were myself, all the Commissioners, Direct Miller and HR Director Christy Royals.
At 11:39 a motion was made by Commission Bosarge to go into an executive session to discuss these personnel matters, and that motion was seconded by Chairman Gollott.
In the executive session, there were three motions made.
The first was a motion by Chairman Gollott to adopt an employee evaluation of the MDMR as an evaluation of the Executive Director himself which is a responsibility they do every year. That motion was seconded by Commissioner Bosarge.
The second motion was to adjust the salary range

of the Executive Director to be in line with a Personnel Board recommendation for what that salary range should be. That motion was made by Chairman Gollott and seconded by Commissioner Harmon.
Finally, there was a motion by Commissioner Bosarge to increase the director's salary to be in line with the new recommendations presented by the Personnel Board. That was seconded by Commissioner Drummond.
At 11:53, Commissioner Drummond made a motion to end the executive session, and that was seconded by Commissioner Harmon.
COMMISSIONER GOLLOTT: I would like to thank everybody.
Shelby Drummond, do we have a motion to adjourn?
COMMISSIONER DRUMMOND: I make a motion we adjourn, Mr. Chairman.
COMMISSIONER GOLLOTT: Do we have a second?
COMMISSIONER BOSARGE: So seconded.
COMMISSIONER GOLLOTT: We have a motion and a second.
All those in favor say aye.
(All in favor.)
COMMISSIONER GOLLOTT: Opposed?
(None opposed.)
COMMISSIONER GOLLOTT: Motion carries.

Adjourned.
(Whereupon, at 11:56 o'clock, a.m., the March 22, 2016, meeting of the Commission on Marine Resources was concluded.)

C E R T I F I C A T E

I, Lucille Morgan, Certified Shorthand Reporter, do hereby certify that the above and foregoing is a true and correct transcript of the March 22, 2016, meeting of the Commission on Marine Resources, as taken by me at the time and place heretofore stated in the aforementioned matter in shorthand, with electronic verification, and later reduced to typewritten form to the best of my skill and ability; and, further, that I am not a relative, employee, or agent, of any of the parties thereto, nor financially interested in the cause.

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