

STATE OF ALABAMA DEPARTMENT OF
CONSERVATION AND NATURAL RESOURCES
ADVISORY BOARD MEETING
Alabama Department of
Agriculture and Industries
Montgomery, Alabama
February 29, 2020

TRANSCRIPT OF PROCEEDINGS

Proceedings taken before Tracye
Sadler Blackwell, Certified Court Reporter, ACCR
No. 294, and Commissioner for the State of Alabama
at Large, at the Alabama Department of Agriculture
and Industries, Richard Beard Building, 1445
Federal Drive, Montgomery, Alabama, on Saturday,
February 29, 2020, commencing at approximately
9:00 a.m.

BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT:

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

CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Welcome, everybody, to the
first Conservation Advisory Board
Meeting of 2020. Glad you're all here
today and everybody made it in safe.
Let's have a really productive meeting
today with some really good dialogue.
And to get it started, I'm going to ask
Mr. Avery Bates to please give our
invocation today.

MR. BATES: Thank y'all. I guess this thing
is on.

Anyway, it's good to be here today.
It's good to pray for our state and
industry and stuff. I say our industry.
Our animals and stuff. But let's pray
the Lord will bless us.

One scripture before we go into it.
Solomon was a very wise man in his day.
A lot of his wisdom extends to today.
He wrote in the Book of Proverbs 27:23:
Be thou diligent to know the state of
thy flocks and look well to thy herds.
That can go for fish. That can go for
deer, ducks.

Look well. Know what you got. Know
how to treat your animals, your stocks
of oysters, shrimp, fish. We are to be
wise in our decisions and know what's
out there and what can be done to help
it. Let's bow.

Dear Heavenly Father, we thank you
for your many blessings. We thank you,

Lord, that you give us the bounty of the
sea and the land. Lord, we pray that
we'll be mindful to protect it and
protect those that catch it and hunt it
and fish it. And, Lord, we just pray
that you will give us food for our labor
that we might continue to feed these
people and the people around our
country. Let us make sure, Lord, that
we have no diseases, pestilence, Lord,
that might affect us. Bless us, Lord,
give us knowledge and wisdom and this
group make the right decisions that we
might be better because of things that
comes through this house here today and
use us to your honor and glory. In
Christ's name we pray, Amen.

CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Chief Weathers, we have the
great honor of having the Color Guard
here today. Present the Colors, please.

(Presentation of the Colors.)

CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Patrick, if you would lead us
in the Pledge of Allegiance, please.

1 (Pledge of Allegiance recited.)
 2 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Thank you.
 3 On the agenda we have the
 4 Sportsmen's Pledge. It's something
 5 we've talked about before. It rings
 6 through to what we all believe is the
 7 purpose of forward-minded resource
 8 management. And we're going to recite
 9 the pledge, and you have a copy of it.
 10 Please recite it along with us. I'm
 11 going to ask Mr. Greg Barksdale to lead
 12 us in the Sportsmen's Pledge.
 13 (Sportmen's Pledge recited as
 14 follows: Since the state in its
 15 sovereign capacity occupies the attitude
 16 of guardian and custodian of the
 17 people's welfare, it is therefore the
 18 duty of the state by enactment of
 19 appropriate legislation to endeavor to
 20 extend adequate protection to those
 21 resources in which the people have
 22 collectively a natural right. Wise and
 23 discreet individuals who feel no

1 inclination to make assaults on nature's
 2 storehouse should have their rights
 3 protected by the enactment of strong
 4 laws to restrain the hands of the wanton
 5 and the reckless whose vandalism would
 6 annihilate every visible thing of fin,
 7 fur, or feather to gratify their savage
 8 instincts.)
 9 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: That was written, as you
 10 know, at the turn of the 20th Century,
 11 so -- but it holds true through today.
 12 Mr. Secretary, do we have a quorum?
 13 COMMISSIONER BLANKENSHIP: Yes, sir, we do.
 14 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: I have one brief announcement
 15 or congratulatory. There was a special
 16 award presented to Department of
 17 Conservation and Natural Resources.
 18 That award was the *2019 State Agency of*
 19 *the Year*. It's presented by the
 20 National Assembly of Sportsmen's
 21 Caucuses. We are the one agency in the
 22 country that got that. It's a very
 23 prestigious and noteworthy award, and

1 we're very proud to be selected.
 2 Congratulations to the Department,
 3 to the staff, everybody that's a part of
 4 it. Congratulations. That's pretty
 5 cool.
 6 COMMISSIONER BLANKENSHIP: Thank you.
 7 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: So if anybody has any
 8 questions about that, I'm happy to talk
 9 about it some more.
 10 All of the Board members, I think,
 11 have gotten and read the minutes from
 12 our May 4, 2019, board meeting. Are
 13 there any notes or changes?
 14 (No response.)
 15 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: If there are no notes or
 16 changes, the Board minutes that are
 17 provided by Ms. Tracye and approved by
 18 Ms. Betsy stand approved.
 19 And, if we can, let's ask each board
 20 member -- we'll start down at the far
 21 end with Mr. Barksdale -- to please
 22 stand or sit and give us their name,
 23 their district, and a district report.

1 MR. BARKSDALE: All right. My name is Greg
 2 Barksdale. I'm in District 4.
 3 The main topic of discussion in
 4 District 4 was concerning chronic
 5 wasting disease. There was a lot of
 6 discussion about this just before deer
 7 season. There were CWD meetings held
 8 across the state.
 9 We did have a meeting in October at
 10 Wallace State College which was within
 11 the district. I think this was a very
 12 informative meeting for the hunters and
 13 breeders that did come to the meeting.
 14 I would have liked to have seen more
 15 folks show up to that. The information
 16 would have been a really good idea for
 17 those folks where they understood CWD
 18 more than what they were reading on the
 19 Internet.
 20 I was also contacted about deer dog
 21 hunting in Franklin and Marion Counties.
 22 The other contact I had was about deer
 23 populations in Winston County and the

1 need to take it out of Zone C.
2 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Greg, Mr. Barksdale, would
3 you please lean closer to the mic. Some
4 of the folks can't hear you. And I
5 think you have to turn it on.

6 MR. BARKSDALE: Okay. Thank you.
7 Like I said, I was contacted about
8 deer dog hunting in Franklin and Marion
9 Counties. I was also contacted about
10 the deer population in Winston County
11 and the need to take it out of Zone C.

12 Other than that, it was relatively quiet
13 in District 4 since our last meeting.

14 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Thank you very much.

15 MR. MARTIN: Jeff Martin, District 3.
16 You know, all in all it's been a
17 pretty calm year. The changes that we
18 had made in the past seemed to be
19 working on both sides from the dog --
20 from the Talladega National Forest end.
21 They've been doing a good job. I've
22 been talking with Chuck and some
23 other -- and Lonnie. It's just been a

1 pretty quiet, peaceful year. I
2 appreciate that on both sides,
3 especially you guys.

4 With all the rain and all, fishing
5 has been good. I know on the Coosa
6 chain it has been. So hopefully we
7 will -- some of that may subside a
8 little bit, but all in all it's been a
9 great year.

10 MR. BROCK JONES: Brock Jones, District 7. I
11 share that representation with Tim Wood
12 who could not be here today.

13 Tim and I have met with a couple of
14 groups around the district in trying to
15 get a feel for what people are thinking
16 and talking to several processors. And
17 the general feeling is over the District
18 7, which is pretty much the Black Belt,
19 that it was a good season -- not a great
20 season -- for deer. The quantity and
21 quality were up.

22 Feral hogs continue to be a great
23 frustration, and everyone is looking

1 forward to hopefully us coming up with a
2 solution poison-wise for that.

3 There were no dog hunting issues.
4 There's a feeling that allowing baiting
5 has caused more negative than positive
6 and that bucks become and doe become
7 more nocturnal. The three-buck limit
8 seems to be having a very positive
9 effect on the quality of deer that we
10 now see.

11 And the CW meetings were very
12 informative and very well done. Had a
13 couple of locations, Tuscaloosa and
14 Selma, where we had those meetings.

15 That's all I have.

16 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Thank you.

17 MR. CAGLE: I'm Patrick Cagle, and I represent
18 District 2.

19 Like Mr. Barksdale, the Department
20 of Conservation hosted a CWD meeting at
21 Bass Pro Shops in Prattville which was a
22 convenient spot for a lot of folks in
23 District 2. I would have loved to have

1 seen every hunter there. I really
2 commend the Department for going out of
3 their way to share good information.
4 It's hard to -- you know, it's hard to
5 reach everyone that they need to with
6 their efforts. And at least the folks
7 that attended that now have good
8 information, and hopefully they'll be
9 leaders and share that with others.

10 You know, getting information on a
11 disease so complex directly from the
12 source is really the only way to do it.
13 You can't read a few lines, a few
14 sentences on the Internet and understand
15 much about it. So I commend the
16 Department for their efforts in reaching
17 out. I know they plan to continue.

18 I received less calls this year than
19 ever. You know, I can't take that as a
20 reflection necessarily of the issues in
21 District 2. Folks may have just gotten
22 tired of calling me. But I will let you
23 know I'm always available. My cell

1 phone number is published. So if you
2 have an issue or if you don't have an
3 issue and have something that you've
4 seen that's positive, feel free to call
5 me.

6 A little outside of my district, but
7 I really want to commend the Department
8 for all they've done on the coast. This
9 year I got to spend more time off the
10 Alabama coast than in typical years.
11 And spearfishing is my passion. And I
12 just really saw how great of a resource
13 we have both on the public reefs and the
14 private and had a couple of great trips,
15 including October.

16 Since the state is doing so well
17 with Snapper Check, they're able to make
18 sure we fully capture the available
19 resource because reporting ensures we
20 don't go over, which prevents us from
21 being subject to very strict fallback
22 for next year. So the state was able --
23 you know, we had a couple of extra days,

1 a few weekends added in October. I was
2 quite impressed that the boat I was
3 on -- we had an average of a 19-pound
4 snapper in October after the resource
5 had been enjoyed by everyone who had the
6 opportunity, and that really says a lot
7 about the quality of it and the quality
8 of the artificial reef system that our
9 state has created.

10 MR. STIMPSON: I'm Ben Stimpson. I represent
11 District 1.

12 Like everybody that's gone before
13 me, this year overall seemed to be a
14 very quiet and good year. I as well had
15 fewer calls on dog deer hunting than
16 I've ever had. I actually only had one
17 call from Mobile County and two calls
18 from Washington County and none from
19 Baldwin, which is -- I think that's
20 impossible, but it happened.

21 Obviously everybody is working to do
22 a good job. I think the permit system
23 must have had something to do with it.

1 But it was the least amount of calls
2 that I've had since I've been on the
3 Board.

4 There was some excitement over -- we
5 had an oyster harvest for the first time
6 in -- I don't know when the last time we
7 had it, Chris, but it's been a while.
8 Of course, the rivers jumped up and shut
9 that down. But that had a lot of
10 positive talk going on there.

11 And most of the conversation that I
12 did have with people in general was
13 around CWD and feeding and baiting. And
14 most of it was just questions trying to
15 gather information. But a good year in
16 District 1.

17 MR. RAYMOND JONES: I'm Raymond Jones. I
18 represent Congressional District
19 Number 5, which is in north Alabama.

20 We had a -- overall it's been a good
21 year. The deer season in our neck of
22 the woods was average at best, marginal.
23 I think a lot of that was due to the

1 unseasonably warm weather.

2 Duck season was better than it has
3 been in the last few years, but again it
4 was not as -- it was well below
5 historical averages simply because of
6 the unseasonably warm weather and
7 literally water-water everywhere. The
8 ducks were very scattered.

9 Last spring's turkey hatch marked
10 five years in a row that we've had well
11 above average hatches. We have turkeys
12 in our area of the state where they
13 haven't been in over a century where
14 we're now seeing turkeys. So that's
15 very positive in that regard. And I saw
16 a hen and several poults, again, on some
17 land we've owned since the 1950s where
18 we've never seen turkeys, and we've got
19 hens and poults there now, which is a
20 positive.

21 I did receive a complaint on dog
22 deer hunting in Colbert County. I've
23 checked into that, and I'm monitoring

1 that situation. But I did receive a
 2 complaint there.
 3 That's my report.
 4 MR. HARTZOG: Good morning, everybody. Grady
 5 Hartzog, District 2.
 6 There again, following what
 7 everybody else has said, probably had
 8 the quietest year that I've ever had.
 9 We had a lot of good things happening in
 10 District 2.
 11 We just got through with the youth
 12 hunt, and next year the Barbour County
 13 Youth Hunt will have its 25th
 14 anniversary. There were several hundred
 15 kids there. I want to thank the
 16 Department. They had about ten wardens
 17 there assisting with the youth hunt.
 18 It's a big deal.
 19 Greg ought to be smiling because
 20 we've had several big tournaments there
 21 at the state park. The parking lot was
 22 full every day. I want to thank Greg.
 23 We had a problem with one of the ramps,

1 and the mayor had called me. And, in
 2 fact, the day I called Greg, Greg, I
 3 think, had just signed a contract to
 4 spend a couple of hundred thousand
 5 dollars on repairing that ramp -- they'd
 6 had a lot of problems with it -- and
 7 also doing the paving.
 8 But there for several weeks the
 9 parking lot and boat landing was slap
 10 full. And they were catching nice bass,
 11 good bass. And so the lake is probably
 12 in a good cycle right now.
 13 The only -- I only had one dog
 14 hunting complaint.
 15 And the only other thing -- and I've
 16 talked to Chuck and Chris -- is that
 17 I've had several requests -- well, a
 18 good many requests for Barbour County to
 19 be placed in the north zone for dove
 20 season. If you look at the map of the
 21 south zone and north zone, Barbour
 22 County is the northernmost county in
 23 that south dove hunting zone.

1 Because of federal regulations, you
 2 can't change but once every five years.
 3 We can't make it effective for the next
 4 season, but Chuck and Keith and Chris
 5 and all have said that we would shoot
 6 for making that available for the dove
 7 hunters for the '21 season.
 8 So other than that, overall a quiet
 9 year. I did call several of the
 10 processors, and they processed the same
 11 number of deer. But they keep saying
 12 the deer seem to be getting healthier
 13 and bigger. The weight size is going
 14 up. So they're happy with it. And
 15 Barbour County, as y'all remember, is
 16 the only county that has the antler
 17 restriction rule, and it seems like
 18 everybody is still happy with that rule,
 19 trying to grow good quality bucks.
 20 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Thank you, Grady.
 21 DR. LEMME: Good morning. I'm Gary Lemme
 22 representing -- ad hoc member
 23 representing Alabama Cooperative

1 Extension System.
 2 The Extension will be cooperating
 3 with State Soil and Water Conservation
 4 Committee and APHIS and the Department
 5 on feral hog reductions in three
 6 watersheds in lower Alabama. We'll be
 7 providing the educational programming.
 8 And the 4-H shooting sports programs
 9 are up and running. And we'll be having
 10 state tournaments here in the next two
 11 months, and we have over 1200 kids
 12 involved.
 13 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Thank you, Dr. Lemme.
 14 COMMISSIONER PATE: Hi. I'm Rick Pate. I'm
 15 actually Commissioner of Agriculture. I
 16 live in Lowndes County. But I want to
 17 extend a welcome to you to being here at
 18 the Beard Building. Hopefully you found
 19 the restrooms just right outside the
 20 door. But anything -- there's three or
 21 four of my staff people here. If any of
 22 us can help y'all in any way while
 23 you're here, just holler at us. Thank

1 y'all.

2 I would say while you're here in
3 Montgomery if you're planning on staying
4 or maybe -- I wouldn't leave any
5 vehicles inside the fence after the
6 meeting is over. When everybody has
7 cleared out, we'll lock that gate. And
8 so I'd just ask you if you're going to
9 leave a vehicle here this afternoon,
10 pull it into one of these parking spaces
11 in the front, and then you'll be able to
12 come back later in the day and get it.

13 I will take a little privilege since
14 you are in your building that my offices
15 are in. But look at the boards that are
16 on the wall. Nobody really understands
17 what we do here. We probably have as
18 much regulatory responsibility as any
19 state agency, and the responsibilities
20 we have are huge. Just take food safety
21 and ag compliance and animal health -- I
22 mean, the Governor and them have done
23 such a great job of tracking industries,

1 but if we get AIDS and influenza or
2 something in our poultry industry, it
3 would be an economic impact that the car
4 industry doesn't even understand.

5 But from pesticides management to
6 weights and measures. Everybody pretty
7 much knows we regulate the gas pumps to
8 make sure you get a gallon, but most
9 people don't realize we regulate
10 everything weighed and measured in the
11 state of Alabama. So when you're buying
12 bananas at Winn-Dixie, we certify that
13 scale to make sure you're treated
14 fairly.

15 And, of course, we've got a huge
16 initiative. They put that screen in
17 front of it. But hopefully you will see
18 it this year. We've realized that
19 people want local Alabama products. And
20 so we've initiated a new program called
21 "Sweet Grown Alabama." And we're hoping
22 this year you will be able to go to a
23 farmer's market or go in your grocery

1 store and find that "Sweet Grown
2 Alabama" logo and you'll be assured that
3 the things you're buying are from
4 Slocomb or Sand Mountain and are not
5 from Mexico and they're not from central
6 California, which is probably where they
7 typically come from.

8 So, anyway, we're excited to have
9 you here. If we can be of help to you
10 in any way, me or my staff, just reach
11 out to us. Thank you.

12 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Thank you, Commissioner Pate.
13 And thank you for the loan of the
14 building very, very much. It's a
15 wonderful venue, and we enjoy being
16 here.

17 Thank you all, gentlemen. Those
18 were great reports. I appreciate it.

19 Next would be our Commissioner's
20 report. Would you like to come to the
21 podium?

22 COMMISSIONER BLANKENSHIP: I'll just do it
23 from here if that's okay with you.

1 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Yes, sir.

2 COMMISSIONER BLANKENSHIP: I do want to thank
3 Mr. Pate for letting us meet here. This
4 is very convenient for everybody, a lot
5 better parking and getting in and out
6 here than downtown. Thank you, sir, for
7 letting us meet here.

8 And I want to welcome you on behalf
9 of Governor Kay Ivey to the Conservation
10 Advisory Board Meeting as I'm blessed to
11 be the Commissioner of the Department of
12 Conservation and thankful almost every
13 day to get to work with a great staff to
14 try and do the right thing by the
15 resources and the sportsmen and citizens
16 of Alabama.

17 I'd like to think after hearing the
18 reports of the quietness of everybody's
19 district -- I think that's a testament
20 to the good work of our staff both on
21 the enforcement side and the biological
22 side and the State Parks and Lands
23 Division, the good work that they do

1 throughout the year.
 2 I would be remiss if I didn't take
 3 an opportunity while I've got everybody
 4 here to remind them that the census
 5 forms will be coming out. I think you
 6 will get those the week of March 12th
 7 and that you'll start to see a push for
 8 that.

9 It's imperative that we all
 10 participate in the census for our state.
 11 Some of the rural areas of our state
 12 have traditionally been undercounted,
 13 which if that happens this year, that
 14 may cost us one of our representatives
 15 in Congress as well as several million
 16 dollars that comes to the state through
 17 a lot of the federal programs. So
 18 please take that census seriously.

19 And make sure you count your kids.
 20 If they're off at college, you count
 21 them. Make sure you count your
 22 children. Even if they don't live with
 23 you, make sure that one of you is

1 counting all those children. That's
 2 where I think that we leave a lot of
 3 people off of our census in the past.
 4 So that's been a big initiative of the
 5 Governor this year to make sure that
 6 happens.

7 I will report to the Conservation
 8 Advisory Board that we had our legal
 9 compliance audit this year for the
 10 Conservation Advisory Board and it was
 11 extremely uneventful. There were no
 12 findings, and they got us all in a room
 13 to tell us that there were no findings.
 14 It lasted about two minutes, which was
 15 very good, the way you like to have an
 16 audit. So I thank the staff for that.

17 This year having the bait license
 18 privilege has made a little bit of the
 19 change throughout the state. I have
 20 received very little negative feedback
 21 on that throughout the season. I think
 22 it's been received well by most of the
 23 people throughout the state. People had

1 the opportunity if they didn't want to
 2 use -- hunt with the aid of bait, they
 3 didn't have to, and after a little bit
 4 of work within some of the hunting
 5 clubs, I think that that over the next
 6 couple of years will work itself out.

7 But I think one thing that happened
 8 this year that to me really shows the
 9 value to the economy of Alabama of the
 10 hunting season is I was in Sumter County
 11 on Martin Luther King weekend and shot a
 12 deer on that Sunday afternoon. And I
 13 went to take it to the processor in the
 14 middle of nowhere in Sumter County, and
 15 they had people out there directing
 16 traffic on the road so that people could
 17 get into the processor, you know, in
 18 rural Sumter County. Then you pulled in
 19 and they had one-way signs in the yard
 20 and then around the back of the building
 21 they had several people in there
 22 cleaning deer. Must have been -- must
 23 have been 20 people in line either

1 dropping off a deer or picking up deer
 2 and people steady coming in the whole
 3 time I was there. I said that -- I took
 4 a couple of pictures just so I could
 5 show people that don't understand what a
 6 value hunting and fishing is to the
 7 economy of our state. So I hope that
 8 you do the same in telling people how
 9 important hunting and fishing is not
 10 only for the quality of life in Alabama
 11 but for the economy of our state.

12 Our Forever Wild program has
 13 partnered with the Division of Wildlife
 14 and Freshwater Fisheries on several
 15 opportunities over the past year -- the
 16 past several years to provide more
 17 hunting opportunities for people in
 18 Dallas County and then, also, on the Red
 19 Hills Salamander habitat in Monroe
 20 County. Appreciate the work of the
 21 Department and the Forever Wild Board
 22 partnering together to do some good
 23 things for our state.

1 In our state parks that are managed
 2 by the Director of State Parks, Greg
 3 Lein, we're implementing a new
 4 reservation system that is coming online
 5 April 1st for some of the campgrounds
 6 and will be fully implemented by
 7 October 1st of this year for all of our
 8 facilities. I think that that will make
 9 it a lot easier for people to camp or
 10 stay in the cabins or cottages that are
 11 at your state parks.

12 And I know, Commissioner Pate, you
 13 hear a lot about rural broadband and the
 14 importance of that in the state. That's
 15 important for us as well in our state
 16 parks because most of them are located
 17 in rural areas in the state. I'm happy
 18 to report that over the next couple of
 19 months we will have broadband access to
 20 all of our state parks in Alabama. I
 21 wanted to have that done by the end of
 22 2019, but it was more challenging than
 23 we were able to accomplish.

1 But we will have that done here --
 2 hopefully by the end of next month we'll
 3 have all of our state parks with
 4 high-speed Internet access, which will
 5 be a benefit, too, to some of the other
 6 citizens around those parks so that they
 7 can tap into that high-speed Internet.

8 The Lodge at Gulf State Park that
 9 opened last year where we had our last
 10 Conservation Advisory Board Meeting of
 11 2019 in May has had a productive year
 12 and continues to do extremely well,
 13 allowing us to put some profits from
 14 that back into the other parks and take
 15 care of some much needed long-term
 16 maintenance and capital improvements
 17 there along with other operational
 18 income that we're seeing from the people
 19 that are staying in our parks, one,
 20 because, I think, all of the work that's
 21 been done by the staff to make them
 22 nicer and to take care of some of the
 23 old maintenance backlog, but also with

1 the economy that we have people are
 2 having a little bit of opportunity to
 3 have some more money to spend on leisure
 4 and they're spending that in our state
 5 parks.

6 And if you have not been to a state
 7 park in a while, I hope that you'll go
 8 either camp or stay in one of the cabins
 9 or cottages or chalets and spend some
 10 time in your state parks.

11 As was mentioned earlier with the
 12 oyster season, the oyster season this
 13 year was longer than it has been in
 14 several, several years, and we've
 15 harvested more oysters this year than we
 16 did if you combined the last five years.
 17 The industry and the resource is not
 18 back to where we want it to be, but it's
 19 headed in the right direction. And I
 20 appreciate the work of the Marine
 21 Resources Division and the Good Lord for
 22 making the conditions right to see those
 23 oysters start to come back and grow in

1 our waters.

2 This year was the last year of the
 3 exempted fishing permit for red snapper
 4 which allowed us to have a season last
 5 year that was over 40 days. That
 6 exempted fishing permit and the state
 7 management of red snapper was made
 8 permanent beginning this year. So we'll
 9 be managing that fishery from now on for
 10 the recreational side and thanks to the
 11 good work of a lot of people in Congress
 12 and Senator Shelby, Congressman Byrne
 13 particularly, and then a lot of work
 14 that's been done on the research side by
 15 our staff, the University of South
 16 Alabama, and Auburn University, that's
 17 allowed the state to be able to manage
 18 that fishery. And I think that is going
 19 to be long-term one of the biggest
 20 successes that you'll see in
 21 conservation in our state in a long time
 22 is the opportunity for people to access
 23 and get out and catch those red snapper

1 on our artificial reefs.

2 And we're still seeing diminished

3 catch on flounder. I was in Washington

4 this past week talking with senators and

5 representatives up there with people

6 from all of the five Gulf states.

7 They're all seeing the same low

8 recruitment and low amount of flounder.

9 And so we are working to try and find

10 the cause of that and what we can do to

11 combat that to try and get the flounder

12 fishery back to where we want it to be.

13 And part of that is we're now raising

14 flounder in our Claude Peteet

15 Mariculture Center in Gulf Shores, and

16 we'll be restocking flounder beginning

17 this year.

18 And if you follow the Marine

19 Resources Division Facebook page, you

20 can see the progress of how that's

21 going. I think every week they're

22 posting pictures or -- start out under a

23 microscope and now they're big enough

1 you can see them in the tanks -- about

2 how that project is going.

3 So with that, Mr. Chairman -- it's a

4 little bit of a long report, but I did

5 want to hit on a lot of topics since we

6 have not met since May. Thank you.

7 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Thank you, Commissioner.

8 Thank you very much.

9 And to go back to what Mr. Cagle

10 said and to backstop what the

11 Commissioner said, Snapper Check works.

12 The reason that we have what we have is

13 because of the reporting -- mandatory

14 reporting. But that's gotten us where

15 we are. The same thing with our Game

16 Check system for deer and turkey.

17 That's something that's a tool that

18 helps us provide more and more

19 opportunities.

20 I'd like to take a couple of minutes

21 because this meeting is going to be not

22 too long and thank Ms. Jones, Betsy --

23 thank you for putting all this

1 together -- if I miss somebody --

2 Tracye, Wanda, Kristen, Chief Weathers

3 and your officers for being here, of

4 course, the Honor Guard. Good-looking

5 young men in great new uniforms. Very

6 proud of that. So thank you.

7 Don't forget our Special Opportunity

8 Areas. The Department is working to

9 create those every day in concert with,

10 as the Commissioner said, Forever Wild

11 and with the foundation. So those are

12 great opportunities -- and as well the

13 mentored hunting program -- to bring

14 somebody into hunting.

15 With that, let's step into the

16 Directors' reports. I think we have two

17 today. You want to go first?

18 Scott Bannon. Colonel Bannon.

19 DIRECTOR BANNON: All right. Good morning,

20 everyone. It will be a fairly quick

21 report. The Commissioner handled most

22 of it for me, so that worked out good,

23 the good news.

1 So again on the oyster season,

2 oysters are very important to the state

3 of Alabama. It's a source of income for

4 our folks and it's a way of life for the

5 people of south Alabama. Our staff

6 worked very hard to develop some harvest

7 goals for this year based on our

8 surveys, and we had a target of 7,000

9 sacks to be harvested. And then based

10 on the efforts of the oyster catchers,

11 they discovered some areas that we had

12 not surveyed. And we were able to go

13 back and resurvey those and reopen some

14 areas, and we actually harvested about

15 40 percent more. So we closed the

16 season at about 11,000 sacks. That's

17 about a million pounds of raw product.

18 Again, that's fair in the big scheme

19 of things. We feel like we're turning a

20 corner. I think next year is going to

21 be a better year. I'm very optimistic.

22 Unfortunately, our states to the west --

23 Mississippi, they lost all their product

1 due to the high water events of last
2 year, and Louisiana lost a large portion
3 of theirs. So there was very high
4 demand for Alabama oysters.

5 There's always high demand for
6 Alabama oysters, and the price was at
7 record highs this year. So our catchers
8 were able to make a little bit of money,
9 and we hope that's better for next year.
10 We had 110 boats, I think, was the most
11 number of boats we had out on the reef,
12 and we haven't had that in ten years.

13 The flounder and trout changes that
14 were passed last year through the
15 Advisory Board, we've received some very
16 favorable comments. We've been through
17 a season where people utilized the new
18 slot limit and the reduced bag limit.
19 And generally whenever you make a
20 reduction or a change you get a lot of
21 negative feedback. Overwhelmingly we've
22 received some positive comments. So
23 thank you guys for doing that.

1 To back up real quick about the
2 oysters and some other fisheries,
3 because of the freshwater events of last
4 year, as you guys have seen this year, a
5 lot of high water. The Mississippi
6 system was very high. And they opened
7 the Bonnet Carre spillway, and that
8 caused the damage in the other two
9 states. And then our watershed is
10 slightly differently, but, again, we had
11 some freshwater intrusion that caused
12 some damage to the saltwater areas. So
13 it impacted our shrimp and our crabs.
14 And our oysters came out fair through
15 that. We didn't get enough to destroy
16 them like it did in the other states.
17 But we're a large processor state. So
18 most of our processors in the Bayou La
19 Batre and Bon Secour areas bring product
20 from those states that didn't have
21 product.

22 So we had a large economic impact.
23 It totaled about \$129 million in the

1 time period that we calculated. And, of
2 course, the damage continues to go on.
3 So we've submitted to NOAA Fisheries a
4 claim for \$129 million, and there was
5 \$165 million available for the entire
6 country. The Gulf Coast had about
7 half-a-billion dollars in damage.

8 So we have not received any monetary
9 announcements yet. We were in DC this
10 week and having some conversations with
11 them. We hope that comes in the future,
12 but it will be pennies on the dollar.

13 Quick mention of the hatchery. We
14 have three species there. Florida
15 pompano we've been doing since 2017, and
16 we released about 8,000 juveniles into
17 the system this year.

18 Flounder is in its first full year
19 of production. We had our first spawn.
20 It takes them about a year or so to
21 acclimate to the tanks. We were able to
22 use some federal funds along with some
23 donations from the Coastal Conservation

1 Association of Alabama to get the
2 correct equipment and to establish this.
3 And we had our charter fishermen and our
4 recreational anglers who helped catch
5 the stock to put into those tanks. It
6 was a great combination of a
7 public-private partnership, so to speak,
8 where the public provided the flounder
9 to put in the tanks. We issued permits
10 so they could catch some undersize ones,
11 which the males are generally small.

12 And so we look forward in a couple
13 of weeks to having the release of those,
14 and we'll get David to do an article.
15 And, like I said, follow our Facebook
16 page. The pictures have been great to
17 watch those baby flounder and their eyes
18 move from both sides of their head to
19 one side of their head. They're an
20 interesting creature.

21 Spotted seatrout is the third
22 species that we've just started. Again,
23 the public has provided the stock for

1 that. It's more cost-efficient for us
2 to let the public go catch the fish
3 instead of my staff going and catching
4 the fish and probably a little better
5 optics too. So we've been very
6 appreciative of that.

7 That Claude Peteet Mariculture
8 Center has been there since about the
9 '70s, and we had a drain line that has
10 been there since the '70s. So this year
11 we were able to replace it so that we
12 could -- hopefully we'll get another 40
13 or 50 years out of that drain line so
14 that we can continue operations.

15 License sales this year have been
16 pretty steady for us. I know in some
17 parts of the conservation world it's
18 been in a little bit of a decline. In
19 the saltwater fishing it's been pretty
20 good.

21 Last year we passed the Gulf Reef
22 Fish Endorsement which helps us to
23 identify the people participating in

1 reef-fish fishing. And that went on
2 sale in August of this year, and that
3 applies to private anglers, commercial
4 party boats or charter boats, and
5 commercial anglers as well. And the
6 sales in that have been pretty fair. So
7 we're hoping to utilize that along with
8 Snapper Check this year to have a little
9 bit of a -- a better definition of the
10 number of people that are truly
11 participating in the reef-fish fishery
12 off the state of Alabama.

13 And we're working on doing some
14 surveying offshore to expand our
15 artificial reef zone by about 110 square
16 miles, and by then -- I don't remember
17 what the total number of square miles
18 will be, but it'll be a bunch. That's
19 my official term. So we're very excited
20 about that. The surveying should start
21 here in the next few weeks.

22 Snapper Check, last year we had the
23 best reporting rate we had had in -- in

1 the history. It was about 51 percent
2 for the private angler, and in the
3 reporting world that's a pretty good
4 number. Scott's goal is 100, so I'm
5 going to stick with that.

6 But it did help us to manage that
7 season. As Mr. Cagle said, we made two
8 additional seasons based on the weather.
9 Last year the weather got us pretty good
10 on a few weekends, so it reduced the
11 effort. And so we opened two different
12 occasions, and that shows that the State
13 of Alabama can be very responsible in
14 managing that fishery.

15 So for this year we got a little bit
16 of boost in the number of pounds that we
17 can catch, and it's about a day or two's
18 worth in the grand scheme of things.
19 Alabama has 3 percent of the coastline,
20 and we get 26.2 percent of the fish out
21 of the Gulf of Mexico. So it's a pretty
22 good deal across the -- when you look at
23 it from a Gulf perspective.

1 So we're going to open a season this
2 year -- the announcement will go out
3 Monday, the official press release, but
4 I want to tell you guys today that we
5 are going to open to the private angler
6 red snapper season on Friday, May 22nd,
7 which is the Friday of Memorial Day
8 weekend, and we're going to run through
9 Sunday, July the 19th. So that's a
10 35-day season.

11 And we're going to run it a little
12 bit different this year. We're going to
13 do four-day weekends. We've done
14 three-day weekends, Friday, Saturday,
15 Sunday. We're going to add Mondays.
16 And that's at the request of the public.
17 Especially local people in the south
18 part of the state would like to avoid
19 the chaos of the weekend fishery and let
20 the visitors participate in that, and if
21 their schedule allows and the weather is
22 going to cooperate, they'll go on Monday
23 and let other people have an opportunity

1 and not have to deal with quite as much
 2 activity. And that helps spread the
 3 pressure.
 4 So Mondays are kind of a new thing
 5 for us. So we're shooting for that
 6 35-day season. There's always a chance
 7 that we could close a little early if
 8 the weather is perfect and the effort is
 9 extremely high, but we feel pretty
 10 confident we'll get through that
 11 weekend. And then if there's any
 12 additional days, we will consider
 13 something such as the amberjack season
 14 in August or Labor Day weekend. And
 15 last year we got all the way to the one
 16 weekend in October, which was fairly
 17 successful, but that really only applies
 18 to local anglers to get to take
 19 advantage of that.
 20 So, again, Friday, May 22nd, through
 21 Sunday, July 19th. 35 days. Friday,
 22 Saturday, Sunday, Monday. So it opens
 23 12:01 a.m. on Friday, so if you're an

1 early riser or you like to stay up late,
 2 and it'll close at midnight on Mondays.
 3 With the Gulf Reef Fish Endorsement
 4 it allows our enforcement guys to have a
 5 little more role in ensuring the
 6 compliance that will also lead to the
 7 compliance in the Snapper Check.
 8 And one last item on the Snapper
 9 Check is we did not allow for anglers to
 10 catch red snapper from the shoreline,
 11 which historically has not happened, and
 12 we did not allow for anglers to catch
 13 red snapper via kayak or unpowered
 14 vessels. Now with Alabama's expansion
 15 of the reef zone right up to the
 16 shoreline -- we have some reefs that are
 17 within 800 feet of the shore -- you can
 18 and will and they do catch red snapper
 19 on the beach.
 20 So we're using the Conservation ID.
 21 This year our staff along with Alabama
 22 Interactive is putting that into place
 23 hopefully for the start of the season so

1 that a kayaker or someone fishing from
 2 the beach can report through Snapper
 3 Check using their Conservation ID. We
 4 just did not give them the opportunity
 5 to do that before. And when you see the
 6 Facebook pictures of somebody with the
 7 condos in the background, you're like
 8 good job catching those fish, but we did
 9 not give you the opportunity to report
 10 and we want to do that.
 11 So that concludes my report. If I
 12 can answer any questions --
 13 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Any questions from the Board?
 14 Mr. Hartzog.
 15 MR. HARTZOG: Mr. Chairman.
 16 One species you didn't -- Mr. Avery
 17 at the last meeting expressed concern
 18 over the flounder and over the oysters
 19 but also over the crabs, and you didn't
 20 have any comments as to the crabs as to
 21 what's the status of their --
 22 DIRECTOR BANNON: Sure. So I don't have the
 23 numbers on the -- we were actually just

1 looking at flounder on the way up here,
 2 the harvest efforts of flounder.
 3 Flounder are an up-and-down species
 4 throughout the last few years, so it's a
 5 little hard. I did not look at the
 6 crabs, but we do know that the crabs
 7 were impacted by the freshwater events
 8 this year.
 9 So crabs have the ability to push
 10 away from that freshwater intrusion. So
 11 what we saw in some areas was an
 12 increase in harvest and in other areas a
 13 decrease. Mississippi crabs kind of
 14 push towards the Alabama line, and then
 15 the Bay crabs push down towards the
 16 lower end of Mobile Bay.
 17 So it's a little bit of a quirky
 18 year with the incredible high water that
 19 we had this year, the freshwater
 20 intrusion. But we still have a
 21 consistent number of crab catchers, and
 22 so I will -- for the next meeting I'll
 23 make sure we pull the harvest reports

1 and give you some totals compared to the
2 last couple of years.

3 MR. HARTZOG: Okay. You know, Mr. Avery
4 brought up those three species and in
5 your report you didn't mention them,
6 so ...

7 DIRECTOR BANNON: And, like I said, we did
8 look at the flounder numbers. I was
9 remiss and did not look at the crab
10 numbers.

11 MR. HARTZOG: Thank you.

12 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Any other questions for
13 Colonel Bannon?
14 Commissioner.

15 COMMISSIONER BLANKENSHIP: Would you like to
16 talk about your oyster season
17 regulation --

18 DIRECTOR BANNON: Yeah, the changes. I
19 probably should do that.

20 So the two regulations that we
21 presented before the Board today, the
22 first one has to do with oystering.
23 We've been able -- last year we didn't

1 open at all. The year before it was 138
2 sacks. Before that it was only a few
3 thousand sacks.

4 When we were going to open this
5 year, I made the comment -- I said the
6 average age of an oyster catcher is
7 going to be 55. Probably wasn't that
8 far off. One of the discussions in the
9 seafood business is trying to get young
10 people interested in becoming commercial
11 fishermen. And, again, it's been a way
12 of life here in Alabama, and there are
13 some changes that have made that
14 difficult.

15 For the oystering, the way the rules
16 are set up it's a Monday through Friday
17 harvest. And I was there on a holiday,
18 and there were three kids that went
19 oystering with their parents. Two of
20 them said I kind of like this and
21 wouldn't mind doing it, and one of them
22 said I hate this, I'd rather be in
23 school. Both of those are good answers.

1 One learned this is not for me, and the
2 other two said, you know what, I would
3 like to do this. And we realized that
4 we did not give them the opportunity
5 because we are only open Monday through
6 Friday.

7 And actually someone from industry
8 brought it up as well. They said,
9 Scott, you're going to be mad at me
10 because I want to do something. I said,
11 well, I'm not going to be mad. I may
12 not agree. And he said I think we
13 should open on Saturdays to allow young
14 people to go oystering. And I said,
15 well, you're in luck. I'm not mad. I'm
16 excited because I think that we should
17 do that.

18 So that's the purpose of opening on
19 select Saturdays is to allow young
20 people who are in school the opportunity
21 to commercially harvest oysters. They
22 could buy a commercial harvester
23 license. They could make their own

1 money. It's hard work. And some of
2 them want to do it, and so we want to
3 provide that opportunity.

4 We will do select Saturdays because
5 there is a little bit of a concern with
6 the -- we'll have to coordinate with the
7 dealers. So we couldn't do it every
8 weekend because it's not cost-effective
9 for the dealers to be open for that all
10 the time. So we will work with the
11 industry to decide how many Saturdays
12 and what that would look like. But the
13 regulation did not allow for it. So
14 that's the purpose for that regulation.

15 The other regulation that we've
16 presented to you was to our Snapper
17 Check regulation, so to speak. We
18 wanted to make the change to make the
19 Conservation ID a requirement for an
20 angler who's fishing from the shore or
21 from an unpowered vessel where we didn't
22 give them the opportunity.

23 In addition, we would like to add

1 amberjack and triggerfish as two
 2 mandatory species under Snapper Check.
 3 And, again, that seems like more
 4 regulation, things to that effect, but
 5 we want to do this for the fishermen's
 6 benefit. Snapper Check we feel has
 7 proven that real-time data and data by
 8 our folks off our coast is important to
 9 make change. That was part of the
 10 process that allowed us to get to this
 11 state management where the states now
 12 manage red snapper.

13 Amberjack and triggerfish are two
 14 species that are very valuable to the
 15 private anglers of the state of Alabama.
 16 And we disagree a little bit with some
 17 of the data that is collected from the
 18 federal government, and the best way to
 19 dispute it is to get your own good data.
 20 And we have through the Sea Lab. We
 21 have some other survey type things. And
 22 then we would like to do the reporting
 23 to show what Alabama anglers are really

1 bringing in.

2 The survey system that the federal
 3 government uses showed that we fished a
 4 million pounds of red snapper last year,
 5 which was what we were allocated. We
 6 finished the season with 16,000 pounds
 7 left, which is about half of a Sunday
 8 fishing in Alabama. So we felt like we
 9 did a pretty good job with that. The
 10 federal government says we fished 5
 11 million pounds. We can't physically
 12 fish that many pounds. We don't have
 13 that number -- the number of trips they
 14 said we made, we don't have the ability
 15 to fish that many trips.

16 So that's why we want to add
 17 triggerfish and amberjack, two crucial
 18 species for us in Alabama, to the
 19 mandatory reporting. That would begin
 20 in January of '21. We wouldn't
 21 implement it this season. You know, it
 22 has to go through the Board here. But
 23 then we would start in January of '21.

1 And we would advertise and explain to
 2 people, look, the reason why we would
 3 want to do that. And for people that
 4 are engaged in that fishery, they
 5 realize that this data is very valuable
 6 to what they do.

7 And I think now -- we also want to
 8 remove the paper tickets. If you're
 9 reporting through Snapper Check, there
 10 are some select boat ramps where you can
 11 fill out a paper ticket to report your
 12 catch. It's about 7 percent of the
 13 landings. And it's a little bit clunky
 14 for us. It doesn't contribute to the
 15 real-time data. We have to go collect
 16 that. It's a cost that we feel like we
 17 could do away with. With the access of
 18 smart phones there are very, very, very
 19 few people that go on a fishing trip
 20 where there is not a smartphone on the
 21 boat to be able to report. Reporting
 22 takes less than 30 seconds.

23 There are -- I can name a fisherman

1 who has a flip phone, but his family has
 2 a smartphone. So he can call his family
 3 member and say please report my fish.
 4 So there is access to it.

5 Reducing the administrative and
 6 financial burden of paper tickets for
 7 next year we think would be a benefit.
 8 And most people who reported by paper
 9 could have reported by smartphone, and
 10 that's a much better -- a lot of them
 11 have handwriting like I do, and we run
 12 into a lot of administrative errors
 13 trying to enter that data.

14 Sorry for the addendum there. Thank
 15 you, Commissioner.

16 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Any questions from the Board
 17 of Colonel Bannon?

18 (No response.)

19 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Thank you very much.

20 Next we will hear from Director
 21 Sykes. As he is cueing up, I want to
 22 take just two seconds more to thank the
 23 folks who work with our legislature

1 here, not just the Commissioner or the
2 Directors, but, of course, Deputy
3 Commissioner Poolos and legal staff with
4 Jennifer, Charlanna, and those that
5 aren't here today. So thank y'all very
6 much for what you do.

7 DIRECTOR SYKES: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. And
8 I am really glad that you let Colonel
9 Bannon speak ahead of me. It kind of
10 sets up one of the points I want to
11 make.

12 Commissioner said it. You said it.
13 Mr. Cagle said it. And Colonel Bannon
14 said it: That Snapper Check has been
15 the reason why things have been so
16 successful. I think the success of that
17 by participants has been because the
18 federal government has been involved and
19 they think our staff can do better than
20 the feds.

21 Well, since I don't think we have a
22 fear of the feds coming in and taking
23 charge of our deer and turkey numbers, I

1 don't think that hunters are going to
2 respond to Game Check like they did
3 Snapper Check. And since we have
4 advertised in magazines, TV, radio, our
5 Digest, begged and pleaded for people to
6 actually report, we're kind of at the
7 end of our rope. We don't really know
8 what is the next step to try to increase
9 participation.

10 So in meeting with my staff and the
11 Commissioner's office, we figured that
12 this was the next best thing is for 2021
13 we're just going to close turkey season
14 in the hopes that people will understand
15 how important Game Check is. We only
16 had less than 11,000 turkeys reported
17 last year. I don't think anybody on
18 this board -- Raymond and Ben probably
19 know enough people that got 10 percent
20 of that.

21 We need people to understand how
22 important those numbers are. If our
23 turkey numbers are actually that low,

1 we're in a mess. Now, we don't think
2 they're that low, but this is the
3 information that we have to go on.

4 And before the Commissioner has a
5 stroke, we're just picking with this
6 slide. But I wanted to get everybody's
7 attention, and Scott set it up
8 beautifully. We need people to report.

9 You can breathe now, Dr. Lemme.
10 We're not going to make the phones ring
11 off the hook.

12 All right. On a serious note, the
13 Chairman wanted me to bring up something
14 that -- every hunting accident in the
15 state comes across my desk. I didn't
16 realize how bad it was until I got
17 there. My crew that I hunted with
18 growing up and through my career had
19 always been pretty safe. We grew up
20 doing it. We respected the issues. But
21 unfortunately there's a lot that don't.

22 Hunting accidents in 2018 and 2019,
23 we had 20 total, 14 non-fatal and six

1 fatal, with the vast majority of those
2 being tree stand accidents, 12 non-fatal
3 and three fatal. And we did a little
4 bit better this year. Hunting accidents
5 for this season were down two with 15
6 non-fatal and three fatal. Firearms, we
7 had no fatalities. We had only had five
8 non-fatal. Tree stand numbers were down
9 a little bit.

10 But some of the common denominators
11 were -- it's not what you would think.
12 It's not typically younger hunters or
13 inexperienced hunters that are having
14 these problems. The majority of the
15 hunters who fall out of tree stands and
16 are killed or injured are anywhere from
17 their late 30s to their 60s. They've
18 been hunting forever. The majority of
19 them have not taken a hunter education
20 course because they were grandfathered
21 in and they get complacent. The
22 majority of the firearms incidents are
23 the same, and most of them were

1 self-inflicted. Just taking things for
2 granted and being complacent.

3 The really bad thing about the tree
4 stand accidents is 95 percent of them
5 are completely preventable. If people
6 will wear a safety harness and wear a
7 Lifeline and be connected from the time
8 they leave the ground till the time they
9 get back on the ground, 95 percent or
10 better of our tree stand accidents would
11 be eliminated.

12 We did have something pop up this
13 year that was a little unusual is we
14 actually had three people die in tree
15 stand accidents this year from permanent
16 shooting blinds. So every year -- yeah.
17 It's kind of perplexing, which is why I
18 put that picture there.

19 This was a portable homemade blind
20 that was made out of scaffolding and tin
21 put on a trailer and was ratcheted
22 together with ratchet straps. Every
23 year we've been telling people check

1 your portable stands, check your
2 lock-ons, check your ladder stands, but
3 apparently now we need to start telling
4 people check your shooting houses, check
5 your permanent box stands.

6 We had one gentleman fall through
7 leaning out of the front window to trim
8 a branch that had grown in front. The
9 whole side collapsed. So a lot of these
10 are prevented -- we can prevent them
11 from happening if people will just take
12 a little bit of time to do some small
13 things before the season comes in.

14 The biggest change that we have got
15 for this year is we added two new deer
16 zones. We've been looking at this for
17 over a decade with our fetal
18 collections. When we started out, we
19 just had a Zone A and B with B going
20 into February. We adjusted that. So
21 now we have Zone D, which is mainly
22 around Winston County, which has an
23 earlier rut based on all of our

1 information than the surrounding areas,
2 and we have a Zone E, or affectionately
3 known as Zone J, in Cleburne County and
4 then down around Russell County.

5 The data is there. The science is
6 there. We've been telling hunters that,
7 yes, we know you're right. Your deer
8 rut earlier. It just takes a while to
9 get lines drawn and get the maps done
10 and make sure that not only can the
11 hunters enjoy it, but we can enforce it,
12 that everybody understands what's going
13 on.

14 I'm not going to go through all of
15 the dates because it is -- you can see
16 from that it's fairly elaborate, the new
17 maps. David Rainer has stuck a mic in
18 front of me here, so I am betting that
19 probably next Wednesday afternoon there
20 will be an article out on the
21 proceedings from the Advisory Board
22 where David will have all of these maps
23 with their dates.

1 The main thing people need to
2 understand is that in Zone D and E gun
3 season will come in a couple of weeks
4 early and will go out a couple of weeks
5 early. You're not getting additional
6 time. You have asked to be moved to the
7 earlier spot because of the rut. You
8 get a little in the front. You lose a
9 little bit in the rear. So David will
10 have all of that next week. It will be
11 out. It will be online and in the
12 newspapers.

13 Several of the Board members
14 mentioned our CWD stakeholder meetings
15 that we had throughout the state. I
16 want to thank our staff, especially Amy
17 and Michael East, for organizing all of
18 these. I want to thank Commissioner
19 Pate for his staff participating with
20 Dr. Frazier and some of the other vets
21 that were there at all of them.

22 As of today -- I want to hit that
23 last bullet point -- we do not have CWD

1 in the state of Alabama. We've
 2 currently tested this season over 1500
 3 deer, which exceeds our sample goal.
 4 However, we still have a couple of areas
 5 that we're not quite satisfied, that
 6 we're going to test an additional 2- or
 7 300 before next gun season.

8 We've been trying to work with as
 9 many processors, taxidermists, hunting
 10 clubs. We're even working with DOT.
 11 They're letting us know road kills. But
 12 we also put out 53 self-service check
 13 stations, which are freezers, scattered
 14 throughout the state. Unfortunately,
 15 you could house ice cream in most of
 16 them right now because nobody used them.

17 We had several hundred that were
 18 dropped off, but that's not enough. We
 19 need participation from the hunters to
 20 help us maintain our status of CWD free.
 21 People can go online to
 22 *OutdoorAlabama.com* to see all of the
 23 freezer locations. All of our district

1 offices are equipped to take samples.

2 And unlike years past, we have a
 3 good relationship with our Department of
 4 Ag and Industries with our sampling and
 5 our testing. Now we can get samples
 6 collected, sent to Auburn, and back
 7 sometimes within a couple of days,
 8 90 percent of the time within a week to
 9 ten days. So if hunters drop a deer
 10 off, we can have their results back to
 11 them quickly. And, again, all they need
 12 to do is go to
 13 *OutdoorAlabama.com/CWD-sampling-results*
 14 and they can find all of that.

15 I was on a text thread with Chief
 16 Gauldin and Mr. Cagle yesterday or day
 17 before yesterday on a deer just north of
 18 the line that someone had sent him a
 19 video of that was exhibiting some
 20 strange behaviors. That's one thing
 21 that we need from people. If they see a
 22 deer that is acting strange -- let me go
 23 ahead and say this: You cannot look at

1 a deer and tell that it has CWD. So if
 2 somebody tells you they saw a deer on
 3 the side of the road with CWD, they're
 4 lying. You cannot do that unless we
 5 take a sample, send it to Auburn, and
 6 have it tested.

7 However, if you see something, you
 8 can contact us. We have 24 hours
 9 somebody sitting by the phone, or you
 10 can go online and report it.

11 Mr. Chairman, that's all I have.

12 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Thank you.

13 Are there any questions from the
 14 Board for Director Sykes?

15 MR. RAYMOND JONES: Mr. Chairman?

16 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Mr. Jones.

17 MR. RAYMOND JONES: On your CWD map you had
 18 two different colors, a green and kind
 19 of a beige color. What was the
 20 difference?

21 DIRECTOR SYKES: It's basically an assessment
 22 of risk of where we think it may -- so
 23 northwest Alabama, with Tennessee being

1 positive, Mississippi being positive,
 2 some of those counties down through
 3 there we're trying to take a higher
 4 number of samples just because common
 5 sense tells you that may be where it's
 6 going to come from.

7 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Any other questions?

8 MR. HARTZOG: Mr. Chairman?

9 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Mr. Hartzog.

10 MR. HARTZOG: Chuck, just out of curiosity,
 11 what was the dollar amount raised by the
 12 new permit for corn?

13 DIRECTOR SYKES: I think it was \$10.75.

14 I don't know the exact number. It
 15 was around -- it was a couple of million
 16 dollars.

17 MR. HARTZOG: Is that available for PR match?

18 DIRECTOR SYKES: Absolutely.

19 MR. HARTZOG: Good.

20 DIRECTOR SYKES: The part of it that does not
 21 go to law enforcement. It's a
 22 complicated, convoluted formula, but,
 23 yes, the part that does not go to law

1 enforcement is available for match,
2 absolutely.

3 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Any more questions for --

4 COMMISSIONER BLANKENSHIP: I do want to
5 clarify one thing Chuck said. We have
6 had a good relationship with the
7 Department of Ag and Industries. They
8 just didn't have the equipment for us to
9 be able to do the sampling and get those
10 results back to us as quickly.

11 DIRECTOR SYKES: That's right.

12 COMMISSIONER BLANKENSHIP: And so now that
13 we've worked together and they have the
14 sampling equipment, we're able to get
15 that turned around very -- quicker now
16 than having to send it off to other
17 states.

18 DIRECTOR SYKES: Absolutely.

19 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Mr. Stimpson.

20 MR. STIMPSON: Chuck, I wanted to let you know
21 that I posted a picture of that slide
22 that you had on closing turkey season to
23 Instagram through a cell phone. You've

1 already had 5,000 hits.

2 DIRECTOR SYKES: I sort of figured it would.

3 That's why we did it.

4 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Any other questions?

5 MR. CAGLE: Mr. Chairman?

6 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Mr. Cagle.

7 MR. CAGLE: Can you give us an update on where
8 license sales stand and kind of how we
9 compare to other years?

10 DIRECTOR SYKES: Yeah, I can. And I might as
11 well while I'm here. I'll go ahead and
12 do this. Scott took the liberty of
13 going a little extra, so I will too.

14 Grady, I do know exactly how many we
15 sold, and I guess it needs to be in the
16 record.

17 Last year we sold 146,828 all game
18 hunting licenses. This year we sold
19 151,286. So that was an increase of
20 4,458.

21 MR. HARTZOG: Good.

22 DIRECTOR SYKES: So our license sales went up
23 this year. Small game went up.

1 Resident baiting privileges, do you
2 think we sold more or less than annual
3 hunting licenses?

4 MR. STIMPSON: More.

5 DIRECTOR SYKES: 7,011 more. Sold 158,297.
6 This was as of Monday.

7 Our non-resident licenses are still
8 up. Non-resident bait privileges were
9 around 17,000.

10 But one thing I do want to get in
11 the minutes, this isn't the full story.
12 People don't ask all of the right
13 questions. Yes, we sold more licenses
14 and that baiting privilege did bring us
15 in another couple of million dollars,
16 and unfortunately that's where a lot of
17 people let it go. If they would bother
18 to ask another question or listen a
19 little better, this was the first year
20 in the past four that Fred and I have
21 not had to cut the budget from our Law
22 Enforcement, Wildlife and Fisheries
23 Division, for budget downfalls.

1 So we weren't flush and all of a
2 sudden we're in high cotton with the
3 baiting license. All that did was allow
4 Chief Weathers to buy a couple of trucks
5 this year rather than not, where
6 officers that are in a 200,000 mile
7 truck can now have a decent truck to go
8 check for compliance.

9 So I don't want people to think that
10 just because that baiting license passed
11 that we're great because we're not. It
12 just allowed us not to have to cut
13 budgets this year.

14 MR. STIMPSON: Do you think the baiting
15 changed your harvest numbers any?

16 DIRECTOR SYKES: And it may have been you that
17 said in your report that deer seem to be
18 more nocturnal. That's been proven in
19 state after state after state after
20 state. We're getting reports from some
21 people it was the greatest season they
22 ever had. Others think it's the worst
23 thing that ever happened. It's all in

1 how you use it and is a personal
 2 preference.
 3 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Mr. Cagle.
 4 MR. CAGLE: Mr. Chairman, I want to ask one
 5 more follow-up question.
 6 So we sold 151,000 all game hunting
 7 licenses. Do you think we have more
 8 than 151,000 hunters?
 9 DIRECTOR SYKES: Oh, absolutely. That's
 10 another thing that we ran this year.
 11 With that baiting privilege it had no
 12 exemptions. So we had 27,000 people
 13 that bought a baiting license that did
 14 not have a hunting license. So that is
 15 private landowners on their own
 16 property, under 16, over 65. So for the
 17 first time in the history of Alabama we
 18 can count them now as hunters. That
 19 gives us a bigger portion of the PR
 20 dollars that's set aside for Alabama.
 21 Whether it's good, bad, whether you
 22 agree with it or not, it did have some
 23 positive impacts to our budget, and,

1 more importantly, the legislature gave
 2 us the authority to manage baiting and
 3 feeding of wildlife in the event of a
 4 disease. So philosophy aside, ethics
 5 aside, whether you like it or not, in my
 6 opinion the Department is better off
 7 today than it was before it passed.
 8 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Any other questions from the
 9 Board?
 10 (No response.)
 11 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Director Sykes, thank you
 12 very much. Appreciate it. Appreciate
 13 it very, very much.
 14 MR. HARTZOG: Thank you, Chuck.
 15 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: The next portion of our
 16 meeting today will be public comments,
 17 which is very important to what we do.
 18 We appreciate everybody being here.
 19 You have three minutes at the
 20 podium. We call your name. Your three
 21 minutes start when you get there. I ask
 22 you -- we only have eight speakers
 23 unless somebody else has signed up. So

1 I'm going to ask the participants and
 2 our folks here visiting with us today to
 3 be respectful, reserve your comments,
 4 please, inside this hall. No applause
 5 and no outbursts.
 6 And so let's move on with the first
 7 one. Ms. Jones is going to hold time
 8 with the three minutes, and we'll
 9 reserve the right to give you a few
 10 extra moments to finalize your
 11 statement.
 12 So with that, our first speaker
 13 today -- is there anything else that
 14 I've left out that you want to know?
 15 You're going to have to speak
 16 into -- if you talk softly -- I don't.
 17 But if you talk softly, speak into the
 18 microphone and get close to it or we
 19 can't hear you.
 20 So our first speaker today is
 21 Mr. Randy Campbell.
 22 MR. CAMPBELL: Good morning, gentlemen.
 23 Appreciate the time. My name is Randy

1 Campbell, and I live in Alpine,
 2 Tennessee. And for the past -- and I
 3 have for the past 22 years. Before that
 4 I lived in the state of Florida.
 5 I have been in the rattlesnake
 6 business for 33 years, and I've been
 7 picking up dead rattlesnakes in Alabama,
 8 Florida, and Georgia since I began. I
 9 am here because about a year ago
 10 required permits to deal with
 11 rattlesnakes in Alabama was enacted. I
 12 applied for these requests for the
 13 permit, and I was denied three times.
 14 Gentlemen, let me explain my
 15 business. I pick up dead rattlesnakes
 16 from the mom-and-pop stores in rural
 17 areas like you were talking about
 18 earlier. They pay a couple of dollars a
 19 foot for a rattlesnake to the public,
 20 and I double that money to the
 21 mom-and-pop stores.
 22 I spend tens of thousands of dollars
 23 on rattlesnakes in the state of Alabama,

1 Florida, and Georgia every year. The
2 money people get for turning in a dead
3 snake instead of letting it rot buys
4 them milk -- a couple gallons of milk, a
5 little bit of gas. The country store
6 receives 200 to \$500 a month, and on a
7 little country store that's a lot of
8 money.

9 The snakes that I collect are from
10 natural kills, run over by a car,
11 tractor, farm equipment, encountered by
12 farmers, somebody in their yard,
13 somewhere on the farm that would
14 actually throw that snake away, and I
15 turn it into a natural resource. I tan
16 rattlesnake hides, canebrakes, western
17 diamondbacks, and I furnish them to the
18 boot companies.

19 If you ever see a rattlesnake boot
20 in a western store, it came from us, a
21 family business, my son and myself. I
22 pick up just a tiny fraction of the
23 naturally killed snakes in Alabama. I

1 also pick up snakes in Florida which no
2 longer requires a permit. And Georgia
3 requires a permit, and I give them a
4 report every month -- every year.

5 According to my rattlesnakes -- the
6 rattlesnake is thriving in Florida,
7 Georgia, and Alabama. The report that I
8 have given you took months to compile
9 and will show you the number of
10 rattlesnakes actually in the hundreds of
11 thousands are healthy and abundant.

12 If you'll turn to page 13, you'll
13 see ten pickup sites, and at the bottom
14 you'll see how many snakes that I buy
15 per year. And those numbers fluctuate
16 very little.

17 Gentlemen, I want to comply with the
18 law, have done due diligence just to do
19 that, and I have been denied a permit.

20 I stand before you today --

21 MS. JONES: Time.

22 MR. CAMPBELL: -- requesting to be issued a
23 permit for myself, my son, and my family

1 that we have done for the past 33 years.
2 Thank you.

3 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Thank you. Hold your
4 position.

5 Any questions for Mr. Campbell?

6 COMMISSIONER BLANKENSHIP: Mr. Campbell, I
7 would like to ask you to speak with Amy
8 Silvano while you're here today.

9 Before you leave today, Amy, will
10 you please talk with him. Thank you.

11 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Thank you, Mr. Campbell.

12 Our next speaker is Brandon Jackson.

13 MR. JACKSON: I'm Brandon Jackson. I own
14 Riverside Fly Shop and have since 2005.

15 I appreciate the Board for all that
16 you do and the Department for all that
17 they do. Congratulations on that award.
18 That's pretty awesome. Appreciate our
19 enforcement officers.

20 Officer Jonathan does a lot of work
21 on the river where we're at. We own the
22 shop on the river below Smith Lake on
23 the Sipsey Fork, and he does a great

1 job. It's not often you find a guy who
2 can write somebody a ticket and they
3 walk away smiling afterwards, but that
4 seems to be the case with him often on
5 our river.

6 I have two things that I'd like to
7 express. I'm part of Trout Unlimited,
8 and that's a group that has a national
9 organization but also has a chapter in
10 Alabama. And recently that chapter, the
11 state chapter, raised over 10,000 --
12 around \$10,000 for a feasibility study.

13 We are contracting with Chris
14 Metcalfe. He was the person responsible
15 for the work that Alabama Power did on
16 the Sipsey Fork in improving it and
17 making it more accessible and a better
18 fishery. And he's going to do a
19 feasibility study to see how much it
20 would cost, whether it is feasible or
21 not feasible, to implement the same
22 patterns for a lower section of the
23 river.

1 Only a very small section was done
 2 originally through the work that Alabama
 3 Power did, and we're using those funds
 4 to help look at the possibility of
 5 improving larger sections of the stream.
 6 That would make it match more closely to
 7 other states that have improved areas of
 8 their streams bringing in more revenue,
 9 more anglers, and more opportunities,
 10 and that's what we would like to see.
 11 How we see that being used is to provide
 12 greater opportunities to more people.

13 In order to raise that money, this
 14 local chapter, the Sipsey chapter of
 15 Trout Unlimited, was one of the first
 16 tailraces ever to be granted money
 17 through the national organization of
 18 Trout Unlimited. So the national
 19 organization sees the potential of this
 20 stream. But it was also one of the
 21 largest number of unique donors to any
 22 of their fundraisers. So within that
 23 section we had more people interested in

1 our stream in Alabama than in any of the
 2 other streams that were in that drive
 3 nationally.

4 The second thing is I've been able
 5 to secure funding for two stockings of
 6 brook trout per year. In previous
 7 meetings with the Board we've talked
 8 about the possibility of brook trout,
 9 and that was -- that was a favorable
 10 opinion. We've talked about brown
 11 trout, not so favorable --

12 MS. JONES: Time.

13 MR. JACKSON: -- but brook trout was much more
 14 favorable. And we have been able to
 15 secure those funds.

16 I would like and look forward to the
 17 opportunity to work with the Department
 18 in purchasing those fish, stocking those
 19 fish, and working with the Department on
 20 that effort.

21 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Thank you, Brandon.

22 Any questions from the Board?

23 Mr. Hartzog.

1 MR. HARTZOG: Mr. Brandon, one question.

2 MR. JACKSON: Yes, sir.

3 MR. HARTZOG: Since the brown trout has a
 4 higher temperature tolerance than the
 5 brook trout, why are you looking --
 6 because the further you go downstream
 7 trying to enhance that habitat the
 8 warmer the water gets, and if the brown
 9 trout is more tolerable to higher
 10 temperature, why is the brook trout the
 11 species of choice instead of the brown
 12 trout?

13 MR. JACKSON: Brown trout would be my choice,
 14 but we've been denied that on several
 15 occasions. But the brook trout was more
 16 favorable. It seems from my
 17 understanding -- I'm not a fisheries
 18 biologist, but my understanding is that
 19 they typically stay closer to the dam
 20 and therefore would be less likely --
 21 because they like colder waters -- less
 22 likely to go into areas that might
 23 adversely impact other fish or other

1 areas of the fishery.

2 MR. HARTZOG: Okay.

3 MR. JACKSON: But the area that we're looking
 4 to improve is from the bridge up. So
 5 we're still only looking at about
 6 3 miles downstream from the dam. If
 7 there is much of a temperature change,
 8 it would be minute at that point.

9 MR. HARTZOG: Okay.

10 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Any other questions?

11 MR. CAGLE: Mr. Chairman?

12 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Mr. Cagle.

13 MR. CAGLE: And I think my comments are mostly
 14 directed at the Department.

15 I appreciate all the effort and
 16 resources the Department has invested in
 17 this great fishery. The research that
 18 Auburn did was great. It's a very
 19 significant investment to do that. The
 20 Department has worked well to make this
 21 great fishery what it is working
 22 alongside private companies that have an
 23 interest in it and have been supportive.

1 And it's a very unique resource. We're
 2 very blessed to have it.
 3 Appreciate y'all's efforts and just
 4 continuing to look at ways to make it
 5 better recognizing that, you know, the
 6 improvements to get us this far were
 7 easy. It gets a lot harder to make
 8 something that's good a little bit
 9 better because you've already picked the
 10 low-hanging fruit. But appreciate
 11 y'all's efforts in continuing to work
 12 with the resource users of that to see
 13 what's possible and look at each step
 14 with U.S. Fish and Wildlife.
 15 So just appreciate what y'all have
 16 done. It's a great resource that we
 17 all -- that everyone in the state gets
 18 to enjoy. And, you know, I think it's
 19 great that we have an opportunity to
 20 look for ways to make it even a little
 21 bit better if it works within the
 22 biology and all the other constraints.
 23 So thank y'all for your efforts.

1 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Any additional questions?
 2 (No response.)
 3 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Thank you, Brandon. Well
 4 done.
 5 Our next speaker today is Mr. David
 6 Miller.
 7 MR. MILLER: Good morning, gentlemen. Thank
 8 you for the opportunity to address the
 9 Board today.
 10 My issue has to do with landowner
 11 safety. I own land in Bullock County,
 12 and I have for the past 27 years. My
 13 issue today is the placement of these
 14 deer stands from adjoining landowners
 15 for their leases with the deer stands
 16 only a few feet away from our property
 17 line. And they will face our property.
 18 Now, my place is not big. You see
 19 the diagram there on the packet that you
 20 have there. And on that diagram it
 21 shows the position of each of these deer
 22 stands. And over the years it has
 23 evolved to a commercial-type hunting

1 operation, either pay to hunt by the day
 2 or pay a lease. Either way this
 3 situation is very dangerous.
 4 My family and I and my guests have
 5 been out on our horses running our bird
 6 dogs, jumping deer or a wounded deer,
 7 and before that thing gets off the
 8 property these deer hunters are shooting
 9 at the deer on our place. They're not
 10 waiting for it to cross the line.
 11 So what I'm asking you to do is to
 12 provide me some protection and my guests
 13 and my family, have these deer stands
 14 limited to the distance from the
 15 property line, also the direction that
 16 they face, that they do not face the
 17 adjoining property.
 18 I'm not the only one that has this
 19 problem. I have fellow landowners in
 20 Bullock County that are in the cattle
 21 business. Same problem.
 22 I'm a hunter. I'm not against
 23 hunting. I mean, I actually have one of

1 the first lifetime hunting licenses ever
 2 issued by the State of Alabama. So I've
 3 hunted all my life and so have my
 4 children.
 5 Now, this has far-reaching
 6 consequences. In 2019 the Youth
 7 Division of the Alabama Field Trial
 8 Association contacted me about having a
 9 Youth Field Trial on our property. When
 10 the directors came out to inspect the
 11 property and set up the course, they saw
 12 these deer stands along the perimeter
 13 facing our land, and they said no way,
 14 the safety concern is way too high.
 15 So I'm asking y'all for protection.
 16 I don't know of any rule in the fish and
 17 game laws -- now, some of the larger
 18 land companies -- the timber companies
 19 require their deer hunters to maintain
 20 50 yards from the property lines.
 21 Thank you so much for your
 22 attention.
 23 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Hold your place.

1 Any questions from the Board?

2 Mr. Jones.

3 MR. RAYMOND JONES: This is more directed at
4 some of the staff.

5 How do other states handle this, or
6 do they?

7 CHIEF WEATHERS: It's a patchwork quilt, like
8 everything. There are states that do
9 have a distance from a property line
10 regulation. Alabama does not unless
11 there's a dwelling on the other side of
12 the line.

13 MR. RAYMOND JONES: Is that legislative or
14 regulatory here?

15 CHIEF WEATHERS: Here it would be regulatory.
16 Most likely it would be regulation from
17 the Commissioner.

18 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Just from the Chair, we've
19 dealt with this before. We've had
20 some -- we've had end resource users
21 come to us before about this, and it is
22 a sticky wicket.

23 Director Sykes, any comments about

1 this?

2 DIRECTOR SYKES: I'll defer to Chief Weathers.

3 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Do we get more complaints,
4 Chief?

5 CHIEF WEATHERS: I'll talk over here where we
6 can hear.

7 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Please. Do you mind sharing
8 with him, Mr. Miller?

9 MR. WEATHERS: We have, you know, pretty
10 common complaints about the practice
11 about putting a tree stand on a property
12 line facing a property line. The only
13 regulation we have that covers that is
14 our 100 yard rule, and that's when there
15 is a dwelling on the other side of the
16 property line. And that does not -- it
17 doesn't take effect if the person who
18 places that stand is the landowner. So
19 it would be someone who leases the land.

20 Now, we have a regulation they
21 cannot -- you know, they, of course,
22 can't fire and strike a dwelling. They
23 can't fire across the property line. If

1 Mr. Miller has a neighboring hunter who
2 fires at a deer on his property, whether
3 you strike the deer or not, if he
4 witnesses that, our officers can assist.
5 We can get warrants so we can prosecute
6 that person. They can't fire onto his
7 property without a permit written by him
8 to do so.

9 So we have some regulation. We have
10 some law in place that would assist that
11 but nothing that addresses the distance
12 that a stand has to be from a line
13 unless there's a dwelling.

14 MR. MILLER: What about the direction the
15 stand faces?

16 CHIEF WEATHERS: It's not mentioned.

17 MR. MILLER: I mean, even in the packet there
18 we have a picture of one of these
19 shooting houses that is perpendicular to
20 our property line not 20 yards off the
21 line. And they have mowed lanes toward
22 our land, and the only reason they do
23 that is to shoot in our direction. Our

1 horses are there. Our dogs are there.

2 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Thank you, Mr. Miller. It's
3 indicated in the picture, and we've
4 heard and we understand. We do
5 understand. And we will speak as a
6 group. This is something that we will
7 take under advisement and give some
8 consideration to. And I have your cell
9 phone number here, and we'll talk.

10 MR. MILLER: Yes, sir.

11 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Thank you.

12 Any other questions?

13 MR. HARTZOG: Well, Mr. Chairman, I was just
14 going to ask if Chief Weathers could
15 actually possibly have his wardens in
16 Bullock County to work -- you know, when
17 Mr. Miller sees somebody in those stands
18 and he knows somebody might be shooting
19 across the line, have the warden sitting
20 there to catch the guy. You know, even
21 if you had a 100 yard rule, with today's
22 rifles -- I mean, the guys next door to
23 me are shooting deer at 900 yards, you

1 know.

2 MR. MILLER: Well, let me address that a

3 minute. Our Conservation officer has

4 been promoted to a sergeant and does

5 recruitment now. He was our

6 Conservation officer, Bill Freeman. He

7 did catch one of these groups baiting

8 and shooting right there on the --

9 before it was legal. He wrote them a

10 ticket. They were from out of state, no

11 hunting licenses, illegal hunting. They

12 shot an illegal deer. The next day the

13 sheriff called him wanting him to drop

14 the charges.

15 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: All right. This is -- thank

16 you very much for your comments, and

17 it's something, again, I think the Board

18 wants to --

19 MR. MILLER: Thank you for hearing my

20 complaint.

21 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Thank you.

22 Our next speaker is Mr. Jimmy

23 Jimmerson.

1 MR. JIMMERSON: I can assure y'all that my

2 comments are going to be a lot shorter

3 than they've been in the past few years.

4 I just want to say thank you to

5 Chuck, your staff, and to the

6 Commissioners and to everyone that's

7 worked on this project as you've shown a

8 lot of diligence and persistence. I

9 think it's going to be a whole lot

10 better for the folks hunting in Cleburne

11 County. Thank you.

12 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Thank you, Mr. Jimmerson.

13 Our next speaker is Mr. Donald

14 Nelson.

15 MR. NELSON: Good morning. Thank you,

16 Commissioner and Board Members, for

17 allowing me to speak.

18 I've been blessed about the last 50

19 years to be able to hunt in District 2

20 in Mr. Grady and Mr. Patrick's area and

21 particularly in Butler County. And what

22 I'd like to do is just say thank you to

23 them for the great report they got from

1 District 2, in particular for Butler

2 County. And I attribute that to several

3 factors, and one is the fact that we

4 educate our hunters 100 percent to be in

5 compliance with your rules and

6 regulations. We stress that every time

7 we gather to hunt.

8 The second thing is we work very

9 closely with Mr. Don Knight, Mr. Lonnie

10 Miller, and Ms. Susan Morrow to

11 alleviate any problems.

12 The third thing is that I

13 communicate -- and Mr. Cagle can attest.

14 About three years ago we had an issue in

15 our area. I come up with an action

16 plan. We implemented it. And I believe

17 that plan has gone away forever. And

18 that's through the communication with

19 Mr. Cagle.

20 Another thing that's helped us in

21 our area is the Garmin -- the Alpha

22 Garmin. That's been the greatest thing

23 since sliced bread for hunters. We are

1 transitioning to that. Basically if my

2 dog is running a mile from here on our

3 property and I want him to stop, he will

4 stop and come back. That has been

5 fantastic. So we're going to be in

6 100-percent compliance with that, and

7 we're working toward that goal to

8 alleviate to have zero issues.

9 Our relationship -- the game warden,

10 I believe, is Mr. Forrester. He's very

11 professional. He had interaction with a

12 couple of our hunters this year, and

13 they're very complimentary about his

14 professional demeanor. And we

15 appreciate that.

16 One thing I would ask is if you have

17 a problem -- I've been in Butler County

18 hunting for over 50 years. My family

19 has land there. Please communicate if

20 you have a concern or problem, and I can

21 sit there and help alleviate the problem

22 so you don't get the calls and I don't

23 worry about the privilege of allowing my

1 grandsons to hunt with me to be taken
2 away. I do not want to lose that
3 privilege right there.

4 One thing I would ask: Due to the
5 fact of all the great reports I heard
6 this morning, I would appreciate it if
7 you would allow us to continue to hunt
8 in Butler County in District 2 the way
9 we have for the last several years and
10 not impose any regulation. I know
11 you're trying to make it better. We're
12 trying to make it better. And my
13 commitment is I will work with you any
14 way I can. I've been here a number of
15 years to this board and am extremely
16 appreciative of what you do.

17 And the Color Guard, appreciate
18 those gentlemen. The NCO I saw was a
19 Marine. I'm a retired Marine. So I saw
20 that in that. I'm very proud of what
21 they did this morning.

22 Thank you very much, gentlemen.
23 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Thank you.

1 Any questions?
2 (No response.)

3 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Thank you very much,
4 Mr. Nelson.

5 Our next speaker is Mr. Lane
6 Stephens.

7 MR. STEPHENS: Thank you, Chairman and
8 Commissioners. My name is Lane
9 Stephens. I am with the firm SCG
10 Governmental Affairs out of Tallahassee,
11 Florida, and I'm here representing the
12 Alabama Dog Hunters Association.

13 You may ask yourself what in the
14 world is a guy from Tallahassee doing in
15 Montgomery representing dog hunters.
16 Well, as a contract lobbyist, I've been
17 lobbying in Florida since 1993. And I
18 represent insurance companies and banks
19 and health-care companies, manufacturing
20 companies, but my passion is
21 representing sportsmen organizations.

22 In 1998 I was retained by the
23 Florida Dog Hunters and Sportsman's

1 Association, and I still represent them
2 today. I also today represent the
3 Southeastern Dog Hunting Association,
4 the Suwannee River Dog Hunting
5 Association, and the Florida Airboat
6 Association. I don't just do hunting.
7 I also have represented IGFA, the
8 Florida Tarpon Anglers, Safari Club
9 International to name just a few.

10 In July of last year -- or June
11 rather, the deer hunting association
12 here in Alabama asked me to come over
13 and speak with them to address and see
14 if I could help them with the deer dog
15 trespass rule that the Commissioner was
16 developing. I came over and met with
17 them, and I told them -- I said, folks,
18 I'll be happy to help you if you want to
19 be helped. I don't use an excuse that
20 deer dogs can read a trespass -- can't
21 read a trespass sign. Those days are
22 long gone. I represent ethical and
23 responsible hunters. And I said if

1 that's what they were and they wanted to
2 hire me, I would go to work for them,
3 and they did.

4 We met with the Commissioner, and I
5 think the first thing out of my mouth to
6 him was that, Commissioner, half of my
7 job is educating them on what your
8 issues are and then educating you on
9 what their issues are. It's a two-way
10 street, and only through that two-way
11 street can I help my clients to come to
12 a mutual understanding.

13 The Alabama Dog Hunters Association
14 supported the deer dog trespass rule
15 that the agency put forward, and we're
16 ready to continue working with the
17 agency on that issue moving forward and
18 on other issues. And to that end, the
19 association has created a stakeholder's
20 group representing dog hunters from
21 around the state, and I'll be working
22 with them to look at potential model
23 legislation and rules that will continue

1 to provide for ethical and responsible
2 hunting in this state and by those that
3 use dogs for that.

4 I look forward to coming back and
5 visiting with all of you further and
6 would be happy to take any questions if
7 you have any.

8 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Any questions?

9 Mr. Cagle.

10 MR. CAGLE: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. With
11 this I think I've fulfilled my quota on
12 comments. So this will be my last one.

13 Mr. Stephens, I know you've shared a
14 little about maybe some of your
15 experience in Florida and some of the
16 rules there. I know Florida has put in
17 place a pretty comprehensive regulatory
18 regime related to deer dog hunting. Can
19 you share some of that and any thoughts
20 you have if any of that could be adapted
21 for Alabama?

22 MR. STEPHENS: I thank you for the question.
23 In Florida -- you're right. Florida

1 has for 25 years been working on
2 preserving the sport of hunting deer
3 with dogs. We now have 21-and-a-half
4 million people living in the state of
5 Florida, and the pressures continue to
6 mount.

7 The first six years that I
8 represented dog hunting organizations
9 starting in '98 it was reactive. You
10 know, it was the ole whack-a-mole. An
11 issue would come up and we would take
12 care of that issue and then another
13 issue would come up and we'd take care
14 of that issue.

15 In 2004 the agency in Florida and
16 the deer dog hunters basically had a gun
17 pointed to their head. The incoming
18 speaker of the house called me up. We
19 were good friends. And he said, are you
20 representing them dog hunters? I said,
21 yes, sir. He said, well, I'm going to
22 give you an opportunity to work with the
23 agency to fix deer dog trespassing and

1 you won't like my fix if you don't come
2 up with a fix.

3 And what we instituted in 2004 was a
4 statewide permit system on private
5 lands. The agency would take care of
6 all the WMAs and government lands
7 through rules. They can just set the
8 rules however they want to do that. But
9 on private land we pushed for -- and it
10 was adopted -- a mandatory requirement
11 that if you're going to run deer with
12 dogs on private land, no matter the
13 size -- you can run on 5 acres or 20,000
14 acres -- it's a free registration permit
15 that that land had to be registered with
16 the state and a registration number
17 issued. That number then had to appear
18 on the collar of the dog and every
19 member of that club or whoever was on
20 that land had to have the registration
21 number.

22 That move in itself saved dog
23 hunting for deer in the state of

1 Florida. We've now got well over 200
2 properties in the state registered.
3 And, again, some of those are 20,000,
4 30,000 acres. Some of them may be 10.

5 The individuals are held
6 responsible, not the club. The
7 individuals are held responsible by a
8 deer hunters responsibility rule.
9 That's the dog trespass rule that y'all
10 were trying to pass here last fall.
11 That rule holds -- says that if a dog is
12 pursuing game on someone else's property
13 without them having permission of that
14 landowner, the game warden can write
15 that citation to the owner of that dog.
16 We've seen the number of citations and
17 complaints drop dramatically since all
18 of that was put in place.

19 In 2015, based upon some pressures
20 that were going on in Blackwater State
21 Forest, the dog hunters in Blackwater
22 State Forest worked with the agency and
23 asked the agency to implement mandatory

1 GPS and training collars if you're going
2 to run dogs in Blackwater Forest. And
3 they did that, and it's been extremely
4 successful. That saved dog hunting in
5 Blackwater State Forest. It would have
6 gone away because of the inholdings if
7 the hunters didn't do that.

8 But I mentioned being proactive. A
9 number of years ago as we saw how the
10 collars were working in Blackwater, the
11 hunting organizations went to the agency
12 and said we think we ought to look at
13 mandatory GPS and training collars for
14 deer dogs. And the agency staff said,
15 you know, we think that may be a good
16 idea, but we don't think the time is
17 right to try to place that in rule at
18 this time.

19 It took several years of them seeing
20 what was going on in Blackwater, hearing
21 from other hunters around the state
22 positive comments about the collars. So
23 candidly we were a bit surprised in

1 October of this year when the agency
2 released its proposed rules for
3 mandatory tracking and training collars.
4 It doesn't say GPS collars. It says
5 tracking collars because there are still
6 people that use the beep-beep telemetry
7 collars. And so we wanted them to be
8 able to use that.

9 But that issue went before the FWC
10 in December for its first hearing.
11 Their response from online comments was
12 close to 80 percent support. At the
13 meeting in Panama City, I think there
14 were 25 or 30 hunters that got up in
15 support of that. There were one or two
16 detractors. The rule moved forward on
17 February 20th, two weeks ago -- or last
18 week. The Commission took it up for its
19 second rule -- second hearing, and it
20 passed unanimously.

21 But the interesting thing about
22 it -- and I'll tell you -- is this: In
23 2004 the Chairman of the Commission at

1 that time was a gentleman by the name of
2 Rodney Barreto . And Rodney and I
3 worked closely to get support for that
4 permit system. We spent a year doing
5 that and having stakeholder meetings.
6 He's back on the Commission now, and he
7 made the comment during discussion of
8 this issue the other day -- he said --
9 you know, he said it's amazing. He said
10 in 2004, dog hunters, we had to drag
11 them to the table to pass the permit
12 system. He said here in 2020 or '19
13 when it was started -- he said the dog
14 hunters are proactive. They're being
15 proactive and asking us to do things to
16 help them protect their sport.

17 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Thank you. Thank you,
18 Mr. Stephens.

19 Any further questions?
20 (No response.)

21 MR. STEPHENS: Thank you.

22 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Thank you very much.

23 COMMISSIONER BLANKENSHIP: I would like to

1 tell Lane thank you for -- I do
2 appreciate working with you over the
3 last year and appreciate your
4 conversations and the work that you've
5 done. Look forward to continuing to do
6 the same. Thank you.

7 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Next is Mr. Avery Bates.
8 MR. BATES: Thank y'all for all you do and all
9 you're going to do to help our industry.

10 I am vice president of Organized
11 Seafood Association. My name is Avery
12 Bates. I see y'all quite often. But I
13 want to say a few things and some
14 requests that I had made to the Board
15 and the reason behind it.

16 The additional Saturdays that we
17 asked for for oystering was for bad
18 weather days and not only bad weather
19 days -- but the amount of bad weather
20 days -- we also have that was
21 mentioned -- the young people need to
22 qualify, learn how to oyster. Everybody
23 just can't oyster. But we want them to

1 be trained by their grandparents and
2 their parents, and the only way to do
3 that is to open Saturdays.

4 The reason we want every Saturday --
5 and it was mentioned to me we don't have
6 the money to hire the personnel. And
7 that was another problem we had was
8 checking in and checking out. Sometimes
9 it was real long to check in or check
10 out, standing in the rain or whatever,
11 with a limited number of days. If we
12 have Saturdays -- if you wanted to go up
13 on the license \$10. Then y'all went to
14 a bait license for \$10 and what
15 happened? What did you say, Chuck?
16 7,000 people got involved with buying
17 bait license.

18 Now, we fell down in oyster license
19 because there wasn't no oysters. In
20 fact, everybody was hollering, Avery, I
21 need a boat this year. Their boats
22 rotted under the oak trees. Why? No
23 use. No seasons. This year the Good

1 Lord blessed and it looks like we're
2 going to have a great year pending no
3 hurricanes and no major disasters. That
4 means more license.

5 If you have more license and can get
6 the Saturdays and charge \$10 more --

7 What is a license? \$36 for an
8 oyster license -- commercial oyster
9 license?

10 -- you will add money to the coffers
11 to pay the extra time that they work on
12 Saturdays. The shops will love the
13 extra oysters.

14 We've got as much as 80 to 85 cent
15 for Alabama oysters. When I oystered
16 regularly, the best we got was 35. It
17 fell down even though we had other
18 entities pouring oysters into Alabama to
19 only 60 cent. But I want to tell you,
20 you can make a good day's work at 80
21 cent a day with six sacks of oysters.
22 But if you have three bad days that week
23 of weather, that will put you out of

1 work, and the Saturdays would help.

2 Even the Good Lord give them on
3 Saturdays or day before the Sabbath.
4 What did they get when they went to pick
5 up manna? You get what? Two extra
6 quarts. We're just asking for one day.

7 MS. JONES: Time.

8 MR. BATES: And we've got many more things to
9 say about shrimping, crabbing,
10 floundering. But y'all ask the
11 questions. If not, do y'all want to
12 elaborate on the things that I wrote for
13 y'all?

14 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Thank you, Avery.

15 Are there any questions for Avery?

16 MR. HARTZOG: Not really Avery.

17 What impact would it have -- I think
18 Mr. Avery has an excellent point for
19 these children to learn the trade.
20 Would it impact the species that bad for
21 us to give Mr. Avery what he's asking
22 for?

23 Or let Chris --

1 COMMISSIONER BLANKENSHIP: I'll take that one.

2 Director Bannon has proposed that we
3 open -- that we could have the
4 regulation changed to allow us to open
5 on Saturdays. So I think he's already
6 addressed that, that that's something as
7 a Department that we are in favor of.
8 That's in your packet from the
9 Department.

10 MR. BATES: This is some Saturdays he said.
11 We want during the season. And you
12 already have control. That's 924,
13 part A. If you see a problem with the
14 production, you can either shut the
15 season or stop it. This would always be
16 in your discretion if the biologists see
17 where we're taking much, much longer to
18 get your quota, if the quota says we can
19 go to eight sacks, ten sacks. But you
20 can see if you have a problem and by
21 regulation adjust either the quotas --
22 but the days here is quite critical when
23 we had -- I seen three fronts come

1 through in one week blowing 25, 35 miles
 2 an hour, and the small oyster boats --
 3 this is imperative that you have an
 4 extra day not only for the school kids
 5 and the upcoming generation to learn.
 6 Everybody can't catch oysters.
 7 COMMISSIONER BLANKENSHIP: Let me just --
 8 quickly, just for your information,
 9 Grady -- and the rest of the Board might
 10 be interested in this -- how we manage
 11 oysters in this state is cooperatively
 12 managed with the processors and others.
 13 So if you don't have a processor that's
 14 open on Saturday, then it doesn't do any
 15 good to have the reef open because
 16 there's nobody for them to sell it to.
 17 So we work with the processors.
 18 And our season now is allowed to go
 19 from October through April to have an
 20 oyster season based on the amount -- but
 21 we base the harvest on the amount of
 22 oysters that are available in the
 23 resource to sustainably harvest. So

1 like this year it opened in November and
 2 we closed sometime in January. So it
 3 was not for the full October through
 4 April season.
 5 Our staff will continue to manage
 6 the resource for the most effective way
 7 for the resource itself and the
 8 economics of how that's done. As you
 9 can see, if you open it on Saturdays,
 10 that extra harvest day during that week
 11 will likely shorten it at the end. So
 12 you won't have as much harvest later
 13 because you'll be condensing that
 14 harvest into a shorter period of time.
 15 And that may be the best to do on some
 16 years because of the economic value of
 17 the oysters, depending on what other
 18 states are open and how much value our
 19 fishermen can get.
 20 But as you can see, it's not just as
 21 easy as saying we're going to open every
 22 Saturday. It's an extremely complicated
 23 process that Scott Bannon and his staff

1 do an excellent job working with the
 2 industry to make sure that the harvest
 3 in our state is sustainable and that it
 4 provides the best economic benefit for
 5 the people down there.
 6 And I know Mr. Avery wants that and
 7 wants everybody to be able to make as
 8 much money as they can throughout the
 9 whole year and not just condense it into
 10 a couple of weeks if we can make the
 11 season last and provide good income for
 12 people there. So thank you.
 13 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Thank you, Avery, very much.
 14 MR. BATES: That's the reason we wanted the
 15 Saturdays, though, is just to make up
 16 for some lost time. And we know that
 17 y'all manage the resource. We're not
 18 trying to manage the resource. And we
 19 know that every year we have floods,
 20 every year.
 21 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Thank you, Avery. Thank you
 22 very much. We appreciate you always
 23 being here.

1 The next speaker is Mr. Earl Jordan.
 2 MR. HARTZOG: While he's coming forward, you
 3 did notice Mr. Avery had a smile on his
 4 face today though.
 5 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Yes, yes, yes. He's smiling.
 6 MR. JORDAN: Hey. My name is Earl Jordan from
 7 Mobile. I'm here on behalf of a
 8 ten-year-old little boy.
 9 The State of Alabama's laws for
 10 sharks is kind of complicated. They
 11 list size and everything for a few, and
 12 then all of a sudden it says for all
 13 other sharks 54-inch fork length.
 14 There's a couple of species in this
 15 NOAA Shark Identification Chart. I'm
 16 sorry. It's a poor quality copy. I
 17 don't run an office.
 18 One's a finetooth, blacknose, and a
 19 blacktip. There's a -- you can read the
 20 max size of a finetooth is 5 foot. 5
 21 foot is 60 inches. I'm sure NOAA is
 22 measuring those from tip to tail, not
 23 fork length. That's some legal mumbo

1 jumbo; right?
 2 Well, so I got to catch a trophy in
 3 the State of Alabama waters of a
 4 finetooth shark to keep it. I got to
 5 catch a trophy, 54-inch fork length.
 6 The biggest they grow is 5 feet. I'm
 7 sorry.
 8 Okay . Blacknose, the biggest they
 9 grow is 4 feet. I can't even keep one.
 10 Our legal limit, 54 inches. Can't keep
 11 it.
 12 All right. Blacktip, 6 foot. Well,
 13 we go to Mississippi, the next page.
 14 It's got two categories of sharks, large
 15 coastal, small coastal. One is a 37.
 16 The large coastal was a 37 total length.
 17 Nose to the tip of the tail 37 inches,
 18 you can keep it. The small one is
 19 25-inch total length. That's
 20 Mississippi. And you'd have to maybe
 21 Google -- I Googled this, and I'm not a
 22 computer guy -- to find out what these
 23 small coastals and large coastals -- the

1 categories, and I'm sure you're going to
 2 find blacktip in one of those
 3 categories.
 4 All right. The next page is the
 5 Florida rules. It's got some -- the
 6 54-inch at the top. Okay. We're on
 7 line with them; right?
 8 Well, down here it says retain shark
 9 with no minimum size limit. Guess what?
 10 I'm telling you -- you Google it. I'm
 11 sorry about the poor quality of the
 12 copy. Blacktip is one of those.
 13 Blacknose is one of those. No size
 14 limit in Florida. We share all the same
 15 waters. I mean, I can step one foot
 16 over there and I'm in Florida and one
 17 foot -- it's really all about where you
 18 launch the boat, right, where you bring
 19 the fish back to, not about where you
 20 caught it.
 21 Anyway, it just don't make sense. A
 22 blacktip shark is really good to eat if
 23 you know how to prepare it right. I'm

1 just saying it needs to be changed.
 2 Thanks a lot.
 3 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Hold your place.
 4 Any questions?
 5 (No response.)
 6 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Thank you very much.
 7 MR. MARTIN: Mr. Chairman, I do.
 8 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Jeff, I'm sorry.
 9 MR. MARTIN: That's okay.
 10 Is there any reason why it's like
 11 that or it's been that way or --
 12 DIRECTOR BANNON: So in Alabama the sharks --
 13 you know, for sharks we only go out to
 14 3 miles. Alabama is generally a nursery
 15 area for most shark species. Inside the
 16 state waters you can catch some that are
 17 of legal size. So we mimic the federal
 18 regulations, which they've done stock
 19 assessments.
 20 We don't have the ability to do the
 21 stock assessments on these sharks, so
 22 we've defaulted to the federal shark
 23 limits. So that allows the angler to

1 not have the confusion because they're
 2 more often caught in federal waters than
 3 they are in state, other than the ones
 4 that we see -- bonnethead and Atlantic
 5 sharpnose are caught in state waters
 6 pretty regularly, and they have no size
 7 limit. But the others we default to the
 8 federal rules.
 9 And we did check with Mississippi.
 10 They are not aware that they've actually
 11 ever done a stock assessment within
 12 state waters. And so we were trying to
 13 see if they had done one. It appears to
 14 be an arbitrary setting for the size
 15 limit, so --
 16 MR. MARTIN: Yeah. To me sharks are like
 17 cobras, snakes.
 18 DIRECTOR BANNON: A shark is a shark.
 19 MR. MARTIN: Yeah. They're all great whites.
 20 DIRECTOR BANNON: Sharks are one of the most
 21 misidentified species. Our commercial
 22 shark fishermen and dealers actually are
 23 required by federal law to go to shark

1 identification class. We send our
2 enforcement staff to shark
3 identification class. They can be very
4 difficult to identify.

5 MR. JORDAN: Blacktip sharks are out there by
6 the thousands. They're easy to catch.
7 A lot of fishermen consider them
8 nuisance. They don't like to catch
9 them. If you get an overabundance of
10 fish in a pond, what happens to them?
11 They get malnourished.

12 I would think a lot of benefit would
13 happen if you started keeping some of
14 them to all the other fish species that
15 seem to be going away, your speckled
16 trout, your redbfish. If I got to catch
17 one the max size -- there's no other
18 fish out there you got to catch the max
19 size. Redfish can grow 30-plus inches.

20 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Thank you, Mr. Jordan.

21 MR. JORDAN: You can keep one that's 16.

22 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Thank you. We appreciate
23 your comments and appreciate you being

1 here today. Thank you.

2 That is the end of our -- well, that
3 is the last of our public speakers
4 today. Our next order of business would
5 be unfinished business.

6 I would ask the Board, is there any
7 unfinished business that is before you,
8 before us?

9 The only few things that I have on
10 my notes was Mr. Jimmerson, Grady and I,
11 and that's it. Is there anything else?

12 We're squared away with
13 Mr. Jimmerson.

14 MR. HARTZOG: I have a question for Chuck, if
15 possible.

16 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Okay.

17 MR. HARTZOG: Chuck, where do we stand on the
18 research projects that we started
19 last -- say, two years ago with the
20 gadwalls and the turkeys? Are we any
21 closer to getting those studies
22 completed?

23 DIRECTOR SYKES: I will refer to Ms. Silvano,

1 Assistant Chief of Wildlife.

2 MS. SILVANO: Yes. So the turkey research --
3 the graduate student who was on the
4 turkey --

5 Sorry. Not turkey. Wrong species.

6 -- waterfowl research project has
7 left, and so we just recently got on a
8 new person so that we can continue our
9 efforts there.

10 We've shifted gears. The original
11 objectives in the data that was
12 collected for the original research
13 project weren't where they were supposed
14 to be, and with this new graduate
15 student coming on, we're shifting back
16 to those original objectives. So it
17 will be prolonged a little bit longer
18 than we had originally thought. So
19 hopefully within the next two years
20 we'll have some information for you.

21 MR. HARTZOG: Okay.

22 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Okay. Any other unfinished
23 business for the Board?

1 (No response.)

2 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Well, let's move on, then, to
3 our new business.

4 New business today, I think that we
5 have a motion, Dr. Lemme.

6 DR. LEMME: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

7 I move that consistent with Alabama
8 Code Section 9-11-68 and Section 9-11-69
9 that hunting and fishing license fees be
10 increased based upon the percentage
11 increase in the Consumer Price Index as
12 maintained by the U.S. Department of
13 Labor.

14 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Okay. I won't make you read
15 that again. We've been through it. We
16 all know what that means for us. It's
17 very important.

18 Is there a second?

19 MR. RAYMOND JONES: Second.

20 MR. CAGLE: Second.

21 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: We have a second, Mr. Cagle.
22 Let's have a vote on this, and we can
23 just -- all those in favor ...

1 (All board members present respond
 2 "aye.")
 3 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Any opposed?
 4 (No response.)
 5 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: The "ayes" have it. It's
 6 unanimous.
 7 Is there any other new business
 8 before the Board today? Any comments,
 9 questions?
 10 (No response.)
 11 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Being no new business and
 12 there are to my knowledge no
 13 announcements, Mr. Commissioner, then
 14 the last thing that we have to do is set
 15 the location and time of the next
 16 meeting. And we will do that with --
 17 there will be an announcement in the
 18 paper. We have not set that date and
 19 time or location yet.
 20 COMMISSIONER BLANKENSHIP: We're looking to do
 21 it in May again, likely that third
 22 weekend in May. But we'll be trying to
 23 set that very quickly.

1 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: And somewhere geographically
 2 that we haven't been in recent years.
 3 So that's it. Thank you very much.
 4 This meeting is adjourned.
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 9 (Meeting adjourned at
 10 approximately 10:54 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 February 29, 2020.
 12 The foregoing 126 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 4th day of May 2020.
 19
 20
 21 _____
 22 Tracye S. Blackwell, CCR, RPR
 23 ACCR No. 294
 Expiration date: 9-30-2020
 Certified Court Reporter
 and Commissioner for the State
 of Alabama at Large