STATE OF ALABAMA DEPARTMENT OF
CONSERVATION AND NATURAL RESOURCES

ADVISORY BOARD MEETING

Alabama State University
Abernathy Hall Auditorium
915 South Jackson Street
Montgomery, Alabama
March 11, 2023

* * * * * * * * * *

TRANSCRIPT OF PROCEEDINGS

* * * * * * * * * *

Proceedings taken before Stacey L.
Johnson, Certified Court Reporter and
Commissioner for the State of Alabama at
Large, Alabama State University, Abernathy
Hall Auditorium, 915 South Jackson Street,
Montgomery, Alabama, Saturday, March 11,
2023, commencing at 9:00 a.m.

* * * * * * * * *
BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT:

Mr. Joseph Dobbs, Jr., Chairman

Commissioner Christopher M. Blankenship,
Ex-Officio Secretary

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

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

Mr. Kevin Savoy

Mr. Grady Hartzog

Mr. Greg Barksdale

Mr. Jeff Martin

Mr. Brock Jones

Mr. Tim Wood

Mr. Raymond Jones, Jr.

Mr. Ben Stimpson

* * * * * * * * * *
CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Welcome, everyone. Let's bring this meeting to order of the first Conservation Advisory Board meeting for 2023. Today's date is March the 11th. We're glad you're all here.

Let's be diligent today -- we don't have a big crowd, but let's be responsible and considerate to everyone in all the things that we do.

I'd like to take a moment to give special thanks to Dr. Quinton Ross, the president of this university, and to Ms. Crystal Moss, who is the event coordinator who helped us today in a big way, who helped Betsy and Wanda put this together. It's a wonderful venue. Maybe we can do it again here someday.

The Lord has blessed us with this fair weather. I hope it stays that way. And so safe travels home to all of you at the end of the meeting.

I'm going to ask today Mr. Brock
Jones to please give our invocation.

MR. B. JONES: Let us pray.

(Invocation given by
Mr. Brock Jones.)

CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Thank you, Mr. Jones, very much.

Today we are very pleased to have
the DCNR honor guard to help begin our
meeting. Please give your attention as
they post the colors.

(Presentation by the honor
guard.)

CHAIRMAN DOBBS: I'm going to ask
Mr. Greg Barksdale to please lead us in
the Pledge of Allegiance.

(Recitation of the Pledge
of Allegiance led by
Mr. Greg Barksdale.)

CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Thank you, Greg, very much. That's most impressive. It always is.

Again, I thank Dr. Ross for the
facility today. I appreciate our
Conservation Enforcement Officers being here, the staff being here. Thank y'all very much. Let me take a minute to thank Ms. Wanda McCullers and her staff and Betsy Jones who helps run and manage things, and today she will be as well keeping time on our clock, our three-minute clock for public commentary.

On the agenda, we have the Sportsmen's Pledge, and I'm going to go through it for us today. I think it rings true to what the purpose of good resource forward-minded management represents. And this is from 1908.

(Sportsmen's Pledge read by Chairman Joseph Dobbs.)

CHAIRMAN DOBBS: So let's have a wonderful and productive meeting today.

And, Mr. Secretary, do we have a quorum?

COMMISSIONER BLANKENSHIP: Yes, sir, Mr. Chairman, we do.
CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Thank you very much.

I know that our Board members have read and reviewed the minutes of our May 21, 2022, meeting. Are there any corrections?

There being no corrections, the Chair approves the minutes as provided by Ms. Stacey Johnson.

I'm going to ask each Board member today to introduce themselves -- we will start at the far end with Mr. Jeff Martin -- and give, if they will, a district report as brief as they'd like for it to be.

MR. MARTIN: I am Jeff Martin. I represent District 3.

You know, hunting was a little slow this year just due to some weather. It's been kind of a rainy season. It's kind of bad.

As far as fishing goes, we've had the carp season just come in. It seems to be rocking and rolling on Logan Martin. I
had some issues with maybe some quality of bass, but we're checking on that with Fisheries. So all in all, it's been a pretty good year.

CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Thank you, Jeff.

Go ahead, Greg.


It appears our deer season was pretty good from stuff you see on social media. I think everybody now has a camera and takes a picture of whatever they shoot. Didn't hear a lot from the duck hunting. The fisheries around Smith Lake and that part of the country seem to be doing very well at this point in time.

And that's all I have today.

Thank you.

MR. WOOD: I'm Tim Wood. I represent Congressional District 7, which is basically the west half of the Black Belt. I'm from Selma.

Deer season was pretty good.
Dallas County was down, but overall the Black Belt had a good year in deer. Fishing has become huge on Alabama rivers. Miller's Ferry is doing a fantastic job of publicizing and having tournaments there as well as over in Montgomery and also on the Tenn-Tom in Demopolis.

I tell you, the tornado -- we're kind of digging out of the tornado right now. We've got a lot of repairs to do at some of our facilities.

But it looks like it's going to be hopefully a good spring for turkeys. One thing about it, there's been a lot of interest generated on turkeys, a lot of management practices going on, a lot of burning, so we're looking forward to seeing what we can do in the future with our turkey populations.

MR. HARTZOG: My name is Grady Hartzog. I represent District 2.

Hunting was good this year. I talked with most of the processors, and I
only talked with one processor that felt like he was a little down.

We had the -- something that we can be proud of in our district. We had the second largest youth hunt east of the Mississippi hosted there on Barbour County Management Area. I want to commend the Department, the employees, because a lot of wardens that helped with that took actual days off to help with that. We had several hundred kids there. A huge success.

The same day -- just showing how much was going on in our county, the same day we had a massive bass tournament. The whole parking lot at Lakepoint was full. That evening, the state parks through -- was having a -- what is it, Greg -- the presentation? The Department made an excellent presentation on bear, and I think I was told it was the second most attended one they've had, you know, and especially just coming out of COVID.
They're hoping to expand it. But I really want to thank the Department officers that spend their own time in trying to help the youth and do what they do for the youth, because if it's not for the youth, we won't be here in the future. So anyway, thank you and we thank all the officers.

One officer that I think especially needs to be recognized is Johnny Johnson. The couple that's been doing this youth hunt for the last 25 years health has gotten real bad. He's had -- one of the guys has had seven operations since the first of the year. They were really afraid because of his health and all they wouldn't be able to continue with it, and one of the officers stepped forward. Johnny Johnson stepped forward to take over to be in charge of the event every year, and so I'd really like for the Department to recognize Johnny for his behalf in accepting the challenge of that event because it is a
great event for kids and a great event for the Department. And I just really appreciate the work the Department does when working with kids and also with the personnel at the management area helping out as much as they do. They moved all of the trailers around setting up for Keith's division, the archery division, they set up all the -- help set up all the trailers. They were a great, great help out there. Without their help, it would be -- it was a great success. But without the Department's personnel -- and, like I said, a lot of the officers took days off in order to do that and they need to be really commended for that, and I really appreciate that.

So, Mr. Kevin, next.

MR. SAVOY: Thank you. I'm Kevin Savoy, District 2. I live in Dothan, Alabama.

We had a successful deer season from all reports. Also a successful dove
season as well. Grady mentioned the fishing tournaments on Lake Eufaula. Those have been quite a success from what -- as he mentioned.

Early reports that I'm hearing from folks on -- that are scouting turkeys seems to be positive. I'm hearing some really good reports, so that's encouraging. We'll see how that works out in the next few weeks.

And that's about it for me. Thank you.

MR. PATE: Hi, I'm Rick Pate. I'm the Commissioner of Agriculture and Industries, and I live in Lowndes County in Tim's district.

MR. PHILLIPS: Good morning, everybody. My name is Mike Phillips. I'm the director of the Alabama Cooperative Extension System and work with a lot of specialists, especially on the aquaculture side and wildlife side.

MR. STIMPSON: I'm Ben Stimpson. I'm
from Mobile District 1.

The Department has apparently been doing a fantastic job this year because my phone has been relatively quiet. Everything is going very well and everybody is excited about talking about turkey season.

MR. R. JONES: I'm Raymond Jones. I represent Congressional District Number 5, which is in North Alabama.

Deer season our way was good. Duck season was okay. We are seeing a lot of turkeys, so the turkey population seems to be doing well in our area of the state.

And that's it.

MR. B. JONES: Brock Jones, District 6, which is most of Tuscaloosa, Jefferson, and all of Shelby County, a small sliver of Bibb County.

Deer season was average from what I gathered from talking to people. Hogs continue to be a problem. I've had many compliments on our Conservation
Enforcement Officers, how quick they were to react to any issues that took place and their desire to help whenever needed. Great job there. I compliment them.

And that's about all I have.

CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Thank you, gentlemen. Those are good reports. I appreciate it. And I've asked before, mentioned to you, these are the folks that are in your districts. Contact them with issues, with good thoughts, with compliments. We love to hear it. Things really are very good. I think they are. A measure of that -- simple measure is there aren't many people here that have issues, and I'm very happy with that. But contact these guys.

And then we're going -- we're not going to hear today from the directors. There are no reports, but I want to introduce them if I can. Mr. Scott Bannon from Marine Resources. He's in Mobile and manages all of our Red Snapper and everything that goes with that and what a
great but challenging job that is. Mr. Greg Lein with State Parks. They're coming online and just absolutely doing great. I'm not taking the Commissioner's stuff away. I'm just so proud of all these folks. Patti McCurdy with State Lands. What's happening there, it's just wonderful. And Chuck Sykes with Wildlife and Freshwater Fisheries. All of that is just -- we're innovative. We've been fortunate to get to go to other states and have meetings with groups of surrounding states, and it's amazing at those meetings when they sit there and look and talk about the programs and opportunities that the State of Alabama has and how we're managing our resources. We're leading, and it makes me very happy. Good people to work with. Download the latest Alabama app and Outdoor Alabama and all of this is there.

Thank you for letting me run on.

Commissioner, your update, please.
COMMISSIONER BLANKENSHIP: Thank you, Mr. Dobbs.

I also would like to recognize our Deputy Commissioner, Ed Poolos, and our general counsel, Charlanna Skaggs. With the division directors and our senior staff, we're really, really blessed with a great group of people to work with every day that are passionate about the outdoors and really care about what we do, about the resources, and the people that use those resources. I couldn't ask for a better group.

In lieu of the directors giving a report today, I'm just going to hit some highlights because there are people that are having some issues with different things related to what we do, and I want to leave plenty of time for the public comment and make sure that they have the ability to be heard and so we'll know things that we can address to continue to make things better in our state.
Again, I thank President Ross for allowing us to meet here. This is a beautiful campus right here in the middle of Montgomery. I appreciate what they do to educate people here at Alabama State University and thank them for opening their facility for us.

We don't plan to have any legislation that we will introduce as a department this year. We've had some success in the legislature over the last quadrennium, and we'll keep everybody up to date on any legislation that is introduced that does impact us or that deals with the department, but we don't plan to have any departmental legislation.

The Governor issued several executive orders when she began this term. One of those executive orders is a Red Tape Reduction executive order that she issued this week and so we're still working to totally understand that and see how that's going to impact our agency, but
one of the things included in that was a moratorium for a certain amount of time on any new regulations and then for us to look at the regulations that we do have and see where we can repeal some of those or reduce regulatory impacts on businesses and individuals. So I say all that to say there may be a time when we're not able to pass any regulations except for seasons and bag limits and some other exempted things, but we're working through that. I'll keep you all up to date on that.

I want to give a quick overview of each of the divisions. Our State Parks Division -- since we met last, the State of Alabama and the people voted to pass an 80-million-dollar bond for State Parks last May. We got those funds in November, and we've already gone to work at state parks all over the state in doing construction and upgrades. We have three years to use those funds, and so we'll see a lot of work happening in all
of our parks over the next three years so you'll see a lot of construction going on. We're partnering with ADEM on some water and sewer projects at our state parks through their Clean Water Fund and their drinking water programs. I appreciate that partnership to help us in our parks.

We've -- kind of groundbreaking, I told you about last year on using the rubber modified asphalt for projects that we did at Guntersville and at DeSoto, and this year we're paving all the roads at Joe Wheeler State Park with that rubber modified asphalt in conjunction again with ADEM in a partnership with them.

The cabins at the Gulf that were destroyed in Hurricane Sally are being rebuilt. That construction is well underway, and we hope to have those back open by the fall. We're building back what was there and then adding some additional cabins on that footprint. Really excited about how those are
looking. That's going to be really nice.

And then if you've been to
Gulf Shores, you've seen the pier that was
damaged in Hurricane Sally. We have the
design for the pier repairs. We have the
permits that we need from the Corps of
Engineers and NOAA Fisheries, and that is
out for bid currently. Those bids close
at the end of the month, and so hopefully,
we'll be awarding a contract for
construction and then the pier repairs to
start later this fall as well.

All parks but one were profitable
in 2022. One of our parks where we had
the cabins closed for renovations, that
impacted the profitability of that one
park, but I'm very pleased with the -- how
our parks are operating and so many people
still are using those parks that started
during COVID are still coming out. And
we're seeing a good participation in
day-use areas at the golf courses. We've
just done an RFP and hired a firm to
handle all of our electronic reservation system and really integrate it into all of the things that we do at the parks -- the reservation system, the check-in, the point of sale, the golf courses, the food and beverage totally integrated through all of our operations -- and that will make us more efficient and allow us to be able to track things much better and increase the profitability of our parks. We're putting that money right back into operations and maintenance.

In our State Lands Division that's Ms. McCurdy's division, Forever Wild Field Trial Area in Hale County is -- we're doing some improvements there. We host about 35 big dog trial events there every year, and the trails and the landscape is first class, world renowned for the things that we host there, and we're going to try and bring the facilities there up to the same class as the trails. When Forever Wild and our State Lands Division
purchased that several years ago, it was
an old Department of Corrections facility
in great need of improvements, so we're
making those improvements now. We're also
making improvements in our trail
amenities, Forever Wild properties, that
include signage, parking lots, and other
things to make all of those tracts more
accessible to the public.

On the offshore oil and gas, we
don't talk about that very much here, but
just thought it was noteworthy that
yesterday I got a call from the director
of the Bureau of Ocean Energy Management,
and there will be a lease sale on the
offshore oil and gas leases between now
and September. That's the first lease
sale that we've had under this
presidential administration, so I'm glad
to see those lease sales start back up
again. That translates into some money
for the state through the Gulf of Mexico
Energy Security Act, GOMESA, that's
managed through our State Lands Division, and we should see from the lease sale a good return on that for next year's GOMESA funds.

Today we've done about 120 million dollars in GOMESA-funded projects in Mobile and Baldwin Counties since 2019, so it's a significant amount of work. And then there will be the pier management project in Orange Beach, Gulf Shores, and Gulf State Park and Dauphin Island this fall, and those are permitted through our State Lands Division and is a good partnership between those two cities and the State Parks Division to fund that, as well as some money from the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation for the project on Dauphin Island.

For the Marine Resources Division, this past year we -- between our division and the public where we permit artificial reefs, we've deployed almost 2,000 artificial reefs in 2022. And we plan to
do a great deal of work in 2023 and 2024 with some National Fish and Wildlife Foundation artificial reef funds, probably about eight million dollars' worth of additional reef work.

The Red Snapper season and the quota, as you've probably read in the paper and some other things, we have been working with the federal government for many years on Red Snapper management and on being able to manage the fishery off the coast of Alabama. However, NOAA Fisheries sets the quota and gives us the amount of fish that we can manage off of our coast. There's been some work to calibrate between different reporting systems, our state, Snapper Check, and the federal MRIP program, that's been going on for several years. This year, they've completed that recalibration and it's caused us to have a reduction in our quota of about 500,000 pounds, which has the potential to impact our season length.
But looking at the last two years and what we caught and how we've managed that, we still think we're going to be okay with a good, long season for Red Snapper. We anticipate opening that on Memorial Day weekend again this year, and it will be open on four-day weekends every weekend after Memorial Day until we're projected to reach our quota. If things happen and we're not reaching our quota, we do have the ability to go back and make some changes in the season to allow more fishing days or to increase the bag limit to make sure that our people have maximum access to the quota that we've been given.

And I want to give a quick update on the oyster season and the oyster resources. As you recall from several years ago at this meeting, Scott Bannon stood up and said we did not have an oyster season at all that year because we didn't have enough oyster resources to be able to harvest. With the work that we've
done with shell planting, with some other work that's taken place, our oyster resources -- and really just to be frank with you, God's doing a good job of keeping the salinities where they need to be and there's -- you can -- man can do certain things, but when it comes to oysters, it's really more of a God-given set of circumstances that make those either thrive or not. So we've done everything that we can to put our Mobile Bay and the Cedar Point reef in a very good place for it to flourish with the right conditions. And so those conditions have been good the last few years, and we're starting to see a real impact on growth of oysters and increasing that from having a season with zero harvest to this past year a little over 50,000 sacks that were harvested.

And I appreciate the work that the Marine Resources Division has done. The oyster -- most of the stuff that we do in
management, as you're well aware, is a marathon and not a sprint. We have to look at things from a macro level and how those are being managed so that we have those resources not only now, but in the future, so it is a very art -- a little science and a little art on how we manage all of our resources, but oysters in particular is extremely complicated, and I appreciate the work that they've done to get us to where we were with over 50,000 sacks harvested this year and looking like that's going to be the trend over the next few years if we don't have some type of disaster, a flood, or something. But we're really seeing that resource come back and looking forward to continued access to that as well.

On our Wildlife and Freshwater Fisheries side, everybody kind of talked about the deer season. And I can't read my writing, so I've got to put my glasses on. A lot of habitat work is being done
on ducks and quail, and I'll probably share a little bit more of that at the May meeting or get Chuck to talk a little bit about some of the species and habitat work that's being done that's not deer and turkey, which is what most everybody wants to talk about at these, but there's a lot of other stuff going on by our staff.

We've added land at several WMAs and SOAs in cooperation with Forever Wild. The night hunting for hogs and coyotes has been very popular. We sold quite a few licenses for that and that has become a good recreational activity outside of the normal deer and turkey seasons. We've got a lot of boating access projects, not only in Wildlife and Freshwater Fisheries, but in State Lands and Marine Resources Division, to try and get people out on the water to be able to partake in the great natural resources we have in Alabama. We've got projects at Mink Creek, Lake Martin, Mount Vernon, just completed
a great project in Demopolis, got work
going on at Dauphin Island, Weeks Bay,
Lake Wedowee, and many more, many more of
those projects either underway or in the
hopper.

I want to recognize Chuck Sykes to
give a CWD update. I think it would be
better coming from him so he can tell us
where we are on CWD. But I'd also like to
recognize Chuck is going to be the
incoming president of AFWA, the
Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies,
and he'll be representing the state of
Alabama as the president of AFWA, keeping
everybody in the whole country safe and
giving them plenty of ideas and sharing
what we've done in Alabama. I'm very
proud of Chuck for that, and that's a good
recognition from his peers all over the
country to have elected him as the chair
of AFWA. So congratulations on that. I
know you'll do us a good job. So give us
a CWD update, Chuck.
MR. SYKES: Thank you, Commissioner.

As y'all know, we announced in January of 2022 that we found our first case of CWD up in Lauderdale County. This shouldn't have been a surprise to anyone. We had a very well thought out, very well crafted, strategic response plan, marketing plan trying to educate people, let them know that it was coming. It came in where we thought it would. We found two last year, which I think that was the best case of a bad scenario.

This year, we've tested a little more than 3600 deer statewide, more than 1100 just in the CMZ up in Lauderdale and Colbert Counties. We've still got 28 samples pending that have not been tested yet from the last week of deer season, but out of those 1100 up in that area, we've only found one other positive animal. So, again, nobody wants it here, but one out of 1100, I'll take those odds. So I think we're in as good a place as we can be in.
I do want to commend the hunters up in that area. Once all the social media conspiracy theorists settled down and people took a breath, the hunters have responded extremely well with working with our staff at mandatory check stations, dropping off at our freezer locations. It went extremely well.

The only thing that we are recommending to do this year different from last year is we're going to add the entire county of Lauderdale into the high-risk zone and a portion of Colbert County into the high-risk zone. The major reason for doing that is through talking with hunters in this area coming to our check stations, there was mainly one deer processor in that whole area that can take deer. By extending that HRZ, it takes in two more processors and several taxidermists, so it allows the hunters a little more flexibility as to where they can take their animals. The one processor
up there would get overloaded with deer
and it shut down and it left hunters with
no place to go. So this is not a
punishment. This is not anything to add
more regulation. This is just simply a
measure to help hunters be a little more
free to move around in Lauderdale County
and get deer processed and get it to the
taxidermist.

Thank you.

COMMISSIONER BLANKENSHIP: Thank you.

Mr. Chairman, I did leave one
thing out on oysters -- and I apologize
for doing this out of order -- but the
Natural Resource Damage Assessment Trustee
Implementation Group, the region-wide
implementation group, we're working with
all of the five states on some oyster
restoration projects, and from that, we
hope this year to have about seven million
dollars that we can use to do oyster
planning and resource work through the
region-wide TIG. I did leave that out.
Not only are we -- have we done a lot of work, we have a lot of work planned in 2023 and 2024.

Thank you.

CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Thank you, Commissioner. That's a lot, but that's not the whole iceberg. There's so many good things going on. I'm proud to be associated with it.

Our next agenda item is the public commentary, and it is very important to this Board as people come up to speak -- and I'm going to invite the speakers up in a moment -- but as the speakers come to the podium, I ask you as always -- and there's only 46 or 47 people here, so we shouldn't have any issues -- just be respectful, reserve your comments to outside. And one thing so that Ms. Johnson doesn't send me a mean email, please refer -- speakers refer all of your questions to the Chair, and the Board will ask the Chair for a chance to respond.
Don't engage directly with the Board members unless the Chair gives you that opportunity.

Our first speaker today is Mr. Brian Travis. And as he comes, Mr. Travis and other speakers, you have three minutes, and Ms. Jones is going to keep the clock there that I can see that. I reserve the right to give you another moment to make a specific point if you need to.

MR. TRAVIS: I didn't write anything down or print out any papers. I come to talk about rehabbing rabies vector species in Alabama. I was talking -- or asked at y'all's last meeting with the Alabama Conservation Society or Wildlife Rehabilitation Society, and they said that y'all said that there was -- that the USDA said that they recommended that Alabama not allow it. So I wrote APHIS, Tanya Espinosa, and the project manager, Amy Gilbert, and she said that she did not
recommend any such thing to Alabama.

Also, I would like to know why y'all keep blaming it on -- which I know rabies is a problem. I know it's, you know, a hundred percent lethal if it's not treated. But they said there's no pandemic of rabies in Alabama on the emails they sent me. They said it's east of the Coosa and in the southern states. I don't understand how you can have hunters hunt year-round with their dogs, you know, and you've seen them shoot raccoons out of trees, wounding them so their dogs can tear them apart. What risk is greater -- or what makes it more dangerous to a rehabber that's trained to rehab RVS than to a hunter and his dogs? What's the difference? It makes no sense.

I kind of got involved with this two years ago because my wife was depressed and we bought two raccoons from a USDA breeder. She brought them to us in Alabama, and the game warden took them,
took them to the woods, put a bullet in their head is what they said. But y'all's own policy says that if an animal should be tested for rabies, they shouldn't be shot in the head. That's y'all's own policy. Another thing it says that y'all are charged by law to make sure -- it's charged by law to protect, manage, and enhance the state's fish and wildlife resources. Y'all set up here today and all you talked about was hunting and how good deer season was and turkey season was, but I never heard any one of you say how many animals were saved or how many animals were helped. You know, turkey season everybody wants to blame it on the raccoons, the possums eating eggs, stuff like that, but if you research it, it says the number 1 cause of the turkey population declining is the harvest.

MS. JONES: Time.

CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Thank you. Anything that you can add in one sentence?
MR. TRAVIS: If I can say one thing in one sentence, Mr. Blankenship, I would ask you to reconsider -- I know you spoke with Mr. Robbins on allowing rehab for RVS species with certain policies in place.

CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Thank you. That was your specific point.

Thank you.

Our next speaker is Mr. Brandon Jackson.

MR. JACKSON: Brandon Jackson from Walker County. I wanted to thank you for the work that you're doing to benefit the trout fishery in our area. I did provide you with a handout, and it's got some numbers that I'd like to share.

We have great Conservation officers. They've done great work there. We've got a no culling regulation that's continued to prove effective over the years that it's been in place. Recently, we had a two-rod regulation that's really helped to reduce some of the user conflict
that we were seeing. We're not seeing as much anymore.

According to a 2007 report entitled Economic Impacts of Trout Stocking on Tailwaters in the Southeast Aquatic Resource Partnership, Alabama anglers have the following expenditures per trip to the Sipsey Fork for trout:
$25.26 for food, lodging, transportation. When you include fishing supplies, that number goes up to $47.42. When you include all those plus some other tertiary expenses, their number was $61.91 per angler, per trip. That amount of expenditure was 33 percent higher than the average for the Southeast. So Georgia, Tennessee, those other states, when we averaged all of those together, our anglers are spending 33 percent more per trip to come fish on the Sipsey Fork.

If we use Alabama Power's daily use numbers, we're seeing that they reported about 60 people per day utilizing
the waterway. Most of them fishing but some of them not, so we can -- but we can take that as a baseline. You get $3,600 per day, you have $108,000 per month, $1,314,000 per year.

There's a big opportunity in this area, and one of the ways that we can improve it -- I was able to talk with Chief Greene and Deputy Commissioner Poolos, and we talked about being able to stock some more fish this year. So we're going to work on some funding trying to help get that done because it is a pressing and immediate need. What's happening is we don't get as many fish during the middle of the summer when we have the highest number of anglers, and that's having a very negative effect on angler participation and enjoyment. And so if we can get more fish, we feel like we can in a temporary measure benefit those people who are spending $63 a trip. And nobody wants to pay that type of money
and that type of time and not have the opportunities that they feel should be afforded.

CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Thank you, Brandon. You're working with Chief Greene. You're satisfied with that?

MR. JACKSON: Uh-huh.

CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Thank you very much. I appreciate you coming here always.

Our next speaker is Mr. Chip Dillard.

MR. DILLARD: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'm Chip Dillard. I'm from Vestavia in Jefferson County. I've got some handouts for you guys. If y'all could pull those out, the highlighted section real quick. We've got a lot of infield CEOs in the house. You guys don't get thanked very often, but I appreciate what you guys do.

Basically I guess I'm looking for clarification on the ability to hunt coyotes at night. And under the
220-2-.27, there's a specific wording in
there that says feral swine and coyotes
are species for which the necessity of
demonstrating specific damage is not
required.

So I know this last year and --
you know, whenever we started the night
hunting license, people have been denied
permits. If the cattleman calls up -- I
had one particular one that had a dead
calf -- picture of the dead calf, sent it
in and I was copied on the email -- he was
still denied a permit for somebody to come
out there and act as an agent to night
hunt.

The equipment's gotten a lot
better. I know this question may be for
you, Chuck -- I'm not sure -- as far as
clarification of the reg, but, you know,
we've got adjoining states there.
Florida, Georgia, Mississippi, Louisiana,
Texas have night hunting year-round, and
I'd love that. But right now, I just
would love the possibility for somebody that calls me or some of my fellow Alabama coyote hunters to be able to come help them. And right now what you guys have set up, they're not allowed to do that because you aren't issuing those permits. And so I want some clarification on the reg and how it's interpreted by the Board, and that's -- that's what I want.

CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Okay. So I understand what you're asking, Mr. Dillard. What I will recommend to the Board and to the Commissioner is that Wildlife and Freshwater Fisheries put together an answer with regard to the regulation and that will be part of our comments and new business at the May meeting, if that's okay.

MR. DILLARD: Yeah, that's fine, Mr. Chairman.

One other question I had if you could tack in there for me -- or two questions -- is addressing -- I've had a
lot of people ask us can we shoot beavers at night. You know, I've had a lot of people ask me that. Could you include that as well as a question to be clarified?

CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Yes, I will. I will ask them. Of course, they're hearing you, but I've made a note of that and I will ask that question as well.

MR. DILLARD: Okay. Is my time up?
CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Your time is up.
MR. DILLARD: One more thing? Can I --
CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Okay. One more thing.
MR. DILLARD: This is a question from my trapping friends. They just wanted to know -- and I don't have a dog in this fight -- but they wanted to know if it's legal to pen deer, can you not pen a coyote for the extraction of -- you know, for collecting urine to make lures for trappers.
CHAIRMAN DOBBS: All right. Noted. And thank you. Thank you for coming and thank you for the handout.

MR. HARTZOG: Mr. Chairman, can you have them turn that speaker up for us old guys? We're having a hard time.

CHAIRMAN DOBBS: You can't turn it up. I will have them stand closer to it.

Our next speaker is James Johnson.

MR. JOHNSON: Good morning. Before I tell you about myself, let me tell you about two other men named Bill and Dave.

The story is a few years back. Bill worked for the railroad, and he worked on a piece of track with a crew when they heard a train approaching on a parallel track. When the train got closer, they noticed it wasn't a train, it was just one car, but it belonged to the president of the railroad. The train the men were working on stopped. The president of the railroad stepped off the train, stretched out, looked down and
said, Bill. Bill looks up and says, Dave. Dave gets off the train, and the two men come down and they embrace arm around their shoulders and walk off. They visit. They laugh. They come back. Dave gets on the train and it leaves. The crew who did not know anything about this said, Bill, you never told us you knew the president of the railroad. You guys are tight. What's going on? He said, well, about 25 years ago, Dave and I started working on the railroad on the same day, on the same crew. He said over time, we kind of drifted apart. I haven't seen him in a long time. That wasn't enough for the crew. They finally had to ask, man, if you guys started on the same crew, same day 25 years ago, how is it that he is now president of the railroad and you're still working on the crew. Bill said don't think I haven't asked that myself many times, but I do know the answer. He said, 25 years ago, I started to work for the
railroad for $3.13 cents an hour. Dave started to build the railroad.

My name's James Johnson. I work for Pheasants Forever and Quail Forever. I'm out of the national office. I want to give you a very quick update on some things that we think are exciting but also could happen in Alabama.

Firstly, I started my career in law enforcement in Texas several years ago, border patrol, CBP. These green uniforms are bringing back a few memories to me. I went into Pheasants Forever and Quail Forever about six years ago on a national campaign, five-year campaign and fundraiser for 500 million dollars. We wrapped it up here just in the middle of last month as a success. Our main thing that we were trying to do was put habitat on the ground -- more habitat on the ground for birds, bees, and butterflies, youth education, and advocacy. Our goal was to put over these five years -- these
last five years put nine million acres of habitat on the ground, new habitat for birds, bees, and butterflies. We hit 11. Our goal is to reach kindergarten to eighth-grade students, teach them about pollination and cultivation of land and conservation. We're doing 1.5 million. We got 1.8. So it was a huge success.

Now, that's as of last month. Now we're putting emphasis on doing a couple of other things that will help give us some other areas. We're going to target some other areas to build wildlife for birds, bees, and butterflies. Guess what, Alabama's on top of the list.

MS. JONES: Time.

MR. JOHNSON: May I finish my sentence real quick?

CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Yes, please.

MR. JOHNSON: So we're looking at coming into Alabama to bring in more birds, bees, and butterflies here immediately. We're going to get new
people on the ground. We've started a
brand-new chapter in Birmingham. We're
looking at two more chapters. I will be
coming down personally over the next
three months. Alabama is going to be our
target over the next year. On behalf of
the people here in Alabama, we're going to
give more than for birds, bees, and
butterflies. We're going to work hard
together with everyone here to do that.

Thank you for your attention,
Mr. Chairman. Thank you for your time.

CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Thank you,
Mr. Johnson, and thank you for your
efforts and congratulations and good luck
going forward.

Our next speaker is Mr. Matt
Whitfield.

MR. WHITFIELD: My name is Matt
Whitfield. I'm a falconer in
DeKalb County. I am the president of the
Alabama Hawking Association and a
representative of the Alabama Falconry and
Raptor Council, and I am a licensed falconer and small game hunter in Alabama. I'm speaking to you on behalf of the falconers in our state.

Falconry is a long-time practiced hunting sport and is recognized worldwide as an intangible cultural heritage. Falconry is defined as hunting with a trained raptor to pursue wild game. In Alabama, falconry is a hunting sport which is regulated under Alabama Administrative Code R. 220-2-.02 paragraph 9, which defines the regulated hunting and trapping seasons, bag limits, and permit requirements for falconry. Falconers have a deep respect for the raptors we use and the game we hunt, and we are very careful to follow and respect these regulations. We want what's best for birds under our care, and falconers strive to hunt with them as much as possible and present as many successful hunting opportunities as we can.
I'm going to skip on to the point here. Y'all have got the paper. You can read. But what we want to propose is falconry to not be regulated under traditional gun hunting restrictions in relation to the time of day and from a vehicle, around businesses, things like that. We know that these restrictions are appropriately applied to gun hunters for there are dangers, you know, from discharging firearms and these styles of hunting. However, when practiced by a falconer, these styles are not dangerous to us or the public around us and can be beneficial. Other states, falconry is practiced at night and from moving vehicles, ATVs, or things like that. Currently, these forms of hunting are against regulation for Alabama falconers, which is justly applied to the majority of gun hunters, but the sport of falconry and Alabama licensed falconers are limited by these regulations.
So the exemption that I'm proposing today is that we could practice these things outside of traditional gun hunting regulations, and one of the things that we'd like to add under Alabama Administrative Code R. 220-2-.02 paragraph stating: A falconry permit holder may use a raptor in pursuit of rabbits only during periods of sunset to sunrise on private land with the aid of artificial light, no dogs or firearms. And then also a falconry permit holder may use a raptor in search of legal game from a vehicle obviously on private land to that degree.

So that's all I have. If you have any questions...

CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Thank you. Thank you for your time. They have heard you. Thank you.

Our next speaker is Mr. Luke Parker.

MR. PARKER: I've got some handouts.
I'm talking about legalizing spear hunting in Alabama.

Good morning. Thank you for the time. Thank you for all that you do for the state of Alabama. My name is Luke, and I reside in Cullman, Alabama. My purpose for being here today is to hopefully shed some light on spear hunting and the push for getting it legalized in Alabama once again, specifically for white-tailed deer.

THE REPORTER: Slow down.

MR. PARKER: In the late 1990s, Alabama became the first state to legalize the use of spears for deer hunting. This, of course, ruffled feathers of the Humane Society being that their intent is to eventually put an end to all hunting. Fortunately, everything must have stayed pretty quiet because spear hunting for deer remained legal up until 2018. This change put an end to a goal that I had set and tried to achieve for years, which was
to spear a white-tailed deer. I wasn't necessarily given a clear answer on why it was outlawed other than not wanting to cause issues with the Humane Society and animal rights activists.

Now, if I may, I would like to address some thoughts that most people have on this topic. Some individuals, like those in the Humane Society, think it's barbaric and that people are running around like cavemen throwing spears hoping that they hit an animal, but I can tell you from personal experience that this is definitely not the case. Spear hunters may be the most patient and responsible hunters in the woods who take it seriously. This is because there are so many factors that actually have to align and come in in order to even have an opportunity to take an animal with a spear. This is much different than a gun or a bow where you have a major advantage no matter how far the animal is.
Essentially with a spear having a max range of ten yards, we actually make it harder on ourselves and easier for the deer.

THE REPORTER: Slow down.

CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Luke, I'll give you 30 extra seconds if you'll slow down so she can get that.

MR. PARKER: I'm sorry. For anyone who thinks that you can just run outside and kill a deer with a spear has an extreme misunderstanding on the topic.

Another thought that some have is that spear hunting is unethical. Again, this is just simply not true. Alabama spear hunter Gene Morris took over 500 big game animals with a spear and has a museum in our great state to prove it. He talks about his experience in the Washington Post saying -- and I quote -- when I throw a spear, it's such a devastating blow that the massiveness of the impact and killing power far exceeds most bullets or arrows.
Let me explain it like this. No matter what weapon we choose as a hunter, as a hunter, we need to make sure that we've practiced and are comfortable enough to take an animal with whatever weapon we choose. Spear hunting should be no different. It's extremely ethical. My spear of choice was a seven-and-a-half-foot, two-pound Samburu spear made by Cold Steel specifically designed to take down big game.

The last thought that may come to us is why, why does this even matter, why bring up spear hunting when there are only a few people doing it. To answer this, I can only speak for myself. I've learned to respect everything God gave us and grew to love the thrill of the chase. I grew to love the challenge of successfully harvesting an animal. I was encouraged by people like Gene Morris, Tim Wells from Illinois, and even Andy Coates who I've talked to personally who have all proven
that taking a deer with a spear is indeed possible and can arguably be one of the most challenging and most ethical ways of hunting.

Thank you for your time.

CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Thank you very much. Thank you for coming.

Our next speaker is Mr. Koty McCarley.

MR. MCCARLEY: Thank you, Chairman.

My name is Koty McCarley. I'm here from Hodges, Alabama, located in Franklin County.

I'm here today with a request to expand the dog deer hunting permit system into Franklin County. I'm primarily focusing this request on two clubs within the county. Both of these clubs would meet the requirements of the permit if it was just made available to us. This is the exact same request that I presented and was denied at last year's first CAB meeting. I won't go into a lot of detail
because you've already heard it. You have it in your handouts. But I do want to mention a few key points, and I have some questions regarding the denial of this request.

Deer hunting with dogs in Franklin County was completely closed in 2002. The permit system has never been made available for Franklin County. The permit system was created and is governed by the Department. It can be suspended, restricted, or revoked by the Department. The permit system is currently available for 15 counties. My first question: Considering the authority that the Department has with this system, why are we, the hunters of Franklin County, being denied an equal opportunity to hunt by this permit system that is currently being used in 15 other counties?

My second question: As mentioned above, dog deer season was closed in Franklin County 2002, 21 years ago. Why
are today's generation of hunters being punished for the actions of the previous generation?

My third question: Doesn't the new generation deserve the opportunity to prove that by utilizing today's technology of trained and tracked GPS collars that we can hunt deer with dogs the right way?

And lastly, the definition of hunting as written by the Department regulations, it uses the word pursuing. With that, if a person is pursuing a deer with a dog, they are then hunting a deer with a dog according to the definition. People all across the state are using dogs to track and recover deer that have been shot. These people are essentially pursuing a deer with a dog. Therefore, they are hunting a deer with a dog according to the definition by the Department. These actions are taking place in areas closed to deer hunting and during times when dog deer season is
closed. And so DCNR allows or overlooks these seemingly illegal actions of tracking and recovering deer by using a dog.

My last question: How could these seemingly illegal actions be allowed --

MS. JONES: Time.

MR. MCCARLEY: -- or overlooked while at the same time the Department denies the opportunity for us to have a deer season?

Now, let me be clear, please. I am not against making all possible efforts to recover a wounded deer. I think those efforts should be made. However, I am against a double standard by the Department for overlooking one action but not giving opportunity for the other.

CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Thank you, Koty. Appreciate you coming. This, of course, has been delivered to Wildlife and Freshwater Fisheries and the four questions or three questions that you've asked, I'm sure that they will take that
under advisement.

MR. MCCARLEY: Thank you.

CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Thank you for coming. Our next speaker is Ms. Susan Morrow.

MS. MORROW: Well, thank you, Chairman.

CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Thank you. It's always a pleasure to have you here.

MS. MORROW: Thank you, Board. I just want to say that our dog hunters have really tightened down. They're true dog hunters. In the last couple of years, most of the clubs won't let you turn a dog loose if you don't have a GPS collar. And it's good. The complaints are down. We're doing everything that we need to do to keep what we want to do and what we love alive. And I just want to thank y'all for not putting any more restrictions on us. And you, too, Chuck. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Thank you, Susan.
Thank you for being here.

Our next speaker is Mr. Donald Nelson.

MR. NELSON: Joey, you had to put me behind Ms. Susan. You know I have a disadvantage.

Mr. Chairman, Commissioner, and Board members, I'm Donald Nelson from Creola. I'm very happy to hear Mr. Blankenship's comments about the GOMESA program, because what I'm here for this morning is that my city is applying for a grant through that program.

You have a coin and my business card. The coin has the Gateway to the Delta, the Dolly Parton bridge just as a reminder. The card is I'm extending an invitation to all of y'all if you have the opportunity to come to Creola to visit that site. I'll take you to lunch. One thing the card don't do, now, it won't get you out of jail. They did give the mayor a ticket for speeding, so they're pretty
hard down there. But we'll be pursuing that.

I have a situation where we have a bear habitat, a migratory area for the bears. In that particular area, you're not allowed, whether it be Forever Wild or the city or whomever, to look at purchasing that property. They have a habitat for wood ducks. My vision is like what you see at Orange Beach, walking path, bicycle path, eco-friendly area. So I'll be around at the end of the meeting to talk to y'all about that, but we are applying as we speak right now for a grant. Glad to hear what you're doing at Orange Beach and all the other areas there to preserve wildlife.

The second thing, just to let you know, your Conservation officers -- to brag on -- in Barbour County did a fantastic job, very professional, very appreciative of them. I had a hiccup with my club. Over the years, I've always
shared with Mr. Grady when we've had some problems. Well, I found out this morning I had a problem. You can rest assured that that one problem we had will be corrected, because once again, it's a privilege that y'all allow us to hunt. I've been there about 60 years, so we want to continue that privilege and allow us to do that.

With GOMESA, I appreciate your support. And once again, I'll be hanging around -- and maybe -- if anybody wants to talk about it, especially our reps from Mobile. We're talking about Exit 19. We've got the bears. I would love to see the Gopher Tortoises reintroduced to our area that we're talking about. I've got the wood ducks, and I'm thinking about -- I would love to extend the county's kayak trail up Gunnison Creek.

Thank you.

CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Thank you, Mr. Nelson. You are a credit to our
sport, you're a credit to the state and your city of Creola. Good luck with that.

COMMISSIONER BLANKENSHIP: Mr. Nelson, will you make sure before you go today to speak with Director McCurdy and let her know about the projects so we'll be on the lookout for that?

MR. NELSON: We went through a list of the grant writers. She's working on that as we speak. I know there's a deadline, and we'll talk about that. And, like I said, once again, we want to help our wildlife. What's happening is it's getting encroached in Mobile County. That's just natural, building up homes and subdivisions.

COMMISSIONER BLANKENSHIP: It sounds like a good project, and I -- talk with her and we'll make sure. And thank you very much for the Challenger. That's a good one. I collect those all over the state, and I like yours a lot. That's very nice.
CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Hold on, Mr. Nelson, for a question from Mr. Jones.

MR. B. JONES: This is not a question. It's a delayed response to Ms. Morrow. I just wanted to say I've been on the Board off and on for about 12 years, and the progress that the dog hunter relationship has been with everyone is, to me, the most encouraging thing since I've been on the Board. It's fantastic. Y'all have done a great job.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

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

Our next speaker is Lane Stephens.

MR. STEPHENS: Good morning, Mr. Chairman, Commissioner, Board members.

I'm Lane Stephens with SCG Governmental Affairs. I am here representing the Alabama Dog Hunters Association.

First, I'd like to thank the Commissioner and his staff for allowing
the association to hold the two hunts in conjunction with your staff in Geneva for this past year. During the adult hunt, 14 fine bucks were harvested during that hunt. And then we had a kids hunt, children's hunt. A lot of shooting took place. Those youth were able to harvest four during that hunt. So, you know, even if they don't have a success, they get to pull the trigger and have a good time.

Understanding the stipulations that have been placed upon you by the Governor with no new regulations, I'll tell you that the association will be back and have a bill filed in this session. We have a House member who is going to be filing the bill I'm still working on as soon as possible. And whenever we had legislation two years ago, this will be shortened somewhat from that. It will be focused on the issue of deer dog trespass and providing the agency and your officers with the ability to write citations for
those people who purposely cast their dogs on someone's property where they don't have permission to be or purposefully allow those dogs to enter that property. We think that that's something -- you know, if someone's got private property rights and they don't want people on their land, your agency ought to have the ability to write citations for that today. That would be the main focus of that legislation.

Two years ago, we lost the legislation on blood trackers. That's being removed from the bill. We're not going to try to tackle that issue. It's going to be more streamlined.

The bill two years ago also required GPS collars. We've taken that out because we heard from some legislators who feel that their constituents may not be able to afford it, so we're willing to streamline this bill. And, again, it will be filed, and we look forward to working
with you through the session.

Thank you.

CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Thank you, Lane, very much. We appreciate that and appreciate you being here and being the voice for the Alabama Dog Hunters Association.

Our next speaker is Mr. David Clapp.

MR. CLAPP: Thank you, good morning. My name is David Clapp. I have property in Clay County, Alabama. And the lady asked me up front when I was registering to speak, if I was going to speak on dog hunting, and I said yes. So she said, well, are you for or against it. And that's a hard question to answer, and so I wrote I'm for it as long as it's not on my property and imposing on our rights to hunt.

My property is on Horns Valley Road in Clay County. We border the Talladega National Forest on three sides. We've had it for 15 years. We've been
managing the property. It is a marathon, not a sprint. So we've been doing that as a family. And we partner with the Talladega National Forest for burn agreements to manage the property together with them. We've had a very serious issue with dog hunting ever since I've had it. We've had years where we haven't seen any deer, you know, constant dogs running across our property from the national forest. And it's, you know, my perspective -- I'm not an expert on dog hunting -- but that it's just not a practical area, at least if people are going to be wanton and reckless to use the term that you described earlier.

I came several years ago. I've stood before you a few times. I'm really grateful for Jeff and the support he's provided. The limitation on the days and the hours did seem to help quite a bit, and we've finally started to see progress after ten years of really leaning into our
problem. The relaxation of those in the last year or two has made it worse. Last year was a horrible year for us in terms of incursions on our property.

Lonnie and Jeff and I have had a number of conversations and I'm really grateful for the support that Lonnie and the Alabama Dog Hunters Association has provided to me with my specific issue. We had a great meeting on my property several weeks ago with Jeff and I would say my friend Lonnie, and I really believe that the Alabama Dog Hunters Association is opposed to what's happening in my situation specifically. So it's a pretty specific issue that I think has just been happening over the years with people that are being reckless about it.

My ask is that the Conservation Advisory Board and the Alabama Dog Hunters Association just continue to work to drive out the bad actors or the bad actions. I was really grateful that one of the
members said to me, you know, the years of saying dogs can't read property signs or, well, I can only hunt for two days now so it's kind of your tough luck, that's unreasonable, and I was really grateful to hear that from Lonnie.

MS. JONES: Time.

MR. CLAPP: And so my hope is that --
CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Go ahead. Finish up.

MR. CLAPP: My hope and my ask is that the Conservation Advisory Board and the Alabama Dog Hunters Association will work together to trim back this behavior of, I think, people that just aren't taking this issue seriously, whether it's trimming hours back or speaking to people that, you know, aren't willing to do this responsibly. That's my ask. I'm grateful, I'm hopeful, and I need your help.

CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Thank you. What I would recommend again as you've done is continue your dialogue with Mr. Martin and
with Mr. Miller and work to get whatever works in your area for you and let Mr. Martin bring that back to this Board again.

MR. MARTIN: Mr. Chairman?

CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Yes, Mr. Martin.

MR. MARTIN: Dave has been very patient and very -- just very willing to help and he was -- I asked him to give us one more year. We met with Lonnie. Lonnie had several of the Board members from that association up there that met with Dave. They've been -- Lonnie and his group have been very good about correcting the problem before it becomes a fire. Lonnie and that crew are very aware. I told them that day if we don't get this straightened out, next year I will propose to close that section down of Talladega National Forest.

CHAIRMAN DOBBS: All right. There is part of your answer. And then, of course, that will be up to the Board and the
Department. So good luck. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Our next speaker is Ms. Sheila Gray.

MS. GRAY: Sheila Gray from Munford, Talladega County.

First of all, Mr. Chairman, Commissioner, Board members, Conservation officers and law enforcement agencies, we send our heartfelt condolences on the loss of Officer Greg Gilliland.

And with that being said, we live, hunt, and fish in Talladega County. Since we bought our first property, we've had a continuing issue with hunters running their dogs through it. Granted, we're in a different part on the opposite end of -- we're on the Talladega side of the forest, Munford side. We lease additional property adjacent to ours as well. Throughout the years, it's very difficult to hunt our property because the dogs run through them during deer season. The presence of the deer dogs in the middle of
our hunts completely destroys the hunt, interferes with our right to quietly enjoy our property. We've always purchased our hunting and fishing licenses even though we only hunt our properties. It's our way of supporting the Alabama Department of Conservation and Natural Resources, which, in turn, supports our right to hunt and fish.

We spend a lot of money on equipment, building food plots, providing supplemental food for much of the wildlife in hopes of harvesting an animal for the table. Running dogs across the lands that we've worked hard to prepare disturbs the wild game on the entire property and adversely affects our possible hunting success. At what point does the State consider deer dog hunting an interference with our right to lawfully hunt our own property? The dogs don't know where they can go. The deer dog hunters can't possibly think that this does not
adversely affect our efforts to enjoy and hunt our property. Wherever the dogs are released, the hunters know the dogs will run deer through private property knowing full well we and other property owners will be interrupted. That's where our hunt ends and the deer dog hunters' hunt continues.

We understand the heritage and tradition of hunting with dogs can be a personal issue. However, there seems to be a total disregard for people who own property. When that happens, heritage has very little to do with it. Hunting and fishing as a whole are vital parts of our heritage, not just deer dog hunting. There seems to be no adequate remedy for us as this regularly interferes with our peaceful and quiet enjoyment of our private properties. We're asking this Advisory Board for relief in this matter. If the deer hunting with dogs is legal and if the dog owners cannot be charged with
trespassing for their dogs coming out of the private property, where is the relief for us? All we want to do is quietly hunt what we have worked for. We enjoy waiting and watching for the natural movement of the deer. We're very selective of the deer we harvest. We have to watch these dogs run across our properties. The hunters drive their vehicles in the direction while others wait and shoot what comes their way. Talladega County does not have a leash law, nor have they adopted the State of Alabama's leash law.

And with that, we have attachments. My packet is a manilla envelope. And I thank you for your time.

CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Hold one moment.

Have you spoken with Mr. Martin?

MR. MARTIN: No.

MS. GRAY: No, sir.

MR. MARTIN: If you would, get with me and Lonnie after the meeting. Anybody in the Talladega National Forest if you're
having issues if you'll meet with me and Lonnie. I'm just telling you. And Susan does a good job as well. She's not up in my area. Lonnie is and he is fantastic about getting the fires put out and so are a lot of dog hunters up in that area. There's a -- I would say 85 or 90 percent are trying to do the right thing and they're trying to help police the ones that are not. So like Dave, I'm fully confident that Lonnie and his guys will take care of it. So if you will get with me after the meeting, we'll be glad to try to get your problem solved.

MS. GRAY: Yes, sir. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Thank you, Ms. Gray. Good luck. And Mr. Martin is your congressional representative. He's in your district, so please contact him.

Thank you.

Our next speaker is Mr. Chris Turner.

MR. TURNER: Chris Turner. I'm from
the Munford area, Talladega County.

I personally own property in this area. We lease several hundred acres in this area and have private property that I have permission to hunt as well. For the last 28 years, I've had problems daily during deer season with people hunting with dogs either in the Talladega National Forest or coming to the road that I reside on and turning their dogs loose on our road. This method of hunting interferes with my ability, my family, and guests to quietly enjoy my own property and hunt wildlife thereon.

These dogs and dogs in general are not welcome upon my land. They're continuously released in the national forest on the edge of our property line. I've been personally told by these dog hunters that the reason why they turn their dogs loose on the edge of our property line is that we can plant food plots and have supplemental bait and feed
the deer on our property and they cannot
do it in the national forest. And that
type of conduct is a nuisance to myself
and my guests, you know, when they do
that. These people have exhibited a
cavalier, almost outlaw attitude and have
taken no precautions to keep dogs from
entering my property. They have no
respect for me to quietly and peacefully
enjoy my own property. These people will
sit on the public roadway that I live on,
and this can be very intimidating while
trying to hunt safely on my own property
not knowing if they are going to fire
across the road onto my property where
myself or my children are hunting or even
towards my home. When confronting these
people they all state, we're not hunting.
We're catching our dogs. These dogs are
an instrumentality to my hunt. They end
my hunt every time. I've told the
numerous dog hunters to keep their dogs
off my property.
Running dogs across the land, being hunted by still hunters, disturbs the wild game on the entire property and adversely affects the hunting success for those engaged in still hunting. I spend thousands of dollars each year in leasing land, planting food plots, and providing supplemental food for the wildlife and game in our area. This behavior regularly interferes with my attempt to peacefully, quietly, and successfully hunt my own property.

Over the years, I've had numerous complaints with our Conservation officer, Greg Gilliland, who was a great friend of mine. Greg would come out and attempt to catch these dog hunters illegally dropping tailgate on my property. They would do it at night the day before. The day before, they would come on the road that we live on, turn their dogs loose to push the deer towards the national forest. I've been told by several of them that that's how
they do it. We always missed the
opportunity to catch them in the act. Dog
hunting in the Talladega National Forest
is a nuisance and is an invasion of my
property, disrupting the natural movement
of the deer for an indeterminate amount of
time. These dogs coming from the national
forest ruin my effort to hunt on my
chosen, lawful manner of still hunting on
my own property that I paid for and
expended money and time to prepare for
hunting. When these dogs --

MS. JONES: Time.

MR. TURNER: Can I finish?

CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Yes.

MR. TURNER: I've got one more
question as far as, like, the -- the
strategic surveillance and the response
plan. He brought up earlier about the
chronic waste disease. Does that -- you
know, practice to contain that, does
that -- you know, running dogs can, we --
you know, is that part of the plan, you
know, in those areas? You know, it's up in north Alabama, Limestone County. You know, is that plan, you know, to stop dogs pushing, you know? Can we contain that, you know, by the -- is that a good method of containing that CWD?

CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Well, I'm guessing your question is do dogs push deer out of the containment area?

MR. TURNER: Yes.

CHAIRMAN DOBBS: I couldn't answer that question.

MR. TURNER: Yes, how far deer are chased by dogs, it can be up to 15, 20 miles, you know. If you take movement of animals from, you know, certain directions down, you could push it down into our area as well.

CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Yes, sir. Common sense would dictate that. I don't know the answer to that. Is that your final point?

MR. TURNER: Yes.
CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Thank you very much. Have you spoken with Mr. Martin as well?

MR. TURNER: No, sir, but I've talked to Jerry Fincher and Shawn Nixon, you know, as well.

MR. MARTIN: If you would get with me after the meeting as well and Lonnie, and we'll -- and what I keep referring to Lonnie for, we like to try to put these fires out before, you know --

MR. TURNER: And in my pamphlet, y'all see the pictures that I've provided, you know, of how they will drive down, they line up, and turn them loose.

MR. MARTIN: Okay.

CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Our next speaker is Mr. Avery Bates. You didn't think I'd forget you.

MR. BATES: I have many years of seeing you.

I'm vice president of Organized Seafood Association and am here to say we have had a couple good years of oystering,
but I do appreciate the '23/'24 planting program for the oyster industry and I really appreciate what the Wildlife Federation has done. And I want to tell you what, we appreciate everything y'all -- we've got another 150,000 to put in reef areas for us to work on. Our people has been cut down on time, and we've got a group here that's about -- he's a professional oysterman like I was for many years, but we need to be building back our reefs, both for recreational and commercial fishermen and quality of water, everything that -- we're behind time really in planting real good productive areas.

We also need to get better water around the mouth of Bayou La Batre by extending that pipeline out to 15 foot. We've got the money. It's been allocated for years. It's been okayed. Something's holding it up. Chris, could you help us try to find out and push that pipeline
out, which is the Bayou La Batre outfall line? It's been okayed by everybody. It just needs to go in place so we can upgrade some of these areas so we can plant. We can recoup Little River area and get Mobile Bay looking a little better too because of the amount of outfall that's coming in through that line. And it's in four and a half foot of water. So we want to get that out so we can biologically get better water for our little crustaceans and stuff in that area. So we want to thank y'all for all you do for us. We thank our farming people down there. We just had a meeting with them.

We're glad that y'all are looking into seafood that comes in from foreign countries. We've got more seafood coming in this nation now through the shrimp and stuff that's being poured in here. We definitely want you to keep checking for chloramphenicol and stuff, different chemicals that's growing in these ponds
that we do not need here in America. We
want to keep our fishermen going. We
thank y'all for having a fishing industry
here. The only few -- and not -- game
fishing status flounder, I've been asked
that a thousand times. I say, no, we've
got some management programs. We hope we
can loosen some of these programs up,
these regulations, that our fishermen can
catch a few more fish because it is a
great thing to be able to catch a flounder
or a mackerel. Thank you for not years
ago making sheepshead a game fish and
mackerel a game fish. That entails more
food for y'all and the people of Alabama.
Keep us fishing.

Don't forget, we've got a big
dinner coming up on the 22nd. That's our
Seafood Bash as we call it in Montgomery.
Please come.

CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Thank you, Mr. Bates.
Thank you, Avery, for being here. It's
always a pleasure to have you here.
COMMISSIONER BLANKENSHIP:

Mr. Chairman?

CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Yes, sir.

CHAIRMAN BLANKENSHIP: Avery, what day did you say that Seafood Bash is on? I don't want to miss that. What day is that Seafood Bash?

MR. BATES: On the 22nd of March. We'll have fresh Alabama seafood and Gulf Coast seafood. We hope we have some oyster season -- or oysters there. Those are on the half shell.

CHAIRMAN BLANKENSHIP: Mr. Chairman, I just want to give a quick update. You asked about -- if it's okay -- on the --

CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Yes, I'd like to hear that.

CHAIRMAN BLANKENSHIP: So that project is being managed through our Deepwater Horizon section. We've just gotten the increase from the U.S. Department of Treasury on that project to 19 million dollars, which is what it's going to take
to do that work. It's being implemented by the Bayou La Batre Utilities. So we have provided that funding to them. They are, my understanding, still waiting on the permit from the Corps of Engineers, and as soon as they get that permit, they'll be ready to bid it and make that happen. Hopefully, in 2023, that project will finally get done.

MR. BATES: That's good news to us. Cleaner water makes the best oysters and better seafood. And if y'all can get that done for us or push it along, Chris, we appreciate it.

CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Sounds like it's going to happen. Thank you.

MR. BATES: Sounds like it is. We need all the help we can get down there.

CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Thank you, Avery. Thank you very much.

Our next speaker is Kerry Mitchell.

MS. MITCHELL: Hello. How are y'all?
My name is Kerry Mitchell. Me and my husband, we are both commercial fishermen, oysters, shrimp, crab.

I've supplied y'all with some paperwork. We had a petition out. I have over 700 signatures. We are trying to get our oyster reef opened for a full season. We have a seven-month season from October 1st till April 30th. This season we got 61 days is what we had to work. That was 44,409 sacks. Oysters in our community are very important. Opening this reef and letting us work will not only help the commercial fishermen but will also help the local community, local small businesses, shops. I mean, it just goes on and on.

You know, this is our livelihood, our careers. We need a full season. And I've had this petition out for a while. We've been in contact with the news. We've talked to Mr. Kevin Anson. We just want to try to work with y'all and y'all
work with us to get us working longer.
There's an abundance of oysters. I mean, the reef's doing really, really well. My husband can catch his limit in 30 minutes -- that's over, what, 500 pounds -- and be back in two hours from when we left, you know, and we just would like to get a chance to work, you know, our full season. We never do. You know, the reef has had issues in the past, but I do believe it's coming back really strong, you know.

CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Thank you. They've heard you. I'm sure that Director Bannon understands and the Commissioner, of course, understands. They're very close to this issue. One thing that I know -- I don't know much about oysters except that I like them -- is that this Department and Marine Resources micro manages that to maintain that level of harvestability, that capability.

MS. MITCHELL: Also, I would like to
say one more thing if I can.

CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Yes.

MS. MITCHELL: I just have some questions about some of the funding that's sent down for Wildlife, Fisheries, spillway floodwater money.

CHAIRMAN DOBBS: I'm sorry?

MS. MITCHELL: Spillway floodwater, 2019. I've been watching since this was released. It's on the Alabama Outdoor website. It says the application will be posted soon. We've never heard nothing else about it. I know this money is supposed to be for resources to help the fishermen to, you know, update their businesses or whatnot. I know other states have received their fundings, and I was just trying to find out what is the deal.

COMMISSIONER BLANKENSHIP: Director Bannon was in Washington this past week working on that to try and find out through the Office of Management and
Budget when they're going to release those funds. Would you be prepared to -- I hate to call you on the spot, but are you prepared to give an update on that?

MR. BANNON: So Alabama applied for the 2019 spillway funding. It's about eight million dollars that's coming to the state. We were the first state to get it in the works. It has cleared the Office of Management and Budget, which is a black hole in DC that nobody really understands.

It is now with NOAA Fisheries. We met with them on Monday. January 5th, I had an email that said the money was imminent -- apparently, our definitions of imminent are different -- but they were going to check on that. The other states have not received their funding. They're actually behind where Alabama is, but we all anticipate during this year that money should be released. We actually anticipate that it should be out before May. And as soon as that money is
released, the application will be opened up on the website. So I'll use the word imminent, and we'll follow the federal definition. But I believe it will be here before May.

CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Thank you.

Ms. Mitchell, does that answer your question?

MS. MITCHELL: Yes, sir.

CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Thank you very much and thank you for being here today.

Our next speaker is Mr. Michael Williams.

MR. WILLIAMS: How are y'all doing? I'm Michael Williams. I'm one of the fishermen in south Alabama.

We get a six-month oyster season, October to April. We don't really get that full season because we get freshwater closures. We've had a closure -- this season already has closed for a month, maybe a month and two weeks, so we lose that time right there to fish.
Another thing I want to talk about is the grid system they've got us on. I can't make money on a grid system. I've got tides and winds pushing me. I've got lines and lines. If I cross that line and I'm in closed waters, I get a ticket. I've never had to fish in this way. I've fished for 30 years. They've got us in little one-acre boxes. We're going to devastate that little spot. And I just want to do away with the grid system and go back to the way we fished for 30 years. It's never hurt nothing. All we do is make the reefs better. We ain't killing nothing, and we need to be managed. And that's pretty much all I have to say. The grid system's got me starved out and I can't -- I got tides and winds pushing me across the lines. I can't sit and look at a phone and try to fish oysters. There's no way possible. If we ain't looking at our phone, we've got to work. We've got to manually catch them on the boat. I
can't be worried about crossing a line. And if there's thick oysters on the other side of that line, I'm naturally going to go to them thick oysters. I'm not going to be scratching on baby oysters. I don't want to catch baby oysters. I want to catch big, full-size oysters. And I would appreciate that, if somebody would look into that grid system.

CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Thank you. Your point is made, and we hear that. And I'm certain that Mr. Anson is aware. Thank you.

That concludes -- unless there's anything further from the Board with regard to rebuttal, that concludes our public comments today.

Our next agenda item is unfinished business. Is there any unfinished business?

The only unfinished business is -- and I believe that the requests for information from the Department have all
been complied with, so we will move on to
new business, today's new business.

Is there any new business before
this Board?

MR. R. JONES: Mr. Chairman?

CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Yes, Mr. Jones.

MR. R. JONES: I'd like to make a
motion. In accordance with the
requirements of the Alabama State
Legislature, I'd like to make a motion to
approve and increase all licensing fees
levied by the Department of Conservation
and Natural Resources where applicable
based on the increases in the Consumer
Price Index as published and using the
formulas for said increases as previously
approved.

CHAIRMAN DOBBS: All right. There's a
motion on the floor. I'm going to ask for
a second.

MR. STIMPSON: Second.

CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Second from
Mr. Stimpson.
Mr. Jones, would you read that motion one more time, please.

MR. R. JONES: In accordance with the requirements of the Alabama State Legislature, I make a motion to approve an increase in all licenses and fees levied by the Department of Conservation and Natural Resources where applicable based on the increases in the Consumer Price Index as published and using the formulas for said increases as previously approved.

CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Thank you. The motion is before the Board for the vote.

All those in favor of the motion raise your hands.

The ayes carry. The motion is passed.

Are there any other motions?

Mr. Hartzog?

MR. HARTZOG: Not actually a motion, but I would like for the Department to look into something since I'm the old man on the Board that can't hear. But anyway,
one situation I've run into is used to be we had what -- Raymond and several of us are big waterfowlers and used to have actually a duck stamp with a physical duck stamp. You could go to the probate office and buy it. You now have to buy it online. Once you pass 65, which I'm past that, I can -- I'm still required to buy a federal duck stamp, but I would love to buy an Alabama duck stamp. They add more money into the duck stamp program, and yet, the way the system is set up, I can't even make -- voluntarily buy a duck stamp because it has to go through the computer system. So if the Department could possibly look at updating the computer system or making it where people over 65 could voluntarily buy a duck stamp to add to the duck stamp dollars to add to more conservation work for the State if they'd look into that for us.

CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Thank you. We will direct them or ask them to, and we will
review it and get back with you at the
next meeting, if that's okay.

MR. HARTZOG: Yeah, that's fine.

CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Okay. Any other
business before the Board?

Any thoughts?

There are no announcements today
that I'm aware of. So the date and
location of our next meeting is going to
be May the 20th. It is in Huntsville. It
will be downtown Huntsville probably. So
you can make your plans.

Y'all have safe travels home and
be safe. And thank you for being here.

This meeting is adjourned.

(Proceedings concluded at
10:45 a.m.)
REPORTER'S CERTIFICATE

STATE OF ALABAMA

AUTAUGA COUNTY

I, Stacey L. Johnson, Certified Court Reporter and Commissioner for the State of Alabama at Large, hereby certify that on March 11, 2023, I reported the proceedings in the matter of the foregoing cause, and that pages 3 through 99 contain a true and accurate transcription of the aforementioned proceedings.

I further certify that I am neither of kin nor of counsel to any of the parties to said cause, nor in any manner interested in the results thereof.

This the 24th day of April, 2023.

/s/Stacey L. Johnson
STACEY L. JOHNSON, CCR
Commissioner for the
State of Alabama at Large
CCR 386, Expires 9/30/2023
COMMISSION EXPIRES: 6/22/2023