COMMISSION ON MARINE RESOURCES

COMMISSION MEETING

Tuesday, July 21, 2015
9:00 a.m.
Bolton State Building Auditorium
1141 Bayview Avenue
Biloxi, Mississippi 39530

Commission Members:

Richard Gollott, Chairman
Shelby Drummond, Vice Chairman
Steve Bosarge
Ron Harmon
Ernie Zimmerman

Also Present:

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

COMMISSIONER GOLLOTT: Good morning. Fist of all, we are going to have the Pledge of Allegiance. I would like to ask Jamie to lead us in the pledge.

(Whereupon, the Pledge of Allegiance was recited.)

COMMISSIONER GOLLOTT: Next, we have approval of the minutes.

COMMISSIONER DRUMMOND: So moved, Mr. Chairman.

COMMISSIONER ZIMMERMAN: Second.

COMMISSIONER GOLLOTT: We have a motion and a second.

All those in favor say aye.

(All in favor.)

COMMISSIONER GOLLOTT: Motion is carried.

Next, we have approval of the agenda.

COMMISSIONER ZIMMERMAN: I would like to make a motion to approve, Mr. Chairman.

COMMISSIONER GOLLOTT: We have a motion to approve as written and read.

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.

SEAN MORRISON: Mr. Chairman.

COMMISSIONER GOLLOTT: Yes, sir.

SEAN MORRISON: We may want to put the elections on the agenda, as well. I don't believe they are already on there.

COMMISSIONER ZIMMERMAN: It's already on it.

COMMISSIONER GOLLOTT: It's on there.

SEAN MORRISON: I'm sorry. I had an old version.

COMMISSIONER GOLLOTT: Next, we have election of officers. Every year in July, we elect officers. We start the election with the chairman and we go to the vice chairman.

Are there any nominations for chairman?

COMMISSIONER ZIMMERMAN: Yes, Mr. Chairman.

I would like to nominate you as chairman again, if you would take it.

COMMISSIONER GOLLOTT: Thank you.

Do we have any more nominations?

(No response.)

COMMISSIONER GOLLOTT: With no more nominations, nominations are closed.

Do we have a second?

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

COMMISSIONER GOLLOTT: We have a motion made and seconded.

All those in favor say aye.

(All in favor.)

COMMISSIONER GOLLOTT: Motion carries. Thank you.

Now, we open the nominations for vice chairman.

Do we have any nominations?

COMMISSIONER BOSARGE: I would like to nominate Mr. Shelby Drummond as vice chairman.

COMMISSIONER GOLLOTT: Do we have any more nominations?

(No response.)

COMMISSIONER GOLLOTT: Nominations are closed, at this time.

Do we have a second for the motion?

COMMISSIONER ZIMMERMAN: I'll second the motion.

COMMISSIONER GOLLOTT: Motion has been made and seconded.

All those in favor say aye.

(All in favor.)

COMMISSIONER GOLLOTT: Motion carries.

COMMISSIONER ZIMMERMAN: Mr. Chairman, I would like to take the time to thank y'all for what you've done as the Chairman and the Vice Chairman for the past year. You have done a good job. I think CMR as a whole, under your direction, Jamie's direction and our direction, is moving in the right direction. So thank you.

COMMISSIONER GOLLOTT: Thank you, Ernie.

We have the Executive Director's report next.

JAMIE MILLER: Thank you, Chairman Gollott.

I've got two items. One is the Governor's Oyster Council, the final report was delivered to the Governor at a press conference on June the 23rd. The Governor has had a chance to review that final report. He has contacted me on a few occasions. He has been very impressed with the work that was done. He thanked the volunteers and the staff, and I also want to thank everybody that was involved, that gave their time to develop the report and the recommendations.

The Governor also said that he is committed to working with our agency and the Commission to make the recommendations a reality. So we will continue to do that, moving forward. Our staff has already started to begin kind of a time line and next steps for us to consider.

The report is available on our website at

www.dmr.ms.gov. It's on the front page. So we encourage people to go there and download it, or you can get a hard copy.

We have delivered the reports to all the coastal counties. You can get a hard copy of the report which looks like this at the Hancock County Chamber of Commerce building in Bay St. Louis, at Pass Christian City Hall, you can, of course, come here and get a copy of it, and in Jackson County, we've got them at Gautier City Hall (indicating document).

Secondly, the agency is just now in the final draft of its budget request for the 2017 fiscal year. We have been preparing that budget. The staff has been working very hard to get all of those numbers put together. As soon as it becomes final at the end of this month, we will make it available online, as well, on our website where the public and everyone can view that budget. We will also deliver hard copies to the legislative budget office, at the same time.

That will be fiscal year 2017 which begins July of 2016. So we are ahead of the calendar, but it will be forecasting what our budget with the agency will be involved in, in the next eighteen months to twenty-four months. Thank you for that.

COMMISSIONER GOLLOTT: Next up is Office of

Marine Patrol, Mr. Keith Davis.

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

You have the report in front of you for the past month, the month of June. There are a couple of things I do want to mention.

The first one, under "Oyster Violations", you see one that says "No Shellfish Repacker Certification". That was one our trip that four of our officers took to north Mississippi, checking seafood shops up there for compliance, and this particular shop was taking oysters out of gallons and repacking them in unmarked pints and quarts. His reasoning for it was he could make more money that way.

It was a good trip. The Chief is going to talk a little bit more about that. We did make contact with several seafood shops up there.

One other item I would like to mention that I really don't like to talk about it, but it is fatalities in the past year. If you notice, we had ten fatalities, compared to eight in 2014. The last two were drownings in the Wolf River at Merlin Necaise. The Chief is going to talk about that, too, where our dive team recovered the deceased.

Do you have any questions?

COMMISSIONER DRUMMOND: I have a question.

RUSTY PITTMAN: Yes, sir.

COMMISSIONER DRUMMOND: Under "Marine Litter Violations", the "Discharge of Hazardous Substance", what was the substance?

RUSTY PITTMAN: Oil. A shrimp boat was pumping oil out of the bilge.

If there are no more questions, I would like to ask Chief Davis to come up and do the recognition.

COMMISSIONER GOLLOTT: Thank you, Rusty.

RUSTY PITTMAN: Thank you.

KEITH DAVIS: Good morning Mr. Chairman, Director Miller, and other Commissioners.

As you can see in your packet, today is a day that we would like to pause and recognize those Marine Patrol Officers who are committed to the agency and our mission here at DMR. This has been a very busy summer for them, as they have shown through their efforts to carry out those commitments.

We would like to start out with recognizing one of our reserve officers who has decided he is going to retire and rest.

Officer Dawson Love started his career with the United States Air Force, working primarily in communications. After twenty-one years of service, he

retired, becoming a civilian instructor with the United States Air Force where he, again, retired in 2014.

Throughout his career, he understood the importance of continuing education, and he went on to get his Master's Degree with William Carey University and a Ph.D. in Management.

In 1999, Dawson Love decided he wanted to volunteer and he came to work here with the DMR Marine Patrol Division. Since 1999, Officer Love has been credited with assisting with enhancing the communications division as a part-time dispatcher. His training and passion to enhance communications assisted us with where we are today, and I thank him for that.

In addition, he has also volunteered, on average, a hundred and twenty hours per year. Volunteered a hundred and twenty hours per year, in his spare time.

During his tenure as a Marine Patrol Officer, Dawson could always be counted on. Even at a moment's notice, he was always willing to come and assist us with our goals and missions.

For the last seven years, Dawson served as the Chief of Marine Patrol Reserve Unit and, today, I gladly announce that he is ready to go home and spend time with his family.

Sir, from my office, I say thank you for your

service. Rest easy. Thank you.

(Applause.)

KEITH DAVIS: The next recognition is several of our officers on a few search and rescue efforts that we have had this summer so far. I'm not going to go through all of what is in your packet. If you have any questions on that, obviously, we are here to answer those questions.

We also want to update you on where we are on JEA, our current contract and overall review of the JEA.

Finally, we are going to talk a little bit about the Cowart case. I know some of you had some questions on what we were doing with recreational fishermen.

The first search and rescue happened on May 24th. Chief Pittman already mentioned we had two kids that went missing off the west end tip of Ship Island, and you have all seen the news reports on that. That did not end the way that we would like for those rescues to end, but Marine Patrol was able to save one of the young men who was clinging to a buoy west of Ship Island.

One thing that I would like to point out in this slide is, on the night that these kids went missing, the weather was extremely bad that night and, while we all were at home safe in our houses, Marine Patrol, Park Service and the Coast Guard were out looking for these young men in deplorable conditions.

Finally, as I mentioned before, on May 27th, we recovered the body of Omar Gonzalez, with the assistance of the United States Coast Guard and one of our local charter boat fishermen who wishes to remain anonymous.

Then, on June 6th, a medical emergency call came in to our communications division. This was a unique call. It was the United States Coast Guard requesting our assistant in Louisiana. A young man was having some heart conditions and Louisiana had no one to respond, and the Coast Guard was unable to respond quickly and asked if we had anyone in the area. That particular day, Senior Master Sargent Tommy Jennings was patrolling south of Ship Island and was the closest vessel to that young man.

Subsequently, the gentleman succumbed to his conditions, but I would like to point out that Marine Patrol never gave up on him, and eventually brought him in from the Isle au Pitre area to Pass Christian where he was eventually pronounced dead, but I would like to point out that Senior Master Sargent Tommy Jennings did a great job on doing everything he could to save that man's life that day.

I do want to mention that Sargent Jennings demonstrated actions indicative of this agency's commitment to protecting life on the waterways and should be commended for a job well done. We will get to that in

just a minute.

On June 16th, we received another call concerning a possible capsized vessel. Those two victims, we found early that morning on June 16th, and one of the highlights on this slide that I would like to point out is that utilizing our down-view sonar, dive team members were able to recover both victims in what is being described to me as record time of thirty-six minutes. They were able to provide closure for both of those families and bring their loved ones in.

Now, I want to take the time to specifically recognize each member who was involved in these search and rescues. We will reserve applause until the end.

Team leader, Bryce Gex.

Dive Commander, Senior Master Sargent Tommy Jennings.

Senior Master Sargent Matt Kasovich.

Master Sargent Scott Anderson.

Corporal Chris Collins.

Private Jeff Langlinais.

Our support staff was:

Senior Master Sargent Scott Chatham.

Corporal Amanda Skok.

Our very own Commissioner, Harrison County Boat Patrol Lieutenant Ron Harmon was out there that morning,

as well.

United States Coast Guard sent a boat out there.

Lieutenant Mike Yonce.

Captain of Patrol, Kyle Wilkerson.

Dispatch Supervisor, Amy Taylor.

Christine McQueen.

Selena Burhorn.

Micki McCellen.

Daphne Moore.

Chief Pittman, stand by. I know you think I missed you, but I didn't.

A year ago, Director Miller challenged me with making sure that our Marine Patrol is professional, courteous, and fair.

I would like to take the time to say to Director Miller that we are well on our way in Marine Patrol in doing that, and the reason why we are is the people I just mentioned in that slide.

At this time, I would like for them to stand and be recognized, including Lieutenant Ron Harmon with Harrison County Boat Patrol.

(Applause.)

KEITH DAVIS: These cases do not stop with the recovery. We have implemented an Investigative Division that has been committed and remains investigating these

cases to ensure that it was truly an accident.

At this time, I would like to recognize Captain Chris Caldwell and Investigator Will Freeman for the work that they have done on ensuring that these were true accidents and not some crime that happened out there on the waterway.

Captain Chris Caldwell and Will Freeman.

(Applause.)

KEITH DAVIS: Finally, my little buddy standing here, Assistant Chief Rusty Pittman, he didn't know that I was going to sidebar and do this today, but Chief Pittman was the glue that held this place together and he has not received proper accolades for the work that he has done. Without his leadership, we certainly could not do the things that we are able to do in Marine Patrol.

Please join me in congratulating Chief Pittman in the work that he has done.

(Applause.)

KEITH DAVIS: JEA Update. I'm not going to go through this entire slide, as you have been able to read, but, if you have any questions, please let me know. Those are the numbers that we have received from NOAA, as a result of our JEA contract.

As Chief Pittman mentioned briefly just a moment ago, we traveled to the north part of the state and that

was in direct response to a seafood dealer approaching me early on and putting me on notice that Marine Patrol has not done a due diligence job is enforcing the laws that we enforce on the three coastal counties, in terms of seafood licenses.

We responded to that and we are now patrolling, or have a schedule to travel to the north part of the state to ensure that those businesses are following the same rules and regulations that the coastal counties are, and, as you can tell, we did have a lot of activity going on there.

Some feedback from that was we had numerous shops and market owners that thanked us for the added enforcement and they were able to provide us with some information that is going to be beneficial in the future, with us going after those individuals who are doing roadside sales of seafood.

We have also partnered with the USFDA and they are going to travel with us to ensure that this seafood being sold on the roadside is safe for human consumption.

We are excited about where we are there and what the future holds, with that type of enforcement in the north part of our state.

The Cowart Case. I know you have seen this case in the news where we served a search warrant with the

assistance of NOAA, U. S. Fish and Wildlife, Hancock County Sheriff's Office and some other partners.

This individual was identified last year as purchasing illegal seafood from recreational fishermen, and, with the leadership of our Criminal Investigations Division, we went after this individual and that has turned out to be a really good case, and it is currently pending court action in the U. S. Federal Court.

This case is still being investigated by our investigative team, as well as NOAA, and we do feel that some good things are going to come out of this case.

Any questions?

COMMISSIONER GOLLOTT: Chief, let me say thank you on behalf of the Commission on Marine Resources, especially to the people you have recognized. Good job. Thank you.

KEITH DAVIS: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

COMMISSIONER GOLLOTT: Up next is Mr. Joe Jewel, Marine Fisheries.

JOE JEWELL: Good morning Commissioners.

Before I proceed into the agenda items for Marine Fisheries, I would like to give you a couple of updates.

The commercial quota for flounder is seventy-four thousand. To date, we have landed approximately

twelve thousand, or sixteen percent.

For red drum, the quota is fifty thousand. To date, we have landed forty-two thousand nine hundred and ninety-one pounds, or approximately eighty-six percent.

For spotted seatrout, the quota limit is fifty thousand. To date, we have landed just over nineteen thousand pounds, or about thirty-eight percent.

I want to give you a brief update on the shrimp season.

As you know, we reopened the season north of Intracoastal on July the 13th. So far, from our dockside inspections, the shrimp being landed are a little bit larger than when we initially opened the season on June 3rd. They are a little bit larger shrimp. They are reporting large numbers of white shrimp which is a little bit unusual for this time of the year. Most of your know, white shrimp usually start coming into the sound mid to late August.

It has been an unusual season this year in a lot of different ways. We opened the season, like I said, on June 3rd, on a legal count of sixty-eight and had maintained sixty-eight and actually started getting larger shrimp, and, then, through our routine sampling, the count dropped below sixty-eight and we closed the season.

The shrimp, early in the season, we feel that

they probably were of multiple year classes, then, due to the early rainfall. As you know, this year we had an unusual amount of rainfall into the system that we haven't had that amount of rainfall and that prolonged amount of rainfall in quite some time, and we feel that had some impact into the system. This has been quite an unusual season for everyone. It has had an economic impact on the fishermen, the fisheries, the dealers, the processors, and it has just been a very tough time for everyone.

With that being said, I will go into the main agenda items. First up is item one, Title 22 Part 9, a final adoption for your consideration.

As you know, the Commission passed the Notice of Intent, on June 16th, 2015. The Notice was filed with the Secretary of State, Administrative Procedures Act, on June the 18th. We published Public Notice on the DMR web page, on June the 18th. We published a legal notice in the Sun Herald that appeared on June the 26th.

The public comment period was June 16th through July the 20th. To date, no public comments have been received.

I presented this as a Notice of Intent, Commissioners, at our last Commission meeting. Section 102 will be completely eliminated from the title and part.

This section will be modified, Section 101. I

will read it into the public record.

"Each seafood dealer/processor is hereby required to complete Mississippi trip tickets provided by the MDMR. Commercial fishermen who sell their catch to individuals other than a Mississippi dealer/processor are hereby required to complete Mississippi trip tickets provided by the MDMR and be in possession of a fresh product permit. A completed trip ticket shall only be required for the initial point of sale of the seafood product." -- if the item is underlined, that means it is new to the regulation. If it is crossed out, that means it is deleted -- "Commercial fishermen who sell their catch to anyone other than a Mississippi licensed dealer/processor, or transport their catch out of state, are required to purchase and possess a Dealer/Processor License and are required to comply with all regulations governing Mississippi dealer/processors. All trip tickets shall be returned to the MDMR, or electronically submitted, on or before the 10th of each month for actual transactions from every commercial fisherman during the preceding month. A trip ticket summary form that states the total trips taken in a given month shall be submitted by the 10th of each month by the seafood dealer/processor, or commercial fisherman. The fisherman is required to provide to the dealer complete and accurate information

necessary for the completion of the fisherman portion of the trip ticket. This may include, but is not limited to, commercial fisherman's name, valid license number, date and area of harvest, trip and fishing time, proper vessel identification, gear, quantity, and size of gear used, and applicable mesh size, if any, of gear used, seafood dealer's name, date of purchase, dealer license number, port and county product was landed, species being purchased, weight or any other applicable standard, condition of product, count or market grade of purchased seafood product, and price paid per unit, pound or number, per species. The seafood dealer/processor, or fisherman, is required to verify the accuracy of the tickets by signing each ticket."

We need a motion for final adoption.

COMMISSIONER BOSARGE: I'll make the motion for final adoption of Title 22 Part 9.

COMMISSIONER GOLLOTT: We have a motion.

Do we have a second?

COMMISSIONER ZIMMERMAN: Second.

COMMISSIONER GOLLOTT: All those in favor say aye.

(All in favor.)

COMMISSIONER GOLLOTT: Opposed?

(None opposed.)

COMMISSIONER GOLLOTT: Motion carries.

JOE JEWELL: Thank you, Commissioners.

The next agenda item is Title 22 Part 7, Spotted Seatrout Regulatory Adjustment, as it appears on the agenda.

As y'all may recall, the Commission asked the staff to examine ways to help the commercial spotted seatrout fishermen more efficiently capture the fifty thousand pound quota.

The staff examined the two primary controlling regulations, Title 22 Part 7 and Title 22 Part 5. We came up with really two recommendations.

The current regulations that exist. There is a fourteen inch minimum length.

There is a fifty thousand pound annual quota, beginning on February the 1st of each year.

The season currently is divided into three four-month periods. Two active harvesting periods: February the 1st through May 31st, twenty-five thousand pounds, and June the 1st through September the 30th, there is an additional twenty-five thousand pounds, and there is one inactive period, October 1st through January 31st.

The commercial fishermen must possess a current harvester's license and be in possession of the spotted seatrout endorsement.

I'm not going to read all of this to you, but this is the section that requires them to have the endorsement and explains the three seasons (indicating slide).

The options that we put forward before the Commission today are status quo, or increase the length of the second quota period to run through October 31st, allowing eligible commercial fishermen additional time, an additional month, to harvest the total annual quota.

Should the Commission consider that, I will read into the public record that section of the regulation that it would change and the potential impacts of those changes. It would be to Title 22 Party 7 Chapter 09 Section 109.

"From and after February 1, 2013, the annual total allowable catch, TAC, for commercial landings of spotted seatrout, Cynoscion nebulosus, will be set at fifty thousand pounds. The 2015 commercial fishing season for landing Spotted Seatrout shall commence on February 1st, 2015" -- and instead of ending on September the 30th -- "and end on October 31st, 2015, and each subsequent year thereafter. The commercial TAC for the fishing season shall be divided into two periods as follows: February 1st through May 31st, twenty-five thousand pounds; June 1st through October 31st, twenty-five thousand pounds. In the

event the commercial TAC is not met, or exceeded, in the first time period, February 1st through May 31st, the pounds shall be added to, or subtracted from, the second time period, June 1st through October 31st."

Commissioner Bosarge.

COMMISSIONER BOSARGE: Yes, sir. Let's talk about this just a little bit.

JOE JEWELL: Sure.

COMMISSIONER BOSARGE: How did we manage to get from filling the quota so quick to where we are, now?

We are at nineteen thousand pounds, and, normally, by this time of year, the season would be closed.

What has changed?

JOE JEWELL: There are several factors that played into that, but the primary factor that played into it that I think is the major contributing cause of that was the speckled trout endorsement.

COMMISSIONER BOSARGE: We don't have that many commercial fishermen that actually do hook-and-line. It's just not what they are used to in gear choice.

I see what you're trying to do. By talking to most of the fishermen, they catch a good many trout in early spring when the water is still cool and there are not very many catfish around because they don't have much

gear left that they can use to target that species.

I'm just wondering if by extending the season maybe later in the year and the water cools off -- because, as the water cools off, the catfish will move off -- maybe that will help.

I guess my point is, if this doesn't help and we are not able to fulfill the quota, what are our options, then?

COMMISSIONER ZIMMERMAN: And I feel the same way Steve does. We went from filling the quota in a month to, now, we are sitting here a year later not being able to meet the quota, and the only thing that changed, as you said, was the endorsement, and I question whether we made a wrong move, by doing that endorsement

I read last month's minutes, and Chairman Gollott said that we aren't supplying the market with what they need.

JOE JEWELL: I want to remind the Commission of a couple of things. The Commission set about putting in place the endorsement for one primary reason, and their concern was that there are a lot of fishermen that are participating in the commercial quota that were not true fishermen that were not in the fisheries as commercial fishermen. They are part-time fishermen for other reasons, and the Commission used the endorsement as a test

for participation that it would be strictly, or primarily, for those fishermen that were commercial fishermen as a living. I want to remind the Commission of that.

What that did to the fisheries was it reduced from just over four hundred participants in the spotted seatrout fisheries down to about a hundred, just over a hundred.

COMMISSIONER BOSARGE: It did what it was intended to do.

JOE JEWELL: Correct.

COMMISSIONER BOSARGE: I don't say it stopped most of the illegal sale of speckled trout. I think it stopped a lot of it. I think it changed the way the fish are being sold now somewhat which we can work on that.

My point is, at some point in time, if we can't harvest fifty thousand pounds from the commercial sector, what is the estimate that the recreational side gets in a year's time?

JOE JEWELL: As we sit, right now, I think what I estimated was about thirty-eight percent.

We looked at other options. If you look at Title 22 Part 7 -- when you look at the regulation which the Commission has control over and can modify, Title 22 Part 7 deals with size and possession limits primarily, and Title 22 Part 5 primarily deals with gear and area

restrictions.

The Commission has in the past, and has in the recent past dealt with Title 22 Part 5, and the Commission, at that time, opted not to make alterations to that regulation.

Now, for Title 22 Part 7, when staff reviewed that regulation, we went through that regulation line-by-line, and we felt that this time we would take the process -- rather than a shotgun approach, we would take a step-by-step approach, and we felt at this time the first step we would do was try -- as Commissioner Bosarge pointed out, it is primarily a cool water fishery and that the best approach, right now, we would try to extend it at least into the month of October where the water is cooler and they have more opportunity to catch because they are really not catching fish in the hot water months, right now, and the first approach is to provide them the opportunity to catch the fish while the fish are there, and, if that doesn't work, we are ready to come forward with other recommendations.

COMMISSIONER BOSARGE: That was my question.

To answer my question, where is the recreational fishery at poundwise?

I'm curious.

Do you know that number?

JOE JEWELL: I don't know that number offhand, but I can get that number for you.

COMMISSIONER BOSARGE: An estimate?

MATT HILL: It's roughly in the four hundred to four hundred and fifty thousand pound range.

COMMISSIONER BOSARGE: I've never heard that number. I'm just trying to be fair and equitable.

I agree with you. Hopefully, by extending the season and the water getting cooler, it may give the commercial fishermen a chance to use what gear they have left to harvest a few more fish.

If that doesn't work, then, I would like to come back and look at this again and see just what we can do.

JOE JEWELL: Sure.

I want to bring to the Commission's attention, at the last Commission meeting, the Commission directed the staff to come forward with recommendations for the Commission to consider.

If you have noticed, I put the presentation forward in a Notice of Intent format for the Commission's convenience. If the Commission so chooses to direct the staff to move forward with a Notice of Intent to modify Title 22 Part 7 -- if the motion is going to be for us to go forward with a Notice of Intent, the motion would have to be made for the staff to proceed with a Notice of

Intent to modify Title 22 Part 7, rather than an amendment.

COMMISSIONER BOSARGE: Do we need to amend it, first, Joe?

JOE JEWELL: It's essentially doing the same thing, but, for the public record, the motion has to state a Notice of Intent.

COMMISSIONER GOLLOTT: Do we have a motion?

COMMISSIONER BOSARGE: I'll make the motion to amend Title 22 Part 7 and to bring it out for Notice of Intent.

JOE JEWELL: Correct.

COMMISSIONER GOLLOTT: Do we have a second on that?

COMMISSIONER BOSARGE: And, at the end of the year, after this extended season is up, to come back to us and let's see if it helped.

JOE JEWELL: Well, as far as the process goes, the Notice of Intent will go on file. We will do the regulatory change and the Administrative Procedures Act. We will file the Notice of Intent, within the next day, or two. It has to go out for public comment for twenty-five days, and, if we meet that requirement, we will come before the Commission at the August meeting and propose the final adoption. Then, it has to be on file for thirty

days.

If it meets that time frame, it will be open in October for that extension. If we can't meet that time frame, it won't be this year. It will have to be next year.

COMMISSIONER BOSARGE: I understand.

COMMISSIONER GOLLOTT: We have a motion.

Do we have a second?

COMMISSIONER ZIMMERMAN: I'll second it, 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.

JOE JEWELL: Next up for the Commission's consideration is Title 22 Part 7, red drum quota increase, by Mr. Matt Hill.

I want to point out a regulatory process for the Commission. Last time, the Commission voted on this as an action item to proceed, but, again, this was an item that wasn't on the agenda as a Notice of Intent.

What Mr. Hill is going to provide for the

Commission is the same presentation that the Commission approved and adopted at the last Commission meeting, but it is going to be in the Notice of Intent format.

MATT HILL: Good morning Commissioners, Director Miller, Sean.

Like Joe said, we did present this at the last Commission meeting. This was the commercial red drum quota update. It was voted on and passed by the Commission. However, it was not an action item. Now, we must bring this back to the Commission as a Notice of Intent.

At the June Commission meeting, several options were presented to the Commission, concerning the commercial red drum quota.

The Commission voted to amend Title 22 Part 7, and what we have decided to do is to make this issue an action item for this meeting, and, for this to take place, a Notice of Intent will be required, if the Commission so desires these changes.

The first thing we are going to go over are the current Mississippi regulations.

Currently, there is an eighteen inch minimum length.

Fishermen may retain only one red drum over thirty inches.

We currently have a fifty thousand pound annual quota beginning on January 1st of each year.

The fishermen must possess current applicable harvester's license to commercially harvest.

The current quota of fifty thousand pounds was implemented January 1st, 2014. Previously the quota was set at thirty-five thousand pounds, 1990 to 2013. The Mississippi commercial red drum fishery has met the quota in twelve years since implementation, 1991, 1993 to 1997, 1999 to 2001, 2011, 2013 and 2014. You can see, in the recent years, we have been meeting the quota.

The options that were presented to the Commission were status quo, to leave it at fifty thousand pounds, beginning January 1st and ending on December 31st.

The next two options are highlighted because these are the two the Commission passed, that they voted on and passed at the last Commission meeting. They were to split the season into two six-month segments and, also, to increase the commercial red drum quota to sixty thousand pounds.

We also discussed placing the red drum under the species endorsement, and it was felt that, at this time, this was probably not the path that we should go down, or a combination of any, or all three, options listed.

If these changes are made, Title 22 Part 7

Chapter 09 Section 108 would currently read:

"From and after October 1, 2015, the annual total allowable catch, TAC, for commercial landings of red drum, Sciaenops ocellatus, will be set at sixty thousand pounds. The TAC shall commence on January 1 and end on December 31 of each year. The commercial TAC for the fishing season shall be divided into two six-month periods as follows: January 1st through June 30th, thirty thousand pounds; July 1st through December 31st, thirty thousand pounds. In the event the commercial TAC is not met, or exceeded, in the first time period, January 1st through June 30th, the pounds shall be added, or subtracted, to the second time period, July 1st through December 31st."

This is very similar to what we do in the spotted seatrout commercial quota fishery.

What will be required from the Commission, if they so desire, is a motion to amend Title 22 Part 7 and take it out for Notice of Intent to increase the commercial red drum quota to sixty thousand pounds and divide the commercial harvest season into two six-month periods.

As I said, this was voted on and passed by the Commission, at the last Commission meeting. However, it was not an action item. It is an action item on the agenda and we are asking to take this out for Notice of

Intent, at this meeting.

COMMISSIONER GOLLOTT: Matt, the only question I have is why don't we go ahead and divide this into three four-month periods, instead of two six-month periods?

That way, if we have a problem in the future, it will be already in there.

MATT HILL: That is an option. We could divide it into three.

COMMISSIONER GOLLOTT: I think it would be wise to go ahead and divide it. Leave it like it is, but just divide into --

MATT HILL: (Interposing) Into three twenty thousand pound seasons?

COMMISSIONER GOLLOTT: Yes, and, that way, if you have a problem, you won't have to go back out for notice and all that kind of stuff.

MATT HILL: So we would go January, February, March and April, and, then, May, June, July and August, and, then, September, October, November and December, in twenty thousand pound increments.

COMMISSIONER ZIMMERMAN: Matt, I have a couple of things.

MATT HILL: Okay.

COMMISSIONER ZIMMERMAN: First, I see none of the data on the resource, in either one of these packets.

The last time you were before us, I think when we added ten or fifteen thousand pounds a year, or a year and a half, ago to the redfish, you talked about the escapement rate. We would shoot for thirty, and, at that time, going up on the quota, you said that you expect it to be, like, twenty-eight point six, if I'm not mistaken.

Is that correct?

MATT HILL: We would be right around twenty-eight point six percent, but the commercial catch is insignificant towards the escapement rate. The recreational effort and harvest is what drives our escapement rate. We are talking about a twenty thousand increase versus a six hundred to seven hundred thousand pound harvest in the recreational sector.

It's a drop in the bucket is what I'm saying. There will be very little to no change in the escapement rate.

COMMISSIONER ZIMMERMAN: The other thing that I'm seeing in this is -- correct me if I'm wrong -- we are trying to give the commercial fishermen their quota in this. They are not meeting it presently, and we are trying to give it to them, but I look at as a bird in the hand is better than two in the bush. If they have a good part of the year and everything is perfect for them to catch in the beginning, when they meet twenty thousand

pounds, they are not able to use any of the ending quota.

Why don't we have it both ways where they can get their sixty thousand pounds the first four months, if it's available?

MATT HILL: Well, we have been approached by not only the dealers. We have also been approached by the fishermen, and the issue that we have had, especially in the recent years, is the quota, especially the spotted seatrout quota, before we had the problem for the last two years, and the red drum quota have been met so early in the season that we are talking about shutting them down in May and June every year.

We all know that the crabbing has been down. The oyster industry has suffered, in the last few years.

When it comes to the fall, when you get to the holiday season, these fishermen, they have no way to make a living. We are almost trying to save them from themselves. We are trying to extend the season, not only for them, but for the dealers, especially during the holiday season. We get a lot of them around Thanksgiving and December. These fishermen are struggling.

If we can somehow split these seasons and have individual quotas per season, we would allow them to fish later in the season and have a more steady income throughout the entire year, and that was the basis for us

doing this.

COMMISSIONER ZIMMERMAN: You think that's the right way to do it?

I would rather go out in the first quarter of the year and make a hundred thousand dollars than having to work all year to make that same hundred thousand dollars, if that makes sense.

MATT HILL: Well, the problem is, I think the fishermen initially wanted to do that, but they also felt like there were other things that they were going to be able to do in the fall and the early winter months. The last several years, that has just not worked out for them.

Bills were still coming due in September, October, November and December, and they had no means of income to pay these bills.

If we help them stretch these seasons out, at least they will have the opportunity to catch these fish at a later time.

COMMISSIONER GOLLOTT: Plus, let me say this, Matt. If they catch all the fish in the first two months, or three months, the dealers will buy them, and, then, they will ship them out of state and sell them and, later on in the year, it won't do anybody any good.

Like Matt is saying, we are trying to sustain this thing through the year so everybody can have them on

their retail counters, plus the fishermen making money.

MATT HILL: That has been our goal all along is to give the fishermen -- not only the fishermen, but also the dealers the access to these fish and the opportunity to continue for a constant revenue stream for as long a period of time as we can, and we feel like, now, that splitting these seasons up into some type of equal periods will allow for this.

COMMISSIONER BOSARGE: And you are okay with the three four-month seasons, instead of the two six-month seasons?

MATT HILL: I am. Any type of split season, we can work around that. We would be for that.

COMMISSIONER GOLLOTT: Do we have a motion?

COMMISSIONER BOSARGE: I'll make the motion to amend Title 22 Part 7 to increase the red drum quota to sixty thousand pounds and to divide the commercial season into three four-month periods and to bring it out for Notice of Intent.

COMMISSIONER GOLLOTT: Do we have a second?

COMMISSIONER HARMON: 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.

MATT HILL: I'm going to take a little bit more time on this one. I'm sure we will have a few questions on here.

JAMIE MILLER: Matt, bring it up to the front and lean it on this table (indicating).

MATT HILL: Okay.

I would like to start off by saying we've had a lot of constructive criticism on this program. We are working diligently to try to correct some of these problems. As I will show, there were some things pointed out to us that we didn't realize. I think we had some tunnel vision on a few things, but we were advised to maybe look at the data in some different ways.

We have taken that advice from different people in the community and we are going to be able to show you what we can actually do with this data and how this reporting system is working.

As we all know, effective December 1st, 2014, the CMR adopted a regulatory modification to Title 22 Part 9 Statistical Reporting and Confidentiality of Statistical Data for Marine Fisheries, requiring the mandatory reporting of red snapper landed in Mississippi.

Following the directive given by the Commission, our staff began developing a reporting system for this purpose.

The first thing we had to figure out was what did we want to know. We tried to keep this simple. It was the first year. There are definitely some other things that we would like to know, but, being the first year, we did try to keep it as simple as possible.

The information we requested from our snapper fishermen were:

The vessel owner/captain's name.

The vessel owner/captain's email.

The vessel registration number.

The date of the trip.

The number of anglers.

The duration of trip in hours.

The number of red snapper landed.

And whether they landed these at a public, or private, access site.

Several of these questions only require answering during the initial setup. You do not have to answer these questions, every time you got onto the program. You basically created a user profile and they were filled in for you.

Once this was created, the information was saved

automatically and it was automatically filled in, when the angler went back to create their trip.

We developed the Tales N Scales reporting system. It had several options available. The most popular was definitely the electronic reporting. We had a smartphone app that was developed and we also had a web portal and we also had a call-in option which is available twenty-four hours a day seven days a week. It was there to answer any questions and to walk people through it, if they had some problems.

On the right side here, this is a card that we made, a business card that we made and we handed out (indicating slide).

With the advice of some people in the community, we developed signs. We have, now, hung them at all major marinas and boat launches. We have also given a smaller version of the sign to our bait and tackle shops to keep inside their shops.

Everybody has been very receptive of these, and we have had many one-on-one conversations with the marina owners and the bait shop owners. We feel the longer the program goes on the higher the compliance rate will be which we will talk about shortly.

Another portion of this program was the collection of the biological information. Our MDMR staff

conducted surveys on a daily basis, during the ten-day season, at sites that were predetermined to have the highest probability of intercepting offshore fishing trips. The surveyor's priority was to collect as many lengths and weights of red snapper as possible. Otoliths were also collected, if time permitted and the anglers had no objections. Of course, when we did collect the otoliths, we were able to determine the age structure of the fish being harvested in the fishery.

COMMISSIONER BOSARGE: Just out of curiosity, Matt, what was the average age?

Do you have that?

MATT HILL: We do not have them aged yet. We are in the process of aging them. Hopefully, in the next week, or two, we will have all of the ages and we can come up with a mean age. That process takes a little bit more time.

I do want to take a little time on this slide. These are just the reported results for the 2015 season. When we're talking about the 2015 season, we're talking about the first ten days, when the private recreational guys and the for-hire guys were able to fish together.

The reason that we did not go through the July 15th for-hire season is we had to have this information in. We had to have the presentation in. The season was not

over. So we chose to use the ten days, when everybody can fish.

These are unadjusted results. We will get to the adjusted results shortly and how we adjusted what we got here.

Our total harvest was thirty thousand one hundred and twenty-two pounds. We had an average weight of six point zero nine pounds. We measured and weighed close to four hundred fish which is pretty impressive. Our average length was twenty-and-a-half inches. Trips completed in the system were six hundred and thirty-seven. Our effort was four point nine two anglers per vessel per trip. That means that, on every trip that went out, you had roughly five anglers on that trip. Our harvest rate per angler was one point six six fish per angler per trip, and, of course, we all know this year for the weather we had, in our opinion, excellent conditions all ten days to fish.

COMMISSIONER BOSARGE: Just comparing some of the figures to what you had last year...?

MATT HILL: We're getting there.

COMMISSIONER BOSARGE: You are going to get there?

MATT HILL: We are going to get there, unfortunately.

What we did was we had to factor in noncompliance rate. We know we did not have one hundred percent of the universe participating in the system.

So we came up with an initial compliance rate calculated at seventy-seven point eight percent. We also, then, applied eleven point nine percent standard error to that.

These adjusted rates, as you can see -- if we go back to the slide before, the reported results were six hundred and thirty-seven. The adjusted rates were seven hundred and seventy-eight. Then, we applied eleven point nine percent standard error. So we came up with plus or minus ninety-two point six trips from this number. The minimum number of trips is six hundred and eighty-five. The maximum number is eight hundred and seventy.

Like I said, we did calculate a seventy-seven point eight percent difference between reported trips and visual surveys which we will get into shortly with an eleven point nine percent standard error.

We were also able to apply these same statistics to the total pounds. We had thirty-eight thousand seven hundred and seventeen pounds, once we applied the noncompliance rate. That gives us a minimum of thirty-four thousand and some change, and a maximum of forty-three thousand three hundred and some change.

One thing I do want to point out here is, even though there is some disagreement in the total numbers, we do feel very comfortable with the trend that we saw.

As you see, Monday was the first day. It was a little higher. Then, it starts sloughing off. Towards the weekend, we went back up, and, then, we came back down. We feel like our trends are where we want our trends to be. We just may have to work on the actual effort numbers and try to get those a little more accurate (indicating slide).

I wanted to go back to the slide before because I did forget to mention this. We had a request to look at this by city, trips by city. We didn't quite have the time to do that. We did have the time to break it down in the county and, as you can see, the vast majority of the trips did take place in Jackson County.

We were also surprised at the trip, the other, and we dug into this a little bit deeper, and we found out that these other trips which were roughly a hundred were from areas, or counties, north of our three coastal counties.

We did not do as good a job getting the word out into these areas as we should have. We were criticized on that. We are trying to fix this. We had tunnel vision. We tried to concentrate on the three coastal counties,

but, now, we are trying to correct that. As you can see, they do make up a significant number of people coming down from north of the three coastal counties.

Now, we are doing is breaking this down by zip code and eventually we will get down to the City, and we will have a little bit better data to go by, after that. I did want to point that out.

COMMISSIONER DRUMMOND: Is this mostly charter boat effort?

MATT HILL: No, it is not. This is mainly private for-hire effort.

The charter boat guys, what we saw -- like I said, we did not include a lot of their effort -- we included all their effort in, in the first ten days, but they had an extra thirty-five days. Like I said, we were not able to put all this in because this presentation was due before the season was over.

A lot of our charter for-hire guys waited until after that rush in the first ten days, and we did see a spike in for-hire trips, after June the 10th. Basically, they had it to themselves out there and they took advantage of that. The next time we present this, we will have the for-hire data after those ten days.

COMMISSIONER GOLLOTT: Matt, can I ask you a question?

MATT HILL: Yes, sir.

COMMISSIONER GOLLOTT: Was there anybody ticketed for noncompliance with the trip tickets?

MATT HILL: We had some what we call courtesy citations. We decided, as an agency, to not ticket them, but we decided to give them a courtesy citation. If they were not signed up for the program and they did not have the confirmation number, we allowed them -- I was given a list, on a daily basis, saying these people had courtesy citations, and I was able to go back in the system and see if they did go back in there and register for a trip and turn it out, and we did have a hundred percent compliance on that.

At some point, we had a discussion that we will stop doing the courtesy citations in the near future. We think as the word gets out more and more that, at some point, we do have to have some consequences to it, but being the first year of the program, the agency felt it was better to administer courtesy citations. We didn't want people to get a sour taste in their mouth, and, like I said, especially these guys from north of the three coastal counties, we did not do a good job of getting the word out up there, and it put them in a bad spot.

We decided to try to use education, first, but, at some point in the near future, we will move away from

courtesy citations and give standard citations to them.

COMMISSIONER BOSARGE: Matt, how many fishermen did you actually intercept, or talk to, on the water?

MATT HILL: I believe Marine Patrol talked to somewhere between eight and ten on the water, and, at the docks, we talked to close to a hundred and fifty at the docks validating, once they came in.

COMMISSIONER BOSARGE: What was the ratio of the people that knew about the system and ones that didn't?

MATT HILL: About fifty fifty is what we found out. Just from some back-of-the-envelope calculations, it was about half, but, once all of them were told, they were all very willing to get on the system and participate.

COMMISSIONER BOSARGE: When you showed the counties, that made me feel a little better because, like I told you, I've talked to a lot of people that fish and I didn't come across any that knew about the system, but they did all sign up and do their reporting of their totals.

MATT HILL: That is correct.

COMMISSIONER BOSARGE: It must have done some good.

MATT HILL: It did, and we were surprised. After we had that conversation, that's the first thing I said, let's do it by county and, frankly, we were

surprised at the difference. We thought Harrison and Jackson Counties would be a little closer, but the data doesn't lie. We definitely had a significant increase of vessels leaving out of Jackson County. We feel like we may should focus our efforts there in the future.

COMMISSIONER BOSARGE: Well, it's closer to deep water.

MATT HILL: That is correct, and that's something that we also talked about is maybe we missed some of those areas in our validation surveys. It's easier for them to run south southeast and get in some of those. That right there showed us that there is definitely some improvement we can do on the validation.

COMMISSIONER BOSARGE: There are always improvements, but I'm glad to see what you are doing. This is great. This is a good start.

MATT HILL: Once we talk about the validation, we did do dockside interviews. We had at-sea observations which we will get to shortly. We did look at the enforcement reports. We had trailer counts at selected docks. We did contact, through email messaging and phone interviews, for expired trips not completed by anglers. We had a lot of guys that signed up for a trip and went out. They may have only gone once. They didn't report their trip back. We gave them five to six days. If we

didn't hear from them, we emailed them, or called them, and we got that information from them.

I am happy to report that all reported trips have been accounted for, at this time. We are very proud of that.

COMMISSIONER DRUMMOND: Were trailer counts an afterthought?

MATT HILL: Sir?

COMMISSIONER DRUMMOND: Were trailer counts an afterthought?

What good does is that data?

MATT HILL: We just wanted to see that what we looked at was -- we did make an assumption. Like, we would go to west beach launch, and, if we saw double-axle trailers, or trailers that we thought could go offshore, we just counted them. It wasn't really anything scientific about it. It was just more of an observation saying we have fifty of these guys that we think went out, and we just waited around to see them, and a lot of the guys, to be honest with you, said, we just went to the island.

It's some assumptions that you have to make, but we feel like, in the future, that we can get away from those assumptions, that we are going to have this universe of actual fishermen through this program. This was just

one way that we wanted to see the pressure at certain docks during this time period.

Here's what we did. This is from Wednesday, June the 3rd. I apologize. It's a little tough to see, but the big E is what the plane could fly (indicating slide).

We put the plane up in the air, and the yellow dots represent the vessels that the plane saw and assume were snapper fishing because of the areas that they were fishing in (indicating slide).

The plane had a sixty mile maximum flight. It could only run sixty miles south of the coastline. We know there were people fishing further than that. So we took our offshore vessel, we ran to these spots, and we counted the vessels south of there, and, then, we added them up (indicating slide).

We do have an area that we have talked about over here. Now that we know that the majority of people left out of Pascagoula, we do have an area right here that we probably need to do a better job of. The plane limitations and the fuel limitations that we had in our vessel just didn't let us get these areas over here, and we obviously know that there were vessels over there (indicating slide).

With the data that we had on this Wednesday, we

had a total of sixty-two vessels that were validated through the plane and the vessel survey, and we had fifty-two vessels sign up on our reporting system.

We did this day after day. First, what we tried to do was come up with some quantitative comparisons from 2014 and 2015. We determined that the quantitative comparisons were not possible because of the reporting program differences between years and the Federal season was not complete. The for-hire industry was able to fish until July 15.

2014 was a voluntary system. We came up with fifty-five thousand four hundred and sixty-five pounds harvested, at seven point eight zero pound average weight.

In 2015, we came up with thirty-eight thousand seven hundred and seventeen pounds harvested, with a six point zero nine pound average weight.

There are several factors in that. Definitely you can see there is a drop in the average weight. We also had a drop in the anglers per trip per vessel.

We were up around six anglers per trip per vessel, in 2014, and this year we were somewhere around four and a half, but we also had a catch rate which was lower. There is a two fish per person limit on red snapper. Last year, they were catching close to one point nine two snapper per angler per trip. This year we saw

one point six six snapper per angler per trip. This all contributed to the lower numbers.

However, we did start looking at our analysis of uncertainty. There was a short season. We are talking about a ten-day season. It's extremely difficult to calculate variance from such a short season.

We do feel like, with the additional days from the State season, the compliance and harvest values will become much more accurate.

I don't want to get into a big statistics conversation here, but the method that we were forced to use, with the data set that we had, was percent standard error which we came up with eleven point nine percent.

We would prefer to use the sum-of-squares method. We feel like this method will probably increase our harvest rate and increase our effort levels. However, the data currently available only supports using a percent standard error method, due to the short length of the season, but we have determined that, as more data becomes available, the sum-of-squares method will produce more accurate levels.

We have a limited data set, right now, but we feel like, in the future at the end of the State season, we will be able to swap over to this method. It is our preference to use this method. We feel that it will be

much more accurate. One reason we feel it will be much more accurate is because we can come up with a weekday error and a weekend error, and we all know that the weekend trips -- we have much more weekend trips than weekday trips.

We just need some more time, and I think we can make these numbers where everybody will be a little more comfortable with them.

We definitely do have some concerns. This is all angler-supplied information, on the reporting system.

As we talked about before, we know there are vessels fishing outside of the flight path and vessel path which we cannot validate, at this time, but we are working on ways to validate these vessels.

There are a limited number of public access sites which support offshore landings.

One of the big problems we see is twenty-six point nine percent -- this came from our reporting system -- of Mississippi offshore anglers that reported landed at private access sites. We currently do not have access to these private access sites. We cannot go to somebody's home and survey them and measure and weigh their fish. However, we currently have a tidelands grant beginning which deals with private access site landings. The system has provided us with a universe to work with so that we

can begin reaching out to these anglers, telling them how important it is for us to get their catch, in an effort to capture their data in the future.

This program will begin next year, and we should be able to get a better picture of the private access site catches.

I'm sure nobody has any questions.

COMMISSIONER DRUMMOND: You didn't get a search warrant to go to a private site?

MATT HILL: Now that we have the universe of these people and they have told us they land at private access sites, we are going to reach out to them through emails, calls, letters, and I think a lot of them will be receptive, once we tell them what we are trying to do, not all of them, but we do think a vast majority of them will work with us to allow us to, at least, come down there and weigh and measure their fish.

COMMISSIONER DRUMMOND: I think that will be real smart.

MATT HILL: We do have the program in place. We are just trying to get the universe as complete as possible, before we start the program.

COMMISSIONER BOSARGE: I notice you didn't point the finger quite all the way at me, when you talked about folks that are critical. I know we've had some lengthy

conversations.

MATT HILL: Yes, sir.

COMMISSIONER BOSARGE: The reason, from my standpoint, is it's data. It's data that can be used, and we need to make sure that our data is as correct as we can get it.

MATT HILL: Correct.

COMMISSIONER BOSARGE: I think for the first year of the mandatory reporting, we are on target. We are headed down the right course, but we've still got a long way to go.

MATT HILL: Correct.

COMMISSIONER BOSARGE: You and I have had these conversations. I look at the data, and I wonder how accurate we are. It's hard to believe that we can have that much less poundage landed with the mandatory reporting, versus like we had in 2014, when it was voluntary.

I have a lot of questions, but we are doing good. We just need to make sure that everybody understands this is strictly preliminary. It's preliminary data.

MATT HILL: Correct.

COMMISSIONER BOSARGE: I think, now, the word is out. Most people know about this reporting system. I

think next year we are going to see a true account of what is taking place.

MATT HILL: And that's we are asking for. We are asking for more years. We need a historical data set. The goal with this system is one day we will be able to predict, before the season, weekend effort, weekend harvest, weekday effort, weekday harvest, and we can project what our season should be. If we get a certain amount of pounds allocated to us, it will be our responsibility to say how many days are fishermen going to be able to fish.

That's what we are working towards, but it is going to take some time, and we think our biggest issue, now, is not the use of the program. Everybody that is using the program is extremely happy with the program. They understand it.

We know we missed some areas, and I will take that squarely on my shoulders. We know we definitely missed some areas north of the three coastal counties. We did very little there.

COMMISSIONER BOSARGE: We are learning.

MATT HILL: We are learning.

COMMISSIONER BOSARGE: With the data, I have concerns because the poundage dropped and the size of the fish dropped.

MATT HILL: Yes.

COMMISSIONER BOSARGE: In other words, if you look at that data and that data along, this is not good.

MATT HILL: No.

COMMISSIONER BOSARGE: But I do believe that a lot of it has to do with weather. Last year we had bad weather. It was only seasoned anglers that most likely went. There are so many things that play into what that data says.

MATT HILL: Correct, and we had that conversation. That was a lot of my concern.

One thing that we did not see is past that sixty-mile range that we took the vessel out, we did not see near as many vessels fishing out there as we did last year. Last year we were counting up to twenty-four to thirty vessels a day. This year we were counting ten to twelve. I think you just had a lot of guys staying in closer.

You had a lot of guys, the weather was perfect. They probably never snapper fished in their life. They didn't have the tackle, and they just wanted to take advantage of the season. They caught smaller fish. They caught their limit. They came home. I think we did have a lot of that. We saw a lot of vessels, eighteen and nineteen foot vessels that probably had no business being

out there, but the weather was perfect.

Those are things. You can't really quantify those, but those are things that we are going to have to take into consideration at some point.

COMMISSIONER BOSARGE: I think it's a great start. It's a good program. We will keep tweaking it.

MATT HILL: Yes, sir.

COMMISSIONER GOLLOTT: Thank you, Matt.

MATT HILL: Thank you.

JOE JEWELL: Thank you, Matt.

Commissioners, the final agenda item for your consideration is State records. Mr. Jon Barr will do the presentation.

JON BARR: Good morning Commissioners. Good morning Director Miller and Mr. Morrison.

The new State Saltwater Fishing records, we have two. We have conventional tackle and we also have fly tackle.

For the conventional tackle, it's a Black Driftfish, Hyperoglyphe bythites. The old record from 2007 is fifteen pounds seven point two zero ounces. The new record is twenty-three pounds three point eight four ounces. The angler was Mr. John Cuevas.

There is the Black Driftfish. There is Mr. Cuevas with his fish (indicating photographs).

The next one is Fly tackle. It's an Almaco Jack, Seriola rivoliana. This is a new record listing. It's four point four eight ounces. The angler is Mr. John Reed Guice.

As stated in our regulations, there is a picture of the fly and there's a picture of the fish. There is Mr. Guice with his fish (indicating photographs).

I would like to request a motion to adopt these new saltwater state records.

COMMISSIONER DRUMMOND: Mr. Chairman, I make a motion to adopt these new records for the State of Mississippi.

COMMISSIONER GOLLOTT: We have a motion.

Do we have a second?

COMMISSIONER ZIMMERMAN: I'll second that.

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: The motion carries.

At this time, I'll make a motion that we take a ten-minute break.

(Whereupon, meeting stands in recess.)

COMMISSIONER GOLLOTT: I would like to call this meeting back to order.

Next on the agenda we have Mr. Joe Spraggins.

COMMISSIONER ZIMMERMAN: Mr. Chairman, if I could, before we go to the next item, I would like to amend the agenda to have the public comments -- I see we have an executive session, and I would like to move L before K-1 so that the public comments can go before we go into executive session.

COMMISSIONER GOLLOTT: We have a motion to amend the agenda.

Do we have a second?

COMMISSIONER DRUMMOND: I 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.

Now, Mr. Joe Spraggins.

JOE SPRAGGINS: Good morning Commissioners, Director Miller, Sean.

Kacey is out on maternity leave and about to

have a little baby. I think that will come in the next few days.

We are going help out with this, this morning, and give you a little idea.

The State revenue that you see here is seven point three million. Appropriations have not been transferred to us, at this time, of one point one million. We did receive about eleven months of interest from the Treasury which is about two hundred and eighty K, somewhere in that neighborhood.

The agency revenue to date, that's year to date was twenty-six million, right at twenty-seven million.

State net income is negative two point three million, and I will give you a little brief explanation of that.

Number one, there is one point one million that we have not received from the State, but they have it in appropriations and tell us not to worry about it. It is going to be fine and we are okay.

The other part is about one point one five million, and that's spending cash on hand that we had obligated funds for. That was things like BP seafood funds and some coastal cleanup and other things that we were doing. That was obligated funds that were there which shows up as a negative because the funds were there

before the fiscal year.

Just to give you an idea, Wildlife and Fisheries owes us about three hundred K which I'm sure they will get it to us before the end of next month.

We have about three hundred K that is owed to us from JEA which is just a matter of getting it through the system, and about another twenty-five thousand for some interest money.

If we had all the money that is owed to us and that will be coming in, in the next month, we would really be about seventy thousand to the good.

That two point three million is just a number. It's not real factor. We're okay.

On the next page, if you will look at it, you will see that we have about thirty-five percent left in our funds. That was at the end of the year, and the reason for that is because we have escalated funds, and that would be, basically, like our CIAP and our CZM and the NERR and other projects that are funded, a lot of them, to the end of the calendar year and, since our fiscal year ends the end of June, this money is there. That's why we still have thirty-five percent.

It will be spent, between now and the end of the calendar year this year, but it will show up as we still have funds left at the end of 2015.

Any questions?

COMMISSIONER GOLLOTT: Thank you, Joe.

JOE SPRAGGINS: Thank you.

COMMISSIONER GOLLOTT: Next, we have Melissa's report.

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

Since the June meeting of the Commission, the agency has been mentioned a hundred and twelve times in local, state and national media. The items of particular interest were the closing of the waters north of the Intracoastal Waterway to shrimping, as well as the announcement of the opening of State waters for red snapper fishing.

The agency helped with two press conferences, since the last meeting. We hosted the July 2nd press conference, in which Governor Phil Bryant, Attorney General Jim Hood, and DEQ Director Gary Rikard announced the historic settlement with BP over the oil spill that occurred in 2010. Local and State officials attended the press conference which also received media attention across this region and across the country.

We hosted a press conference June 24th with Secretary of State Delbert Hosemann at the Maritime and Seafood Industry Museum. Director Miller and the

Secretary of State announced the winner of the bid to construct the pier at Deer Island. Walters Diving and Marine in Pascagoula received that bid, and work should begin soon on that.

Several employees participated in the Mississippi Deep Sea Fishing Rodeo in Gulfport, over the July 4th weekend. That was a pretty big success, although we were rained out on Sunday.

This weekend, we are sponsoring several chefs at the Natchez Food Festival, and we will also participate in the Great American Seafood Cook-off in New Orleans in August, and Chef Ty Thames of Restaurant Tyler in Starkville will represent Mississippi in the cook-off, and we intend to bring home that trophy again.

The Office of Marine Patrol held three boat and water safety classes in June and certified fifty-six students. In fiscal year 2015, officers taught twenty-two classes and certified two hundred and seventy-eight students. Officers also participated in six outreach and special marine events, during June, which included the Redfish Tournament at Island View, the Police Kids Fishing Camp in Gulfport, St. Jude Fishing Rodeo, Pirate Day in the Bay, a fishing rodeo at the Boardwalk Marina, the movie production security at Gulfport Lake, boating safety outreach in Ocean Springs, and another safety day in Moss

Point.

We also had a busy time at the NERR. Since the last Commission meeting, NERR employees participated in eleven outreach events in the last month, or so. They included tours and kayaking activities at the facility, workshops and events such as the Waterfest on the Reservoir in Jackson which was sponsored by the Department of Environmental Quality, and the NERR also sponsored a workshop for sixteen teachers titled "Teachers on the Estuary" which was the second of five workshops presented across the Gulf of Mexico.

Any questions?

COMMISSIONER GOLLOTT: Thank you, Melissa.

MELISSA SCALLAN: Thank you.

COMMISSIONER GOLLOTT: Next, we have public comments.

Mr. Earl Chavers, would you please come to the podium and state your name?

EARL CHAVERS: Y'all will have to excuse me. I'm kind of intimidated by you guys. I'm a commercial fisherman.

First off, I would like to give you a little background. I've been fishing since 1980, and I have watched the Gulf come and go.

When I first started commercial fishing, I

worked on tuna boats and swordfish boats, and, then, the Vietnamese came over and it was over fished. I lost that. There wasn't no tuna fish and swordfish no more.

Now, I'm a shrimper. I fish almost every week of every month of the year somewhere, but for the last four, or five, years our State has let our shrimp go in our bays. They say they opened the season too early. That's not so.

I'm here to tell you today, sir, six weeks before the season opened, I made five-minute tries in the Bay. I made three of them. I had sixty pounds of shrimp. All of them was ten, fifteen, sixteen twenties, thirty-one thirty-fives, a handful of eighty hundreds.

The day the season opened, three miles off shore is was eighty hundred shrimp. There was no shrimp in the Bay left. I had forty-one boxes in two days. My deck hands made three hundred dollars. That's the best they have made this year so far.

Now, there's no shrimp in the Bay at all. It's a desert. You can go out there and drag three hours. There ain't no shrimp. I had ten pounds in two hours, when they reopened the season. That itself tells you there's no shrimp left.

Almost every year lately, the grass has been here. I'm a trawler. Skimmer boats are not required to

pull TEDs. We are. When the grass shows up, the TEDs clog up. In ten minutes, or fifteen minutes, our doors go together. We can't catch shrimp.

What's good for one man is good for all men. If it's fair for a skimmer to not pull TEDs, it should be fair for us not to pull TEDs, when the grass shows up. We should be allowed to make our living.

I have already lost one boat, and I'm about to lose my other boat. I would appreciate you guys standing up for the fishermen. That's what we need. Thank you, sir.

COMMISSIONER BOSARGE: Just to give you a little bit of information, I was in New Orleans yesterday at a meeting. It's a workshop for TEDs and skimmers. National Marine Fisheries, they have a proposal, now, to put TEDs in skimmers. It is going to be a little ways down the road. They are doing a lot of testing, trying to figure out which ones work the best and what the rules and regulations are going to be.

The problem they are having, now, most TEDs have a four-inch bar spacings, and the turtles that they have been seeing with observer data and the skimmers, the thickness of that turtle is three inches. So they are looking at narrowing the bars.

They are doing a lot of testing, but it's

coming. It's just a little ways off.

It's hard to predict opening and closing the seasons. We do the best we can. I have suggested before to Joe Jewell that maybe we need to have an area south of the Intracoastal Waterway that never closes.

EARL CHAVERS: Exactly, sir.

COMMISSIONER BOSARGE: They do that in Alabama, and, when they first did it, I said that's got to be the craziest thing I've ever seen, but, as I watched it and I saw what took place, it works. I would suggest that maybe that is something we need to look at, an area south of the Intracoastal Waterway.

EARL CHAVERS: That's exactly what needs to be done, sir.

Also, if you look -- I've been doing this a long time -- in the month of May when the moon gets full, the shrimp are going to go out. They are heading south, sir. About the time the moon gets full in June, there ain't no shrimp left and that's a fact, sir. That's what God told them to do.

COMMISSIONER BOSARGE: Last year was not the norm. Last year the shrimp stayed in shore. They got big in the sound and guys were able to catch good shrimp.

In other words, it's hard to predict. For us and for the guys here at DMR, it's hard to predict.

Leaving that area open, if those shrimp do move, there's a place where these guys can work and they are off far enough that I don't see it doing any harm.

I will talk to Joe, and we will see what we can do.

EARL CHAVERS: Thank you very much, sir.

COMMISSIONER BOSARGE: Thank you.

COMMISSIONER GOLLOTT: I think we have to have a motion to go into executive session.

COMMISSIONER ZIMMERMAN: Mr. Chairman, I have something I would like to bring up, and I talked with Kelly a little bit earlier, some education on this vibrio.

We had a shrimper in Hancock County last week that was hanging on for life.

I know we put out an oyster book and we put out a shrimp book. I looked in the shrimp book and didn't see anything on how to clean, or deal with, these cuts.

Is there something that we could do to try to educate these people that may help these fishermen from getting in this shape?

I know we are kind of getting in the medical field and we probably don't want to do that, but it just seems like we could do something. Working hand-in-hand with these fishermen, there have got to be some right things to do and wrong things to do that maybe would

educate them on.

Do you have anything, Jamie?

Joe is coming up.

JOE JEWELL: Commissioner, we do have a pamphlet dealing with vibrio that relates directly with shellfish, and the Department of Health also has some additional literature that they hand out.

We do have a program that we can develop some literature.

Is there something specific that you have in mind that's in addition to shellfish, outside of that?

COMMISSIONER ZIMMERMAN: As I said, Joe, I know we put our oyster book out every year and our shrimp book, and I looked in the shrimp book. I had it handy at the house and looked through it, and I didn't see anything addressing it, and it seems like that's where we would address those types of things, in additional literature in that book.

JOE JEWELL: The infections that are occurring, now -- vibrio vulnificus is an ubiquitus organism that is found primarily during the warm water times of the year. It is a common occurring organism that is naturally occurring. It is always there, but the recent infections that are occurring are wound infections, and they are usually occurring to individuals that have some sort of

pre-occurring condition.

If the Commission is going to make a recommendation to staff, we would ask for a little more direction, specifically of content.

COMMISSIONER ZIMMERMAN: I'm more or less asking the Executive Director to move forward with something that is a community effort. I'm not asking for anything from the Commission.

I just think it would be a good point of order to look at and see if there is something we can do to help these people having these problems.

KELLY LUCAS: Commissioner, we will be glad to look at some ways that we can put more literature out there so that these individual groups do recognize that there are some issues and some things that they can do to protect themselves.

COMMISSIONER ZIMMERMAN: Thank you.

JAMIE MILLER: Commissioner Zimmerman, I appreciate that concern. It has been an issue this summer seemingly more than previous summers.

The media has covered it and I think it was in June that Dr. Lucas participated in a Chamber of Commerce event where we brought the Department of Health, this agency, and the research lab, and had kind of an open forum debate about vibrio and kind of the facts and

dispelling some of the myths. It has been a topic of conversation.

Surprisingly, there is plenty of literature out there that we can incorporate into what we do and how we communicate with our fishing community. I think that would be the first step is that we would take advantage of all the information already out there, make it more available through our website, and also through publications that we produce.

We will look at that closely and make sure that we are getting the message out.

COMMISSIONER ZIMMERMAN: That's exactly what I'm looking for. Thank you.

Mr. Chairman, I would like to make a motion, if I could, to go into closed session to discuss the need for executive session to discuss personnel matters.

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: Motion carries.

(Whereupon, meeting stands in recess.)

COMMISSIONER GOLLOTT: I call this meeting back to order, and I would entertain a motion to adjourn.

COMMISSIONER DRUMMOND: Mr. Chairman, I make a motion that we adjourn.

SEAN MORRISON: Mr. Chairman, I would like to read into the minutes the notes from the executive session.

COMMISSIONER GOLLOTT: I'm sorry. Go ahead, Sean.

SEAN MORRISON: The Commission went into executive session to discuss personnel matters. All of the Commissioners were present, as well as the Executive Director and myself.

At 11:00 a.m., Mr. Zimmerman moved to go into executive session to discuss personnel matters and that motion was seconded by Commissioner Bosarge.

This was an informational session. No motions were made.

At 11:15 a.m., Commissioner Drummond moved that we end the executive session and come back to the regular session. That motion was seconded by Commissioner Zimmerman. Thank you.

COMMISSIONER GOLLOTT: Shelby has made a motion we adjourn.

Do we have a second?

COMMISSIONER ZIMMERMAN: So seconded.

COMMISSIONER GOLLOTT: We have a second.

All those in favor say aye.

(All in favor.)

COMMISSIONER GOLLOTT: Adjourned.

(Whereupon, at 11:26 o'clock, a.m., the July 21, 2015, 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 July 21, 2015, 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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