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STATE OF ALABAMA DEPARTMENT OF
CONSERVATION AND NATURAL RESOURCES
ADVISORY BOARD MEETING
Jasper High School
Jasper, Alabama
May 8, 2021

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TRANSCRIPT OF PROCEEDINGS

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Proceedings taken before Stacey L.
Johnson, Certified Court Reporter and
Commissioner for the State of Alabama at Large,
in Jasper High School, 1501 Viking Drive,
Jasper, Alabama, Saturday, May 8, 2021,
commencing at 9:02 a.m.

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BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT:

Mr. Joseph Dobbs, Jr., Chairman

**Commissioner Christopher M. Blankenship,
Ex-Officio Secretary**

**Commissioner Rick Pate, Ex-Officio, Department
of Agriculture and Industries**

**Director J. Mike Phillips, Ex-Officio, Alabama
Cooperative Extension System**

Mr. Kevin Savoy

Mr. Grady Hartzog

Mr. Greg Barksdale

Mr. Brock Jones

Mr. Tim Wood

Mr. Gary Wolfe

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1 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Let's bring
2 this, the second Conservation
3 Advisory Board meeting, May the 8th
4 of 2021, let's bring this -- open
5 this meeting.

6 I'm glad everybody's here
7 today. We have a thin crowd. It is
8 a beautiful day. There is a fishing
9 tournament going on, a large portion
10 of the Army Reserves are here
11 exercising, I understand, so we'll
12 attribute that to our low turnout
13 today.

14 These are still unusual
15 times. Of course, we're pretty well
16 self-distanced, but let's do
17 everything we're supposed to do, wear
18 your masks where it's practical, and
19 consider others, and -- so we'll go
20 from there.

21 I want to -- at this time,
22 I'd like to give a special thanks to
23 our superintendent for schools for

1 the Jasper schools, Ms. Ann Jackson,
2 and to Principal Jonathan Allen for
3 Jasper High School and their staffs
4 for allowing us to use this venue.
5 Thank you all very, very much for
6 providing this.

7 Today with us is a special
8 guest who would like to speak to you,
9 Mayor David O'Mary. And I'd ask
10 Mayor O'Mary to come up and say a few
11 words, please.

12 MAYOR O'MARY: Mr. Chairman,
13 thank you.

14 And let me say good morning
15 to all and a special welcome to the
16 Conservation Advisory Board and to
17 our visitors to our city. We're so
18 pleased to have you here. We keep
19 the red carpet rolled out for events
20 like this. I just told the Chairman
21 the only reason we wouldn't do this
22 again is if he doesn't ask, so please
23 know you're always welcome in Jasper.

1 Let me first thank the Board
2 for their work. I appreciate the
3 work you do. I appreciate the work
4 that's been done by your
5 predecessors.

6 I've been an outdoor
7 enthusiast all my life. My fondest
8 memories as a child on my
9 granddaddy's farm following a high-
10 grade black and tan hunting
11 squirrels. Hunting and fishing has
12 brought tremendous joy to my life,
13 and it -- every year and late fall, I
14 normally travel to northern Kansas or
15 South Dakota to pheasant hunt, and
16 there's not a time that I go there
17 that I don't find myself comparing
18 South Dakota and Kansas to Alabama.
19 And what you see is those folks have
20 nowhere near the opportunities that
21 we have in Alabama. You know, you
22 can pheasant hunt, you can deer hunt
23 for a season about this long. And

1 those things have not happened by
2 chance in Alabama. You know, to have
3 the lengthy seasons that we have, the
4 liberal bag limits, creel limits that
5 we have, are just tremendous. And if
6 you're an outdoor enthusiast, I don't
7 believe that there is a better place
8 a person could be than in Alabama.
9 Those things didn't happen by chance,
10 and without question, much of the
11 credit for those things trace back to
12 the Conservation Advisory Board so
13 thank you for your work.

14 A word about Ed Poolos and
15 what he has meant as a friend to this
16 city. I came out of a long tenure in
17 commercial banking and people talked
18 me into running for mayor, and
19 luckily or unluckily, I won. I still
20 scratch my head about that often.

21 But shortly after taking
22 office and not long after Ed had
23 moved to Jasper, I come to know Ed,

1 to know Ed Poolos -- and I'm not
2 taking credit for this -- you had
3 three players to make that work. You
4 had the Department of Conservation,
5 you had the Walker County Commission,
6 and you had the Jasper City Council.
7 I felt like I had the Walker County
8 Commission and the City Council where
9 they needed to be to make this
10 happen, and Ed made it happen in
11 Montgomery. From the time we
12 started, we probably did the
13 annexation inside of a month.

14 Aside from making
15 enhancements to that facility, there
16 was a selfish motive, and that is, by
17 annexing that property, it positioned
18 the City to annex eastward if the
19 opportunity were to arise, and I
20 think it will arise. So that's been
21 a great partnership, and, Ed, I thank
22 you for the friendship that you've
23 shown this city and the way you've

1 helped us.

2 So, again, we're pleased
3 that you're here. The door is always
4 welcome -- open. I hope your day is
5 productive. And, again, as I said,
6 the only reason we won't do this
7 again is you don't ask us. So thank
8 you. And please, Mr. Chairman, happy
9 to have the opportunity to be with
10 you.

11 COMMISSIONER BLANKENSHIP: Thank
12 you, sir.

13 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Thank you very
14 much, Mr. Mayor. We appreciate that
15 very, very much, and thank you for
16 being here.

17 So today, like I said, the
18 Lord's blessed us with a pretty day.
19 And to all of you, if I don't remind
20 you at the end of the meeting, safe
21 travels home.

22 We have some special
23 attendees today that I'm going to

1 recognize. Mr. Rick Pate,
2 Commissioner of our Agriculture --
3 Department of Agriculture. His
4 office has a lot of responsibilities,
5 and I won't detail you with those but
6 it's very important.

7 I made a mistake in our last
8 meeting, and I wrongly called
9 Dr. Steve -- Dr. Mike Phillips Steve,
10 and I didn't include doctor. So I am
11 reintroducing Dr. Phillips. Welcome
12 to the Board, Dr. Phillips. Thank
13 you for being here. We're glad to
14 have you, very glad to have. This is
15 his second meeting by the way.

16 Please also welcome to the
17 Board our new Board member, Mr. Kevin
18 Savoy. This is his first Board
19 meeting.

20 Kevin, would you stand up
21 quickly and just tell us what
22 district you're from.

23 MR. SAVOY: Hi, Kevin Savoy,

1 Dothan, Alabama, representing
2 District 2.

3 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Thank you,
4 Kevin. We're glad to have you on the
5 Board. Welcome and welcome to the
6 fire.

7 Let me take just a quick
8 moment. Again, we've got such a few
9 people, let's have some fun. I
10 thank -- let me thank Wanda McCullers
11 again who puts this on with a very
12 limited staff. And thank you again,
13 Wanda. I saw you come in. And thank
14 you, thank you, thank you.

15 Ms. Betsy Jones, who manages
16 all of these meetings from beginning
17 to end for the Commissioner and helps
18 me a little bit too -- she throws me
19 in the mix -- thank you very much.
20 And to the balance of your staff that
21 aren't here, always thanks to them.
22 As well, Betsy's going to manage the
23 clock today, and I'll explain that

1 later.

2 So I'll say hello to you
3 that are previous attendees and
4 welcome to the new attendees. Let's
5 have a productive meeting.

6 I'm going to ask Gary Wolfe
7 today to do our invocation. And,
8 Gary, if you will, please, lead us in
9 that.

10 MR. WOLFE: Let us pray.

11 Our most gracious Heavenly
12 Father, thank you for this beautiful
13 day, thank you for the opportunity
14 for all of us to be here together and
15 do business with your animals and
16 what you give us an opportunity to do
17 in the state of Alabama, give us the
18 knowledge and help us make the right
19 decisions and make the decisions to
20 take care of those animals. Watch
21 over each and every one of us when we
22 leave here and go home and protect us
23 and watch over this meeting.

1 In Jesus name I pray, amen.

2 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Well, he --

3 MR. POOLOS: If you'll give us
4 one second, the flag's coming.

5 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Thank you.

6 MR. POOLOS: I apologize.

7 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Thank you. I
8 was --

9 MR. POOLOS: Yes, I knew I
10 forgot something, and that's what I
11 forgot.

12 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Well, Ed,
13 you've done a great job from your
14 dark corner with a dim light bulb.
15 We appreciate everything.

16 With the unusual
17 circumstances, I will lead us in the
18 pledge.

19 COMMISSIONER BLANKENSHIP: The
20 flag's behind you there.

21 (Recitation of the Pledge of
22 Allegiance led by Chairman
23 Dobbs.)

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CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Thank you.

Also today, we have on our agenda, the Sportsmen's Pledge, something that we started two years ago. We don't do it at every meeting, but I think this meeting, being this is our first time in Jasper, it's important that we do it. And I'd like Mr. Brock Jones to lead us in the Sportsmen's Pledge. Many of you may not have a copy of it in front of you. The Board does, and we'll recite it for you.

MR. BROCK JONES: Will everybody please join me that has a copy. I'm sure a lot of you out there have it memorized.

(Recitation of the Sportsmen's Pledge led by Mr. Brock Jones.)

CHAIRMAN DOBBS: And this was written by a previous Commissioner, Mr. John Wallace, in 1908, and it holds true or rings true even today,

1 I believe.

2 Mr. Secretary, do we have a
3 quorum today?

4 COMMISSIONER BLANKENSHIP: Yes,
5 sir, we do.

6 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Thank you.

7 With regard to the minutes
8 of our previous meeting, are there
9 any corrections from the Board?

10 MR. HARTZOG: I make a motion we
11 accept them as presented.

12 COMMISSIONER BLANKENSHIP: The
13 minutes -- the final minutes have not
14 gone out to the Board. We just have
15 the draft minutes, so we'll be able
16 to peruse those before the next
17 meeting and trying to approve those
18 at the meeting is fine.

19 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: I'm sorry. I
20 had gotten a copy that was a draft,
21 and I'm sorry that everybody else
22 didn't and I apologize. We will
23 table that and postpone it for a

1 vote, and we'll get it at our next
2 meeting, which would be at this point
3 next year.

4 I will ask each Board
5 member, if I can, starting at the far
6 end to stand up and introduce
7 themselves and give their district,
8 if that's okay.

9 MR. PATE: I'm Rick Pate with
10 the Department of Agriculture and
11 Industries, and I'm an ex-officio
12 member of the Board.

13 MR. WOLFE: Gary Wolfe
14 representing District 1.

15 MR. WOOD: I'm Tim Wood. I
16 represent District 7. It's basically
17 the Black Belt, Montgomery to
18 Mississippi.

19 DR. PHILLIPS: My name is Mike
20 Phillips. I'm the Director of the
21 Cooperative Extension System, and I'm
22 also an ex-officio member.

23 MR. BROCK JONES: I'm Brock

1 Jones, District 6.

2 MR. BARKSDALE: Greg Barksdale,
3 District 4.

4 MR. HARTZOG: Grady Hartzog,
5 District 2.

6 MR. SAVOY: Kevin Savoy,
7 District 2.

8 COMMISSIONER BLANKENSHIP: And
9 I'm Chris Blankenship, the
10 Commissioner of the Department of
11 Conservation and Natural Resources.

12 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Thank you,
13 gentlemen. Thank you very much.

14 Folks, these are -- we're
15 missing two of our Board members,
16 Mr. Raymond Jones and Mr. Ben
17 Stimpson and -- oh, and Jeff. Jeff
18 Martin's not here. Okay. So Jeff --
19 we're missing three. They represent
20 District 1, District 7, and -- or
21 District 5 and District 4. I think
22 that's correct.

23 Know that these are the

1 fellows in your districts. Y'all
2 contact them with any issues or
3 ideas. Please stay in touch with
4 them. They're tickled to hear from
5 you. We all are. So they represent
6 all the divisions of Conservation and
7 Natural Resources, Marine Resources,
8 State Lands, State Parks, Wildlife
9 and Freshwater Fisheries. It's very
10 far reaching.

11 So on with that, I'm going
12 to mention our directors of those.
13 Mr. Scott Bannon with Marine
14 Resources, Mr. Greg Lein with State
15 Parks, Ms. Patti McCurdy with State
16 Lands, Mr. Chuck Sykes with Wildlife
17 and Freshwater Fisheries. They work
18 with great people and do wonderful
19 things, and they are the future of
20 our resources. Thank them every time
21 that you get a chance.

22 Now I would like to ask
23 Commissioner Blankenship would he

1 come and please update on the
2 Department's goings on.

3 COMMISSIONER BLANKENSHIP: And
4 I'll just do that from here, if
5 that's okay with you, Mr. Chairman.

6 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Yes, sir.

7 COMMISSIONER BLANKENSHIP:
8 Welcome Kevin Savoy to the Board.

9 MR. SAVOY: Thank you.

10 COMMISSIONER BLANKENSHIP: And
11 I'm glad to have the other -- some of
12 the other Board members that were
13 reappointed recently to the Board.
14 I'm looking forward to continuing to
15 serve with you.

16 I thank the mayor for
17 allowing us to use this -- well, the
18 mayor for all that he's done here in
19 Jasper. I would echo what he said
20 about the Walker County Lake. While
21 you're in town, if you have a chance
22 to go by there, it is a good example
23 of great outdoor recreational

1 opportunities of different types at
2 the same location. We have a great
3 fishing lake over there with a little
4 boat ramp, have the archery park and
5 trails, and more plans to do other
6 things at the lake to continue to
7 provide outdoor recreational
8 opportunities for the citizens of
9 Jasper and Walker County and you
10 while you're here, so just --

11 Mr. Chairman, I'll just give
12 you an update on a few things that's
13 happened since our last meeting.
14 Many of you know the tornado outbreak
15 that we had in our state on March the
16 25th. One of those tornadoes went
17 through Oak Mountain State Park and
18 we had extensive damage at the day
19 use area. There's one lone pine tree
20 standing. I guess we lost several
21 hundred pine trees there. That
22 was -- that one tough old tree made
23 it. But the staff from the state

1 parks and Shelby County have done a
2 very good job of cleaning that up and
3 getting it back into shape, so there
4 will be a lot of work to do there to
5 bring that back up to a good standard
6 for use. But thankfully, there were
7 no injuries, and it just missed
8 the -- we had a few trees down in the
9 campground but nothing substantial.
10 So thankfully, the tornado wasn't a
11 quarter of a mile further south.
12 Then it would have went right through
13 the campground.

14 Speaking of Oak Mountain,
15 Oak Mountain will be the venue for
16 three events in the upcoming
17 World Games in 2022. I don't know
18 that I appreciate how big of a deal
19 that is for Alabama to host the
20 World Games in 2022, but I do
21 appreciate the fact that they're
22 going to host three of those events
23 at our state park. And part of the

1 area that was damaged in the tornado
2 was where one of those events was
3 going to take place, and so we're --
4 have a real incentive to get that
5 back to first class before it's
6 opened to the people of the world to
7 come to Alabama.

8 Red snapper season has been
9 set since our last meeting. It will
10 open on May 28th -- that's the Friday
11 before Memorial Day -- and it will be
12 open four-day weekends Friday,
13 Saturday, Sunday, and Monday until
14 the quota's met. We have about a
15 million pounds of the quota. We --
16 instead of projecting an ending date
17 like we've done in the past, this
18 year we're using a new system where
19 we're just going to -- we're going to
20 monitor that quota every weekend and
21 provide an update to the public of
22 where we stand. That way, it makes
23 it -- instead of having to either

1 extend the season or cut it short if
2 there's different weather conditions
3 or different things to take place so
4 that -- but that opens May 28th.

5 We're partnering with ADEM,
6 building a new overnight mooring and
7 fishing tournament pier at Roland
8 Cooper State Park. This is the first
9 project that I know of that we've
10 been able to do with ADEM to provide
11 good boating infrastructure and
12 boating access, and it's going to be
13 a big improvement for tournament
14 fishing down at the -- at Roland
15 Cooper State Park in the
16 Wilcox County area. Hope to continue
17 more of these projects with ADEM in
18 the future.

19 We're cutting a ribbon this
20 afternoon at the Smith Lake Dam Boat
21 Ramp as a partnership that the
22 Department did with Union Sportsmen
23 Alliance, Alabama Power, and BASS.

1 I'm excited to fit that in along with
2 the meeting today to do some good --
3 good things here in this part of the
4 state. Those tournament boat ramps
5 are very important for the economic
6 impact to the communities and just
7 getting people out on the water to be
8 able to enjoy those facilities. Our
9 Fisheries staff does a very good job
10 managing about a hundred and -- a
11 little bit less than 150 boat ramps
12 between the saltwater and freshwater
13 around the state and glad to see an
14 opportunity to expand this boat ramp
15 in a really good way.

16 Looking at the turkey
17 numbers for the season, we had
18 about -- a little bit less than
19 15,000 turkeys reported. That's
20 about 2,000 less turkeys than
21 reported last season. Those are
22 preliminary, unaudited numbers. The
23 season just ended, but that -- just

1 to kind of give you a gauge on where
2 we were for the season.

3 I want to give a legislative
4 update. The Department had a very
5 good year this year in the Alabama
6 Legislature. Primarily want to
7 recognize Ed Poolos and Charlanna
8 Skaggs, our general counsel. They
9 did a lot of work over in the
10 Legislature making sure the bills --
11 that we were up on the legislation
12 working with the legislators to get
13 the attention of those that was
14 needed to make some changes that were
15 necessary, we felt like, for -- to
16 make those better pieces of
17 legislation and -- so thank y'all for
18 your efforts, along with Greg Lein
19 and Chuck primarily from the division
20 directors that had legislation affect
21 their divisions that were also
22 integral in working with the
23 Legislature this year.

1 Of the legislation that was
2 passed, there's a lifetime disabled
3 veterans hunting and fishing license.
4 That keeps those veterans that are
5 disabled and have their DD 214 or
6 their information of their permanent
7 disability from having to come back
8 every year and get a license. They
9 can just buy this license and -- for
10 the lifetime.

11 There's a new legislation
12 that passed that created a nighttime
13 hunting for feral swine and coyotes
14 that passed this year. That's a \$15
15 license for residents, \$51 for
16 nonresidents, and then we'll have a
17 season. We'll talk about that a
18 little bit later. But the way the
19 legislation passed, it's effective
20 three months from the first day of
21 the third month from the date of
22 passage, which will be July 1st. So
23 we're planning to have the season set

1 and the license sale system up and
2 ready to go to be able to sell those
3 the day that that legislation becomes
4 effective.

5 Probably one of the biggest
6 pieces of legislation that we've had
7 in the last couple of years working
8 with the Senate Pro Tem Greg Reed,
9 who's -- this is actually his
10 district here, and Senate majority
11 leader Clay Scofield and the House
12 majority leader Nathaniel Ledbetter
13 and the Speaker of the House, we were
14 able to attach a constitutional
15 amendment for an 80-million-dollar-
16 bond issue for the state parks. That
17 will be on the ballot in 2022 for the
18 people to vote to approve that, but
19 that will provide 80 million dollars
20 to the parks to do renovations on the
21 campgrounds, build cabins, you know,
22 really turn those parks into the
23 first-class facilities that we really

1 want and to bring us into the 21st
2 century on those campgrounds.

3 When a lot of those
4 campgrounds were built, camping was a
5 tent and a pop-up camper. Now
6 camping is half-a-million-dollar
7 motorhomes with three air
8 conditioners that pull 50 or 70 amps,
9 you know, so we're -- in order for us
10 to continue to do business and to be
11 effective, we need to upgrade our
12 facilities to keep up with the times
13 and so this bond issue will allow us
14 to do that.

15 We also received an
16 additional two million dollars a year
17 for maintenance on the parks with a
18 CPI increase annually, which will pay
19 dividends for the future moving
20 forward, keep that money at today's
21 dollars with the CPI increase.

22 There's also a bill late in
23 the session that set up a state

1 reservoir management program. That
2 was not a DCNR bill, but it -- but in
3 that bill, it adds \$5 to every -- to
4 the boat registrations and then that
5 money is going to come to -- into a
6 program that we'll administer through
7 the Department of Conservation. It
8 could be used for aquatic nuisance,
9 like the invasive carp or grasses on
10 the lakes and reservoirs, also
11 include marine debris removal, which
12 is a problem in the coastal areas
13 with their boats that sink or -- you
14 know, from hurricanes, you know,
15 having moved debris or houses or
16 docks. There's not a program -- a
17 funding to allow removal of those
18 things, so this -- what this will do
19 is set up a fund that we will
20 administer to be able to take care of
21 our -- better take care of our
22 waterways in the state. Even though
23 it wasn't one of our pieces of

1 legislation, I'm excited about the
2 Department's role in keeping our
3 waterways safe and clean.

4 Bills were introduced that
5 didn't move in this session partly
6 due to our opposition or our working
7 with the -- with the sponsors. Those
8 include bills on paddlefish season, a
9 bill to remove the catfish size
10 limit, a bill to allow transport of
11 feral swine, and some dog deer
12 hunting legislation. Those were not
13 successful during this session.

14 As a follow-up from our last
15 meeting, we had a few -- a few items
16 that I wrote down that we said we
17 would follow up with the Board and
18 provide information either before the
19 next meeting or at this meeting. One
20 of those issues was the Sipsey
21 tailrace and the limit of the number
22 of rods. You'll see in your changes
23 that were sent to you before this

1 meeting that we're proposing to
2 change -- we cannot use more than two
3 rods on the Sipsev tailrace.

4 You received a report from
5 our Fisheries section related to the
6 catfish maximum size and to
7 reestablishing the paddlefish season.
8 The recommendation of the Fisheries
9 staff and the analysis was that we
10 make no change there, that we leave
11 the size limit in place and not
12 establish a paddlefish season. And
13 then the turkey season was changed to
14 the Board's recommended start date of
15 March 25th in most of the state and
16 no decoys for the first ten days
17 was -- we have regulations that will
18 do that that are proposed.

19 And then because of the
20 legislation as I mentioned earlier
21 about the feral swine and coyote
22 nighttime season, we were adding a
23 season for that that will run -- in

1 2022, it will begin the day after gun
2 deer season, February 11th, and run
3 through November 1st. That way,
4 we'll have that nighttime season most
5 every -- most all the year except
6 during the majority of the gun deer
7 season.

8 And then last in my report,
9 Mr. Chairman, I represent the
10 Governor on the Federal RESTORE
11 Council. It's money that was set up
12 after the Deepwater Horizon oil spill
13 in 2011, which -- 2010. The fund was
14 set up after that.

15 This past week, we approved
16 a slate of projects of more than
17 450 million dollars in projects
18 gulf-wide. Of those projects
19 approved by -- 81 million dollars in
20 those projects are going to be here
21 in Alabama. So when you add that
22 81 million dollars to the other
23 Deepwater Horizon projects that have

1 been either approved or underway or
2 have been completed, that brings our
3 total to over 900 million dollars of
4 projects that have been funded by
5 Deepwater Horizon funds or GOMESA
6 funds that are being managed by the
7 Department of Conservation and
8 Natural Resources. So I -- we don't
9 talk a lot about that side of our
10 work with the Board, but I just want
11 you to know that that 900 million
12 dollars is a huge investment in
13 coastal Alabama and is really going
14 to make a difference in what happens
15 down there and the resiliency of our
16 coast. I'll be glad to answer any
17 questions on that either here or
18 afterwards, but I wanted to point
19 that out because I think that's a
20 really high point for our staff and
21 the work that they've done to
22 continue to manage those funds and
23 manage it in these projects very

1 appropriately.

2 So with that, that's all.

3 That's my report, Mr. Chairman.

4 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Thank you,
5 Commissioner, very much.

6 I'm going to ask for a
7 directors report, the directors that
8 are in attendance today, and I think
9 I see -- I think I see -- I think I
10 see everybody. I'm just going to
11 go -- I don't see -- Scott is not
12 here, but I'll ask -- anyway, I'll
13 ask the directors in attendance if
14 they've got any updates or division
15 reports that they want to share. So
16 I'll start with Scott Bannon from
17 Marine Resources. Are you going to
18 carry that for him, or is there any?

19 COMMISSIONER BLANKENSHIP: He's
20 not -- he was excused for today.
21 They didn't have any real business.

22 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Mr. Greg Lein,
23 State Parks, anything to share?

1 MR. LEIN: No reports that the
2 Commissioner didn't touch on.

3 Thank you.

4 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: But you're
5 getting broadband?

6 MR. LEIN: Yes, sir.

7 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Ms. Patti
8 McCurdy from State Lands.

9 MS. MCCURDY: Nothing unless the
10 Board has any questions. I have
11 nothing pressing. I'm more than
12 happy to take any questions.

13 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Anything
14 that's -- okay. Very good. Any
15 questions for Ms. McCurdy?

16 (No response.)

17 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Thank you.

18 Mr. Chuck Sykes, Wildlife
19 and Freshwater Fisheries.

20 MR. SYKES: No, sir, no report.

21 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Nothing,
22 nothing. Very good.

23 Okay. Thank you and thank

1 you for all of your staff, adjuncts,
2 and everybody that does what they do.
3 You do a great job protecting our
4 resources, and we all appreciate it
5 certainly.

6 We don't have any special
7 guests that I'm aware of. Is there a
8 special guest that I need to
9 recognize that might want to say a
10 few words? I don't see anybody and
11 don't know anybody.

12 So that moves us on to our
13 public commentary. Public commentary
14 is a very important part of this
15 process. We have eight speakers
16 today. We're going to move a
17 microphone down there. Ms. Stacey is
18 going to be taking this down as she
19 does -- or as is done at every
20 meeting. She's new with us today.
21 Be slow, be concise as you can so she
22 understands. And as I name the
23 speakers, they'll come to the podium,

1 and I'm going to ask you to please be
2 respectful. We don't have a big
3 crowd. Reserve your comments and no
4 applause or outbursts.

5 I'm going to ask each member
6 of the Board, as I always do, to
7 please refer to the Chair for
8 questions of the speakers, and also,
9 the speakers don't engage directly
10 with the Board members or the staff
11 members. Refer your questions to the
12 Chair for direction thereon. It's
13 not because I want to do all the
14 talking. It's because if I don't do
15 it right, she doesn't get it right,
16 and I get an earful for days. So
17 that's proper procedure.

18 So Ms. Jones is going to
19 hold time. You have three minutes.
20 I'm going to reserve the right to
21 give you a few extra moments to make
22 a point. And let's be courteous,
23 give everybody the right to speak

1 like you would want to have.

2 All right. Our first
3 speaker today is Mr. Paul Kennedy
4 from Walker County, from Jasper.

5 Mr. Kennedy.

6 MR. KENNEDY: Thank you,
7 Mr. Commissioner. And I'd like to
8 tell all of you thanks for coming to
9 Jasper and Walker County to listen to
10 some of the outdoor enthusiasts from
11 northern Alabama.

12 I am Paul Kennedy. I'm from
13 Jasper here in Walker County. I'm
14 with the Walker Area Community
15 Foundation and the Walker County
16 Health Action Partnership. We have
17 been your partner in successfully
18 developing the Walker County Lake
19 from a sleepy fishing pond into an
20 outdoor tourism destination, so I
21 want to tell you thank you for that.
22 I think it's been a huge success.
23 Public usage even before the pandemic

1 was way up. And if you have not seen
2 the archery park or the human scale
3 bird nest birding platform out there,
4 please do so before you leave Jasper.
5 It's that very partnership that
6 brings me here today.

7 A few years ago, a group of
8 more than a dozen local agencies and
9 nonprofits started working on the
10 creation of an outdoor
11 recreation-based economy based on our
12 abundant natural resources. Today
13 I'm asking you to join with us to
14 aggressively plan for that same
15 development of the Sipsev Fork of the
16 Black Warrior River as a world-class
17 tourism fishing destination as a
18 logical next step.

19 Two years ago -- moments
20 ago, Jonathan Allen changed the mic.
21 Two years ago, we petitioned the U.S.
22 EPA to be one of the communities that
23 it would adopt to help us develop a

1 recreational-based economy. We were
2 one of only ten such communities
3 selected in the United States. That
4 is our RERC plan, the Recreational
5 Economy for Rural Communities. I
6 will encourage you to replicate this
7 planning process in the other
8 66 counties in Alabama. We have
9 created a 31-mile blueway. We're
10 working now on mountain bike trails,
11 one of which surrounds this very
12 school.

13 One of the key opportunities
14 identified in that planning process
15 was that trout fishery that I've
16 mentioned. We have the opportunity
17 to turn the Sipsey Fork trout fishery
18 into the crown jewel of our local
19 outdoor economy. I am a registered
20 Alabama forester. I'm very aware of
21 the potential this fishery has for us
22 and for the state of Alabama, and I'm
23 asking you to work with us to make

1 this a better fishery and a magnet
2 for wildlife tourism, not just for
3 Walker County but for the state of
4 Alabama. This will not take any
5 exceptional extra resources or
6 significant staff time, but the
7 benefits to Alabama are enormous.
8 What does that look like? I'm not
9 sure.

10 I am a new fly fisherman, so
11 I'm not an expert in any way, shape,
12 or form. But what are they doing in
13 those states that are known as a
14 fly-fishing mecca -- Tennessee,
15 Arkansas, Georgia -- what do we need
16 to do here and how can we turn this
17 well-kept secret into the most
18 popular trout fishery in the South.
19 I've got seconds left. We're
20 National Champions in football and
21 First-Class Pre-K, so why not trout
22 fishing as well.

23 Thank you for your time. I

1 look forward to working with you on
2 this, and I'll be more than happy to
3 submit these comments in writing.

4 Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

5 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Hold, please.

6 Any questions from the
7 Board?

8 (No response.)

9 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Thank you so
10 much for coming here.

11 COMMISSIONER BLANKENSHIP: I
12 just want to say good to see you
13 again, Mr. Kennedy. When we got to
14 town yesterday, the first thing I did
15 was pull into Walker County Lake,
16 park, and walk down there to the
17 eagle's nest and sat there and
18 watched a few birds yesterday
19 afternoon late. So it is a very nice
20 place at Walker County Lake. Thank
21 you for y'all's work there.

22 MR. KENNEDY: Well, thank you
23 for your partnership. You've been

1 great to work with. Thank you,
2 Chris. And your guys have been
3 excellent.

4 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Thank you.
5 Thank you, Mr. Kennedy.

6 Our next speaker is
7 Mr. Brandon Jackson.

8 MR. JACKSON: I've enjoyed going
9 throughout the state to meet with you
10 and appear before the Board, but
11 I've -- I'm really proud that we were
12 chosen to host you today and it's
13 good to have you in our hometown.

14 We really appreciate the
15 consideration and the conversation
16 concerning this single-rod use
17 regulation. I think that that is a
18 great step in the right direction. I
19 think it will eliminate some of the
20 conflict. I don't think it's a
21 perfect solution. I think there's
22 still work that can be done, but I
23 think that that is -- we will take

1 any step in the right direction that
2 we can get. And I think that that's
3 moving in the right direction.

4 I did look through other
5 state regulations. Those that
6 surround us use a single-rod
7 regulation, and they attach a phrase
8 to it that I don't know if the Board
9 is considering but it is that it must
10 be maintained. And so that keeps
11 someone from leaving a rod at one
12 location, moving downstream, fishing
13 as a separate rod at a different
14 location, so I'd like to propose that
15 that's part of the consideration in
16 that regulation. But thank you for
17 the work on getting that there.
18 Appreciate the Department looking at
19 that, considering it, and working
20 toward it.

21 I did want to share with you
22 one -- a story that shows why these
23 regulations are so important and some

1 of the effects that they have
2 generally speaking.

3 In Oxford, Mississippi,
4 there is a quail preserve called
5 Little "q". It's run by a guy named
6 Josh Quong. He started teaching his
7 clients how to fly-fish as well.
8 He's got -- these guys are interested
9 in outdoors and wanted to branch out
10 a little bit, and he began showing
11 them how to fly-fish. He is sending
12 some of them to us because we're
13 only -- less than two hours away, an
14 hour and 45 minutes or so. And we
15 were -- we have a good relationship.
16 I've taken my dogs there to hunt.
17 He's come here to fish. But when he
18 started getting requests to take
19 guided tours to take his clients
20 fishing, he's driving an extra two
21 hours to go to the Little Red in
22 Arkansas. And I asked him why, you
23 know, why are you driving an extra

1 two hours to a fishery in Arkansas,
2 and he said it's because they have
3 the regulations that will allow my
4 fishermen to pursue the sport the way
5 they want. And so in his mind and
6 for his clients who are paying
7 out-of-state licenses, lodging, gas,
8 tackle, all of those expenses, we're
9 losing those guys, and I would like
10 to see them here. I would like to
11 see them in our state, in this
12 county, spending their money here,
13 and I hope that we can work together
14 to establish some of those
15 opportunities here.

16 I'd like to invite the
17 Board -- I hope you can go to the
18 pavilion. The Department's done a
19 great job with that. If you do,
20 you're going to have to come right
21 near the shop. And so we're going to
22 purchase some pizzas, Coke, and
23 water, and so if you want some

1 refreshments before you go up there
2 for the ribbon cutting, we'd invite
3 you to come by, get something to eat,
4 and sit down on the porch and pass a
5 little bit of time before the ribbon
6 cutting. And I wish that we hadn't
7 had six inches of rain this week.
8 They wouldn't be generating, and
9 you'd be able to see the river full
10 of people enjoying the opportunities
11 and see what it's all about.

12 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Hold. Any
13 questions for Brandon?

14 Mr. Hartzog.

15 MR. HARTZOG: Brandon, where do
16 you stand on your looking at the
17 brook trout stockings versus the
18 rainbow trout stockings?

19 MR. JACKSON: So it wouldn't be
20 adverse but it would be in addition
21 to.

22 MR. HARTZOG: Yeah, I knew it
23 would be in addition to, but you

1 have --

2 MR. JACKSON: We haven't had

3 the --

4 MR. HARTZOG: You had talked
5 about y'all were looking into the
6 feasibility of trying to find a
7 source for the brook trout stocking.

8 MR. JACKSON: I haven't yet had
9 a chance to talk with the Department
10 about what size fish to be looking
11 for and what regulations so that we
12 know kind of how many fish to look
13 for. The money's there. I have
14 talked to a hatchery that says that
15 they can get us fish, and so the fish
16 are there now. It's just a -- what
17 kind of regulations are we going to
18 use for that specific breed of trout
19 and then how many and what size would
20 be best to stock in Sipsey Fork.

21 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Mr. Barksdale.

22 MR. BARKSDALE: You mentioned
23 earlier that the guide had folks

1 going somewhere else because they
2 weren't allowed to fish as they would
3 like. What specifically are you
4 talking about when you say they're
5 not allowed to fish as they like?

6 MR. JACKSON: So it just
7 doesn't -- I don't think it's an
8 allowing. It's more of providing.

9 MR. BARKSDALE: Which would be
10 providing what?

11 MR. JACKSON: Regulations that
12 separate different user groups. I
13 know it's -- we all like to pursue
14 our outdoor exposures in ways that we
15 enjoy. Fly fishermen are not going
16 to enjoy a river where they're
17 practicing casting and they're
18 enjoying the river and it's about the
19 sport of fishing and having two guys
20 with bait come in on either side of
21 them and take out their limits using
22 two or four or six rods.

23 It -- there is a natural rub

1 or conflict between those two user
2 groups, and every state around us
3 provides opportunities specifically
4 for those user groups the way the
5 State does for archery deer hunters
6 versus gun deer hunters. The way
7 that they pursue the sport
8 necessitates some differentiation
9 between user groups. We don't want
10 to stop any user from using the
11 river, we don't want to stop anyone
12 from enjoying it, but certain user
13 groups need -- prefer to be able to
14 pursue it the way that they want
15 separated from those user groups. It
16 just -- it creates conflict, and as a
17 retail person, any conflict, any --
18 any kind of rub, is -- is limiting
19 access.

20 MR. BARKSDALE: So it would be a
21 different season or a different
22 location?

23 MR. JACKSON: Different

1 regulations for different areas of
2 the stream.

3 So we've got three areas
4 that are easily accessed for wading
5 opportunities. We have approached
6 the Board before about creating one
7 section of artificial lures for guys
8 who just are more interested in sport
9 fishing, and then a two-mile section
10 that's open more for people to
11 utilize the river with bait who are
12 more interested in their harvest.

13 MR. BARKSDALE: The meat?

14 MR. JACKSON: Yes, sir. Just
15 creating different user group areas.

16 MR. BARKSDALE: Thank you.

17 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Any more
18 questions from the Board?

19 MR. BARKSDALE: No, sir.

20 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Brandon, thank
21 you. That's -- this -- we've all
22 considered this --

23 MR. JACKSON: Yes, sir.

1 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: -- for some
2 time and are working in baby steps.
3 It seems that we're getting some
4 things that help your user group that
5 may entice more economics to this
6 part of the world.

7 MR. JACKSON: We appreciate it.

8 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: So we're
9 working on it. It's a slow process.
10 We don't want to leave anybody out.

11 MR. JACKSON: Right.

12 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Okay. Thank
13 you, Brandon.

14 MR. JACKSON: Thank you.

15 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Our next
16 speaker is Lee Getter.

17 MR. GETTER: Good morning. My
18 name is Lee Getter. I'm from here in
19 Jasper, Alabama. I've lived here my
20 entire life. Sixteen years ago, I
21 came home from my military service
22 and I've hunted and fished in this
23 state my entire life, and I wanted a

1 new challenge. I went and did what
2 every novice does, go to the Bass Pro
3 Shop and buy me a fly rod and the
4 whole kit, you know, and went down to
5 the stream and didn't catch anything.
6 I was introduced to Brandon Jackson
7 down here, and he taught me the
8 basics of fly-fishing. It changed my
9 life.

10 Now, in that 16 years, I've
11 been to Colorado -- from Colorado to
12 West Virginia fly-fishing in
13 different streams. I'm trying to
14 teach my children how to fly-fish.
15 It is a unique sport, and it is a
16 sport. It is a technical sport.

17 I have four biological
18 children and I have three adopted
19 children. I agree with what they're
20 asking for here on the regulations on
21 separate areas. There is a type of
22 rub that you deal with with regular
23 fishermen who I am and fly fisherman,

1 and it makes it hard for me to take
2 my children down there to teach them
3 this sport when there is I don't want
4 to say aggression or anything like
5 that, but, you know, there's tension.
6 You don't want to take them into a
7 tension area to teach these.

8 For a few years, I stopped
9 going down to the Sipsev Fork because
10 of this because people would come
11 down there with five or six rods.
12 There would be two adults and three
13 children, and they'd pull out
14 25 fish. And the only people that
15 were fishing were the adults. And
16 while that's perfectly legal with the
17 regulations that are in place right
18 now, that is still taking fish away
19 from this fishery and the things that
20 I want to enjoy with my family.

21 So anything that has been
22 proposed today and has been put in
23 place, I thank you for already. But

1 in 16 years, that fishery is night
2 and day different when I started
3 going down through there. I don't
4 have to worry about scaling those
5 banks to get down to the water. The
6 access points are wonderful that
7 y'all have put in. The regulations
8 that have been added to it are
9 wonderful, and I thank you for that.
10 But I would like to see -- like they
11 said, this is a hidden gem in
12 Alabama. People can't believe we
13 have a year-round trout stream in the
14 state of Alabama. I work with a lot
15 of people in other states, and when
16 they take me trout fishing and
17 fly-fishing, I bring them -- when
18 they come to town, that's where I
19 take them, and they can't believe it
20 and they love it. But, again, I feel
21 like we need to step up our
22 regulations for this type of fishery
23 so that we can bring in more income

1 Louisiana. My wife is from
2 Birmingham. We're making a
3 transition up to Oakman in the next
4 several years, and we have about a
5 50-acre spread that she's really
6 angry at the deer. She likes to put
7 them down. So we've run into a
8 little bit of an issue over the last
9 five years up here. It's unregulated
10 release of hunting dogs through our
11 property.

12 And I managed a dog club,
13 6500-acre club with 80 members, down
14 in Louisiana for years, and we
15 always -- we never had a conflict
16 with our neighbors because we always
17 ran our dogs correctly. We had
18 enough staffing for the hunt to be
19 able to collect the dogs after the
20 hunt to make sure it didn't infringe
21 upon the surrounding properties.
22 Here it's a little bit different
23 because the only regulation about

1 enforcement involves a landowner
2 actually capturing the dog, reading
3 the name off the collar, and
4 submitting it to our officers at Fish
5 and Game. The problem I have with
6 that being in the medical field is I
7 don't know if that dog's been
8 vaccinated for rabies. I don't know
9 if the dog's been vaccinated for
10 distemper. I don't know if the dog's
11 aggressive. I don't know if I want
12 to be grabbing someone else's dog on
13 my property. It creates an unsafe
14 environment.

15 So I submitted
16 electronically to Ms. Betsy a PDF
17 file that you may have seen. I'm not
18 asking for restrictions on dogs.
19 What I'm asking for is an easy way to
20 identify dogs on my property so that
21 I can turn that information over to
22 enforcement. And I feel that that
23 small step is enough to take the bad

1 actors out of play, because right
2 now, they have to be caught three
3 times in order to be enforced. And
4 if I can take a picture with my game
5 cameras in order to provide law
6 enforcement the opportunity to get
7 these people to fall in line, then
8 it's safer for me, it's better for
9 the dogs because they're better
10 maintained, they've vaccinated; if
11 they have electronic RFID chips
12 implanted in them that matches the
13 owner of the dog, they can be tracked
14 back to the vaccination site; a vest,
15 a high-visibility vest with a Velcro
16 removable patch that can be employed
17 when the dogs are actively engaging
18 in the field. And all of this
19 enforcement comes back to whoever's
20 transporting the animal, so that
21 person needs to have proof of
22 vaccination in their vehicle. That
23 person needs to have the owner's

1 information of the dogs in the
2 vehicle, a map of where they propose
3 to release those dogs to make sure
4 that they understand the property
5 boundaries in order to protect the
6 surrounding landowners. There's also
7 tracking collars. There's all kinds
8 of other gizmos and gadgets. The
9 problem is in the back woods near
10 Oakman, Alabama, they don't engage
11 that technology and there is no
12 enforcement. So what I'm asking you
13 is not to restrict dog hunting
14 because everyone has the right to
15 pursue gaming the way that they see
16 best, but what I'm asking is for you
17 to help the private landowners to
18 have the opportunity to hunt the way
19 that we choose to hunt as well.

20 Thank you.

21 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Thank you. Any
22 questions from the Board?

23 (No response.)

1 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Mr. Perrilloux,
2 I have seen your PDF, I have read
3 your report, and thank you very much
4 for taking the trouble and the time
5 to do that. It's an issue that we
6 deal with quite frequently, and
7 somewhere down the line, we're going
8 to -- we're going to come together
9 and solve the problem to help out.

10 You have a hundred acres,
11 you said?

12 MR. PERRILLOUX: We have 53.

13 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Okay. All
14 right. Thank you very much.

15 MR. PERRILLOUX: Thank, y'all.

16 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: The next
17 speaker is Mr. Don Knight.

18 MR. KNIGHT: I'm Don Knight. I
19 live in Anniston, Alabama. You'll
20 have to excuse my throat. But I'm
21 glad to see all you gentlemen here
22 today and Grady too. Grady and I go
23 back a long way. He's always been a

1 gentleman.

2 But what I'd like to speak
3 to you about today is the way the --
4 dog hunting has been doing much
5 better. Now, I got to admit that
6 we're doing a lot better, and I'd
7 like to approach you gentlemen with
8 the idea of taking some of the
9 counties off the permit system that
10 have been doing well. I'm not saying
11 take any of them off that are causing
12 problems, but there's a lot of
13 counties out there that are doing
14 well. I sent y'all a letter on this.
15 And we would very much like to see
16 you help us a little bit. We're very
17 helpful to y'all. Our whole sport's
18 getting better and better.

19 I've spent a lot of money on
20 collars and all lately. Our collars
21 all have our name, address, phone
22 number on them. All of our collars
23 nowadays are electronic, most of

1 them. Everybody don't have an
2 electronic collar, but I guarantee
3 you probably 80 percent of the people
4 out there do have some sort of an
5 electronic collar on there and I
6 think it makes a big difference in
7 being able to stop our dogs before
8 they get to boundary lines.

9 Sometimes they going to go over
10 anyway, but most of the time, we can
11 stop them now and it makes a big
12 difference. We've been working real
13 hard on this.

14 I've been putting -- dealing
15 with it for, what, Grady, 35,
16 40 years, and it's getting better and
17 better every year. Yes, we still
18 have some problems, but believe me,
19 we're working with the people that I
20 talk to and we're doing everything we
21 can to stop them, to get the problems
22 out, stop them. And that's we want
23 to do. It's getting better. And I

1 ask for y'all to help us just a
2 little bit and open up some of those
3 counties that are on the permit
4 system.

5 I was on the committee that
6 made the permit system that come up
7 with it, and it was set up so in two
8 or three years if they did good, they
9 could get off that permit system.
10 That's in the minutes. You can read
11 them. That's the way it was set up.
12 And so I'd like to see that put in
13 place. So far no county that's been
14 put on the permit system for probably
15 15 years has ever got off. And I --

16 MS. JONES: Time.

17 MR. KNIGHT: Thank you, ma'am.

18 And I'd like to -- y'all to
19 consider that very much. I think it
20 will make a big help and lets the dog
21 hunters see if they get a little
22 progress, they get a reward.

23 Thank you.

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CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Hold on, Don.

Any questions for Don?

MR. KNIGHT: Grady will.

CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Mr. Pate.

MR. HARTZOG: I'm going to ask him what size shock collar he needs.

CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Mr. Pate.

MR. PATE: I mean, to me, that seems like a good faith effort. Is there anybody looking into that to see if there's counties that have done really well for the last four or five years that could be taken off? Who would look into that?

CHAIRMAN DOBBS: That is something that the Department has reviewed. And I'd like to in regard to that ask Don, Don, how would it help. What would it do for the dog hunting clubs that are on permit system or the areas that are on the permit system, how would being off the permit system change things for

1 them if, in fact, they're doing so
2 good and everything is working as it
3 should be?

4 MR. KNIGHT: I think it would
5 just be a reward. It's like your
6 dog, when they do something good, you
7 give them a treat or something.
8 These people have been doing real
9 good on that. I think they should
10 get the opportunity to be off of that
11 permit system. It's got some pretty
12 good regulations on it, I know, but,
13 you know, we can always go back. If
14 they don't do right, they start going
15 the wrong way, you could either put
16 them back on it or whatever you want
17 to do with it.

18 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: It's just such
19 an onerous process to go back and do
20 it again and --

21 MR. KNIGHT: We're not going to.

22 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: My thought is
23 that it's working wonderfully well.

1 We have not testimony, but folks that
2 have come up and spoken. It's been a
3 wonderful thing for them. It's
4 gotten rid of a culture or group that
5 weren't so good that made them look
6 bad and now they're doing very, very
7 well. I think it's worth some study,
8 but that would be a position that as
9 long as it's good, as my grandfather
10 said, it's running, Son, don't mess
11 with it.

12 MR. KNIGHT: Well, I agree with
13 you on that.

14 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Okay.

15 MR. KNIGHT: But there's also --
16 when it was set up and all, these
17 people thought if they did real good
18 in two to three years, they'd get off
19 of it, and quite honestly, I think
20 the people that you would take off of
21 it would continue to hunt basically
22 like they were on it. They've got
23 used to it, they're ready for it, and

1 they know it helps so they try to do
2 it right. And that was the whole
3 point of it, try to get people to do
4 right. But if you do right and then
5 don't get any reward for it, like
6 getting back off of it, what do you
7 want to do that for?

8 MR. WOLFE: Mr. Chairman?

9 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Yes, Mr. Wolfe.

10 MR. WOLFE: Just touch on what
11 you're saying, I guess I'm missing
12 the point. I don't understand what
13 the difference would be if a county's
14 on the permit system and everybody's
15 doing right but maybe one person's
16 not doing right, but if we decide to
17 then take that county off the permit
18 system, what changes except the feel
19 good? I hear what -- I hear what
20 you're saying and I hear the feel
21 good, but what is the advantage to
22 anybody, the Board, the hunters, or
23 anybody, if we take that county off

1 the permit system, what changes?

2 MR. KNIGHT: Well, it changes
3 the restrictions on them. I mean,
4 they're not breaking any laws because
5 the permit system is not a law, but
6 it changes their situation of how
7 they feel about it and what you said,
8 the feel good, but it also takes a
9 few regulations off of them like the
10 loaded guns -- not loaded but having
11 to keep the shells separated and
12 everything. I like to keep my shells
13 in my pocket. But if there's things
14 like that in there that was changed,
15 I think the people would pretty well
16 still do it. But it's just the fact
17 that it was set up to where they
18 could get off. I think they should
19 be allowed to get off. I think we
20 should honor that in the way it was
21 set up.

22 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Mr. Savoy.

23 MR. SAVOY: I'm new to the

1 Board, so I'm trying to find my way
2 around too. But coming from the
3 Wiregrass where we have --
4 Henry County where our land is we've
5 been involved before it was permitted
6 and after, and I will tell you what
7 the permit system has created for us
8 is a -- is the landowners and dog
9 hunters working together.

10 MR. KNIGHT: Absolutely.

11 MR. SAVOY: And so there's a
12 genuine respect for each other. We
13 tend to catch dogs on our property
14 from time to time. We caught -- we
15 know everybody. Henry County is a
16 small county. We're blessed in that.
17 And so -- but the system has -- in my
18 opinion, is working. And I
19 understand your point that there's an
20 element to it that makes the dog
21 hunters feel good, but I go back to
22 what our Chairman has said, if it
23 ain't broke, you know, it don't need

1 fixing so --

2 MR. KNIGHT: Well, it is broke,
3 though. See, that's the whole point
4 of it. When it was set up, they had
5 to -- said in there in the plans it's
6 set up to where in two to three years
7 if they did good, they could get off
8 of it. Now, if they come back and
9 cause more problems, they go on it
10 and they stay on it to where it will
11 straighten it back out. But I don't
12 think it will. I mean, I don't
13 think -- the dog hunters have come so
14 far.

15 Look, I've been in this
16 thing for about 35 years, and when we
17 first started, we had straightly a
18 bunch of outlaws. Okay. We had
19 them. And I've been working and some
20 of the other people have been
21 working, some of the other
22 associations have been working, and
23 we've been trying to get these people

1 out of it to where we can hunt in a
2 respectable way, respect our
3 landowners, respect the landowners
4 next to us and all the way around,
5 and it's made large improvements. I
6 think all of you have to admit that
7 it's made large improvements.

8 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: We would never
9 agree -- disagree with you that the
10 permit system has been fabulous.
11 It's worked well.

12 MR. KNIGHT: Yeah, it's worked.

13 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: The one thing
14 that I don't want to see happen, Don,
15 to all of the good hunters is that a
16 county or a club come off the permit
17 system, somebody then comes in and
18 creates a world of problems that we
19 worked on for a year or two, and once
20 that's done and at the end of that
21 progress we have to put the whole
22 county or the club -- do away with
23 dog deer hunting. It's working as it

1 is. And I hate to take that chance.
2 I hate for that opportunity to show
3 up.

4 And I'll promise you this as
5 always -- and we've been honest --
6 that give us some time to study on
7 this about how it can -- if it can
8 work, and at the next meeting or
9 sometime in between. I'm happy to
10 talk to you. You've got all my
11 conversation -- my contact
12 information. So please call. And
13 thank you for being here.

14 MR. KNIGHT: Like I said, I sent
15 a letter to all of them about it, and
16 I just think it would be a good
17 opportunity to show our willingness
18 to work with y'all and your
19 willingness to work with us. That's
20 what we'd like to have.

21 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: And that's what
22 we want too.

23 MR. KNIGHT: We're very happy

1 what's been going on this year.

2 Everything looks good. Our collars
3 are working. Give us a chance.

4 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Let's -- let's
5 keep it working.

6 MR. KNIGHT: That's right.

7 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Thank you, Don.
8 Thank you very much.

9 MR. HARTZOG: Mr. Chairman?

10 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Yes, Grady.

11 MR. HARTZOG: Can we have
12 Enforcement basically tell us what
13 additional restriction --

14 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Let's do
15 that -- let's ask -- you ask that
16 question of Enforcement after the
17 meeting and let them work that for
18 you. How about that?

19 MR. HARTZOG: Okay. Why don't I
20 ask Enforcement to send the whole --
21 all of us a list of the additional
22 requirements that's on the permit
23 versus the nonpermit, please, sir.

1 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Thank you.

2 Mr. Pate.

3 MR. PATE: Mr. Chairman, I'm
4 just not familiar as a point of
5 information how many counties are on
6 the restricted list and maybe they
7 could provide that to us also and
8 when the last time we've added a
9 county that we're having a problem
10 in.

11 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: You may not --
12 you may not get the packets all the
13 time, but in your packet, there is a
14 detailed map with every county and
15 the areas that are on the permit
16 system and the counties that are
17 closed so you have that. If you
18 don't, Wildlife & Freshwater
19 Fisheries and/or Enforcement can get
20 that for you PDQ as they say.

21 MR. PATE: Thank you.

22 COMMISSIONER BLANKENSHIP: And
23 it's also in the Hunting and Fishing

1 Digest that goes out. We've got
2 about 75,000 copies, I guess, or a
3 hundred thousand of those that go out
4 around the state. It's in there as
5 well.

6 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: It sure is.

7 All right. Okay. The
8 next -- and thank you for the
9 diatribe. That was very good, very
10 informative.

11 Norman Parks is our next
12 speaker.

13 MR. PARKS: Sir, I spoke to --
14 spoke to the Board in Montgomery a
15 month or so ago, and some might
16 consider it redundant, because at
17 least temporarily, we have some
18 influence and accomplished what we
19 wanted to.

20 But I'm Norman Parks from
21 Cecil, Alabama, in Montgomery County.
22 I represent the Nose to the Ground
23 and the Alabama Blood Trailing

1 Network Facebook groups, and what we
2 do is we provide a service that puts
3 hunters who cannot find deer that
4 they've shot in touch with people who
5 track deer with dogs. And through
6 our group, we reported this past
7 season over a thousand recoveries of
8 deer through this service that would
9 have otherwise gone unrecovered, and
10 like many things, we don't think that
11 represents but a fraction of the deer
12 that are actually recovered. And we
13 don't do this just because we think
14 it's a public service. We enjoy it.
15 It's our activity. And many of us
16 have always hunted all our lives and
17 almost given up hunting because we
18 like to pursue this.

19 In the last year, a bill was
20 presented to the state Legislature
21 which would impose additional
22 regulations and restrictions and also
23 expand dog hunting throughout the

1 state. We as a group don't really
2 have a strong opinion one way or
3 another on the provisions of that
4 bill as it applies to dog hunting
5 with deer. Our objection to the bill
6 has been that it includes blood
7 trailing dogs, and in our opinion
8 blood trailing dogs, that activity,
9 is just as different from dog hunting
10 as service dogs or bird dogs or one
11 thing or another. If there's ever a
12 time when there needs to be
13 regulations on trailing dogs, it
14 ought to be in separate legislation.

15 Now, this bill, in our
16 understanding, was presented to and
17 not read by either the Senate or the
18 House of Representatives, and we
19 appreciate all of the efforts by
20 anyone who has had some effect on
21 that. But we do want to go on record
22 that we feel like this is an issue
23 that's likely to come forward in the

1 future, and we will continue to
2 oppose it in every way we can as long
3 as blood trailing dogs are included
4 in the legislation.

5 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Understood. I
6 might make a recommendation that you
7 call for sure your local
8 representative, your legislator, your
9 state senator. I'm not sure who the
10 sponsor of that bill is.

11 COMMISSIONER BLANKENSHIP: I
12 think it would be -- and you may have
13 already done that -- but Senator
14 Larry Stutts --

15 MR. PARKS: We have.

16 COMMISSIONER BLANKENSHIP: --
17 was handling that in the senate, and
18 then Representative Harry Shiver in
19 the House of Representatives I think
20 would be two people that would be
21 most advantageous for you to talk to
22 about that before the next session.

23 MR. PARKS: Okay. Appreciate

1 it.

2 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Hold on one
3 moment.

4 Any questions?

5 (No response.)

6 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: All right.
7 Good luck.

8 The next speaker is Mr. Lane
9 Stephens. You were hiding back
10 there. I didn't see you.

11 MR. STEPHENS: I have a big
12 roadblock I brought with me.

13 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: I gotcha.

14 MR. STEPHENS: Lane Stephens, I
15 am here with the SCG Governmental
16 Affairs, and I am here representing
17 the Alabama Dog Hunters Association.
18 I feel like everybody's been talking
19 about us today.

20 First, we wanted to publicly
21 thank Member Raymond Jones who is not
22 here today. We've had some members
23 of the association working with him

1 on some issues, trying to address
2 that in his district. And -- he's
3 not here today, so we do want to
4 thank him for allowing us to work
5 with him.

6 A Commissioner mentioned
7 earlier our great legislation that we
8 had filed in the House and Senate.
9 Again, for those who are new to the
10 Board, the Association is asked by
11 legislators to come forward with
12 legislation that we try to bring
13 forth some commonsense regulations
14 for responsible hunting in the state
15 of Alabama. That bill was filed by
16 Senator Stutts in the House. It
17 passed out of his committee. He is
18 the Chair of the committee, so --
19 people said, well, that's no big
20 deal, but it's a pretty big deal to
21 me to have an association who's never
22 really been involved in legislation
23 have legislators ask them for a bill

1 and that bill filed in both the House
2 and the Senate and moved out of --
3 out of the Senate. We know who some
4 of our detractors are now. We know
5 who some of the -- what some of those
6 issues are that people have problems
7 with, but -- you know, I've been
8 involved in the legislative process
9 since 1989, and you don't find that
10 out until you get your bill out
11 there.

12 And so we look forward.
13 We'll be back next year with that
14 legislation. It may not look the
15 same. There may be some things that
16 are not in there today that will be
17 and there may be some things taken
18 out. But we're going to continue to
19 work with the Legislature and the
20 Commissioner and his great staff
21 moving forward to provide for
22 responsible hunting opportunities,
23 provide --

1 You know, the thing that
2 you're missing is your dog trespass
3 legislation. You know, we tried that
4 in the Legislature. The Commissioner
5 tried it for the rule. You know,
6 that's the issue that is missing, and
7 until we get that, you know, you're
8 going to continue to have people who
9 will let their dogs run where they
10 want to run because it's not against
11 the law for that dog to be on that
12 property. The law says that hunter
13 can't be on that property, but it's
14 not against the law for that dog to
15 go on that property and we don't
16 think that's right. We think that
17 the private property rights of
18 everyone ought to be respected. This
19 gentleman with the 53 acres ought not
20 to have to put up with that, and he
21 ought not have to catch them dogs.
22 Even if he does, what's it going to
23 lead to? All it's going to lead to

1 is a permit because it's not illegal
2 for that dog to be on the property.
3 And we're trying to help y'all with
4 that.

5 Thank you.

6 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Thank you.

7 Hold on, Lane.

8 Any questions for

9 Mr. Stephens?

10 And for those of you --

11 Dr. Phillips and Kevin, Mr. Stephens
12 is a representative of/a lobbyist for
13 the -- tell me which group.

14 MR. STEPHENS: Alabama Dog
15 Hunters Association.

16 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: And there are
17 two -- for edification, there are two
18 groups in the state; is that correct?

19 MR. STEPHENS: There may be more
20 than that. I only know the one I
21 represent.

22 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Okay. I'm
23 sorry. I don't mean to put you on

1 the spot with that. But there's
2 several groups of dog deer hunters in
3 the state, so he represents one.

4 Okay. Thank you very much.

5 COMMISSIONER BLANKENSHIP: Thank
6 you, Lane.

7 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: The last
8 speaker today is Mr. Avery Bates.

9 MR. BATES: I come before you by
10 and on behalf of some of the
11 commercial fishermen that did get
12 turned down for paddlefish. There
13 was a number of trial tests that
14 showed quite an increase in catching
15 paddlefish. And, by the way, Chris
16 knows this fellow I'm going to talk
17 about. Blackie Strange has proved
18 some of these scientists wrong.
19 Blackie Strange caught paddle nose on
20 a hook and line. He's caught four on
21 some of your set nets, like jug
22 fishing. Now, they say you ain't
23 supposed to do that because they're

1 planktonic fish, but you can believe
2 the side --

3 Well, there's two sides to
4 any question, especially when you
5 talk about fishing. You've got the
6 recreational side and you've got the
7 commercial side. We feed the people
8 fish. In fact, I think one of our
9 legislators said the last he sold on
10 paddle fish eggs was \$130 a pound. I
11 think I heard from one of the persons
12 on the Board that he paid \$55 for a
13 little helping of caviar from the
14 paddle fish. That mounts up to
15 money, commerce. We want to see a
16 small number of fishermen produce
17 food, whether it's caviar or meat
18 fish. I'll tell you that fish is
19 even better than the channel cat.
20 Now, I like a channel cat. Most of
21 the people in Alabama do. But we
22 would like to see a small amount of
23 time out of a year for them people to

1 feed some people in restaurants and
2 people in the Alabama a good eating
3 fish.

4 In the past, there's been
5 some stark, divisive thing that's
6 happened from the Board and from the
7 State. Now, what do you mean. Take
8 me the commercial fisherman, five
9 generations -- and I'm vice president
10 of the Organized Seafood Association.
11 Been there for years. Before that, I
12 was vice president of South Alabama
13 Seafood Association. But to let you
14 know, I was out oystering one day in
15 the gullies. Most of you don't know
16 what the gullies are. But we was
17 oystering, and I'd been oystering
18 there for about 30 years. Here come
19 a boat behind me, says you got to
20 leave. I said, I got to leave. I'm
21 feeding my family and I'm putting the
22 oysters on the market. He says, no,
23 you got to leave. And then I got to

1 looking, and around 1994, I saw a
2 law, 9-11-270. What happens? He
3 says, I can have you arrested.

4 MS. JONES: Time.

5 MR. BATES: Now, that time that
6 you just said has cost us time on the
7 water, and I want y'all to know
8 there's several laws that it's in our
9 right. Our property belongs to this
10 state. We want y'all to eat seafood,
11 whether it's out of the rivers, the
12 bays, or the gulf. And some of the
13 laws that's been so discriminatory
14 has made what we call a monopoly out
15 of some of our fish. A monopoly only
16 lets one user group. That's against
17 federal regulation, the Magnuson-
18 Stevens Fishery Management and
19 Conservation Act. If you take away
20 100 percent of that fish from the
21 commercial fishermen, you take away
22 100 percent of that fish.

23 And by the way, thank you

1 for not allowing them to take
2 sheepshead away from us. Before
3 that, it was mackerel they wanted to
4 take away, Spanish mackerel. And
5 before -- it's always want to take
6 away. When you take it away, you
7 take it away from everybody in the
8 state of Alabama and anywhere else we
9 ship it. We want you to eat good
10 crabs that's being eat up by Redfish.
11 Billions of tons of crabs get eat
12 every year by Redfish, and, you know
13 what, restaurants can get good wild
14 Redfish right today. So keep in
15 mind, when we ask for something, it's
16 for the benefit of the state of
17 Alabama to have more business, more
18 fish on the table, and more consumers
19 enjoying it.

20 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Thank you.

21 Thank you, Avery.

22 MR. BATES: If you have any
23 questions, you're welcome to ask me.

1 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: All right. Any
2 questions from the Board?

3 Yes, Brock.

4 MR. BROCK JONES: Mr. Chairman,
5 can I suggest that Mr. Bates send us
6 an email every time prior to the
7 meeting where he doesn't go over
8 every time?

9 MR. BATES: I'm sorry I got
10 long, but this time I got -- I
11 continued on because we don't have
12 anybody here today.

13 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Well, I give
14 you license because you come every
15 meeting and your message is a good
16 one, but be mindful when we are
17 crowded, when there are people --

18 MR. BATES: I just -- I try to
19 abide.

20 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: And I know you
21 try to go last, but by that time,
22 everybody needs a health break.

23 MR. BATES: We all need to go to

1 the restroom, especially when you get
2 older.

3 God bless y'all and God
4 bless the state of Alabama.

5 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Thank you,
6 Mr. Jones.

7 Thank you, Mr. Bates, very
8 much.

9 COMMISSIONER BLANKENSHIP:
10 Mr. Chairman, can I --

11 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Of course,
12 Mr. Commissioner.

13 COMMISSIONER BLANKENSHIP: Just
14 as information since we have a new
15 Board member -- several new Board
16 members, I do want to just point out
17 that there's not been a request by
18 the Department to make any species a
19 game fish in over a decade so
20 that's -- or take that away from any
21 of the commercial fishermen in the
22 saltwater areas in more than a decade
23 so just for information.

1 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Any questions
2 on that? Any comments? Nothing?

3 (No response.)

4 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: All right.
5 Well, the next portion of our
6 business here today is unfinished
7 business. Unless there is something
8 out there that was put on the table,
9 suspended, left alone, I don't think
10 we have any unfinished business at
11 this time, so we're moving on to our
12 new business.

13 We did the consumer price
14 index last meeting. Today I think
15 that there are a couple of motions.
16 I know one would be to approve
17 seasons and bag limits.

18 Is there a motion for that?

19 MR. HARTZOG: So moved.

20 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Well, let me
21 get the motion, Mr. Hartzog, and we
22 will.

23 Now, is there a motion to

1 approve seasons and bag limits? Is
2 there -- would somebody read the
3 motion.

4 COMMISSIONER BLANKENSHIP: I
5 think just a motion --

6 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: I think the
7 Chair will state that there's a
8 motion afoot to approve all of the
9 seasons and bag limits as written in
10 the packets that were provided to you
11 previously, and I'll be looking for a
12 second for that.

13 MR. BROCK JONES: Second.

14 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: We have a
15 second, Mr. Brock Jones. We'll vote
16 on those. This will be a show of
17 hands. All those in favor?

18 It's unanimous. That
19 passes. Thank you.

20 Is there another motion?

21 MR. BARKSDALE: Yes, sir.

22 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Mr. Barksdale.

23 MR. BARKSDALE: I think this was

1 brought up at our last meeting by
2 Mr. Raymond Jones. He is not here
3 today, so I agreed to make this
4 motion on his behalf. This is
5 talking about the permit system I
6 think you mentioned or somebody
7 mentioned earlier. But I'd like to
8 make the motion to place everything
9 west of Highway 43 in Colbert County
10 under the permit system as it
11 pertains to dog deer hunting
12 beginning with '21-'22 deer season.

13 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: All right.

14 There's a motion. I'm going to ask
15 you to read it one more time, please.

16 MR. BARKSDALE: I'd like to make
17 the motion to place everything west
18 of Highway 43 in Colbert County under
19 the permit system as it pertains to
20 dog deer hunting beginning with the
21 '21-'22 deer season.

22 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: All right.

23 Thank you.

1 The motion has been read and
2 heard. Do I have a second?

3 MR. WOOD: Second.

4 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Second by
5 Mr. Tim Wood. The vote again will be
6 a vote -- or is there any discussion?

7 (No response.)

8 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Being no
9 discussion, we'll vote. The vote
10 will be by a show of hands. All
11 those in favor, please show by
12 raising your hand.

13 (All Board members present raised
14 hand.)

15 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: The vote's
16 unanimous.

17 Are there any other motions
18 today?

19 Resolutions?

20 (No response.)

21 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: There being
22 nothing, Mr. Commissioner, do you
23 have a resolution or do you have

1 another announcement?

2 COMMISSIONER BLANKENSHIP: No,
3 sir. I just appreciate the Board
4 members for their work during the --
5 between the last meeting and this
6 meeting. And any questions that you
7 have throughout the year, always feel
8 free to give me a call or any of the
9 division directors or Deputy
10 Commissioner Poolos and we can try
11 and get you any answers or
12 information that we can. And as
13 we've been doing, I'll try to provide
14 the information to you throughout the
15 year as things come up that I think
16 might be of interest to you. If you
17 get tired of getting emails from me,
18 let me know, but I feel like the more
19 information I can provide to the
20 Board to keep you updated the better
21 it is to make sure everybody knows
22 what's happening in other parts of
23 the state that may not be in your

1 district.

2 Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

3 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Thank you.

4 Anything --

5 MR. BARKSDALE: I do --

6 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Mr. Barksdale.

7 MR. BARKSDALE: -- have a
8 question or clear something up. I
9 saw this on social media. There is a
10 Help Stock Lake Guntersville group
11 that has set up a 501(c)(3) trying to
12 raise money to put some F-1 tiger
13 bass in Guntersville. I just wanted
14 to make sure are we good with it, do
15 we know about it. I don't know who
16 would be able to answer that.

17 COMMISSIONER BLANKENSHIP: Sure.
18 I can take that.

19 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Please.

20 COMMISSIONER BLANKENSHIP: So we
21 have talked with Major League
22 Fishing. We're working with them on
23 a couple of different fronts.

1 They're helping us with some adult
2 mentor fishing opportunities. They
3 have a passion to do some work in
4 Lake Guntersville. One of the things
5 that they would like to do is stock
6 these bass.

7 Our Fisheries section, you
8 know, with Lake Guntersville being
9 such a huge reservoir and what
10 they're stocking, it's not going
11 to -- we don't feel like it's going
12 to make a huge difference in the --
13 either the genetics or the population
14 of bass, but it is a good opportunity
15 to highlight the fishing that we have
16 on Lake Guntersville and all of
17 Alabama and to be able to provide
18 some positive news releases and news
19 stories about our fishing here.

20 So we are aware of the
21 501(c) (3) and have talked with them.
22 We're not actively involved with
23 them, but we do -- I do see as

1 Commissioner opportunities. And any
2 time you're doing something to
3 improve fishing in the state, it
4 gives us an opportunity to put that
5 out to the rest of the world and get
6 more people to come to Alabama and
7 enjoy the great fisheries we have
8 here, buying out-of-state fishing
9 licenses, and spend some money in our
10 state.

11 MR. BARKSDALE: I would agree
12 with that a hundred percent, and
13 Guntersville is known across the
14 United States as really big bass
15 fishing. I just wanted to --

16 COMMISSIONER BLANKENSHIP: Sure.

17 MR. BARKSDALE: -- make sure
18 that it was something we were aware
19 of that was going on and they weren't
20 putting something in there we
21 don't --

22 COMMISSIONER BLANKENSHIP:

23 Well -- and our Fisheries section has

1 been open and out front that stocking
2 in those large reservoirs is not
3 going to make -- as long as it has
4 that Florida stream bass in there
5 already, it's not going to make a
6 huge difference in the genetics or in
7 the population, but it is something
8 that we're -- that I have permitted
9 to be able to do that so that -- some
10 of the other ancillary benefits for
11 our state.

12 MR. BARKSDALE: Great. Thank
13 you.

14 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: With no other
15 questions or comments, I'll call the
16 meeting adjourned. The time and date
17 of the next meeting will be
18 determined. It will -- Betsy will
19 put that -- advertise that, but I'm
20 sure it will be sometime in the fall
21 prior to deer season; is that
22 correct?

23 MS. JONES: No, no.

1 **COMMISSIONER BLANKENSHIP:** Our
2 **next meeting will probably be next**
3 **February.**

4 **CHAIRMAN DOBBS:** Next February.
5 **All right. Next February after deer**
6 **season.**

7 Okay. This meeting is
8 adjourned. Thank y'all all for being
9 here. Safe travels home.

10 **(Meeting adjourned at 10:46 a.m.)**

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