

STATE OF ALABAMA DEPARTMENT OF  
CONSERVATION AND NATURAL RESOURCES  
ADVISORY BOARD MEETING  
Battleship Memorial Park  
Medal of Honor Aircraft Pavilion  
Mobile, Alabama  
August 22, 2020

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TRANSCRIPT OF PROCEEDINGS

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Proceedings taken before Tracye  
Sadler Blackwell, Certified Court Reporter, ACCR  
No. 294, and Commissioner for the State of Alabama  
at Large, at the Battleship Memorial Park, Medal of  
Honor Aircraft Pavilion, Mobile, Alabama, on  
Saturday, August 22, 2020, commencing at  
approximately 9:02 a.m.

BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT:

- Mr. Joseph Dobbs, Jr., Chairman,
- Commissioner Christopher M. Blankenship
- Commissioner Rick Pate
- Dr. Gary Lemme
- Mr. Patrick Cagle
- Mr. Raymond Jones, Jr.
- Mr. Grady Hartzog
- Mr. Ben C. Stimpson, Jr.
- Mr. Tim Wood
- Mr. Brock Jones

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CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Welcome, everyone, to the  
second Conservation Advisory Board  
Meeting on this day August the 22nd,  
2020. I'm glad that everybody is here  
today. Can you hear me? Can everybody  
hear me?  
Can everybody hear me now? Is that  
better?  
Okay. We're working hard to get  
that right.  
So I'm glad you're all here, safe

travels. In these trying and unusual  
times, let's all pray that this pandemic  
goes away as quickly as it came upon us.  
Let's all do everything that we can  
today by distancing and wearing our face  
masks -- I'm going to have mine down  
when I speak, but I'll pull it back  
up -- and consider each other. That's  
part of your responsibilities, our  
responsibilities.

I'd like to thank -- give very  
special thanks to recognize General  
Janet Cobb and her wonderful group for  
allowing us to enjoy this great historic  
venue. And hopefully we can come back  
here one spring day in our rotation.  
And this is a pretty unique place to  
come. So thank you, General Cobb.

Is she here?

Well, thank you, General Cobb.

I want to welcome a couple of  
attendees today. Mr. Rick Pate,  
ex-officio member, our Commissioner of

Agriculture. And I know all of you know  
that agriculture is a big deal, but they  
do a lot more than just looking after  
the cows and chickens in the state of  
Alabama. And I'd like for him to come  
up here for a moment.

COMMISSIONER PATE: Thank you, Joey. I do  
want to just give a minute or two  
update. Joey asked me to. Hopefully  
all of y'all have heard about the seeds  
we received from China. We've kind of  
processed through. We've had almost 600  
reported to our office. Our seed lab  
and our food and drug lab have been  
testing them. So far we haven't found  
anything that was in particularly  
noxious or invasive, and it doesn't  
appear that any we've tested so far have  
had any contaminant added to them.

I was surprised as we went to pick  
them up that 15 percent of our folks had  
already planted them and germinated  
them. So I don't know if that should

1 have surprised me that somebody  
2 receiving unsolicited seeds would just  
3 immediately go plant them and start  
4 watering them. But, anyway, we had to  
5 dig those up and bring the plants and  
6 the soil back. So we've got now lots of  
7 buckets of soil at our office.

8 But, anyway, we've sort of gotten  
9 out of that now that the FBI is  
10 involved. And we've been in pretty good  
11 contact with them, and they're  
12 investigating all the reasons behind  
13 that.

14 I would like to thank the Governor.  
15 We just last week completed an MOU with  
16 the Governor to allocate \$26 million of  
17 the CARES money to agriculture. And  
18 we're going to start -- you know, it's  
19 like any government program. They  
20 announce it, but there's no rules and  
21 there's no application yet. But we're  
22 going to try to expedite that.

23 Obviously, that money has got to be

1 spent by the end of the year, and so --  
2 but it's, I think, a well-needed help to  
3 our farmers, our cattlemen, our -- we  
4 all saw the shortages of ground beef in  
5 our grocery stores. And so we're going  
6 to increase the meat processing in the  
7 state along with catfish and some  
8 vegetable processing.

9 So, anyway, it's great to be here.  
10 If I can ever help you, there again, my  
11 name is Rick Pate. Just give our office  
12 a call.

13 Thanks, Joey.

14 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Thank you, Commissioner Pate,  
15 very much.

16 Also, Dr. Gary Lemme, ex-officio as  
17 well. He's the Director of the Alabama  
18 Cooperative Extension System. And  
19 I want him to bring you up to speed on a  
20 couple of things.

21 DR. LEMME: Thank you. I want to make sure  
22 you are aware of a joint activity  
23 between the Department of Conservation

1 and Natural Resources and the Extension  
2 System in that there's a webinar series  
3 throughout September and October called  
4 "The Best Deer Season Ever." Doesn't  
5 that sound positive?

6 After this year, we need one. And  
7 so on Tuesday evenings at 7:30, just  
8 tune in. There's fliers in the back of  
9 the room there. And tune in on your  
10 computer or your cell phone and learn  
11 about everything from food plots to  
12 processing. And so hopefully that's a  
13 way to get together virtually as deer  
14 hunters.

15 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Thank you very much,  
16 Dr. Lemme. Thank you very, very much.  
17 That sounds very interesting.

18 We don't really have any other  
19 guests besides our Commissioner and the  
20 Directors who I'll get to directly. But  
21 I'd like to offer the Board's  
22 congratulations to Ms. Marianne  
23 Hudson -- she's our Conservation

1 Outreach Specialist -- for her award as  
2 "Conservation Communicator of the Year"  
3 presented by the Alabama Wildlife  
4 Federation.

5 Marianne, she does a great job for  
6 the Department. She's one of the best  
7 wordsmiths I have ever met, and as well,  
8 she is a consistent and very engaging  
9 communicator. She does a super job.

10 I'd like to take one more moment to  
11 thank Ms. Wanda McCullers who runs  
12 Wildlife and Freshwater Fisheries and  
13 Ms. Betsy Jones who manages this Board  
14 very well and will be as well keeping  
15 time. Thank them for traveling in these  
16 strange times. And also Ms. Tracye  
17 Blackwell. She's here and she keeps up  
18 and records every word that's said. And  
19 thank you. It's a job.

20 Hello to our usual attendees. Some  
21 of you come to most of the Board  
22 meetings. And those that are new,  
23 welcome. We welcome you here, and we're

1 glad you're here. This is an important  
 2 part of the process.  
 3 We're going to have an invocation,  
 4 and I'm going to ask my Board member  
 5 Mr. Raymond Jones if he would lead us in  
 6 the invocation.  
 7 MR. RAYMOND JONES: Please bow your heads.  
 8 (Invocation given by Mr. Raymond  
 9 Jones.)  
 10 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Thank you. Thank you,  
 11 Raymond.  
 12 I'll ask Grady Hartzog to lead us in  
 13 the Pledge of Allegiance. There are  
 14 flags in both directions, but let's  
 15 point to this side.  
 16 MR. HARTZOG: I think I'm loud enough that I  
 17 don't need a microphone. If everybody  
 18 would turn and face the flag.  
 19 (Pledge of Allegiance recited.)  
 20 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Thank you, Grady.  
 21 MR. HARTZOG: We live in a great country.  
 22 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Yes, we do.  
 23 Something that we instituted a

1 couple of years ago is the Sportman's  
 2 Pledge. I won't make everybody recite  
 3 it unless you would like to with me, but  
 4 I will -- I'll read it for you. It's  
 5 something that rings through to today as  
 6 it did when Commissioner Wallace wrote  
 7 it in 1908. So this is our Sportman's  
 8 Pledge.  
 9 (Sportman's Pledge read by Chairman  
 10 Dobbs.)  
 11 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: So, again, that's something  
 12 that I appreciate. I enjoy reading  
 13 that, and it follows through to today.  
 14 It's our job to help.  
 15 Mr. Secretary, do we have a quorum  
 16 today?  
 17 COMMISSIONER BLANKENSHIP: We do.  
 18 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: We do. We have a quorum.  
 19 The first part of business is the  
 20 minutes of February 29, 2020. I know  
 21 our Board has read those minutes. Are  
 22 there any corrections to those minutes?  
 23 (No response.)

1 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Being no corrections, then,  
 2 we approve the minutes as provided by  
 3 Ms. Blackwell and perused by Ms. Betsy  
 4 Jones. Those are approved.  
 5 If I can, let's ask each Board  
 6 member -- and y'all can holler unless we  
 7 get this going. I'll ask each Board  
 8 member just to introduce themselves and  
 9 note their Congressional District. And  
 10 I'll start down here on my right with  
 11 Commissioner Brock Jones.  
 12 MR. BROCK JONES: (Inaudible.)  
 13 COMMISSIONER BLANKENSHIP: Hold on, Brock.  
 14 (Brief interruption for microphone  
 15 issue.)  
 16 MR. BROCK JONES: Brock Jones, District 7. I  
 17 represent basically the Black Belt.  
 18 MR. RAYMOND JONES: Raymond Jones,  
 19 Congressional District Number 5, which  
 20 is in North Alabama.  
 21 MR. STIMPSON: Ben Stimpson, District 1, down  
 22 here.  
 23 DR. LEMME: Gary Lemme, Ex-Offio, Alabama

1 Cooperative Extension System.  
 2 MR. PATE: Rick Pate, Ex-Officio, Department  
 3 of Ag.  
 4 COMMISSIONER BLANKENSHIP: Commissioner Chris  
 5 Blankenship, Department of Conservation  
 6 and Natural Resources.  
 7 MR. CAGLE: Patrick Cagle and I represent the  
 8 2nd district.  
 9 MR. HARTZOG: Grady Hartzog, Congressional  
 10 District 2.  
 11 MR. WOOD: I'm Tim Wood, Congressional  
 12 District 5. I live in Selma. Thank  
 13 you.  
 14 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Thank you, gentlemen.  
 15 Appreciate that. I'm Joey Dobbs, and  
 16 I'm in the 6th Congressional District in  
 17 the center of the state.  
 18 To all of you here today, get to  
 19 know these representatives of your  
 20 Congressional Districts. And these are  
 21 the fellows that I hope you will contact  
 22 with your ideas and programs going  
 23 forward. They're pretty knowledgeable

1 on lots of good things.  
 2 Today as well we've got all of  
 3 the -- all of our Directors of the  
 4 Department of Conservation and Natural  
 5 Resources that are here today:  
 6 Mr. Scott Bannon of Marine Resources;  
 7 Mr. Greg Lein of State Parks; Ms. Patti  
 8 McCurdy with State Lands; Mr. Chuck  
 9 Sykes of Wildlife and Freshwater  
 10 Fisheries.

11 They all work with great people that  
 12 are passionate about their jobs, and  
 13 they're looking out for the future of  
 14 this state and our resources going  
 15 forward. Thank them every chance you  
 16 get.

17 If you haven't, let me remind you to  
 18 download the newest "Alabama Outdoor"  
 19 app. It's very easy. It's very easy  
 20 then to purchase your licenses, find out  
 21 about WMAs, find out about the SOAs, the  
 22 Special Opportunity Areas, the mentored  
 23 hunt programs, and just the general

1 goings-on in the Department.  
 2 And when you do that, I think that  
 3 part of that entitles you to  
 4 Mr. Rainer's newsletter that comes out.  
 5 And it's very informative. It keeps  
 6 you --  
 7 MR. BROCK JONES: Joey, why don't you come  
 8 down here. I can't hear you.  
 9 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Can you not hear?  
 10 (Brief interruption for microphone  
 11 issues.)  
 12 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Download the app. That's  
 13 really all I wanted to say.  
 14 (Brief interruption for microphone  
 15 issues.)  
 16 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: I'd like to ask Commissioner  
 17 Blankenship to update us on the  
 18 Department with the Commissioner's  
 19 Report. And then after that, if we have  
 20 any Directors or Division reports, we'll  
 21 get to those.  
 22 COMMISSIONER BLANKENSHIP: Thank you.  
 23 (Brief interruption for microphone

1 issues.)  
 2 COMMISSIONER BLANKENSHIP: I will try this,  
 3 and if it doesn't work, I will go up to  
 4 the 1940s singing microphone.  
 5 I do want to thank General --  
 6 (Brief interruption for microphone  
 7 issues.)  
 8 COMMISSIONER BLANKENSHIP: I would like to  
 9 thank General Cobb and the Battleship  
 10 for allowing us to meet here. If you've  
 11 never been on the Battleship, it is  
 12 really one of the treasures -- if you've  
 13 never been on the Battleship, it really  
 14 is one of the treasures of our state.  
 15 If you're from north Alabama or  
 16 somewhere and you haven't been down  
 17 here, I hope that you'll take the time  
 18 while you're here to go on the ship and  
 19 spend some time in there today and  
 20 really think about what the sailors went  
 21 through while they were on the ship  
 22 during the war and then look at all the  
 23 great aircraft that they have here

1 around the Pavilion. It really is a  
 2 spectacular place.  
 3 This has been a summer of COVID and  
 4 a spring of COVID. It has been very  
 5 different here for us and for other  
 6 people around the state. Our staff  
 7 mostly work in the field anyway.  
 8 So our staff continued their normal  
 9 operation for the most part. We did  
 10 telework -- our headquarters staff and  
 11 some of our district office staff  
 12 teleworked from about the middle of  
 13 March -- from the middle of March  
 14 through Memorial Day, and then we had  
 15 everybody come back and resume normal  
 16 operations.  
 17 With about 1100 employees in the  
 18 Department of Conservation, we did not  
 19 have any positive tests until really the  
 20 end of June. June 25th, I think, was  
 21 our first positive in the Department of  
 22 Conservation. We've had about two dozen  
 23 now within the Department, but out of

1 1100 employees, I think our people are  
2 doing a good job of social distancing  
3 and maintaining all the safety  
4 precautions they can as best as they  
5 can.

6 You know, our State Parks stayed  
7 open the entire time dealing with the  
8 public every day and our officers in the  
9 field and our staff in the field.

10 I just want to -- before I get into  
11 anything else, I do want to thank our  
12 staff that's here, and I hope that  
13 you'll pass that on to the rest of the  
14 Department of Conservation. I really  
15 appreciate everybody's diligent work  
16 during this time. It's been -- we  
17 haven't -- I don't think we've hardly  
18 missed a meeting in the Department, and  
19 that really is a testament to our  
20 employees and their passion for what we  
21 do. And I really do appreciate that.

22 Governor Ivey and State Health  
23 Officer Scott Harris felt like outdoor

1 recreation was essential, and I think it  
2 has been essential for people to be able  
3 to get out and enjoy the outdoors during  
4 the time when so many other things were  
5 closed or was not happening. We've seen  
6 an increase in the occupancy at our  
7 State Park campgrounds and day-use  
8 facilities, on the waterways, on the  
9 fishing lakes, on our Forever Wild  
10 trails, and all the property -- our  
11 WMAs -- were highly used. I think it  
12 shows to the rest of the state -- I  
13 think what we already know -- the  
14 beautiful resources that we have in our  
15 state, the wildlife, the diversity of  
16 the areas, how important that is, and  
17 what a great state we live in.

18 I think there are a lot of people  
19 that got out and did what they always  
20 do, but I think there's a lot of people  
21 that got out and went to places that  
22 they never had gone to before at some of  
23 our Forever Wild properties and some of

1 our State Parks to enjoy some time  
2 outdoors. And I think that's been good  
3 for the health of our state -- not only  
4 for COVID, but for the physical health  
5 and mental health as well. So I do hope  
6 that you will take advantage of some of  
7 those places as well.

8 We've seen an increase in hunting  
9 license -- hunting participation during  
10 the spring turkey season. We've seen a  
11 lot of increase in fishing as we saw  
12 during the red snapper season. So  
13 people are really spending a lot of time  
14 outdoors.

15 Our license sales were up last year.  
16 Year over year our hunting, fishing, and  
17 Wildlife Heritage Licenses were up a  
18 pretty good bit. Our nonresident trip  
19 licenses were down; which as you could  
20 imagine, with people not traveling into  
21 our state, many of those trip licenses  
22 were a little lower than previous years.

23 We did change -- this past year we

1 changed our Information and Education  
2 section. We rebranded them as our  
3 Communications and Marketing section to  
4 have a little bit more of an emphasis on  
5 providing marketing of all of our  
6 facilities in the Department of  
7 Conservation and around the state. And  
8 one of the things that we were trying to  
9 do is increase participation in license  
10 sales for people that utilize the areas  
11 of the state but that don't necessarily  
12 buy a license. They don't hunt and  
13 fish, but they birdwatch or they hike or  
14 they do some different things on  
15 properties that are managed by the  
16 Department.

17 Just as a small example of what  
18 we're trying to do now, we marketed the  
19 Wildlife Heritage License to the  
20 birdwatching community. It's a big  
21 community around the state. We spent  
22 just a little bit of money marketing  
23 that license to them. We increased the

1 sales of that license over 33 percent  
2 last year with just some very limited  
3 targeted marketing. So that's -- we  
4 plan to do more of those things.

5 Our new licenses go on sale Monday,  
6 the new license year. And one of the  
7 things that we have this year is  
8 packages to make it easier for the  
9 public --

10 If you know you want to hunt, you  
11 can just select the hunt package, or if  
12 you want to fish freshwater, you can  
13 select that package, or fishing in  
14 saltwater, you can select that.

15 -- to make it easier for the public  
16 to go on and buy licenses. So that's  
17 one of the changes this year.

18 The red snapper season -- we had  
19 huge participation during the season  
20 while nobody could play travel ball.  
21 People weren't going to Disney World.  
22 They weren't taking all those family  
23 vacations. So a lot of people --

1 anybody that had a boat went fishing.  
2 And we saw that on all of the weekends  
3 of red snapper season.

4 Because of that, we closed the  
5 season on July 3rd as we were  
6 approaching the quota of red snapper.  
7 After QC'ing the data and looking at all  
8 the final landings, we have about  
9 128,000 pounds of red snapper quota  
10 left. And what we're proposing for the  
11 Board is that we reopen red snapper  
12 season October 10th, 11th, and 12th --

13 That's Columbus Day weekend. That's  
14 a Saturday, Sunday, and Monday.

15 -- to allow our people to catch the  
16 rest of the quota to get up to our  
17 quota. And if I don't hear any  
18 objection from the Board or any  
19 discussion, that's what we plan to do to  
20 finish up the quota for this year.

21 On our State Parks, our online  
22 reservation system came online on  
23 Wednesday. We've been working since --

1 for the time that I've been  
2 Commissioner -- working with our State  
3 Parks to implement an online reservation  
4 system to bring us up into where we need  
5 to be in the business of booking State  
6 Parks. So that's operational now.

7 If you go to Alapark.com, you can  
8 access it and book through the online  
9 reservation system for campgrounds now.  
10 By October 1st, we'll have the lodges  
11 and -- the hotel rooms and the cabins  
12 and cottages should be online by October  
13 1st, and you can book all of that  
14 online.

15 And one of the other initiatives  
16 that we've had and we have talked about  
17 with the Board is the high-speed  
18 internet at all of our park facilities.  
19 We need that for not only our guests but  
20 also just to run our operations as we  
21 get the new online reservation system.

22 I am glad to report that we have  
23 high-speed internet and fiber running to

1 all of our parks as of a couple of weeks  
2 ago. So now we'll start the process of  
3 building out the WiFi networks within  
4 the campgrounds and at the rest of our  
5 parks so that our guests can have the  
6 top-notch service that they expect when  
7 they come to our parks.

8 If you want to get away from it all,  
9 you can turn your phone off and get away  
10 from it. But if you still want to run a  
11 business or watch Netflix, you'll be  
12 able to do that in your motor home as  
13 well, so ...

14 And we also have changed our  
15 restaurant operations due to COVID.  
16 Instead of the -- in a lot of the  
17 restaurants we have buffets. We've gone  
18 to a different style. At Cheaha, we've  
19 changed that from a buffet restaurant to  
20 more of a bistro type, and that has seen  
21 very positive financial results for us.

22 We have about \$26 million worth of  
23 renovations going on at our State Parks

1 this fiscal year, which I think is a  
2 real testament to the work of our staff  
3 and the ability for us to find some  
4 grant funds and other funding to do some  
5 deferred maintenance and other  
6 improvements.

7 One of the projects that will be  
8 finished -- hopefully, if it's not  
9 destroyed by the tropical storms that  
10 are coming through this next week -- the  
11 Gulf State Park Pier will be finishing  
12 up a \$2.4 million renovation, and the  
13 pier will reopen before Labor Day. And  
14 I hope that you'll take some time to go  
15 down there and see that and fish.

16 Part of that renovation is that we  
17 built a second level at the very end, an  
18 observation deck, so that you can go up  
19 there and you can watch the people fish  
20 and see all the marine life and all that  
21 around the pier without interfering with  
22 the people that are fishing. So I think  
23 that's going to be very positively

1 received.

2 And then Meaher State Park, which  
3 many of you may not have been to before  
4 on the Board, it's right here on the  
5 Mobile Causeway about 2 miles from here.  
6 That is one of our smaller parks, but  
7 it's close to the population centers in  
8 Mobile and Baldwin County. And that  
9 park will be undergoing a \$3.5 million  
10 expansion that's paid for with some of  
11 the Deepwater Horizon settlement funds.  
12 And that will begin later this year.

13 Patti McCurdy is here with our State  
14 Lands Division. GOMESA funding is money  
15 that comes into our state from oil and  
16 gas revenues from the Gulf of Mexico  
17 Energy Security Act. Last week the  
18 Governor announced about \$27 million  
19 worth of projects in Mobile and Baldwin  
20 Counties from the GOMESA funds. One of  
21 the important things for the Board is  
22 that in that program we have really  
23 focused on public access over the last

1 couple of years, both for boating access  
2 and land acquisition for public hunting  
3 and other access here in south Alabama.

4 In the last round there was a  
5 \$1.1 million project for Satsuma to do  
6 the Steel Creek Lodge and ramp to give  
7 great access to the middle part of the  
8 Mobile-Tensaw Delta, which is a huge  
9 Forever Wild property that we have in  
10 the state managed by -- through the  
11 Department of Conservation. Also  
12 boating access at Dauphin Island, Bayou  
13 La Batre, Orange Beach, the Mobile  
14 Causeway, Downtown Mobile, and Weeks  
15 Bay. So those are all projects that are  
16 included in GOMESA to help our people  
17 have more access to the beautiful  
18 waterways in our state.

19 And we have two really good septic  
20 to sewer projects in south Mobile County  
21 that will improve water quality down in  
22 the Powell River and Bayou La Batre  
23 areas.

1 At the February meeting you were  
2 presented with several regulations. One  
3 of those was the 220-2-.26 that deals  
4 with different species in the state. I  
5 signed that regulation that was  
6 presented to the Board the 1st of  
7 August. This is an attempt for us to  
8 proactively limit the introduction of  
9 invasive or non-native species into the  
10 wild in Alabama.

11 We did receive extensive public  
12 comment on the regulation. And so after  
13 that extensive public comment, we are  
14 going to allow a permit to possess  
15 animals that are already here. Just no  
16 new animals that are covered under this  
17 regulation. A news release went out  
18 this past week, and it included the link  
19 to that -- how to get the permits, a  
20 no-cost permit, so that the people can  
21 have -- possess those animals. We  
22 thought this was something that was  
23 asked by multiple people during the

1 comment period, and we agreed that that  
2 would be fair.

3 And then the last thing I want to  
4 say is that we had extensive  
5 participation during our spring turkey  
6 season this year. I don't know about  
7 you, but I got to go more -- and I'm not  
8 a -- I got to go more this turkey season  
9 than I had in the past, and I think  
10 that's what I hear from most people that  
11 had some opportunities to go. And with  
12 that, we saw increased harvest at our  
13 WMAs and on private lands through the  
14 season. I think that's a trend that we  
15 saw through the southeast.

16 And we have Dr. Chamberlain from the  
17 University of Georgia who's here, and I  
18 think he'll have a presentation and some  
19 comments to you in a few minutes.

20 Any questions about anything in the  
21 Commissioner's Report?

22 (No response.)

23 COMMISSIONER BLANKENSHIP: All right. Thank

1 you.

2 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Thank you, Commissioner, very  
3 much.

4 I'm going to ask the Directors in  
5 attendance: Does anybody have a report  
6 or a comment, announcement that needs to  
7 be made?

8 Ms. McCurdy? Colonel Bannon?  
9 Director Sykes? I don't see Mr. Lein.

10 (No response.)

11 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Okay. With that, we'll move  
12 to our guest educational speaker.

13 Dr. Michael (Mike) Chamberlain is  
14 the Terrell Distinguished Professor of  
15 Wildlife Ecology and Management at the  
16 University of Georgia. Mike received a  
17 B.S. degree from Virginia Tech and M.S.  
18 and Ph.D. degrees from Mississippi State  
19 University. He served on the faculty at  
20 Louisiana State University for 11 years  
21 and now has served as a professor at the  
22 University of Georgia for nine years.  
23 Mike's research program focuses squarely

1 on issues of importance to state and  
2 federal management agencies. He's been  
3 conducting applied research on wild  
4 turkeys for 27 years.

5 Dr. Chamberlain.

6 DR. CHAMBERLAIN: Good morning. Can you hear  
7 me?

8 I appreciate the opportunity to  
9 speak with you today. I understand this  
10 is a bit -- it's a bit of an odd  
11 situation.

12 The packet that's in front of you is  
13 basically a presentation -- a slide  
14 presentation that I was asked to give to  
15 the Arkansas Game and Fish Commission  
16 back in the early part of the spring as  
17 they contemplated regulation changes in  
18 their state. And basically what  
19 happened was they contacted me and said  
20 can you come and explain to us as a  
21 commission how this bird breeds, how its  
22 mating system works, and more  
23 importantly, how does harvest influence

1 this bird and what data do you have that  
2 you can show us that would help inform  
3 us as we consider the path forward.

4 If you're not familiar with the  
5 situation in Arkansas, their populations  
6 have been declining for a number of  
7 years. The trajectory of their  
8 population is almost identical to the  
9 trajectory of the population in Alabama,  
10 except that you're about seven or eight  
11 years behind the trajectory in their  
12 state.

13 So I put together this presentation,  
14 which is now what's printed in front of  
15 you. And what I'm going to do is work  
16 through it with you understanding that  
17 you lack the benefit of being able to  
18 see this on a screen. And I understand  
19 for the audience this is a real  
20 challenge because you have absolutely no  
21 clue what they're seeing. So I'll work  
22 through this with you, and then I'm  
23 happy to answer any questions, you know,



1 as we go through it.

2 So this bird -- as you-all know if  
3 you're a turkey hunter, this bird uses  
4 really elaborate displays to attract  
5 attention; right? So they have this  
6 gaudy head. They have these iridescent  
7 feathers that make them look black and  
8 colorful. And they're doing that to  
9 attract attention. So their mating  
10 system hinges on that.

11 So we look at this bird and we think  
12 they all look the same. We think all  
13 these males look the same, but they're  
14 not. In reality, they have subtle cues  
15 where they can distinguish where one  
16 male is better than another one; okay?

17 One really critical thing about  
18 turkeys is they have social hierarchies.  
19 And what that means is -- you often hear  
20 it referred to as pecking orders. Okay.  
21 All that means is -- I'd like to think I  
22 have a pecking order in my house where  
23 I'm the top alpha and then everybody

1 falls in under me. And we all know that  
2 never works like that, but in the turkey  
3 world it does.

4 So there are social hierarchies that  
5 dictate this bird's entire life. You  
6 have dominant birds, and then you have  
7 subordinate birds under them. And in  
8 the presence of the dominant bird, the  
9 other birds fall in line. That's the  
10 way this bird works.

11 There are many other bird species  
12 that use the exact same system that  
13 turkeys use. And in the presence of the  
14 dominant birds, the other birds  
15 essentially follow along. When those  
16 dominant birds are removed or they die,  
17 they shuffle this pecking order again,  
18 and then they move forward. Okay. It's  
19 not just the second bird steps up and it  
20 kind of starts over. This is  
21 why we constantly see turkeys  
22 fighting -- constantly -- because  
23 they're trying to test those pecking

1 orders all the time, year-round.

2 They use a form of -- it's called a  
3 lek. All that means -- this is kind of  
4 their mating system. They use a lek.  
5 If you've ever traveled out west, you  
6 may see sage-grouse, prairie chickens,  
7 or some other species where they all  
8 show up at the same spot and they  
9 display. What turkeys do is an exploded  
10 lek. You've got little groups of  
11 turkeys, which we're going to talk  
12 about. And that's how they -- that's  
13 how they mate.

14 So if you flip to the next page,  
15 this is my light bulb slide. This is  
16 what I call my light bulb slide.

17 So what you look at -- when you look  
18 at turkeys, they're not uniformly  
19 distributed across the landscape. In  
20 other words, there are places where no  
21 turkeys live. Even though the habitat  
22 may look okay to us, they're just not  
23 there. And the reason they're not there

1 is because these leks, these areas where  
2 they breed, are not distributed  
3 everywhere. They're only in certain  
4 places.

5 So what you see on this slide is  
6 these leks that are like light bulbs,  
7 and those light bulbs -- some are really  
8 bright, meaning they have a bunch of  
9 turkeys, and some are really dim,  
10 meaning they don't have as many turkeys.

11 So the bright bulbs are ones that  
12 have groups of males, and the tiny bulbs  
13 are single males. And the difference is  
14 the groups of males have that social  
15 pecking order, and through time, as  
16 these birds die from -- either we kill  
17 them or they die of natural causes, then  
18 the light bulb gets smaller and smaller  
19 and smaller until either it blinks out  
20 or we get patches, right, in the summer  
21 and the light bulb gets brighter.

22 So they maintain these light bulbs  
23 from gobbling at each other. So if

1 you've ever turkey-hunted and you hear  
2 one bird gobble, another bird gobble,  
3 another bird gobble, that's them telling  
4 each other I'm still here; you're over  
5 there. If they don't hear each other,  
6 they don't gobble. That's their natural  
7 inclination; why speak if there's nobody  
8 to speak to.

9 So what you typically see is, you  
10 have a group of males, a really bright  
11 light bulb -- a bunch of males, and the  
12 hens will come and visit them, choose  
13 the dominant bird, and then go off and  
14 nest. That's how this bird and other  
15 birds work that use this system.

16 Back to these pecking orders. The  
17 dominant female, the dominant hen, she  
18 breeds first, and then the second hen  
19 breeds, the third hen breeds, the fourth  
20 hen breeds. That's how it -- just like  
21 a ladder. It's not a free-for-all.  
22 It's very structured.

23 Okay. And this is known from

1 captive studies of this bird. For many,  
2 many years now we've known this. This  
3 is how they breed. So once everybody  
4 goes through and breeds with that  
5 dominant bird or multiple dominant  
6 birds, everybody goes to nest. Okay.  
7 Very, very structured.

8 As I'm going to allude to, it's  
9 supposed to be in a really narrow window  
10 of time. Okay. So like Hen 1 breeds  
11 with a tom; the next day Hen 2, Hen 3,  
12 Hen 4, Hen 5. So within a short period  
13 of time everybody breeds and they all go  
14 nest. Okay. So keep that in mind.

15 This next slide is an animation that  
16 you're not going to be able to see, so  
17 just flip through it to the -- unless  
18 you want me to like mime it or  
19 something, which I think would really  
20 look odd given this.

21 So you know this as well as I do.  
22 If you're passionate about turkeys, you  
23 see turkeys in the winter and they're in

1 these huge flocks; right? And those  
2 flocks kind of dissolve around the 1st  
3 of March, and you start seeing, like  
4 this picture, a group of eight hens and  
5 three toms or six hens and two toms or  
6 whatever. That's the exploded lek.  
7 That's the light bulb that's on the  
8 landscape.

9 Within that group of hens, there's a  
10 dominant hen, a second hen, a third hen,  
11 and so on and so forth, and that pecking  
12 order is resolute. Until she dies it  
13 doesn't change. And you see this all  
14 the time if you hunt this bird. There  
15 are some hens, they run the roost, so to  
16 speak.

17 So within that group of toms that's  
18 in that picture, there's one dominant  
19 bird. Okay. The other two birds are  
20 subordinate to him, and in some cases  
21 they can breed and in some cases they  
22 cannot breed. And the reason is,  
23 testosterone levels from that dominant

1 tom are super high. We see this when we  
2 hunt this bird. He's aggressive. He  
3 comes to a decoy. He comes to a call.  
4 He's looking for a fight. That is  
5 typically the dominant bird.

6 Those other two birds, their  
7 testosterone levels are suppressed  
8 because of his presence. And in some  
9 cases, research has shown, even if you  
10 remove him, those other two toms don't  
11 just suddenly become breeders. Their  
12 testosterone levels are maintained lower  
13 because he was constantly kicking their  
14 tails for months and months and months  
15 and, therefore, the testosterone stays  
16 low. So just keep that in mind. This  
17 notion that, well, you shoot one or  
18 one's dead or gets killed by an owl or  
19 whatever and others just step up, well,  
20 normally that's not the way turkeys work  
21 nor do sage-grouse, prairie chickens, or  
22 other species.

23 Turkeys also have what's called kin

1 selection. What that means -- and this  
2 is really abstract, and some people look  
3 at me when I say this and they're like  
4 you're a Martian. But it's true.  
5 Turkeys use a form of kin selection.  
6 And what that means is, those three toms  
7 that are in that picture, in most cases  
8 they're brothers. And those brothers --  
9 they were all hatched together and they  
10 survived. And those brothers -- only  
11 one of those brothers is a breeder. The  
12 other two are not.

13 So in a single breeding season, if  
14 you are not going to breed but your  
15 brother is -- you don't know how long  
16 you're going to live. So if you stand  
17 there and display with your brother, you  
18 attract more attention than if you  
19 don't. Therefore, your fitness improves  
20 if you help your brother because you  
21 don't know how long you're going to  
22 live.

23 It's kind of abstract. It's been

1 well documented in birds that use  
2 displays like this. If you're not going  
3 to make it to the next year, at least  
4 contribute to the next generation  
5 through your brother. If your brother  
6 is removed, then maybe you step up and  
7 potentially breed. So keep that in  
8 mind. Not all toms are created equal,  
9 if you will.

10 So this next slide is basically --  
11 this is data that are collected across  
12 the south. And I'm going to lead you  
13 through these, understanding that this  
14 medium is a bit challenging, but we'll  
15 do our best; okay?

16 So I've been studying turkeys for  
17 almost 30 years and right now have  
18 studies all the way from Arizona to  
19 North Carolina. So what I'm going to  
20 do -- sprinkled through this is data  
21 from any number of states. I didn't  
22 pick any particular state. I just  
23 showed examples.

1 So these are some data from South  
2 Carolina. And what you're looking at on  
3 the bottom is a figure, and in that  
4 figure, the lines that do like this,  
5 that's daily gobbling activity. You see  
6 how it just bounces up and down -- up  
7 one day, down the next, up and down and  
8 up and down. That's because  
9 testosterone cycles in this bird. One  
10 day they're wound up. The next day it  
11 goes down. Up, down.

12 And males tend to synchronize.  
13 Humans do the same thing. If you're  
14 around people that are doing the same  
15 thing you're doing, you start to  
16 synchronize your behaviors. In the  
17 turkey world, what happens is all the  
18 toms gobble a lot one day and then  
19 everybody shuts up the next day and then  
20 everybody gobbles the next day and then  
21 they shut up. All right. If you're  
22 going to be gobbling and your buddy is  
23 going to be gobbling, everybody needs to

1 be gobbling because you're gobbling to  
2 try to attract attention.

3 So what you see in this bird is  
4 males, the toms, they become receptive  
5 long before the hens do. So what you're  
6 looking at is other than that  
7 up-and-down, that other line is the  
8 portion of the hens that are nesting.

9 Okay. We know that two things drive  
10 gobbling activity. One is hen  
11 availability. As hens become less  
12 available, toms gobble a lot. And the  
13 other is competition amongst themselves.  
14 If your buddy is gobbling, you gobble;  
15 okay?

16 So what you're looking at in that  
17 figure and then in that top right figure  
18 where the arrows are drawn to it, there  
19 are lags in this process. And what that  
20 means is, toms start gobbling long  
21 before hens are receptive to breeding.  
22 And they're supposed to. That's why we  
23 start hearing this bird in late

1 February.

2 There's no breeding occurring then.  
3 They're gobbling trying to establish and  
4 test those pecking orders. All hens are  
5 doing is walking around oblivious like  
6 you are so obnoxious, just shut up, let  
7 me continue feeding, and if you want to  
8 follow me, go right ahead. There's no  
9 breeding occurring.

10 Then what you're -- so that's the  
11 arrow that's drawn to that negative peak  
12 in that top right figure. What that  
13 means is, a lot of gobbling in March  
14 corresponds to no breeding activity.

15 The next lag is a positive, meaning  
16 gobbling really picks up when laying  
17 starts and incubation starts. And that  
18 should make sense. They don't see as  
19 many hens as they did two weeks ago, so  
20 they're going to start gobbling a lot.  
21 And you see this commonly across the  
22 species.

23 Collectively, if you look across

1 from east Texas to North Carolina, this  
2 process starts 45 days before any  
3 breeding occurs. So this bird starts  
4 gobbling a month and a half before they  
5 actually start breeding. That's a  
6 critical point.

7 So the next slide is basically this  
8 one tom copulating with a hen and the  
9 other tom is standing there just kind of  
10 watching the show. That's a common  
11 occurrence in the turkey world because  
12 all toms are not created equally. We've  
13 already talked about some just aren't  
14 breeders in the presence of a breeder.

15 We also know that jakes contribute  
16 nothing to reproduction. There's this  
17 common -- I see it on social media all  
18 the time. I get questions about this a  
19 lot. Well, if the toms aren't there,  
20 the jakes just step up. That is  
21 patently false.

22 Research has shown through the years  
23 many, many times that only about 4 to 6

1 percent of all jakes in the population  
2 could even possibly fertilize one egg,  
3 so -- in April, May, when this process  
4 is occurring. So this notion that jakes  
5 are reproducing is false. They don't  
6 contribute anything until the second  
7 year. So if they don't live to be two,  
8 they're not -- they're not breeders.

9 We also know that this bird -- if  
10 you pick up a clutch of eggs, ten eggs  
11 laying in your pasture, coin flip, it's  
12 about a 40 to 50 percent chance that  
13 there's more than one tom represented in  
14 that clutch. In other words, at least  
15 one of those eggs is not the tom that  
16 produced the rest of the eggs. There's  
17 multiple parentage. This is really  
18 common in waterfowl and game birds in  
19 general.

20 This notion that there's only one  
21 breeder, she doesn't know that. She  
22 didn't get the memo. She breeds with  
23 one dominant bird, and then she sneaks

1 off and finds other dominant birds and  
2 breeds with them. Why would she do  
3 that? It improves the potential  
4 viability of her offspring. Don't put  
5 all your eggs in one male's basket, if  
6 you will; right? So this is real  
7 common.

8 We also know that they're supposed  
9 to breed more than once. If you are --  
10 if you raise chickens or you talk to  
11 someone in the captive industry, they  
12 artificially inseminate the birds every  
13 seven days. The reason they're doing  
14 that is to improve flock fertility. The  
15 viability of the eggs is better if you  
16 AI every seven days rather than just  
17 once.

18 So this bird is supposed to copulate  
19 quite a few times, and I'm going to  
20 explain to you why that is. It's  
21 natural that they should want to breed  
22 with more than one male and more than  
23 once.

1 So this next figure, sperm storage,  
2 loaded topic. Turkeys use sperm  
3 storage -- and a lot of birds do --  
4 where they can breed with a male and  
5 they stick it in a Tupperware container.  
6 I call it "Turkey Tupperware."

7 They stick it in a Tupperware  
8 container, and each time they breed,  
9 they store that sperm in a tubule in  
10 their body. And then when it's time to  
11 lay a clutch, her body says "go." She  
12 opens those tubules, and the best sperm  
13 wins; right? The most viable sperm that  
14 are released, they fertilize that  
15 clutch.

16 That's something important to think  
17 about. Because what you're looking at  
18 in this figure is nesting data from  
19 multiple sites in Louisiana. The blue  
20 bars are the first nest attempts. The  
21 yellow bars are the second nest  
22 attempts. Green is the third nest  
23 attempts.

1 Okay. Two things to pay attention  
2 to here. You see those red lines?  
3 Those red lines that are the vertical  
4 bars, that's a 30-day period. That's  
5 about how long sperm remains viable in a  
6 wild turkey, so a month.

7 So if you think about it, as soon as  
8 she breeds, the viability of that sperm  
9 starts to decline ever so slightly, and  
10 it continues to decline across 30 days,  
11 back to this notion that she should  
12 breed multiple times and keep storing  
13 better sperm.

14 What you're also seeing here is  
15 that -- if you look, the far left of  
16 this is the 1st of March, right, and the  
17 far right is July. Okay. That's not  
18 normal. We're going to talk about it.

19 This nesting season in this bird is  
20 taking way, way too long. It should not  
21 take four months for this bird to lay  
22 all their clutches and move on. This  
23 should be about a 60-day process. We're

1 routinely seeing it's twice that across  
2 the south, which then begs the  
3 question -- okay.

4 So this next slide is this hen  
5 running across the landscape, probably  
6 trying to escape a marauding tom. But I  
7 get questions about sperm storage a lot,  
8 and my opinion is, based on the science,  
9 it's a panacea.

10 What I mean by that is, this notion  
11 that they're just going to store sperm  
12 and then release it and everything is  
13 going to be okay completely fails to  
14 recognize two things: one, the  
15 viability declines as they store it; and  
16 two is this top box. In birds, they are  
17 fertile until they lay their last -- the  
18 last egg forms in the oviduct.

19 So basically imagine like a garden  
20 hose and in that garden hose is a series  
21 of eggs that are in production. Until  
22 that last one sits, she's fertile, and  
23 toms know it. If a tom can breed with a

1 hen while she's laying, he is guaranteed  
2 to be represented genetically in that  
3 clutch. Does that make sense?

4 When those eggs are in the oviduct,  
5 if he can breed with her, he is going to  
6 be a parent in that clutch. So what you  
7 see, back to that gobbling gauge,  
8 there's keen competition amongst toms to  
9 attract hens and breed while they're  
10 laying.

11 And we don't know how they can tell  
12 that this hen is laying, but in ducks,  
13 you can actually see a drooped profile.  
14 I don't know how turkeys can detect it,  
15 but they can. And that's why you see  
16 gobbling increase when laying starts;  
17 okay?

18 So basically this notion is, you  
19 just can't assume that toms are  
20 expendable prior to some point in their  
21 mating season. Okay. This notion that,  
22 well, some are expendable, that's not  
23 true until you reach a certain part of

1 their breeding cycle.

2 So this next slide is basically --  
3 if you don't know how turkey-hunting  
4 seasons are set, that's why this  
5 document was written.

6 So in the mid 1990s, if you've ever  
7 heard of a guy named Bill Heeley, he was  
8 commissioned by all of the northeastern  
9 state agencies -- just like your state  
10 agency, just in the northeast. He was  
11 commissioned to recommend how do we do  
12 this.

13 And what he did -- he's a scientist.  
14 He's retired now. He took all of the  
15 available literature and he wrote this  
16 document that was published in 1999.  
17 And it is the most widely cited document  
18 on this topic. And in that he says  
19 here's how spring harvest should work.  
20 If you're concerned with the bird,  
21 here's a few things.

22 One, it should occur after most  
23 breeding. Okay. After. Wherever you

1 live, you just need to know when you're  
2 breeding a bird, it needs to occur after  
3 that and here's why.

4 He said, look, the assumption is  
5 that spring harvest has no effect on  
6 populations if it's below 30 percent of  
7 the toms in the population. So, in  
8 other words, you could go and remove  
9 about 30 percent each year as long as  
10 they're producing and it should have no  
11 long-term effect, unless you disrupt  
12 their breeding or you kill too many of  
13 them. That makes sense; right?

14 Which then goes on to that next  
15 assumption, which is that second bullet.  
16 What do you mean by doesn't disrupt  
17 breeding?

18 Well, it should start around the  
19 median date of incubation. What does  
20 that mean? About the peak. So when  
21 most hens have just gone to nest, toms  
22 should be expendable at that point,  
23 right, some segment of them, because all

1 the breeding is basically over; go ahead  
2 and remove them.

3 He also noted, which has been shown  
4 very clearly in research, dominant birds  
5 are most susceptible early in the  
6 breeding season. They're most  
7 susceptible to being killed. Why?  
8 Because their testosterone is high.  
9 They're wired. They're aggressive.  
10 They're vocal. They come to a call.  
11 They fight each other.

12 This bottom box is an important  
13 point. Okay. So Raymond and I spoke  
14 yesterday about models and the  
15 skepticism about models. You know, what  
16 Bill did in his document is he used the  
17 most widely cited model ever published  
18 on this bird that was conducted that is  
19 based on ten years of field research --  
20 consecutive years of research in  
21 Missouri. It's a classic, seminal piece  
22 of work.

23 There were no missing values in

1 their model. They knew every single  
2 input parameter, and that's what he  
3 used. And to this day it's still the  
4 best quality model available to predict  
5 how harvest would influence this bird.

6 In that model, as I'm going to show  
7 you, they had a poult-per-hen ratio  
8 three times higher than what we see in  
9 the Deep South right now. In other  
10 words, production was three times higher  
11 than it is right now.

12 They also had harvest rates of toms  
13 that were 15 percent on average. And  
14 what we see routinely on public land is  
15 30 to 70 percent annually on all public  
16 areas that we study, which is 13 -- 14  
17 last year -- across the south, and on  
18 private lands we see harvest rates in  
19 some places that are really low and some  
20 places on some properties, particularly  
21 this year, were 100 percent. All the  
22 marked birds we had were harvested.

23 So the point is, the models that he

1 used to tell us how to do that  
2 production, we weren't making as many  
3 turkeys and we weren't killing as many  
4 turkeys. That's the bottom line.

5 So you flip to this next slide, and  
6 this is what data -- this is real time.  
7 This is what we're dealing with in the  
8 south.

9 So these are data that I collected  
10 from all of the state agencies that have  
11 these data available. And what you're  
12 looking at is how many young turkeys are  
13 produced relevant to how many old ones.  
14 This is the metric that all state  
15 agencies use to figure out what does  
16 production look like. And it doesn't  
17 take a rocket scientist to see the  
18 trends are pretty much the same across  
19 the states.

20 We've seen a general slow kind of  
21 decline through time. It's -- it didn't  
22 take a year. It took a decade or more.  
23 And if you look over kind of on the very

1 bottom of the scale there -- I know it's  
2 hard to see -- we're right at one poult  
3 per hen now, meaning if you drive around  
4 the southeast and you observe -- and you  
5 write down every turkey you see, if you  
6 see one hen, on average you see one to  
7 one-and-a-half poult total. Remember,  
8 it was three times that two decades ago.

9 So we've seen this long-term  
10 decline. If you think about basic math,  
11 if you're only producing -- if each hen  
12 is producing one poult on average, it's  
13 a 50 percent chance it's a hen; right?  
14 Coin flip. That's not sustainable. She  
15 would have to be guaranteed to live,  
16 given their nest success, for multiple  
17 years for the math to work out. So it  
18 makes sense that in many areas  
19 populations have very slowly declined  
20 because there's been this slow decline  
21 in production.

22 The other number I would point out  
23 to you, inside of that picture of that

1 parasitized nest is two numbers. That  
2 nest success of 22 percent, that's what  
3 we see across about a thousand nests  
4 across the south since 2014. That means  
5 that on average, out of 100 nests, 22 of  
6 them would hatch. Of those 22 that  
7 hatch, 36 percent of them have one poult  
8 or more that lives the first month.  
9 What that means is 7 percent of all  
10 nests produce one poult that survives  
11 one month.

12 So if you think about those numbers,  
13 this bird has a tough road. When they  
14 lay that clutch, it's really low  
15 probability they're going to produce any  
16 young turkeys; right? It's tough being  
17 a turkey.

18 I put in that red box -- in 2011  
19 when I put these data together and then  
20 in 2012 when we met -- all the  
21 southeastern states met, there was  
22 fairly strong consensus something was  
23 amiss. And the data are pretty clear

1 across all the states that have the  
2 data. At the same time I would mention,  
3 harvest in many states was increasing  
4 while production was decreasing.

5 So I'll show you a couple of more  
6 things that I think you'll be interested  
7 in and kind of pan through that cool  
8 picture of that tom.

9 So this next slide -- y'all see this  
10 line figure here? This is what data  
11 looks like, and this is what it looks  
12 like in your state as well. Every state  
13 that we collect this data in, this is  
14 what it looks like.

15 And what you're looking at are two  
16 years of nesting data, red in one year,  
17 blue in the other. The two arrows  
18 simply point to the peak of that nesting  
19 activity. So what you can see, if you  
20 look on the bottom axis, it's about the  
21 second week of April. That's about the  
22 peak in nesting.

23 Now, this data right here we're

1 collecting one hour south of Atlanta.  
 2 So latitudinally, that's about what you  
 3 would expect for most of central Alabama  
 4 would be about mid April; right? And we  
 5 see it only varies a day or two from  
 6 south Georgia to north Georgia, south  
 7 Louisiana to north Louisiana. It's a  
 8 day or two. It's not much.

9 The green line over on the far left,  
 10 that's when the hunting season starts in  
 11 Georgia and still does. That green line  
 12 in the center is when all of the toms  
 13 that have been harvested are dead. So  
 14 all harvesting occurred right at the  
 15 peaks in incubation. So for these two  
 16 populations -- it's multiple sites --  
 17 all the harvest had occurred by the time  
 18 incubation peaked.

19 This next slide -- and you may go,  
 20 oh, my God, messy. So what you're  
 21 looking at here, this figure tells the  
 22 whole story to me. And I'm going to  
 23 lead you through it. You're looking at

1 three pieces of data. The bouncing up  
 2 and down, that's daily gobbling  
 3 activity, the same thing you've seen in  
 4 other figures. Up, down. Up, down.  
 5 Up, down.

6 That vertical black bar is when the  
 7 hunting season starts. Essentially that  
 8 square is when hens start nesting. And  
 9 you'll see it goes up and it peaks right  
 10 about that green line and then it slowly  
 11 declines like we saw in the previous  
 12 figure. It takes a while. It takes  
 13 several months. And then that top bar  
 14 is cumulative harvest of toms. And what  
 15 you see is about 80 percent of the  
 16 harvest is done on this study site by  
 17 the time nesting peaks.

18 The other thing that I would point  
 19 out to you is look at the gobbling data.  
 20 Look at the up-and-down. What happens  
 21 to it? It completely stops. We see  
 22 this on every public area that we study,  
 23 every public area. If gobbling doesn't

1 go to zero, it goes fairly close to it.  
 2 And if they do gobble, it's one day, and  
 3 then they quit for a few days.

4 You may ask how are we tracking  
 5 this. We have units that listen 24  
 6 hours a day scattered all over our  
 7 sites. They hear every gobble that's  
 8 out there, categorize it, and we listen  
 9 to it. So we know. It's about  
 10 3 million gobbles in that data set.

11 So this next slide is math, but  
 12 it -- it's easy to understand. So  
 13 you've got a superimposed bar in the  
 14 center. Ignore that. Look at the far  
 15 left.

16 So what that figure is, is there's a  
 17 line that goes from the top right to the  
 18 lower left; okay? In that red box is a  
 19 number 1.15, and what that means is --  
 20 and it's positive. What that means is,  
 21 as the proportion of hens in the  
 22 population that's laying or incubating  
 23 increases, gobbling goes off the charts.

1 Strong positive relationship. Again,  
 2 that makes complete sense.

3 In the right figure what you're  
 4 looking at is the effect of male harvest  
 5 and hunting activity. Because not all  
 6 males are shot; right? Some just stop  
 7 gobbling. It's negative. And if you  
 8 look at the number in that box, it's a  
 9 negative 1.3. And what that means is,  
 10 across all these study sites, the impact  
 11 of hunting activity and male removal is  
 12 more impactful to gobbling activity than  
 13 the actual nesting ecology of the hens  
 14 that they're trying to attract. And we  
 15 see this across science now.

16 Elk. There's been all sorts of work  
 17 showing that elk adopt all sorts of  
 18 weird behaviors to try to get around  
 19 hunting activity. I know deer that I  
 20 hunt, they go underground or, you know,  
 21 dig a hole.

22 But the bottom line is, what we did  
 23 here is we tried to figure out, okay,



1 what does that mean to somebody  
 2 listening to a turkey. Because I  
 3 want -- I'm a turkey hunter. I've  
 4 traveled all over this country turkey  
 5 hunting. I want to hear turkeys. And  
 6 if I don't hear turkeys, I'm not happy.  
 7 I want to hear a bird. If I hear a  
 8 bird, I'm satisfied for the day. If I  
 9 get to set up on one, better.

10 So what we did is we modeled out  
 11 what's going to happen "if." And what  
 12 these data show is that basically if you  
 13 remove about four toms per 2400 acres,  
 14 gobbling decreases four times,  
 15 four-fold. In these figures, a  
 16 four-fold decrease is zero, meaning  
 17 you're not going to hear any birds.

18 So I started thinking through, in  
 19 particular, this season, what we dealt  
 20 with this year. So, for instance, in  
 21 your state the opening weekend harvest  
 22 was 43 percent higher statewide this  
 23 year than it was last year. So if, by

1 chance, that 43 percent increase  
 2 disproportionately affected toms/adults,  
 3 which it did -- you don't kill many  
 4 jakes in this state -- you would  
 5 naturally expect this coming season to  
 6 see a dramatic reduction in gobbling  
 7 activity because of the 43 percent  
 8 increase in adult harvest in a single  
 9 weekend.

10 Go back to the notion, we know that  
 11 early in the season those dominant birds  
 12 are more susceptible to being shot. So  
 13 that 43 percent increase, without  
 14 question, disproportionately affects the  
 15 older dominant bird. What effect? We  
 16 don't know. But we know it does.

17 This next slide is basically like --  
 18 so how do you set a turkey-hunting  
 19 season? Well, you set it when people  
 20 can hear turkeys; right? I mean, I want  
 21 to be out there when turkeys are  
 22 gobbling, and so does everyone else.

23 So we know that we set a season when

1 birds are vocal. But what I'm -- part  
 2 of me standing here explaining how this  
 3 bird behaves is -- they start gobbling  
 4 long before breeding occurs, as they  
 5 should. We know that we remove vocal  
 6 males. I've shown you that. The data  
 7 very clearly shows it. Not only do we  
 8 remove males and gobbling decreases, but  
 9 the remaining males stop gobbling in  
 10 some cases, not always.

11 What we've seen in some populations  
 12 is as soon as the season ends, they  
 13 start gobbling their heads off. We see  
 14 this -- saw this in three study sites in  
 15 South Carolina. As soon as hunting  
 16 stopped May the 1st, it looked like  
 17 before opening day. Lots and lots of  
 18 gobbling activity.

19 It begs the question are vocal males  
 20 the dominant birds. And if you talk to  
 21 the captive industry, absolutely, yes.  
 22 There is a reason that poultry producers  
 23 have bred out gobblers. They don't want

1 birds standing there gobbling with each  
 2 other. They want them displaying.  
 3 Gobbling is a sign of aggressiveness.  
 4 As we all know, you don't want to elicit  
 5 aggressiveness in a captive bird. You  
 6 want him to stand there and play nice.  
 7 But in the wild world, playing nice is  
 8 not how you become the dominant bird.

9 So we feel very confident in saying  
 10 vocal birds are the dominant bird. The  
 11 question then becomes what is removing  
 12 them prior to them breeding -- what does  
 13 that do? Does it have any consequences?

14 Logically you would assume "yes."  
 15 What are those consequences? I can't  
 16 tell you. But what I can tell you is  
 17 other birds that behave like this  
 18 bird -- prairie chickens, for  
 19 instance -- many, many projects, going  
 20 in and taking a male out of a lek --  
 21 instead of one turkey displaying,  
 22 imagine 50 prairie chickens of which  
 23 five of them are breeders. You go in

1 and you pluck one or two of those out of  
2 the center of that lek, the dominant  
3 ones, and the whole lek dissolves. The  
4 hens stop breeding. They delay  
5 breeding. They go back through the  
6 checks and balances and things slow  
7 down. Okay. Let's assume maybe that  
8 could happen in this bird.

9 Last slide. This is what you're  
10 looking at. Every group of hens we've  
11 caught in the southeast since 2014, the  
12 data look like this. What you're  
13 looking at on the left is a series of  
14 numbers. Those are turkey ID numbers.  
15 Just look at the black, red, and green.

16 These birds were all captured  
17 together in the winter and then started  
18 splitting up. So they are a social  
19 group when they're captured. Okay.  
20 This social group has one group of toms,  
21 again, like we talked about, that breed  
22 with them. And what you're seeing is  
23 the initial laying date. So those dots

1 that progress up the graph, that's the  
2 first egg being laid by each hen.

3 And as you notice, if you look over  
4 on the far left, it starts out just like  
5 I said we know it should start out.  
6 Dominant hen lays first. The next day  
7 the next hen starts, the next hen  
8 starts, the next hen starts. And then  
9 you see that green arrow. That green  
10 arrow is opening day of hunting season.  
11 This is on a public area in Louisiana.

12 And what you then see is obvious to  
13 me. This process starts taking way too  
14 long, and what you see is the black dots  
15 get farther and farther and farther  
16 apart. Why is that? I don't know that  
17 the dominant bird was removed out of  
18 that group. Maybe just the fact that  
19 hunting started and disrupted it enough  
20 to where things kind of slow down. I  
21 don't know.

22 What I do know with certainty is  
23 when those birds start laying that

1 clutch. We can tell with certainty  
2 based on GPS data. So I can tell you  
3 that's the date she went and laid that  
4 first egg.

5 And what you'll also notice -- see  
6 the red arrow in the center of the slide  
7 that points to that dot. That dot is  
8 that first hen that laid the -- the  
9 dominant bird. That's her starting a  
10 second clutch, meaning she lost her  
11 first clutch to predation.

12 She went back and either started  
13 laying a second clutch using sperm she  
14 stored originally or she bred with a tom  
15 again and laid a second clutch. What  
16 you'll see is that because of their  
17 social hierarchies, she starts nesting  
18 before other hens in her group. She's  
19 on her second nest before others even  
20 start their first; right? That's the  
21 social hierarchy.

22 So in that world, if she needs to  
23 breed again and she can't -- she can't

1 find the dominant bird because he's  
2 gone -- who does she breed with? And  
3 what we've seen is they go back through  
4 their checks and balances.

5 This is like you standing in a bar  
6 and you're kind of evaluating the --  
7 well, we can't go to a bar right now.  
8 But if you were standing in a virtual  
9 bar and you're evaluating this plate of  
10 potential candidates, right, you're not  
11 going to just stand there -- unless it's  
12 2 a.m. -- and say, well, that'll do.  
13 That's not what turkeys do.

14 She goes back through the checks and  
15 balances and says, okay, are you as fit  
16 as the guy beside you, and if you're  
17 not, then I'm going to keep looking  
18 until I can find a male that I think is  
19 fit and I'm going to breed with him and  
20 then I'm going to go through this  
21 process.

22 If you then look at the top right  
23 and you go down to the very bottom, you

1 see 60 days. You see the 60 on the far  
2 right?

3 Okay. From the time laying  
4 started -- laying, not hatching. From  
5 the time laying started in this one  
6 group of hens to the time that the third  
7 clutches started hitting the ground --

8 Because they're failing; right? 20  
9 percent nest success, so most fail.

10 -- it took more than two months. If  
11 you then extrapolate how long it takes  
12 for them to hatch, okay, you're looking  
13 at over a hundred days on average for  
14 all of these clutches to hatch if  
15 they're going to.

16 If you are scattering nests across  
17 the landscape across a hundred days and  
18 you can't do what's called predator  
19 swamping -- in other words, if all of  
20 these hens dropped their clutches within  
21 a two-week period, everybody would hatch  
22 at the same time. By scattering them  
23 across the landscape across a hundred

1 days, you give predators the advantage,  
2 not the turkey. Because all the nests  
3 being there at one time, predators can't  
4 possibly find all of them, but when you  
5 scatter them across three months, you're  
6 putting rat snakes, raccoons, horned  
7 owls -- everything that eats a turkey,  
8 you're giving them the advantage because  
9 their efficiency is high enough. Does  
10 that make sense?

11 So we don't see predator swamping.  
12 And that is a tenet in the game bird  
13 world. That is a basic tenet. There's  
14 a reason that mallards all show up on  
15 the northern prairies at the same time.  
16 There's a reason that blue-wing teal  
17 wait and migrate last with gadwall.  
18 Why? Because they're adapted to nesting  
19 in thick stuff and doing it all at the  
20 same time because there's not enough red  
21 foxes in North Dakota to eat every  
22 blue-wing teal if they lay their clutch  
23 within a five- to six-day period.

1 Turkeys can't do that anymore.

2 So if you put all that kind of  
3 together collectively, the science  
4 suggests that this activity that we're  
5 doing is contributing to this prolonged  
6 nesting effort, and the consequences of  
7 it to me seem logical, that you should  
8 see declining production. We're seeing  
9 it. You should see low nest success and  
10 you should see poor brood survival  
11 because you're scattering these birds  
12 across months. And that's essentially  
13 commensurate with the data sets that we  
14 have.

15 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Thank you. Thank you,  
16 Dr. Chamberlain, very, very much. And  
17 I'll pass this down. Let's take a few  
18 minutes and have some questions from the  
19 Board.

20 Questions?

21 Well, I have a question about the  
22 turkeys -- you talked about the  
23 ladder -- or the lek and how that works.

1 So in the time frame when that dominant  
2 bird or the breeding bird that was  
3 prepared to breed and the hens were  
4 accepting, if he gets killed, how long  
5 does it take them to then make up their  
6 minds if and when and who?

7 DR. CHAMBERLAIN: That's a good question. We  
8 don't really know. If -- let's say you  
9 had three toms that were together. One  
10 of them was a breeder. If the other  
11 two -- if one of them had testosterone  
12 levels that were fairly high, it could  
13 literally be tomorrow, two days later.  
14 We don't know. If their testosterone  
15 levels were really low because of his  
16 presence, it may take a week or more for  
17 them to ramp up, which is kind of  
18 consistent with what we -- that last  
19 slide that I showed you.

20 It's not an overnight process. And  
21 this is why -- Raymond and I were  
22 talking about this yesterday. So if you  
23 turkey-hunted and you shot a bird that

1 had a partner with it, it's often he  
2 immediately attacks that bird that just  
3 got shot. That is a pecking order.  
4 That's their hierarchy. It's -- this  
5 bird -- from the time they're two days  
6 old, they are fighting with each other,  
7 and they fight every day.

8 So I spent days with Bill Heeley,  
9 the gentleman that wrote that  
10 document -- I spent days at his house  
11 with he and his wife. He used to  
12 imprint birds to himself so that he  
13 could watch them. And he literally  
14 walked around with these birds. He was  
15 a turkey. And he very clearly told me  
16 turkeys never forget a fight. They wake  
17 up every morning mad. They're like  
18 people are on Facebook. They're mad  
19 when they get up.

20 So my point to you is, it depends on  
21 the aggressiveness of the remaining  
22 birds. Sometimes we suspect -- in my  
23 own observation as a hunter, I think

1 sometimes it's very, very quickly, and  
2 then I think sometimes it may take a  
3 week or more. The property almost goes  
4 silent. You remove one bird. The  
5 property goes silent. That is that  
6 pecking order reshuffling. Because if  
7 you're worried about fighting with your  
8 buddy, you're not going to stand there  
9 and gobble. You've got business to take  
10 care of first, and that is beating his  
11 tail so that you become the dominant  
12 bird.

13 So I think it just varies across the  
14 landscape. There's no way of predicting  
15 it's going to take two days or five days  
16 or whatever.

17 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Any questions? Any other  
18 questions?

19 MR. WOOD: I've got one.

20 Dr. Chamberlain, you said 43 percent  
21 increase the first week of  
22 (inaudible) --

23 DR. CHAMBERLAIN: Say it again, Tim.

1 MR. WOOD: In your presentation, didn't you  
2 say 43 percent increase that first week  
3 of the season?

4 DR. CHAMBERLAIN: Yeah. The first weekend.

5 MR. WOOD: Is that because of Game Check, a  
6 year -- like last year was so terrible.  
7 Nobody turned them in. And I think  
8 Chuck got their attention when he was  
9 talking about canceling turkey season.

10 DR. CHAMBERLAIN: I would say this. So the  
11 question is could it be solely  
12 attributable to Game Check?

13 I would say absolutely not.

14 MR. WOOD: Oh, I agree. I agree.

15 DR. CHAMBERLAIN: Because that trend was the  
16 same in almost every state in the  
17 southeast that opening weekend. In  
18 fact, some states were more than 50  
19 percent higher across public and private  
20 lands the first weekend. Georgia was  
21 like 42 percent. Alabama was 43  
22 percent.

23 And you may say, well, what does

1 that mean numerically? That was almost  
2 a thousand birds. So last year there  
3 were 1272 birds checked the opening  
4 weekend and 2206 checked this weekend.

5 So even if you make the assumption  
6 that an increase in compliance was  
7 attributable to even half of that, which  
8 I doubt -- but let's just say for sake  
9 of discussion it was -- you're still  
10 talking about 500 birds in two days.  
11 And I know -- well, I keep commenting  
12 with Raymond because Raymond and I --  
13 Raymond and I talked a lot yesterday.

14 So you think, well, that -- what  
15 does that really mean? What does 500  
16 birds mean?

17 We don't know how many turkeys are  
18 out there. But go back to the light  
19 bulb. They're not uniform, so they're  
20 in pockets. So if you just threw a  
21 bunch of dots in the state of Alabama  
22 and you went in and just randomly said  
23 I'm going to pull 500 birds out of those

1 dots, right, out of those little light  
2 bulbs -- one here, one here, one here --  
3 the collective light bulb is much darker  
4 after two days this year than it was  
5 last year. Does that make sense?

6 So the expectation is unless you  
7 produced a lot of turkeys last year --  
8 which I know you didn't. You produced  
9 about the same number across the  
10 state -- not in one pocket here and  
11 there, but across the state. Your  
12 production is about the same as it's  
13 been. So the reasonable expectation is  
14 you're going to have fewer adults come  
15 March of this coming year than you would  
16 normally have at the beginning of the  
17 hunting season.

18 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Thank you, Tim.

19 Any more questions?

20 (No response.)

21 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: To sum up, I have one more  
22 thing. I would like to know if -- tell  
23 me, as you put all this together, what

1 is the answer? If you look at the  
2 charts for all the states except Alabama  
3 that you have in your presentation, what  
4 is the answer for those states  
5 collectively and then for us in Alabama?  
6 Noting that there is a defined decline,  
7 what do we do?

8 DR. CHAMBERLAIN: Well, there are some things  
9 we can control and some things we can't.

10 So this bird uniformly across the  
11 southeast is dealing with habitat  
12 issues, declining quality,  
13 fragmentation, urbanization, things that  
14 aren't positive for this bird. We have  
15 disease issues that are popping up that  
16 we don't understand, diseases we never  
17 knew existed that are affecting this  
18 bird. We have predators. Predator  
19 communities are much more diverse than  
20 they were 20 years ago. There's more of  
21 them out there. I think anybody that's  
22 looked at a corn feeder and there's 25  
23 raccoons under it understands that's not

1 the way it's supposed to work.

2 We can't control any of that because  
3 most turkeys live on private land. So  
4 it's incumbent on private landowners.  
5 We can't -- you can't as an agency  
6 control that.

7 What we can control is what we know  
8 is impactful to this bird, and that is  
9 harvest. We've known this since the mid  
10 '90s, that this is how you should  
11 harvest the bird. And for whatever  
12 reason -- primarily political -- we've  
13 ignored it.

14 So the answer to your question is, I  
15 would say, Joey, we have to try to  
16 address issues that are within our  
17 purview, that are within our reach,  
18 understanding that hunting is not the  
19 problem. It's part of the problem.  
20 It's not the cause, but it's part of the  
21 cause. It's contributing. And the  
22 problem is, to definitively tell you  
23 what part of the problem it is, like

1 what percentage of the problem, I'll  
2 never -- I'll retire and never have that  
3 answer.

4 But what I can tell you is, we've  
5 known for decades that hunting this bird  
6 prior to breeding could be impactful.  
7 We just -- I think -- and I've asked the  
8 researchers that developed that work  
9 that was used in that document -- I've  
10 talked to every single one of them.  
11 I've spent time at length with them.  
12 And they all have no clue they'd ever be  
13 seeing a turkey-hunting community that  
14 looks like what it looks like today.  
15 None of them.

16 They all are astounded by the  
17 technology that we have. They're  
18 astounded by the efficiency with which  
19 we kill this bird. And I can tell  
20 you -- I can look at my back seat during  
21 turkey season, and I've got enough  
22 gear -- I mean, it looks like a Cabela's  
23 store in my back seat.

1 I'm part of the problem. I am  
 2 efficient. I can kill this bird in ways  
 3 that I could never kill it before. And  
 4 I think most people that are good turkey  
 5 hunters or accomplished turkey hunters  
 6 will tell you the same thing.  
 7 So the answer is, I think we just  
 8 have to address the things that we can  
 9 address and then see how the populations  
 10 respond, understanding we didn't do this  
 11 in a week or a year. This is a slow,  
 12 slow decline. It's not going to change  
 13 in one year.  
 14 But this particular year that we  
 15 just went through has caused us in the  
 16 research community quite a bit of  
 17 concern because it's very clear that we  
 18 gained a lot of turkey hunters, which is  
 19 a real positive. I mean, that's a real  
 20 positive. We gained a lot of people  
 21 that want to do this, and they  
 22 contribute to state coffers. And those  
 23 coffers manage the landscape for this

1 bird. On the flip side, how do we  
 2 manage a resource where we have more  
 3 demand and less supply?  
 4 That's the situation I think we're  
 5 in as managers and agencies. And I  
 6 think I'm biased because I'm a  
 7 scientist. We need to look at the  
 8 science, understand the science, and be  
 9 willing to follow the science.  
 10 And I can tell you, without  
 11 exception, every state in the  
 12 southeastern United States is having  
 13 this exact same conversation. I've  
 14 presented this to multiple commissions.  
 15 I've done podcasts about it. I've done  
 16 Facebook events about it. Every agency,  
 17 every one, is considering what do we do,  
 18 because the problems are all the same  
 19 across every state. They all look the  
 20 same.  
 21 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: All right. Any questions?  
 22 Did that evoke any questions?  
 23 (No response.)

1 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Thank you, Dr. Chamberlain,  
 2 very, very much.  
 3 Yes, Mr. Hartzog.  
 4 MR. HARTZOG: I can go to the podium, but do  
 5 you think it would be appropriate to ask  
 6 if anybody in the gallery has any  
 7 questions concerning the presentation?  
 8 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: With our current technology  
 9 situation right now, let's hold off on  
 10 that. We just don't have enough  
 11 communicative ability. But I appreciate  
 12 the thought.  
 13 And those of you that have those  
 14 questions, you might catch  
 15 Dr. Chamberlain before he leaves or see  
 16 one of the staff and maybe they can help  
 17 you with that.  
 18 It was a great honor to have  
 19 Dr. Chamberlain drive over here from  
 20 Georgia just to speak to us about this.  
 21 So thank you again.  
 22 The next portion of our meeting is  
 23 the public commentary, and it's very

1 important to this Board.  
 2 As we do that, I'd like to say thank  
 3 you to our law enforcement divisions,  
 4 both Marine Resources and Wildlife and  
 5 Freshwater Fisheries, for being here.  
 6 Thank you very much for taking y'all's  
 7 time. We enjoy seeing you.  
 8 We've got about 15 speakers -- 14  
 9 speakers, I believe. And so we will go  
 10 to that. And let's just hope that our  
 11 PA system continues to hold together.  
 12 I have the list here, and I will  
 13 start. And as the speakers come to the  
 14 podium, I'm going to ask you, as we  
 15 always do, to be respectful. Reserve  
 16 your comments to outside of this hall.  
 17 No applause or outbursts during the  
 18 question-and-answer period.  
 19 And as I always do, I ask the Board  
 20 members to please refer to the Chair for  
 21 the floor and ask the speakers not to  
 22 engage directly with Board members  
 23 except to answer a direct question. And

1 this is going to be a little difficult  
2 with our one microphone. So let's just  
3 work together.

4 \*\*\*\*\*

5  
6  
7 **(Due to orders by Governor Kay Ivey**  
8 **requiring masks and social distancing**  
9 **due to COVID-19, the public commentary**  
10 **portion was unable to be transcribed by**  
11 **the court reporter for this meeting.**

12 **The following speakers addressed the**  
13 **Board on the indicated topic:**

14 **REGULATION 220-2-.26:**

- 15 **Brittany Carruth**
- 16 **Alyssa Bell**
- 17 **James Townley**
- 18 **Kyle Carlisle**
- 19 **Casey Scheirer**
- 20 **Edward Tyndall**
- 21 **Jason Whatley**

22 **DOG DEER HUNTING SUPPORT:**

- 23 **Donald Nelson**
- Susan Morrow**

**GAME CHECK/DEER PROCESSORS**

- Carrie Edmonson**
- Joey Van Dee**

1 **SALTWATER**  
2 **Avery Bates)**

3 \*\*\*\*\*

4  
5  
6 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: That concludes the public  
7 comment portion of our meeting, and we  
8 can move into unfinished business. And  
9 I'll look down and ask: Is there any  
10 unfinished business that anyone has?

11 I think that the questions of staff  
12 that were asked in the previous meeting  
13 have all been answered. Those issues  
14 are squared away. So we'll conclude  
15 unfinished business.

16 Is there any new business with this  
17 Board today?

18 Yes, Dr. Lemme.

19 DR. LEMME: Mr. Chairman, I move that the  
20 start of the Alabama spring turkey  
21 season be moved from the second Saturday  
22 of March to April 1st, 2021, and that  
23 the total season harvest limit be

1 reduced from five to three birds.  
2 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Thank you, Dr. Lemme. I can  
3 reread that or -- I think we all got  
4 that.

5 That's a motion. It's out for a  
6 second. Is there a second?

7 COMMISSIONER PATE: Second.

8 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Thank you, Commissioner Pate.

9 We'll move to vote on that. And  
10 this will be -- let's do this by a show  
11 of hands.

12 COMMISSIONER BLANKENSHIP: Do you want to  
13 repeat the motion just to make sure --

14 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Yes. Let me repeat the  
15 motion so that Tracye can get this.

16 This motion would move the start of  
17 the Alabama spring turkey hunting season  
18 to April 1st, 2020 --

19 COMMISSIONER BLANKENSHIP: 2021.

20 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: -- 2021 -- I'm sorry -- and  
21 the total season harvest limit to three  
22 birds for the season.

23 Is that it, Dr. Lemme?

1 DR. LEMME: Yes.

2 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: That's it.

3 Any questions?

4 MR. WOOD: (Inaudible.)

5 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Well, we don't have a last  
6 day of hunting, but that would be the  
7 first Saturday in May; correct?

8 The first Saturday in May.

9 Any questions?

10 Mr. Cagle.

11 MR. CAGLE: I don't disagree with the need to  
12 make a change. My concern is balancing  
13 the two roles I feel like that CAB has,  
14 which is to make decisions based on what  
15 the scientific data says is best for the  
16 resource and clearly communicating  
17 expectations and requirements to the  
18 users of the resource.

19 My concern is, is that this would  
20 conflict with what's in the "Digest."  
21 Because anyone who has the "Digest" will  
22 be following the wrong seasons, and  
23 they'll have to have some other

1 supplement. You know, folks who often  
2 every year get a "Digest," read it, and  
3 follow it will be breaking the law if we  
4 make this change now.

5 With that, I want to make a motion  
6 to table to a date certain to the  
7 first -- table this motion so that it  
8 comes up and is voted on at the first  
9 meeting in 2021 for the 2022 season.

10 And I say that with a lot of thought  
11 and seeing that need.

12 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Okay. We have a motion.

13 MR. RAYMOND JONES: Second.

14 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Would you read it again,  
15 please, or say it again.

16 MR. CAGLE: The motion is to table the motion  
17 that's on the floor until a date certain  
18 at the first meeting of the CAB in 2021  
19 to be considered at that time.

20 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Thank you. We've heard the  
21 motion. We have a second. Mr. Jones,  
22 second.

23 We'll vote on this, the second

1 motion, by show of hands. All of those  
2 in favor as the motion is read, please  
3 raise your hand.

4 (All members of the Board present  
5 raise their hand.)

6 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: It's unanimous. A unanimous  
7 vote. Thank you.

8 So with that, we will table  
9 Dr. Lemme's motion and then bring it  
10 from the table at our first announced  
11 meeting, which should be in February of  
12 next year.

13 Yes, Mr. Hartzog.

14 MR. HARTZOG: (Inaudible.) Am I loud enough?

15 COMMISSIONER BLANKENSHIP: No, sir. Use the  
16 microphone.

17 MR. HARTZOG: With the motion that was made,  
18 if you remember, several meetings back,  
19 we had similar discussions and we at  
20 that time voted to wait until we got the  
21 turkey study that the Department was  
22 doing before we make any further  
23 decisions.

1 Chuck, will that study be completed  
2 by our next meeting -- or, Mr. Chairman,  
3 can I ask Chuck?

4 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Yes. Please go ahead.

5 DIRECTOR SYKES: That study will be completed.

6 Y'all will have the data. The data is  
7 not going to show anything any different  
8 than what y'all heard an hour ago.

9 MR. HARTZOG: Okay. Thank you, Chuck.

10 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Thank you, Mr. Hartzog.  
11 Thank you, Chuck.

12 One clarification: When we bring  
13 this from the table to be voted on at  
14 our next meeting, it will affect the  
15 2021-2022 season, but it will really be  
16 the 2022 season for turkeys. So just a  
17 clarification for you. Thank you.

18 Any other new business today?

19 Mr. Cagle.

20 MR. CAGLE: Mr. Chairman, I move that we  
21 accept and approve the recommendations  
22 of the Department regarding the  
23 remaining 128,000 pounds of red snapper

1 quota, that there be a supplemental  
2 October season that will be the  
3 Saturday, Sunday, Monday, October 10,  
4 11, and 12.

5 You want me to restate it?

6 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Yes. Restate that, please.

7 MR. CAGLE: I move that the Advisory Board  
8 accept the recommendations from the  
9 Department to allocate the remaining  
10 128,000 pounds of red snapper quota  
11 available for a three-day supplemental  
12 season the Saturday, Sunday, and Monday  
13 of October 10, 11, and 12.

14 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Perfect. There's a motion on  
15 the floor. It's been read twice. Do I  
16 have a second?

17 MR. WOOD: Second.

18 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Second from Mr. Tim Wood.

19 We'll vote on this with a show of  
20 hands again.

21 I'm sorry. Discussion?

22 MR. HARTZOG: During -- because October can be  
23 hurricane season and we can have -- that



1 weekend could be greatly impacted -- I  
2 mean, we've had that situation before --  
3 I would like to maybe add an amendment  
4 to it that if it happens to be inclement  
5 weather that the Commissioner be allowed  
6 to allocate those days according to his  
7 best judgment.

8 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Good deal. If there's no  
9 opposition from the motion-maker, we  
10 will amend that motion.

11 MR. CAGLE: I'll also second that.

12 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: And offer a second for the  
13 amendment.

14 The motion with an amendment, shall  
15 we vote. All of those in favor raise  
16 your hands.

17 (All members of the Board present  
18 raise their hand.)

19 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: It's unanimous. Thank you,  
20 Mr. Commissioner.

21 Any other new business before this  
22 Board today?

23 MR. RAYMOND JONES: Mr. Chairman?

1 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Yes.

2 MR. RAYMOND JONES: No new business. But I do  
3 want to thank Dr. Chamberlain for  
4 coming. I didn't have any questions for  
5 him a little while ago because I talked  
6 to him for an hour and a half yesterday.  
7 And thanks, Director Sykes, for getting  
8 him here. We obviously are headed in  
9 the right direction in listening to  
10 that.

11 But thank you, Dr. Chamberlain, for  
12 being here.

13 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Yes. We would reiterate  
14 that.

15 One last thing I might add -- or ask  
16 is, along with Dr. Chamberlain's  
17 recommendations or analysis, does the  
18 Department, Wildlife and Freshwater  
19 Fisheries, particularly with the study,  
20 have a recommendation for us to consider  
21 going forward with regard to turkeys?

22 DIRECTOR SYKES: I think y'all have stated it  
23 quite well, that y'all have to look at

1 the political aspect of it as well as a  
2 social aspect. Our job is to look at  
3 the science -- well, let me rephrase  
4 that.

5 Chief Gauldin and his staff, their  
6 job is to look at the science. I asked  
7 them to give me a recommendation based  
8 on all the available science, taking  
9 into consideration what the COVID-19  
10 pandemic did for turkeys  
11 southeastern-wide. Their recommendation  
12 to me was the first Saturday in April  
13 for a start, a three-bird bag limit, and  
14 one bird for the first ten days. That  
15 backs up everything in science if you  
16 don't take anything else into  
17 consideration.

18 My recommendation to the Board --  
19 because I know some of that is -- it's  
20 not realistic in the world that we live  
21 in. I would ask the Board to move it as  
22 late a start as possible with a  
23 three-bird bag limit.

1 I think Dr. Chamberlain showed that  
2 Arkansas is in a bad, bad way right now.  
3 They have been for years. Our data is  
4 doing the same thing that they did.  
5 They're just about eight years to ten  
6 years ahead of us.

7 So we're headed in that direction.  
8 The sooner we can get to a proactive  
9 solution to this the better. I don't  
10 want to kick the can down the road any  
11 further.

12 So thank y'all for saying the first  
13 meeting next year. We're going to make  
14 a decision. It's time. Thank you.

15 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Thank you, Director Sykes. I  
16 think this Board agrees, too, that it's  
17 time based on the science that we've  
18 seen for the last several years and the  
19 culmination here with Dr. Chamberlain.  
20 It's very insightful. It's a lot of  
21 math-based stuff, which I'm not very  
22 good at, but it all works.

23 Any other unfinished business,

1 announcements?  
 2 Yes, Mr. Hartzog.  
 3 MR. HARTZOG: I'll ask Chuck, if he could, to  
 4 give us an update on CWD.  
 5 MR. SYKES: Mr. Hartzog has asked for an  
 6 update on CWD.  
 7 Thankfully we're in the same place  
 8 we were last year. Tennessee has had  
 9 more positives. Mississippi has had a  
 10 few more positives. Luckily it's moving  
 11 north and west of us.  
 12 Our staff did a really good job  
 13 getting the number of samples that we  
 14 needed, working with processors and  
 15 taxidermists and hunting clubs  
 16 throughout the state. We're right where  
 17 we need to be with our sampling. We're  
 18 going to continue on at the rate that  
 19 we're going, and let's just cross our  
 20 fingers and pray that it keeps headed  
 21 northwest and doesn't turn southeast.  
 22 MR. HARTZOG: Thank you.  
 23 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Thank you, Mr. Hartzog.

1 Thank you, Director Sykes.  
 2 Any other thoughts, questions,  
 3 ideas, proposals?  
 4 Mr. Cagle.  
 5 MR. CAGLE: Mr. Chairman.  
 6 Chuck, I want to commend you and  
 7 your team for putting together the  
 8 information that we heard from one of  
 9 the processors on needing to know what's  
 10 expected. Y'all did a great job of  
 11 laying it out, laying it out in a way  
 12 that the hunter can see what they're  
 13 responsible for so that the taxidermists  
 14 don't have to referee that. So I  
 15 commend y'all for that. Thank y'all in  
 16 advance for putting the time and effort  
 17 in that.  
 18 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Thank you, Mr. Cagle.  
 19 Anything further from the Board  
 20 before the Board?  
 21 (No response.)  
 22 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Well, with that being said,  
 23 we'll conclude this meeting. We'll set

1 the date, a time to be determined after  
 2 the first -- after the end of hunting  
 3 season -- of deer-hunting season in  
 4 2021. We will set the date for the  
 5 first meeting.  
 6 With that, this meeting is  
 7 adjourned.  
 8  
 9 (Meeting adjourned at  
 10 approximately 11:20 a.m.)  
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1 \*\*\*\*\*  
 2 REPORTER'S CERTIFICATE  
 3 \*\*\*\*\*  
 4 STATE OF ALABAMA:  
 5 MONTGOMERY COUNTY:  
 6 I, Tracye Sadler Blackwell, Certified  
 7 Court Reporter and Commissioner for the State of  
 8 Alabama at Large, do hereby certify that I reported  
 9 the foregoing proceedings of the Alabama Department  
 10 of Conservation and Natural Resources Advisory  
 11 Board Meeting on August 22, 2020.  
 12 The foregoing 103 computer-printed pages  
 13 contain a true and correct transcript of the  
 14 proceedings held.  
 15 I further certify that I am neither of  
 16 kin nor of counsel to the parties to said cause nor  
 17 in any manner interested in the results thereof.  
 18 This 22nd day of November 2020.  
 19  
 20  
 21 \_\_\_\_\_  
 22 Tracye Sadler Blackwell  
 23 ACCR No. 294  
 Expiration date: 9-30-2020  
 Certified Court Reporter  
 and Commissioner for the State  
 of Alabama at Large



KAY IVEY  
GOVERNOR

CHRISTOPHER M. BLANKENSHIP  
COMMISSIONER

EDWARD F. POOLOS  
DEPUTY COMMISSIONER

STATE OF ALABAMA  
**DEPARTMENT OF CONSERVATION AND NATURAL RESOURCES**  
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**MEMORANDUM**

TO: Christopher M. Blankenship  
Commissioner

FROM: Charlanna Skaggs,  
General Counsel

RE: Conservation Advisory Board Meeting Minutes

DATE: November 4, 2020

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On August 22, 2020, the Conservation Advisory Board meeting was held at the Battleship Memorial Park, Medal of Honor Aircraft Pavilion in Mobile Alabama. Due to COVID-19 concerns, the meeting was held in a large museum space in order to provide adequate spacing between all individuals in attendance. In addition, public speakers, visitors, and all board members wore masks or facial coverings in accordance with the State's public health guidance and Governor Ivey's Safer at Home Order. As a result of these precautionary measures, the court reporter, Tracye Blackwell, was unable to transcribe the public commenting portion of the meeting. It is the Department's practice to transcribe the Conservation Advisory Board meetings. However, a transcript is not required by the applicable statute. Section 9-2-14 provides: "The Commissioner of Conservation and Natural Resources shall be ex officio secretary of the board and shall keep **minutes** of all meetings and a record of all proceedings of the board." Ala Code § 9-2-14 (d) (emphasis added). Therefore, generally referencing this portion of the meeting in the transcript conforms with the statutory requirements.

The Department of Conservation and Natural Resources does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, religion, age, sex, pregnancy, national origin, genetic information, veteran status, or disability in its hiring or employment practices nor in admission to, access to, or operations of its programs, services, or activities.