

STATE OF ALABAMA DEPARTMENT OF
CONSERVATION AND NATURAL RESOURCES
ADVISORY BOARD MEETING
Capitol Auditorium
Montgomery, Alabama
March 3, 2018

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 State of Alabama Capitol
Auditorium, Montgomery, Alabama, on Saturday,
March 3, 2018, commencing at approximately
9:00 a.m.

rivers, the great state of Alabama and
all that goes on in it. We thank you
for the game and the fish, for those
things that we all hold dear. Help us
to think in today's meeting and to
discern properly how we should handle
things in the natural resources and the
bounty that you've so richly blessed us
with. Thank you for you son, Jesus, who
died on the cross for our sins, and it's
in His name we pray. Amen.

CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Thank you, Raymond.

We're going to do something a little
different, if we can. If everybody will
rise, we will say the pledge. Deputy
Commissioner Poolos will lead us in our
pledge.

(Pledge of Allegiance recited.)

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

Welcome. I'm glad to see everybody
here. It's a crowded house. Let's have
a very productive meeting.

BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT:

- Mr. Joseph Dobbs, Jr., Chairman
- Commissioner Christopher M. Blankenship
- Commissioner John McMillan
- Dr. Gary Lemme
- Mr. Jeff Martin
- Mr. Raymond Jones, Jr.
- Mr. Grady Hartzog
- Mr. Patrick Cagle
- Mr. Ben C. Stimpson, Jr.
- Mr. Gary Wolfe
- Ms. Jessica Butler
- Mr. Greg Barksdale
- Mr. Brock Jones

CHAIRMAN DOBBS: It's 9 a.m. Let's call the
March 3rd, 2018, meeting of the
Conservation Advisory Board here in
Montgomery to order.

This morning we'll have our
invocation. We'll ask our board member
Raymond Jones if he will please give
that. Let's bow our heads.

MR. RAYMOND JONES: Thank you. Heavenly
Father, thank you so much for this day.
We are glad to gather in this place and
glad to think about the land of many

One note I'd like to make. In our
previous meeting we had an altercation.
That is unacceptable. We will not
tolerate that behavior. So let's all
work together and move forward.

I'm going to ask our secretary if we
have a quorum. Mr. Secretary?

COMMISSIONER BLANKENSHIP: Yes, sir, we have a
quorum.

CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Thank you very much. The
chairs are full.

Some business. Everybody has had
the minutes available to them. They've
read and reviewed those minutes. Are
there any corrections to those minutes?

(No response.)

CHAIRMAN DOBBS: No corrections being noted,
the Chair moves that the minutes are
approved for the two previous meetings.

MR. CAGLE: Second.

CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Well, I'm just going to
approve them as the Chair to save that,
but if you want to make a motion, you

1 can.
 2 MR. CAGLE: That's okay.
 3 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: The next item on our agenda
 4 is our Commissioner's report.
 5 Commissioner Blankenship.
 6 COMMISSIONER BLANKENSHIP: Did you want to let
 7 the board members introduce themselves?
 8 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Well, I was going to do that
 9 after you, but we can do it. Let's do
 10 it.
 11 COMMISSIONER BLANKENSHIP: That's fine.
 12 Good morning. I'm glad to see you
 13 all here today. I am Commissioner Chris
 14 Blankenship. I'm so glad to see you
 15 here today, so glad to have so many
 16 people here with us. I'd like to
 17 welcome some of our new board members as
 18 they introduce themselves in a few
 19 minutes. We're glad to have our new
 20 members Greg Barksdale, Jessica Butler,
 21 and then Brock Jones, who was a member
 22 in the past and has been reappointed
 23 onto the Advisory Board. So glad to see

1 regulations that dealt with game and
 2 fish. In 1907 that came under one
 3 agency.
 4 And so it's good to see where we've
 5 come as an agency since 1907. Some
 6 people may say we haven't come that far,
 7 but I would disagree, because we have
 8 come a long way as an agency in the way
 9 that we look at things in the state and
 10 the way that we work with the people
 11 that like to hunt and fish.
 12 Back in 1907 there weren't very many
 13 deer or turkey, songbirds, much of
 14 anything else in the state. Today we
 15 have a thriving deer and turkey
 16 population. We have some of the best
 17 freshwater fishing anywhere in the
 18 country. Same thing with our saltwater
 19 fishing. And I think that is all
 20 attributed to the will of people like
 21 you to obey the rules and regulations
 22 and the work of the biologists and
 23 enforcement officers in the department

1 him.
 2 And I appreciate the work that
 3 Commissioner Guy has done for the six
 4 years that he was commissioner here. I
 5 had hoped he could be with us today and
 6 was unable to be, and maybe he can be
 7 with us at our next meeting where we can
 8 thank him for all of his hard work that
 9 he did.
 10 And I'm glad to have our new
 11 chairman, Mr. Joey Dobbs, presiding over
 12 the meetings and working with the
 13 department.
 14 And we have a lot of good things
 15 that are happening to the Department of
 16 Conservation. Just this past week we
 17 had a celebration of the 110th
 18 anniversary of the Department of
 19 Conservation and Natural Resources. In
 20 1907 a bill was passed that created the
 21 Department of Conservation. Prior to
 22 that there were some county laws and
 23 local laws that had some patchwork

1 that really have a passion for what we
 2 do.
 3 As a part of that celebration of the
 4 110th anniversary, we dedicated a
 5 memorial wall on our fifth floor of the
 6 office to the 12 officers that have lost
 7 their life -- 12 conservation officers
 8 who have lost their life protecting the
 9 resources that we find so valuable. I
 10 did not realize that we had that many
 11 people that had given their lives in the
 12 line of duty to protect what we hold so
 13 valuable.
 14 It was a very moving tribute to
 15 those officers. Many of the family
 16 members were there. We had some -- one
 17 family from one of the officers that
 18 died in the '70s, he had -- all three of
 19 his children and most of his
 20 grandchildren and some
 21 great-grandchildren were there. So it
 22 was very special to them, special to us
 23 for them to participate. The governor

1 was there and gave a nice proclamation
 2 and showed the importance of those
 3 lives. So I just hope that you'll
 4 remember our employees when you say your
 5 prayers at night and ask for their
 6 protection as they're out doing what
 7 they do so that we can have such
 8 wonderful opportunities to hunt and fish
 9 here in Alabama.

10 I do want to recognize a couple of
 11 our new employees at the Department of
 12 Conservation since our last Advisory
 13 Board meeting. Ed Poolos is our deputy
 14 commissioner here in the department, and
 15 then Patrick Moody is our general
 16 counsel. Patrick is here on the front
 17 row. He heads our legal department.

18 So with that, I'll turn it back over
 19 to you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you.

20 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Thank you very much,
 21 Commissioner.

22 Our next part will be reports from
 23 our board members, their district

1 The recent CWD-positive deer in
 2 Mississippi is something that everyone
 3 seems to be taking very seriously. I
 4 think we have some people speaking today
 5 on that, and I look forward to that.

6 Thank you.

7 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Thank you.

8 MR. RAYMOND JONES: My name is Raymond Jones.

9 I represent Congressional District
 10 Number 5, which is located in north
 11 Alabama.

12 It's been a fairly quiet year in our
 13 area of the woods. We did have a very
 14 bad EHD outbreak. A lot of deer,
 15 unfortunately, passed away during that
 16 process. I don't know why this year was
 17 particularly harder than normal, but we
 18 did have a bad outbreak of that.

19 I had an opportunity -- a good
 20 opportunity to go to the dedication of
 21 the new archery park. Ms. Butler and
 22 Director Sykes were with us. And it's a
 23 great thing there in north Alabama. We

1 reports. They're going to introduce
 2 themselves, and you'll get to meet our
 3 new board members. So if we'll start at
 4 the end of the table, Mr. Martin.

5 MR. MARTIN: Yes, sir. I'm Jeff Martin,
 6 District 3. My district had some pretty
 7 good fishing success so far this year.
 8 As everybody knows, weather has a good
 9 part playing in that. The deer hunters
 10 I've spoken to, some had a great year.
 11 Of course, others didn't have so much.

12 The dog deer hunting complaints were
 13 not at the level they were last year.
 14 Some of the individuals and
 15 organizations have worked to be better
 16 stewards of the resources and better
 17 neighbors to their fellow sportsmen.
 18 With that in mind, I will be reviewing
 19 and discussing some possible changes in
 20 the hunting days and time periods as
 21 well as some geographic areas that will
 22 require additional review and
 23 discussion.

1 did -- Jessica and I hit a target.
 2 Chuck didn't. But we won't talk about
 3 that. But, anyway, that was a nice
 4 ceremony that was held there.

5 Received several calls on Swan Creek
 6 Wildlife Management Area and fielded
 7 those, and there's a lot of discussion
 8 in that regard.

9 Speaking of Swan Creek, I want to
 10 let everyone know and let the board
 11 know, in over 40 years, I don't think
 12 there's been the amount of effort that
 13 is being put into our WMAs as is being
 14 put right now. Thanks to leadership
 15 from Director Sykes, Keith Gauldin, Seth
 16 Maddox, Jud Easterwood, Drew Able,
 17 Courtenay Conring, who are all employees
 18 of the state. There's a lot of energy
 19 and a lot of emotion and stuff that's
 20 going into these WMAs to make
 21 waterfowling the best it's ever been.
 22 So there's a tremendous amount of work
 23 there.

1 I also recently attended a Ducks
 2 Unlimited event in the north Alabama
 3 region where over \$100,000 was raised.
 4 Now, that money is not going to Canada.
 5 That money is staying in north Alabama
 6 and helping fund these projects on our
 7 WMAs so we will have more quality
 8 hunting for the general public in that
 9 region.

10 Obviously, the CWD scare, I know
 11 it's going to be talked about a good bit
 12 today. Mississippi is a real threat.
 13 It's something that we all need to take
 14 very, very seriously, and I look forward
 15 to the occasion of more of those
 16 discussions today. Thank you.

17 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Thank you.

18 MR. STIMPSON: I'm Ben Stimpson, District 1.
 19 I'm from Mobile. I'll be brief today.

20 The biggest feedback item that I got
 21 this past year was on dog deer hunting,
 22 and it was primarily from people
 23 requesting permitting systems throughout

1 My name is Gary Wolfe. I represent
 2 District 1 also. I live in Fairhope,
 3 Alabama.

4 Let me first say kudos to Scott
 5 Bannon and Kevin Anson with Marine
 6 Resources. Exempted fishing permits are
 7 well received. To put our reef fish
 8 management back in the hands of
 9 professionals in five Gulf states will
 10 be a great day. Keep up the good work,
 11 guys.

12 Water quality remains an issue but
 13 is part of the health department's
 14 commitment. I remember last year we had
 15 that discussion about some problems with
 16 health, bad water and stuff. So I think
 17 that really remains back in the health
 18 department's side.

19 I have had several boating
 20 complaints. Shrimpers, fishermen, and
 21 recreational boaters have spoken to me
 22 about tour boats, dolphin sightseeing
 23 boats making large wakes and being two

1 the state. It was generally positive
 2 feedback. But that was the biggest
 3 thing that I heard about.

4 Secondly, we made a lot of changes
 5 in the Mobile Delta this past year with
 6 the duck hunting, and it was by far,
 7 from the people I talked to, very
 8 positively received. I mean, we had
 9 limited hunting hours. We had a
 10 motorless area. We had some -- we made
 11 a lot of significant changes, and the
 12 feedback that I was getting from that
 13 was that they were even requesting more
 14 changes, more motorless areas, and to
 15 continue what we've been doing, and it
 16 was generally very positive feedback on
 17 that.

18 Of course, same thing with CWD. A
 19 lot of questions. A lot of interest in
 20 that. We'll hear that shortly. But
 21 I'll turn it over to my eastern
 22 District 1 representative.

23 MR. WOLFE: Thank you, Ben.

1 abreast to board in parts of the
 2 waterways. This is an issue, and
 3 hopefully we'll be able to review it
 4 with the staff and take care of some of
 5 that.

6 Deer hunting was good, not great.
 7 Been hearing a lot of good and a lot of
 8 bad. So I think overall it might be a
 9 pretty decent year but not a great year.

10 Director Sykes has a PowerPoint I'm
 11 anxious to see. It speaks to lack of
 12 harvest reporting or reduction in the
 13 harvest. And I think that's going to be
 14 very important to us because what I'm
 15 hearing about the EHD and stuff is
 16 something that we really need to get on
 17 top of.

18 Dog deer hunting complaints in the
 19 southern counties have not been an
 20 issue. In other counties I understand
 21 we have some issues, and hopefully we're
 22 going to discuss that today.

23 Meeting with Tony Boutwell, the

1 president of the Baldwin County Dog
 2 Hunters Association -- I've had several
 3 discussions with Tony. And Tony thinks
 4 that the Garmin Alpha 100 dog collar has
 5 been the most effective in our region.
 6 I know his club and another club that
 7 joins them is using those collars and,
 8 talking to him, that they really kept
 9 their dogs on their property and that
 10 this seems to be working really good in
 11 our region of Baldwin County and hoping
 12 maybe some of the other clubs will pick
 13 up on that too.

14 I applaud what DCNR is doing in
 15 being proactive regarding CWD. That, to
 16 me, is one of the most important things
 17 to the board that we've got to address
 18 and take care of. And we would expect
 19 participation from the public as well as
 20 our stakeholders. This will continue to
 21 be our most reviewed item. Thank you
 22 very much.

23 MS. BUTLER: Good morning. I'm Jessica

1 helping the mentee harvest an animal and
 2 see it to its processing. Cooking also.
 3 Justin Grider makes really good rabbit
 4 stew for the record. It was a special
 5 time, a great day for everyone involved.

6 I would like to encourage everyone to
 7 share this program with someone, also,
 8 or volunteer to be a mentor. You can
 9 sign up online, "OutdoorAlabama."

10 Also received information from the
 11 Alabama Dog Hunters Association, the
 12 Talladega chapter. Appreciate their
 13 efforts and work in their community.

14 I am familiar with several
 15 complaints about dog deer hunters in
 16 several counties close to my district as
 17 well as several letters mailed to the
 18 department and the board. We're going
 19 to review these and other items coming
 20 forward.

21 Have had the opportunity to discuss
 22 CWD-positive deer in Mississippi with
 23 some members of surrounding county

1 Butler. I represent District 5 up in
 2 the north part with Raymond. I'm in the
 3 Scottsboro area.

4 And the sportsmen and women in our
 5 district reported a good season for
 6 deer. Like Raymond mentioned, EHD was
 7 reported in part of our district, but
 8 thank you to the division for handling
 9 that very quickly and efficiently. And
 10 it will be discussed further as our
 11 meeting progresses.

12 Also a great duck season for our
 13 area. I had one report that it was the
 14 best duck season he's seen in 40 years.

15 I also had the opportunity a few
 16 weeks ago to attend one of the
 17 adult-mentored hunts. What an excellent
 18 day. I can't say enough great things
 19 about this program. Excellent job by
 20 everyone involved. Thank you to the
 21 division for their hard work on several
 22 hunts, procuring the land, plowing and
 23 planting, building blinds and stands,

1 commissions, and they are concerned
 2 about the possible economic impact it
 3 may have on small communities. But we
 4 will discuss this further also.

5 And it's an honor to be here and
 6 serve. If I can do anything to help,
 7 please feel free to contact me. Look
 8 forward to learning more as our meeting
 9 progresses. I will pass it to Grady.

10 MR. HARTZOG: Good morning. Grady Hartzog,
 11 District 2, Eufaula, Alabama.

12 Overall everybody was satisfied with
 13 the deer season. Barbour County has a
 14 three-point-on-the-side rule. Everybody
 15 was satisfied with that. Talking to the
 16 deer processors, they believe they
 17 processed more deer this year than they
 18 have in the previous years, so that's a
 19 good thing.

20 Had some concerns and talked to
 21 Chuck and the department about the rut
 22 happening earlier east of 431 and maybe
 23 looking at tweaking the seasons on that,

1 but we're still a ways from that. But,
2 you know, those people in those areas
3 really want to maybe see those changes.

4 I want to thank Chris and his wife.
5 Last week they came out -- Barbour
6 County has the largest youth hunt east
7 of the Mississippi, and it's the third
8 largest in the country. There was over
9 250 kids. They came. They shot BB
10 guns, skeet, archery. One of the newest
11 programs they had this time, which I
12 thought was good, was to harness and get
13 into tree stands because of the
14 tree-stand injuries we've had. So the
15 overall youth hunt was a great success.

16 One thing to keep in your prayers,
17 Pat, the lady that puts that on, had
18 cancer removed from her right lung
19 Wednesday morning. In fact, she put off
20 her surgery in order that she could get
21 the youth hunt taken care of, which I
22 thought was commendable.

23 But, overall, I had fewer calls on

1 during deer season, it appears that we
2 had a pretty successful year. My hope
3 is that all those deer we're seeing on
4 social media gets Game-Checked, and from
5 the numbers that we're hearing, that
6 may not be the case. So please
7 Game-Check the animal that you're
8 taking.

9 Also had some conversations with
10 some hunters that hunt out of state
11 concerning what they can and cannot
12 bring back in from other states and what
13 states that is affected by. And now
14 with the new case of CWD in Mississippi,
15 I think you're going to see CWD being a
16 topic of concern going forward.

17 I just want to take this time to
18 thank you guys for the opportunity to
19 serve on this board.

20 MR. BROCK JONES: Good morning. I'm Brock
21 Jones from District 7. Good to be back
22 on the board. I'm from Greene County.
23 Of course, District 7 represents pretty

1 dog deer problems, other than Chambers
2 County I had some calls on, so -- but
3 Coffee County where I normally have a
4 lot of calls from, I didn't have the
5 first call from Coffee County. So that
6 was good. They're doing good.

7 But, overall, everybody is pleased
8 with the seasons, pleased with the bag
9 limits, and pleased with everything
10 we're doing. So just keep up the good
11 work. And thanks to the department for
12 all they do.

13 MR. BARKSDALE: Thank you, sir.

14 My name is Greg Barksdale. I
15 represent District 4. I just was
16 appointed to this board in October of
17 '17, so I'm one of the new guys here.
18 During that time I've been contacted by
19 several folks primarily concerning for
20 and against dog deer hunting and, also,
21 some contact with folks concerning trout
22 fishing below Smith Lake Dam.

23 From all the posts on social media

1 much the Black Belt.

2 As far as my district report is
3 concerned, the main thing that I hear
4 from the various residents and hunters
5 of the district is the concern over the
6 hog damage. That seems to be far and
7 away the number-one issue and what we
8 can do about that.

9 CWD, of course, has got everybody
10 concerned, as everybody else has been
11 talking about. The processors basically
12 said in the Black Belt area that it was
13 a better year than last year. There
14 have been minimal dog-hunting
15 complaints.

16 And, lastly, we had an unfortunate
17 incident in west Wilcox County where a
18 hunter was killed by an alleged poacher
19 that the Alabama Bureau of Investigation
20 is working on right now.

21 That's all I've got.

22 DR. LEMME: Good morning. Gary Lemme,
23 ex-officio member, director of the

1 Alabama Cooperative Extension System.

2 I wanted to give a shout-out to the
3 department for cooperating with local
4 sportsmen and the 4-H in Tallapoosa
5 County and developing the archery range
6 at the state park there. That's one of
7 several now across the state. I think
8 that's great because it gets kids
9 involved and provides a safe place for
10 adults to practice. And I've been there
11 a couple of times. I've seen families
12 on a Saturday all shooting with mom,
13 dad, and the kids, and I think that's
14 really good.

15 4-H now has 2,688 kids enrolled in
16 the shooting sports program, and last
17 year over 3,000 hours of volunteer time
18 was provided by adult coaches. And
19 several of you are involved in that. I
20 just wanted to thank you. I think
21 that's developing the sportsmen for
22 tomorrow.

23 The last thing I wanted to make --

1 sending those tests out of state.
2 They're collected by officers and
3 biologists with the Department of
4 Conservation and some from breeders that
5 actually bring those in when a deer dies
6 on their premises.

7 But, anyway, we've been working with
8 the Department of Conservation for
9 several months now on getting the new
10 testing equipment at the Auburn lab.
11 The equipment is there. It's in place.
12 We've trained a technician over there to
13 operate it. And we're just waiting on
14 the U.S. Department of Agriculture to
15 work with us on validating our ability
16 to operate the equipment and the
17 equipment to do a good job.

18 And that's going to allow us several
19 things as we move forward on this. It's
20 going to allow much more timely tests.
21 We've been having to send those tissue
22 samples -- and only dead deer can be
23 tested and only brain tissue. So we've

1 I've gotten several positive comments
2 about changes in the State Parks system
3 lately, and I wanted to make sure I
4 brought that up. And then we continue
5 to get lots of questions about feral hog
6 control.

7 COMMISSIONER McMILLAN: John McMillan,
8 Commissioner of Agriculture and
9 Industries. It's good to be with y'all
10 this morning.

11 We've already heard some comments
12 about CWD, and I'm sure we're going to
13 hear some more. But from the
14 perspective of our department, I wanted
15 to update you all on the testing process
16 that we have since -- I believe it's
17 '02, Chuck, that we've been monitoring
18 and testing.

19 Several years ago the very expensive
20 equipment that we had at our diagnostic
21 lab in Auburn died on us, and we didn't
22 have the money to replace it at \$100,000
23 plus at that time. So we've been

1 been sending those to Wisconsin.
2 Sometimes the tissue is too decomposed
3 to really get good tests. And it can
4 take as much as four or five months
5 sometimes to get reports back. So we
6 will be able to do that very rapidly
7 with our diagnostic lab over at Auburn
8 and this new equipment.

9 And so we are certainly going to be
10 moving forward in being an integral part
11 of this whole process to monitor and
12 test and do everything we can to work
13 with the Department of Conservation on
14 the CWD issue. It's, unfortunately, one
15 of those things that -- heretofore
16 Arkansas has been the closest place that
17 we had to Alabama as a threat.
18 Mississippi -- thank goodness it was
19 about as far as -- it was as far west in
20 Mississippi as it could get, in the
21 Yazoo City area right on the river. So
22 there's some thought it might -- that
23 deer might have even come from Louisiana

1 across the river. But, nonetheless,
2 it's a problem that all of us in the
3 Southeast and Alabama, in particular, is
4 concerned about working with.

5 So I just wanted to update you on
6 that. And I'm sure Chuck is going to
7 talk about it some more. And if anybody
8 has any questions about it later on,
9 I'll be more than happy to discuss it
10 with you. Thank you so much.

11 MR. CAGLE: Good morning. I'm Patrick Cagle.
12 I represent the 2nd Congressional
13 District, which is the southeast corner
14 of Alabama.

15 I just want to say that -- I want to
16 thank everyone in this room that's
17 helped us make progress. As y'all know,
18 we've -- you know, dog hunting has been
19 a contentious issue longer than I've
20 been alive. It may continue. But we're
21 making progress. I think that's
22 evidenced by -- you know, we have open
23 seats which we haven't had the last few

1 doing an excellent job of handling the
2 day-to-day tasks, the challenges that we
3 face now, as well as addressing the
4 long-term issues that really impact our
5 tradition and our sport.

6 Director Sykes has done an excellent
7 job in helping set up mentored hunts in
8 Special Opportunity Areas, which are --
9 I think that will make a huge difference
10 in getting new hunters engaged which is
11 so critical to continuing our tradition.
12 So I thank them for all the work they've
13 done. Thank you.

14 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Thank you all. Those were
15 great reports. I'm Joey Dobbs. I
16 represent the 6th District. I'm the new
17 chairman. Bear with me. I'm learning,
18 but I'm having fun.

19 I'd like to thank Betsy, Wanda,
20 Tiff -- everybody that has put this on
21 today. Thank you very much. Thank you
22 to Wildlife and Freshwater Fisheries,
23 thank you to Marine Resources, thank you

1 years.

2 So I want to thank everyone that's
3 working with us. I think different
4 groups are working together well. And
5 my goal is that every year we should be
6 able to eliminate more and more
7 problems. But we've got to have
8 realistic expectations. We've got to
9 keep working together. We've got to
10 realize and know that, you know, when
11 we're working together not everyone is
12 going to get everything they want. But
13 the goal is that we minimize conflict
14 where we can. So I thank everyone
15 that's worked towards that.

16 I want to say that living in
17 Montgomery gives me an opportunity to
18 interact with the department staff
19 regularly, and I just want to commend
20 the work that our new commissioner has
21 done and his staff. And they've made
22 some great additions. They made a
23 strong team stronger. I think they're

1 to Parks, thank you to State Lands for
2 being patient with me and my questions
3 in learning and getting up to speed to
4 better be able to serve while in this
5 position. I'm having fun with it.

6 I'm so encouraged by what I'm
7 hearing. I'll add that we've got
8 47 days to snapper-fish. That's not
9 necessarily in my district, but it's
10 important to me and others. That's very
11 important.

12 I have asked Mr. Jones and
13 Mr. Stimpson to be our waterfowl
14 representatives in the north and south
15 zone. They have agreed to that. So as
16 we have questions, they're going to help
17 represent this board. Some of us are
18 not waterfowl hunters to the degree that
19 they are. They're very capable.

20 I think that's really all I've got.
21 The mentored programs have been
22 absolutely fabulous. I've been able to
23 participate as Jessica got to. My sweet

1 wife, Amy, cooked. We served. We just
 2 had a ball. Thanks to the enforcement
 3 staff that was there doing the training,
 4 the firearms training. They also helped
 5 with the processing of the deer. It was
 6 really, really well received, and it's a
 7 great program going forward. The
 8 purchase of the lands, creating the
 9 Special Opportunity Areas, that is a
 10 huge plus for the department and for our
 11 user groups.

12 So with that, our next order of
 13 business would be our directors reports.
 14 And I would ask Director Bannon, Scott
 15 Bannon, to give his and following him
 16 Director Sykes.

17 And I would say that the board, if
 18 you would like, we can step down and
 19 occupy these seats so that we can view
 20 these PowerPoints.

21 (Brief pause in proceedings.)

22 MR. BANNON: Good morning, everyone. If
 23 you're in the Chris Blankenship Fan

1 All right. So, like I said, we're
 2 going to lead out with talking about the
 3 exempted fishing permit that we've
 4 applied for.

5 Just to tell you where we are, as
 6 you can see, the number of federal
 7 season fishing days for private anglers
 8 has decreased over -- from 65 days in
 9 2009 to 11 in 2016, and last year it
 10 was -- a three-day federal season is
 11 what we were presented with from NOAA.
 12 Nobody was happy with that. There were
 13 some challenges to the way that came
 14 about. We were having state seasons
 15 that were adversely impacting the
 16 federal numbers. So NOAA came out with
 17 this three-day season.

18 We're very fortunate that our
 19 members of congress are very actively
 20 engaged in this, and they didn't like it
 21 either. So they got with Commerce --
 22 the Department of Commerce, who is the
 23 parent agency for NOAA, and they decided

1 Club, I'm not Chris Blankenship. But,
 2 fortunately, he is still the
 3 commissioner. So if you're attending
 4 for him, you still have him to visit
 5 with.

6 We'll have a relatively short
 7 presentation. One of the primary things
 8 that is going on in our world down on
 9 the coast is red snapper fishing.
 10 That's hot and heavy on everybody's
 11 minds and on their calendars. And as
 12 the chairman pointed out, it's a
 13 potential 47-day season.

14 We've applied for an exempted
 15 fishing permit. And I brought Kevin
 16 Anson. He's our chief biologist. He's
 17 here with us today. And he's really the
 18 architect behind this exempted fishing
 19 permit. He's the science guy. He's
 20 really done a great job of putting it
 21 together. So if afterwards there are
 22 some questions we did not answer, we'll
 23 be here to try and work through these.

1 that we needed to do something. So
 2 there were lots of meetings and phone
 3 calls between the states to develop this
 4 plan.

5 The commissioner was very actively
 6 engaged at that time. I became the
 7 director in October. So we're in a
 8 transition period. But this was very
 9 important to the entire Gulf Coast, but
 10 it's vital to fishing in south -- or to
 11 the state of Alabama.

12 So that gave us a 42-day season last
 13 year under an agreement that we would
 14 not have state fishing seasons. We
 15 would transition and have a federal
 16 season. And the numbers that we had are
 17 a little bit different than what NOAA
 18 presented at the end of the season, and
 19 so that was a concern for going into
 20 2018 and 2019, that we would not have a
 21 fishing season at all.

22 So we're mandated under the
 23 Magnuson-Stevens Act to make sure that

1 we stay within certain criteria and that
 2 we protect the fisheries, so -- and we
 3 have no problem with that. We have no
 4 goal or intention of wearing out any
 5 fishery in the state of Alabama and no
 6 Gulf state director has that intention.
 7 We don't do that with any other
 8 management of game or of fish, that we
 9 are going to abuse it. So we hold red
 10 snapper fishing very near and dear to us
 11 as a division and to the citizens of
 12 Alabama.

13 Senator Shelby, he has been very
 14 actively engaged in this, and he added
 15 some language to the omnibus budget bill
 16 that said that we would create a plan
 17 for our reef fishing zones is the way he
 18 described it in the budget bill. It got
 19 a little bit strange because Alabama has
 20 one of the world's premier artificial
 21 reef fishing zones. We have over 17,000
 22 documented items out there in that reef
 23 zone. No other state really has what we

1 plan for what is the best method for
 2 deploying reef material, what size, what
 3 shape, what spacing, so that we maximize
 4 the benefit not only for the money that
 5 we're spending in the state but that we
 6 can provide that to people who want to
 7 put their own reefs out to say, look,
 8 here's the best bang you get for your
 9 buck. Nobody wants to waste money. We
 10 want to ensure that we have a healthy
 11 fish population. And we'll also figure
 12 out which reefs attract what species of
 13 fish.

14 So those are going to be available
 15 to be fished, but only the state of
 16 Alabama is going to deploy reef material
 17 in there for science purposes for the
 18 first few years. And those are within
 19 the 9-mile zone. Because now the
 20 federal government as well as the state
 21 recognizes that we claim a 9-mile
 22 fishing jurisdiction. NOAA only
 23 recognizes it right now for Gulf reef

1 have as far as a designated reef zone.

2 So the other states were struggling
 3 a little bit to how do they present a
 4 plan. So in discussions with NOAA, they
 5 said why don't you apply for an exempted
 6 fishing permit. And each state is
 7 eligible to do that, and you can
 8 describe the areas that you want to
 9 include within the permit.

10 So this is kind of an outline of
 11 permanent reef zones off the state of
 12 Alabama. The ones in red we've had for
 13 some time. The ones that are in black,
 14 we just got those approved recently. We
 15 have not put any reefs in those areas.
 16 There are some that were just put out
 17 there by private people over the years
 18 and some wrecks and debris along the
 19 way.

20 We're going to use those little
 21 black squares and the two triangles that
 22 you see there to the west as research
 23 areas. We're going to try and develop a

1 fish.

2 So the exempted fishing permit is
 3 what we applied for, and each of the
 4 five Gulf states have done so. So these
 5 are some of the goals, what we're trying
 6 to do. We're trying to increase the
 7 accountability through use of a
 8 mandatory electronic reporting system.
 9 In Alabama it's Snapper Check. We've
 10 had it for several years now. We feel
 11 that's a very accountable system that --
 12 it's easy to access. It's available on
 13 your iPhone. It takes about 30 seconds
 14 to fill that out.

15 We want to increase fishing
 16 opportunities through that real-time
 17 data landing and reduce the amount of
 18 what we call buffer. When the federal
 19 government sets that federal fishing
 20 season, there is a 20-percent buffer
 21 that's allowed so that we don't -- we
 22 try and not run over, that we don't
 23 overfish whatever fishery.

1 With real-time reporting here in
 2 Alabama, we can make management
 3 decisions within about a week. Under
 4 our federal plan, we don't get the final
 5 numbers until months after the season
 6 has closed. So it is not an effective
 7 management tool for an in-season type
 8 change. With Snapper Check, we can make
 9 these decisions within a week's time.
 10 We can decide are we fishing too heavy,
 11 do we need to adjust the season and make
 12 it shorter so that we can have a season
 13 the next year, or based on the effort
 14 and weather and these other factors --
 15 and life happens when we're out there,
 16 folks, that there are days you just
 17 don't get to go fish. So we may be able
 18 to add days to the end of the season,
 19 which is the bullet there, that we can
 20 adjust the season very quickly.
 21 Right now our goal is to make it
 22 through September, through Labor Day.
 23 If the effort is not there or we've had

1 there on the Gulf Coast. We want to
 2 provide as much access to not only the
 3 citizens of Alabama but the people who
 4 come and visit. So it's a total
 5 potential of 47 days with the potential
 6 to add more days at the end of the
 7 season.
 8 The size and bag limit will stay the
 9 same, 16 inches and two fish per person.
 10 We're not changing any of those because
 11 we want to stick with what change we
 12 want to make incrementally. So we'll
 13 look at these days. We'll see how the
 14 effort goes. And down the road we can
 15 always look at making some other changes
 16 if there was a permanent change in the
 17 rules.
 18 So, then, what do we do for 2019?
 19 Well, we see what 2018 gave us. If at
 20 the end of the season the numbers just
 21 don't -- they don't get to the total and
 22 we realize, you know, we could have
 23 added more days -- adding days in

1 a hurricane -- you know, everybody knock
 2 on wood and pray that that doesn't
 3 happen -- but we can always extend the
 4 season.
 5 And you saw that reef zone that we
 6 had. Alabama has invested very heavily
 7 in that. With a three-day season, we
 8 are not providing you access to what you
 9 have invested in. It's our goal to give
 10 you access to what you have invested in.
 11 So the highlights for the 2018
 12 fishing season -- this is the proposal
 13 that we have -- that it will be
 14 weekends -- Friday, Saturday, and Sunday
 15 is how we define a weekend -- beginning
 16 June 1st, which has been the traditional
 17 opening. Florida is looking at maybe
 18 doing a Memorial Day Weekend opening.
 19 So there may be some inconsistencies.
 20 We want to run through Labor Day Monday,
 21 and we want to include the entire week
 22 of Independence Day or Fourth of July
 23 because that's a high-traffic time down

1 October doesn't help us a whole lot
 2 because you guys are out hunting, your
 3 kids are back in school, and you play
 4 that funny little game called football.
 5 And so nobody goes fishing. So I can
 6 tell you the day when it's the Iron Bowl
 7 because there's not a soul out there
 8 except for that one guy wearing the LSU
 9 hat. He usually gets a ticket.
 10 So we could potentially add Mondays,
 11 or we could potentially move the start
 12 date to Memorial Day Weekend and provide
 13 access on a weekend when people are
 14 historically going to the beach.
 15 The graphic on the right there is
 16 kind of an outline of when and where we
 17 have structures out there. If you have
 18 never been fishing off the coast of
 19 Alabama, I would encourage you to do it.
 20 It's one of the jewels that we have.
 21 And there were some forward-thinking
 22 folks in our history that really planned
 23 out this artificial reef zone.

1 So then to monitor it, we use the
 2 red snapper -- the Snapper Check
 3 program. And it's mandatory. It's the
 4 law. You can get a ticket. That's the
 5 enforcement guy in me. The director in
 6 me says I need you to report that. I
 7 need you to give me the information,
 8 because when we put real numbers into
 9 this, we get a real answer on the other
 10 end. If we have to use the estimates
 11 based on our surveys, it's not as good a
 12 number. And I need to have confidence
 13 in the number at the end of the season
 14 to say, yes, I'm going to give you more
 15 days or, you know what, you're not
 16 giving me the information I need, so I'm
 17 going to have a tough time giving you
 18 more days because I do not want to go
 19 over. I do not want to overfish, but I
 20 do want to provide you with as much
 21 access to this fishery as I can.

22 So the one group that will not be
 23 completely happy in this -- I figure we

1 lines out in federal waters, that they
 2 can't do that. They didn't think
 3 legally they could do that. So they
 4 said federal waters will remain open and
 5 then you choose to open your state to
 6 landings.

7 So if Alabama and Florida are both
 8 open, you can land in either state. If
 9 Florida is open and we are closed, we
 10 are probably not going to allow you to
 11 even transit with fish like we have in
 12 the past because we need you to land
 13 those fish in the state that is open so
 14 that they're accounted for in that
 15 state. And that will help their program
 16 and help our program. We don't want to
 17 contribute -- attribute fish to our
 18 program that were not caught during our
 19 season.

20 Now, Alabama is going to be open,
 21 hopefully, a lot longer than Florida.
 22 Florida is looking at about an 11-day
 23 season -- is that -- well, I mean, just

1 did pretty good, but I think we made two
 2 out of three groups happy. The federal
 3 for-hire charter will not be included in
 4 this program. They're going to stay
 5 with their federal season, which will
 6 probably be around 50 days. And they're
 7 okay with that. We've been in very
 8 close contact with them, had great
 9 conversations. It's a business for
 10 them, and it was too new and it was a
 11 risk that they just weren't willing to
 12 take. So we polled them, and they
 13 wanted to not be included. But the
 14 state-licensed charter guides, the folks
 15 that generally take you speckled trout
 16 and red drum fishing, they're only
 17 limited to the 9 miles. They are not
 18 allowed to go into federal waters.

19 So under the EFP, what we will open
 20 is -- all federal waters will remain
 21 open, and Alabama will be open to the
 22 landing of red snapper. The feds said
 23 we're not going to open and close state

1 down on the Gulf Coast -- I mean, just
 2 on the Panhandle. I think it's a split
 3 season.

4 But it's a shorter season. So we're
 5 going to have more days, but they're
 6 going to look to open Memorial Day
 7 Weekend. So if we are closed, then
 8 we're not going to allow you to land
 9 fish. We should not see Snapper Check
 10 during that time.

11 So that is a little bit different.
 12 We used to let you go to Florida if it
 13 was open and you had their license. You
 14 could come back into Alabama and land
 15 those fish. We probably will not allow
 16 that this year because we need people to
 17 report in the state where those
 18 management plans are occurring.

19 There are two states that are going
 20 to include their federal for hire, and
 21 that's Louisiana and Texas. And there
 22 were some concerns that those boats
 23 would come all the way over to Alabama

1 to fish in our reef zone on their
 2 charters. Not likely to happen.
 3 They're in business, and that's not good
 4 business. You burn a lot of fuel trying
 5 to do that. So it's -- they were
 6 talking about transferring boats. It's
 7 probably not going to happen.

8 So each state has its own program.
 9 Mississippi is likely to be open for
 10 potentially 200 days. I don't think
 11 that will happen because Alabama
 12 fishermen would go to Mississippi,
 13 follow all the rules in Mississippi, and
 14 come back and land in Mississippi, so
 15 we'll help them with their numbers.

16 Each state has designated how much
 17 fish they're allowed to catch. We're
 18 just under a million pounds is what
 19 we've asked to be able to fish, and
 20 that's how we get to the 47 days. So if
 21 Mississippi reaches it before they get
 22 to their --

23 Theirs is 150,000 pounds or so.

1 going to make the management decisions.
 2 Please do not withhold reporting the
 3 fish because you think you'll get a
 4 longer season. I bet that will work
 5 against you. You'll get a shorter
 6 season if you don't report.

7 But that's what it will look like in
 8 theory. And I'm hoping when I come back
 9 next year I'll show you a graph that
 10 looks just like that, maybe a couple of
 11 days at the end of the season.

12 Before I get to the oysters, there's
 13 a couple of other things in there that
 14 we've got going on with the artificial
 15 reef program. We're going to put out
 16 those reefs within that 9 miles in those
 17 little black squares that you saw, and
 18 then we're about to sink two ships. One
 19 of them is a 256-foot ship and another
 20 one is a 102-foot tugboat. The 256-foot
 21 ship was a work boat. It was a cable
 22 layer and has multiple decks. It's
 23 going to be a fantastic dive site in

1 It's not a big fishery in Mississippi.
 2 -- they'll close. Louisiana will
 3 close. We'll close.

4 So we're all working together. We
 5 have conversations sometimes weekly, but
 6 always monthly, to have these
 7 discussions of where we go across the
 8 Gulf, because at the end of the day we
 9 want to ensure that we have some fishing
 10 season.

11 So here's how we kind of look at the
 12 landings to get to the closing. It
 13 should look like this. The red line
 14 across the top is the harvest limit.
 15 That's what we're trying to get to. The
 16 little wavy line as it goes up is the
 17 cumulative landings. We should see that
 18 arch as we're going through the season.

19 And we'll monitor it. Kevin and his
 20 staff will keep a close eye on that. He
 21 will get tired of hearing from me during
 22 the week, where are we, where are we,
 23 where are we. Because that's how we're

1 addition to providing an area for the
 2 reef fish to grow. So we're very
 3 excited about that. You will probably
 4 hear something within the next few
 5 weeks. We're hoping for a deployment of
 6 those within the next month or so.

7 Oh, one other snapper thing we have
 8 is we are going to have a Snapper
 9 Conference March 22nd. It's going to be
 10 in Mobile at the Holiday Inn in
 11 downtown. You can register online. Go
 12 to "OutdoorAlabama.com." And you can
 13 come and it's free. And you can see the
 14 science behind how we make these
 15 management decisions. It's going to
 16 mainly be our program and the program
 17 that we sponsor through the University
 18 of South Alabama at the Sea Lab and how
 19 we determine what the level of fish is
 20 preseason and what the level is
 21 postseason through some longline and
 22 vertical line surveys, some submersible
 23 video. It's a pretty amazing process

1 that they go through to determine that.

2 So you're more than welcome to come.
3 It's free to register. Just go to
4 "OutdoorAlabama.com" and look for the
5 Snapper Conference. And it's going to
6 be March 22nd. It's going to be an
7 all-day event. You can also watch it
8 online. There's some information on
9 there. And if you can't watch it then,
10 we're going to record it, and you can
11 always play it back later.

12 Oystering has been a big part of
13 Alabama -- south Alabama's history.
14 And, unfortunately, on our commercial
15 oyster reefs, our harvest this year was
16 about 58 sacks. That's probably less
17 than 1,000 pounds.

18 Wouldn't you say, Avery?

19 MR. BATES: Yes.

20 MR. BANNON: It was terrible. It's not where
21 we want to be. We love to eat oysters.
22 That's one thing. But we need oysters
23 in our bay system to maintain the health

1 half-shell oysters, if they're from
2 Alabama, they're coming from one of
3 these farms. We have about 15 permitted
4 farms right now. They are all mostly up
5 and running. Some of them are running
6 very successfully.

7 This is a picture of how some of
8 them are set up. They run these lines
9 in towards the shoreline, and there's --
10 these have suspended bags hanging from
11 them. And I'll show you a picture in a
12 minute. There are some where there are
13 floating cages.

14 And this is not an easy method. It
15 is farming. It is work. They have to
16 get out there almost every day, and they
17 sort through these oysters and they
18 arrange them by size. They have to make
19 sure that the parasites aren't getting
20 to them. They have to raise them up out
21 of the water to help with that. But it
22 creates a very consistent-size oyster,
23 and they taste different depending on

1 of the waterway. In addition, there are
2 lots of creatures out there that enjoy
3 eating oysters.

4 There's a multitude of reasons why
5 the oyster population is where it is.
6 We've had a lot of climate challenges.
7 We went through a drought period, and
8 then we went from a drought period to a
9 flood period. And neither one of those
10 are helpful. There were lots of changes
11 from here -- I use the expression from
12 here to Canada. We're at the bottom of
13 the river system. So everything that
14 happens along those rivers funnels its
15 way down to the Mobile Bay area.

16 So to kind of counter that, our
17 oyster folks are pretty creative, and
18 they have now developed what we call
19 oyster farms or oyster aquaculture.
20 Now, they actually cater more towards a
21 half-shell market. For those of you
22 guys that like to go to the oyster bars
23 or these restaurants and consume

1 what part of the bay system they're in.
2 But this is helping replace the lack of
3 harvest on our public reefs.

4 We are still going to continue to do
5 some research. We're looking at some
6 plans for this next year or so to do
7 some science-based studies of the oyster
8 reef areas and what we can do to maybe
9 elevate them. Dissolved oxygen has been
10 a problem for us. So we have a lot of
11 different things going.

12 But we had to adjust to the oyster
13 aquaculture. Our laws and regulations
14 were designed for traditional commercial
15 harvest, which would have been using
16 boats, tongs, like that -- hand tongs.
17 If any of you guys have ever been to
18 Dauphin Island and you looked over the
19 bridge and you saw these guys working
20 those rakes, it was work. It is very,
21 very hard work. And they would get out
22 there before daylight, and then they
23 would work until about noon or so. They

1 would load the boat up with these
 2 oysters, and then they would go cull
 3 through them and then go sell them.
 4 Those days are just about gone. So now
 5 we've moved to the oyster farming.
 6 So we had to adjust the rules. So a
 7 few of the rules that we have presented
 8 here today are to allow for what we call
 9 bulk tagging. These guys are now
 10 harvesting oysters -- you can see this
 11 machine down here. That's a sorter.
 12 They can dump these oysters in there and
 13 it rolls through that machine and it
 14 sorts them out by size. And they sell
 15 them by the individual oysters. We've
 16 been selling them by the sack. Well, in
 17 the aquaculture world they want to sell
 18 it by the oyster.
 19 So we're trying to make a more
 20 efficient tagging system. Tagging is
 21 for health reasons. It's to make sure
 22 that we are able to account for where
 23 oysters are harvested. Because if any

1 waste a bunch of time. The longer those
 2 oysters sit out on the dock, the more
 3 health risks there are.
 4 There's actually a slide missing. I
 5 apologize.
 6 We're changing the rules for those
 7 oysters farms. Right now -- you saw
 8 those guys that were out in the water.
 9 Every person that works out there had to
 10 have a license because that was the only
 11 law that we had to apply. We're making
 12 the adjustment. We want to license the
 13 farm -- and all the farms are supportive
 14 of this -- that that farm buys a license
 15 and every person that works on there
 16 just has to have harvester education
 17 training. That's 11 minutes of watching
 18 me ramble on a video that they can't
 19 ever get back. And once they're done
 20 with that, they're good for five years.
 21 And this allows high school students
 22 to go out and work on these farms.
 23 Because a lot of them, their families

1 of you have ever heard of people getting
 2 vibrio -- they love to call it the
 3 flesh-eating bacteria and all these
 4 other things. An average of 19 people
 5 across the country die every year from
 6 vibrio from consuming raw shellfish.
 7 Most of those people had some health
 8 issue and had been told by their doctor
 9 do not consume raw oysters and they did
 10 it anyway. The pamphlet was probably
 11 laying on the kitchen counter like all
 12 the other stuff my doctor gives me.
 13 So we can't prevent that, but we can
 14 prevent the other deaths by making sure
 15 we manage oysters in a healthy manner.
 16 And so we'll tag them. Each sack had to
 17 have a tag. Now we can do an entire
 18 shipment. When they're coming off these
 19 farms, they're doing harvests of 10,000,
 20 12,000 oysters a day, and I'm hoping to
 21 see that double in the next year.
 22 So we had to provide an efficient
 23 manner for them to tag them and not

1 have done this for years. It allows
 2 oyster catchers who now don't have that
 3 public reef to harvest on -- they can
 4 come in here when they're not doing some
 5 other form of fishery. They don't have
 6 to buy the license. We allow the farm
 7 to buy the license for them to work.
 8 So if we could do all that, the
 9 result, then, is that you get a premium
 10 oyster. And I don't eat raw oysters. I
 11 apologize. But the commissioner will
 12 stand up and cheer that these are some
 13 of the best oysters in the country. And
 14 we get that feedback from other places.
 15 COMMISSIONER BLANKENSHIP: The best.
 16 MR. BANNON: The best.
 17 MR. BATES: Amen.
 18 MR. BANNON: And the value is very high on
 19 these. They go to New York, and they're
 20 getting three to \$5 per oyster. This
 21 old boy from near the bayou, that would
 22 hurt my feelings. That's about a dozen
 23 worth right there.

1 So what we're doing there, we have a
 2 couple of things coming up. We're
 3 hosting the Gulf and South Atlantic
 4 Shellfish Conference. That will be in
 5 Mobile the last week of April, first
 6 week of May. Most of you probably don't
 7 want to go to that. They use a lot of
 8 big words and a lot of science stuff.
 9 But that is a Gulfwide meeting that we
 10 host there, and we talk about the
 11 challenges across the Gulf. We are not
 12 alone in this challenge of reduced
 13 oyster harvest. Each of the states has
 14 experienced the same thing. Commercial
 15 harvest -- public reef harvest is down
 16 in each state.

17 We are working with the FDA and the
 18 Alabama Department of Public Health to
 19 move a wastewater -- potentially move a
 20 wastewater treatment outfall in the
 21 Bayou La Batre area to allow more access
 22 for farmers to have more land -- or
 23 excuse me -- more water bottoms that are

1 water, then we're not going to have
 2 healthy anything else. So we're working
 3 diligently to address those issues.

4 And then we also are working with a
 5 program to do a survey of the entire
 6 shoreline of Mobile Bay, Mississippi
 7 Sound, Dauphin Island, that we take out
 8 one step in the permitting process for
 9 people putting piers in and putting
 10 oyster farms in, that we're going to
 11 help pay for a survey that identifies
 12 items of historic significance. It's a
 13 requirement, and we're going to take
 14 that on. And then when an oyster farmer
 15 wants to apply for a piece of property,
 16 we've already done that survey. It
 17 saves them a lot of money and it saves
 18 them a tremendous amount of time because
 19 we've already identified if there's any
 20 items of historical significance. And
 21 it also helps if you're building a pier
 22 or anything else on the water in south
 23 Alabama.

1 available for them to harvest. We're
 2 working on some programs to open an area
 3 back up that was closed due to
 4 pollution. That's a long-term trek for
 5 us. We have to determine where is the
 6 pollution coming from and how do we
 7 address that. We get the water healthy.
 8 We get it opened back up. And we allow
 9 more people to lease land. We had to
 10 move people out of there, unfortunately,
 11 when that area closed. And that's
 12 devastating. People invested a lot of
 13 money and they had to move.

14 Oh, the water-quality issues. There
 15 are several studies going on in the
 16 south Alabama area to address water
 17 quality through the Sea Lab and some
 18 other places. So that is very important
 19 to us -- not only for the oysters, but
 20 it's for every fishery that we have all
 21 the way from the crabs and the grasses
 22 and different things that exist down
 23 there. So if we don't have healthy

1 So with that, that completes my
 2 presentation and feel free to entertain
 3 any questions.

4 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Any questions from the board
 5 for Director Bannon?

6 (No response.)

7 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Director Bannon, thank you.
 8 Thank you very much.

9 Director Sykes, thank you. When you
 10 conclude, would you stay up here. We'll
 11 raise the lights and the board can go
 12 back if we have any questions.

13 MR. SYKES: Thank you, Chairman. I'm going to
 14 try to go through this pretty quick.
 15 The chairman asked me to hit a few high
 16 points. Last year I pretty much gave
 17 the whole presentation on Game Check.
 18 We felt it was more imperative for me to
 19 hit several other things today. So Game
 20 Check is going to be pretty small. I'm
 21 going to do a couple of fisheries
 22 updates real quick.

23 Most of y'all, I'm sure, know what

1 this is. This is a flying carp, silver
 2 carp. We started getting reports of
 3 silver carp in 2012. In 2015 we had
 4 some DNA from silver carp that was
 5 detected in Pickwick. November the 10th
 6 of last year, 75 carp were collected by
 7 Tennessee Tech and Wildlife and
 8 Freshwater Fisheries researchers.

9 Just an update. We are
 10 participating with the department in
 11 Tennessee, Mississippi, U.S. Fish and
 12 Wildlife Service, USGS, Tennessee Tech,
 13 and Murray State doing research efforts
 14 up there. Basically this is the feral
 15 swine of the freshwater system. So we
 16 want to stay on top of this and try to
 17 prevent them from getting as far south
 18 as us.

19 Those are pictures that I took up in
 20 the Illinois River, and in
 21 three-and-a-half hours of electrofishing
 22 up there we found two native fish. They
 23 had completely destroyed the ecosystem

1 creel and size limits, but as far as --
 2 we've gotten a lot of requests for us to
 3 start enforcing the gillnet ban up
 4 there, and I just wanted to let
 5 everybody know that it is by court order
 6 that we cannot do that. It's not for
 7 lack of effort on our part or not
 8 wanting to do our job. Our guys are
 9 doing their job by enforcing the creel
 10 and size limits.

11 Sipsey Fork trout. It's a
 12 put-and-take trout fishery below Lewis
 13 Smith Dam. It started in 1974. We have
 14 tons of questions about it at every
 15 board meeting. About 35,000 trout were
 16 released in 2017. Sampling by our staff
 17 showed only about 30 percent of the
 18 trout were being caught with only
 19 15 percent of them being harvested.

20 We are doing an ongoing study with
 21 Auburn University examining the fate of
 22 those trout, which a lot of them -- from
 23 some of the videos I saw, they are

1 up there. So just to let y'all know, we
 2 are monitoring this very closely.

3 Y'all, ever since I've been here and
 4 before, there's been conflicts between
 5 commercial fishermen and bass fishermen
 6 up around Guntersville and the Tennessee
 7 River system. Well, this year some
 8 tournament catfishermen have joined in.
 9 May 19 of 2017 -- there is a court order
 10 that prohibits us from enforcing the ban
 11 on gillnet and trammel nets in the
 12 Tennessee River basin. If y'all have
 13 questions about that, Ms. Jennifer Weber
 14 or Mr. Patrick Moody will be more than
 15 happy to talk with y'all about that.
 16 But the bottom line is we cannot enforce
 17 that regulation up there.

18 We have determined through our
 19 fisheries staff that these nets are not
 20 having a negative impact on the gamefish
 21 as well as the catfish industry up
 22 there. We will continue with our
 23 law-enforcement efforts to enforce the

1 contributing to the massive growth of a
 2 striped fishery up there, which is where
 3 the world record came from a couple of
 4 years ago. As one of the guys said,
 5 they're slick, they're pretty, they have
 6 no dorsal or pectoral fins, so they make
 7 perfect bait. As of right now, no
 8 regulation changes are warranted as far
 9 as our staff is concerned until we get
 10 the final results from that Auburn
 11 study.

12 Southern walleye. Most people don't
 13 know that we have walleye in the state.
 14 Due to significant declines, we have
 15 been attempting to collect specimens for
 16 broodstock for reintroductions to put in
 17 our hatchery system. During 2017
 18 sampling, seven males were tagged with
 19 transmitters. Two of the seven were
 20 caught by anglers that year,
 21 approximately 30 percent of the
 22 population. So although not many of us
 23 know about Southern walleye, apparently

1 the few that do were very effective at
2 catching them. So this season our
3 fishery staff is proposing to close the
4 walleye season on the Mulberry Fork
5 River and any of its tributaries in
6 those counties.

7 Okay. Game Check. The first year's
8 totals, 82,484. It's the map on the
9 left-hand side. This year's totals,
10 75,874. Y'all heard quite a few of the
11 board members talking about hunters had
12 a good season. Processors had a really
13 good season. It's not indicative by
14 those numbers.

15 So what our staff wanted to present
16 to the board and to the public is what
17 are we going to do about it. We have
18 placed ads in magazines, radio, social
19 media. We have traveled from one end of
20 the state to the other one conducting
21 seminars. Last year we averaged 50 to
22 75 people per seminar. This year it
23 probably wasn't 10 to 15.

1 of hunting clubs and wait for people to
2 come in and out?

3 I don't know what else to do. I'm
4 looking to y'all for some suggestions.
5 We estimated last year that 30 to
6 40 percent of the people complied. What
7 if we're wrong? What if 70 percent are
8 complying?

9 That's pretty scary. It goes back
10 to what Scott said. Withholding
11 information from us is not going to do
12 you any good. It is doing the exact
13 opposite of what your intentions are or
14 the people's intentions who are not
15 reporting.

16 If 70 percent of the people are
17 reporting and we're only getting 75,000
18 deer -- the average time a hunter hunts
19 and what is reported is how we're basing
20 population estimates right now. So if
21 that's the case, our deer numbers are
22 much lower than we have been
23 anticipating. So, again, I'm asking for

1 We've done newspaper articles.
2 Rainer is tired of writing about Game
3 Check. So is Bolton. We've done
4 everything I know to do to try to
5 educate people on the importance of it.
6 Y'all heard Director Bannon talking the
7 same language when it comes to snapper.
8 If we don't have good information, how
9 can we make good decisions?

10 The first year we said we would give
11 no tickets. It would be a learning
12 process for everybody. So we didn't.
13 Well, last year we issued over 200
14 citations and about 300 warnings trying
15 to encourage. It didn't work. So,
16 board, what do we do?

17 We've heard processors had bumper
18 years. Do I tell my guys to sit at
19 intersections of main roads going into
20 processors and start checking trucks?
21 Do we camp outside of taxidermy shops to
22 see if somebody has Game-Checked a deer
23 coming in? Do we sit at gates in front

1 some suggestions, what do we need to do.
2 Do we need to reduce the season length
3 and the bag limits to protect what we
4 have there?

5 If these are true numbers and
6 70 percent of the people are reporting
7 and we're only killing a small number of
8 deer, maybe we're wrong. Maybe our
9 numbers aren't as robust as we thought
10 they were. Just simple questions that
11 I'm looking to the board to go back to
12 your districts and see if y'all can help
13 us come up with some answers because
14 we're running into a dead end.

15 The deer season for this year
16 basically is going to be just a change
17 in the calendar dates with the exception
18 of Zone C, the orange zone up in the top
19 of the state. Our biologists have
20 worked with DMAP cooperators, also
21 worked with crop depredation permit
22 applications, talking with the board
23 members, working with landowners up

1 there. We have greatly reduced Zone C,
2 taken a lot of area out, put it back in
3 with the rest of the state. And, y'all,
4 that's what we do. We manage based on
5 the information that we have. The more
6 information we have, the better we can
7 do our job.

8 This is two years' worth of data
9 with people telling us here's what we're
10 seeing. Our biologists go in. We
11 sample. We look at the areas and we
12 make good decisions. So those people
13 that wanted to be back into the regular
14 zone of the state, now they're in it.
15 Good information gives us the ability to
16 adapt our management plan and do what's
17 best for the resource first and then for
18 the hunters as well.

19 Y'all heard a couple of comments
20 about Special Opportunity Areas. For
21 those of you who don't know, we opened
22 up four public hunting areas last year
23 that offered opportunities not found on

1 yesterday. And I want to thank Patti
2 and State Lands for administering the
3 Forever Wild program because without
4 them we would not be able to purchase
5 these properties. Forever Wild is
6 applying the state match. Then we put
7 our Pittman-Robertson dollars with it.
8 So we are matching three to one with
9 Forever Wild. So we're furthering the
10 mission of Forever Wild while we're
11 furthering the mission of our department
12 in order to provide quality public
13 hunting areas for the citizens of the
14 state for the low cost of an \$18 WMA
15 permit.

16 This is just one of the areas, Cedar
17 Creek. It's about 6500 acres in Dallas
18 County on the Alabama River. Cedar
19 Creek is its north border. You can see
20 that 6500 acres is broken down into
21 16 compartments based on roads and SMZs
22 where we can paint definite boundaries.
23 You'll go online, apply for a hunt. If

1 a typical WMA. Each opportunity area
2 was managed individually, managed
3 differently for deer, turkey, small
4 game, waterfowl, mentored hunts,
5 youth-only hunts. They were scattered
6 all over the state. We had over 2,000
7 individuals apply last year, which
8 was -- it was very positive for our
9 first year rolling out a new program.
10 What we did was nothing new. People had
11 been applying and drawing permits out
12 west for decades to go hunt specific
13 units in specific states.

14 These properties on these SOAs are
15 not large enough to just open the gate
16 and say have at it. So we opened up a
17 registration process at
18 "OutdoorAlabama.com." If you got drawn
19 to hunt this property, you and one buddy
20 basically had your own hunting club for
21 the duration of the hunt.

22 New SOAs are in the process of being
23 established now, and we closed on one

1 you get drawn, you are assigned one of
2 those units, and you and a hunting
3 partner have that to yourself.

4 This year we only hunted five units
5 at a time. So there was no more than
6 ten people hunting 6500 acres. After
7 that hunt was over with, we closed the
8 doors for a week or ten days and we
9 opened up another five units. These
10 public properties are receiving less
11 pressure than the average hunting club
12 in Alabama, and we're providing hunters
13 with excellent opportunities.

14 The one we closed on yesterday is
15 about ten minutes down the road. It's
16 Pine Barren Creek. It's about
17 4700 acres in Dallas County. Both of
18 them are halfway between Camden and
19 Selma off of 41.

20 And, again, that's how you apply.
21 We are looking to bring more online. We
22 have one in Jackson County that supports
23 waterfowl. We have one in Russell

1 County that was outstanding this year as
2 far as deer, and it's got more turkeys
3 on it than you can shake a stick at.

4 I also heard several mentions of the
5 Alabama Mentored Hunter Program. I
6 think this is one of the most positive
7 things that we have done as a department
8 in a long time. And I'm not trying to
9 pour water on any of the kids' programs.
10 We need to get kids outdoors as often as
11 we can.

12 But by working with our staff and
13 trying to figure out different ways to
14 grow hunters -- not just take somebody
15 hunting, but to actually create a
16 hunter -- this is what we decided to do.
17 You can go online to "OutdoorAlabama"
18 and you apply. We had applicants that
19 ranged in age from 19 to 75 years old
20 that wanted to learn how to hunt. They
21 are paired with someone from our staff.

22 And our deer hunts -- y'all, this is
23 not just take somebody hunting for an

1 somewhere and participate in something
2 where somebody wasn't fussing all the
3 time. Y'all don't know how refreshing
4 that was. And this is equal
5 opportunity, men, women, all races, from
6 19 to 75 participating.

7 We had one lady drive up from
8 St. Cloud, Florida, which is around
9 Orlando, who bought a nonresident
10 license and participated in a deer hunt
11 in January. We had a mentored one-day
12 squirrel hunt last weekend. She drove
13 all the way back up because she was
14 selected again.

15 Y'all, there is a need for this or
16 that lady wouldn't be driving eight
17 hours to come up here on a one-day
18 squirrel hunt. But we were providing
19 something that very few are doing. We
20 can get people started, but it's going
21 to be up to y'all to help us carry this
22 on and actually create hunters out of
23 these people.

1 afternoon. Participants came in on
2 Friday afternoon, went through firearms
3 training, had several PowerPoint
4 presentations on how we're funded, what
5 we do, why we do it, deer management,
6 basic habitat management. Then they
7 were carried to the field the next day,
8 hunted that morning, had tree stand
9 safety demonstrations. We show them how
10 to track deer, show them how to process
11 deer, show them how to analyze a habitat
12 and pick out where to hunt. This was a
13 hunting club environment, what we were
14 used to growing up with and what turned
15 us into hunters. It was incredibly
16 successful.

17 I want y'all to look at one thing in
18 those pictures. Everybody is smiling.
19 This is the only thing that I have seen
20 in my five years of being here -- nobody
21 complained. Nobody said thank you, but
22 why don't you let me do that. They were
23 happy. It was great for our staff to go

1 The chairman wanted me to spend
2 quite a bit of time on CWD and the
3 issues that we're having in Alabama.
4 The first thing I wanted to do is
5 explain that there is a huge difference
6 between EHD and CWD.

7 When Mississippi popped hot a couple
8 of weeks ago, we had to post on our
9 Facebook page that the borders were now
10 closed to Mississippi deer coming back
11 to the state hunter-harvested. We
12 pretty much had one employee monitoring
13 our Facebook for about 48 hours straight
14 trying to dispel all of the
15 misinformation out there. I found out
16 that we already had CWD here, why are we
17 looking now, because this individual
18 found four deer laying dead in a pond
19 last year. Well, that's classic EHD.

20 I found out that us planting GMO
21 crops caused CWD. I found out that us
22 clear-cutting and herbiciding caused
23 CWD. It was amazing the misinformation

1 that was out there. But one of the
 2 biggest ones was the lack of
 3 differentiation between EHD and CWD.
 4 EHD we always have. You heard
 5 Raymond talk about it. It hit north
 6 Alabama pretty hard this year. We have
 7 outbreaks every year. Most of them are
 8 not severe. Epizootic hemorrhagic
 9 disease or blue-tongue viruses, it's
 10 transmitted by biting midges. They bite
 11 one deer, go bite another one, and
 12 infect it. It's endemic to Alabama and
 13 most of the Southeast. It really hits
 14 the northern states a lot harder than it
 15 does us. We lose a few deer every year.
 16 You typically see these outbreaks in
 17 late summer and early fall. It's not
 18 always fatal. That's a big key. A lot
 19 of our deer recover. You can see the
 20 hooves at the bottom there. If you kill
 21 a deer that's got hooves that look like
 22 that, that's a sign that that deer had
 23 recovered from EHD. You typically find

1 made up. This is a real issue.
 2 It was first found in captive mule
 3 deer in Colorado. The CDC changed their
 4 recommendation last year. They
 5 recommend that hunters strongly consider
 6 having those animals tested if they kill
 7 them in a CWD zone before they eat it.
 8 Mississippi's Department of Public
 9 Health put out a notice the other day
 10 that advised hunters of this, and now
 11 there's processors with meat stacked to
 12 the roof because people won't come get
 13 their deer meat.
 14 Preliminary findings from an ongoing
 15 study are showing that macaque
 16 monkeys -- I have no idea what a macaque
 17 is, but apparently it's something
 18 similar to us. If they're fed a diet of
 19 CWD-tainted meat, they can develop it.
 20 As of today, it has not been shown to
 21 jump to humans. But it's relatively
 22 early in the science with this, and it
 23 is being studied. Also, some

1 these deer, like the buck up in the top,
 2 laying around water.
 3 Deer that recover from HD, they can
 4 have antibodies and actually pass it on
 5 to their offspring for that same type of
 6 HD. There's a bunch of different ones
 7 out there. But typically down here this
 8 isn't -- it's not something to worry
 9 about. It's not going to come in and
 10 wipe out our deer herd.
 11 Now, chronic-wasting disease, on the
 12 other hand, is a prion. It's not a
 13 virus. It's not a bacteria. It's
 14 similar to CJD in humans, scrapie in
 15 sheep, and BSE or mad cow in cattle.
 16 It's infectious, communicable, and
 17 always fatal. They do not recover.
 18 It's not endemic to the South. It never
 19 goes away. It can get in the
 20 environment, and it's here forever.
 21 There's no effective way to sanitize the
 22 soil, the environment, or facilities.
 23 So, y'all, this is serious. This is not

1 preliminary research suggests that feral
 2 swine that's inoculated orally with CWD
 3 could possibly serve as a reservoir.
 4 So what are we doing as precautions
 5 to try to keep CWD out of here?
 6 Regulation 220-2-.25 prohibits
 7 importation of certain deer parts from
 8 CWD-positive areas. Only deboned meat,
 9 hides, and antlers attached to the
 10 cleaned skull plate can be brought into
 11 this state. 36 other states have a
 12 similar regulation.
 13 We had seven arrests and five
 14 warnings this year. I'm going to ask
 15 the board -- we want it from every
 16 state. Mississippi became hot during
 17 their deer season, and we had to
 18 immediately close the border to
 19 Mississippi deer because they were a
 20 CWD-positive state. We don't know when
 21 the next one is going to pop up. And,
 22 yes, it is an inconvenience, but it
 23 pales in comparison to the inconvenience

1 that we're going to all have if CWD gets
2 here.

3 This is the proper way to handle it,
4 the last bullet. We had a gentleman go
5 to Colorado, kill a deer. He was in a
6 testing zone. He had his deer processed
7 and tested. He came back to Alabama.
8 The meat was shipped here, and a week
9 later he was called and said don't eat
10 it, it has CWD. Rather than him
11 throwing it out in the back yard and not
12 telling anybody, he called us. We
13 arranged for pickup and disposal --
14 proper disposal of it.

15 These are the states and provinces
16 affected by CWD. Mississippi is the
17 most recent. Y'all, it's getting closer
18 and closer and closer.

19 Some more precautions. We test
20 approximately 500 -- hunter-harvested,
21 road kill, herd health check, working
22 with DMAP cooperators -- deer each year.
23 We've partnered, as Commissioner

1 every animal that dies in the facility
2 that's about 12 months of age or older.
3 We test about 500 a year. They probably
4 test three to 400 a year.

5 We revised the regulation that will
6 allow us to have an online database for
7 traceability. When Texas found their
8 CWD-positive in a captive facility,
9 within 48 hours they had the trace-in
10 and trace-out where they knew exactly
11 where that deer had been, everywhere
12 that they needed to look to try to
13 contain it. Ours is in a three-ring
14 binder right now. It would take
15 forever. So this online database is
16 going to help us greatly reduce the time
17 it would take in the event that
18 something happens.

19 The chairman wanted me to bring up a
20 couple of notable cases to show that we
21 are being proactive and trying to keep
22 the state safe. We had six deer come in
23 from Indiana that were illegally

1 McMillan said, with the Department of
2 Agriculture to purchase a machine -- and
3 they're staffing it -- where we can have
4 our turnaround time cut in half, if not
5 more.

6 We're trying to do everything we can
7 to inform people of the dangers. We
8 don't want you to panic, but we want you
9 to understand that this is a serious
10 issue. And we work closely with our
11 neighboring states to ensure the safety
12 of our deer herd.

13 Y'all, it can travel by several
14 different methods. Some are high risk.
15 Some are low risk. But we all know that
16 the highest risk of it coming here is by
17 someone moving a live deer or someone
18 moving a hunter-killed deer into the
19 state without properly taking care of
20 it.

21 We've got about 220 licensed deer
22 breeders with over 15,000 captive deer
23 in the state. They're required to test

1 imported into Alabama. It was a
2 violation of the Lacey Act, which is
3 federal. A federal judge sentenced
4 \$750,000 in restitution to be paid for
5 possible disease introduction into the
6 native deer herd, surrender all animals,
7 and forfeit a game breeder's license.
8 USDA is partnering with us and will
9 depopulate the breeding facility as well
10 as the enclosure, and all the deer will
11 be tested.

12 This one -- I swear y'all are going
13 to think I'm making this up, but there
14 are some things you just can't make up.
15 So just bear with me on this.

16 This was a canned hunt case for a
17 captive buck purchased from a licensed
18 game breeder. It was advertised and
19 sold on Facebook as a guaranteed hunt.

20 Again, you can't make this up. I
21 was looking at transcripts of everything
22 that happened, and through the process
23 of about a month-long process, the

1 correspondence went from you can kill
 2 this deer during deer season to you can
 3 kill this deer during bow season to you
 4 can kill this deer opening week of bow
 5 season to we've got him eating out of
 6 our hands, you can kill him opening day
 7 of bow season to, finally, we know
 8 you're busy. You don't have time to
 9 waste climbing a tree stand. We're
 10 going to tranquilize the deer and we'll
 11 wake him up before you get there and we
 12 can do a spot and stalk.

13 So that's what happened, except the
 14 deer was accidentally overdosed during
 15 that process and he was placed in a
 16 cooler and propped up and staged for a
 17 hunt. Three men were arrested, multiple
 18 violations of two statutes, hunting of a
 19 game animal for a fee -- a tame game
 20 animal, hunting a game animal within ten
 21 days of release, hunting a game animal
 22 without a reasonable chance of escape.
 23 And there was a multitude more

1 custodian of the people's welfare, it is
 2 therefore the duty of the state by
 3 enactment of appropriate legislation to
 4 endeavor to extend adequate protection
 5 to those resources in which the people
 6 have collectively a natural right. Wise
 7 and discreet individuals who feel no
 8 inclination to make assaults on nature's
 9 storehouse should have their rights
 10 protected by the enactment of strong
 11 laws to restrain the hands of the wanton
 12 and reckless whose vandalism would
 13 annihilate every visible thing of fin,
 14 fur, or feather to gratify their savage
 15 instincts.

16 1908 and it might as well be 2018.
 17 I'm sure Mr. Wallace was dealing with a
 18 whole different set of issues, but it's
 19 the same. We're dealing with a handful
 20 of people that could mess it up for
 21 everybody.

22 So we want y'all to be vigilant in
 23 watching. Let us know if you see

1 violations.
 2 Y'all saw on that first case the
 3 judge took it seriously. There was a
 4 \$750,000 fine. All of those were
 5 misdemeanors, but upon conviction, a
 6 first offense carried a fine of no less
 7 than 2,000, no more than 5,000, and no
 8 more than 30 days in jail for each
 9 offense. Minimum of \$2,000 fine. They
 10 were fined \$750.

11 Y'all, this gives us all a bad name.
 12 It gives hunters a bad name. It gives
 13 the deer industry a bad name. It's not
 14 good for any of us. And all it's going
 15 to take is one or two people selfishly
 16 to mess it up for the whole state.

17 So I want y'all to read this, and
 18 then I'll -- this is my closing. This
 19 was said by John H. Wallace, Jr., a
 20 State Game and Fish commissioner in
 21 1908, and it holds true today. Since
 22 the state in its sovereign capacity
 23 occupies the attitude of guardian and

1 something that is not right. Please
 2 help us protect the resource that we're
 3 trying to manage for y'all.

4 Mr. Chairman, that concludes it.
 5 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Thank you. Thank you,
 6 Director Sykes, very much.

7 Board, do you have questions or
 8 comments of Director Sykes?
 9 (No response.)

10 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Then I say we return and
 11 continue with the order of the day.

12 (Brief pause in proceedings.)

13 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: We're ready to continue. If
 14 there are no questions, we will move on
 15 with our public comments section.

16 We're going to do things different
 17 than we did last year to accommodate
 18 everybody to make sure that everybody
 19 has an opportunity to prepare their
 20 remarks. So when I call the name of the
 21 first speaker, I'm going to ask him to
 22 come to the microphone. I'm going to
 23 call the second speaker. I'm going to

1 ask that he come to our "ready" chair or
 2 "on deck" chair so that he has a moment
 3 to prepare his remarks going forward.
 4 Once the first speaker finishes, if the
 5 second speaker or the next speaker will
 6 get up, announce or give his name,
 7 please, I will in that transition call
 8 the next speaker. In this instance it
 9 would be the third and so on. We'll try
 10 this. If we have a problem, we'll just
 11 take it slow and easy.

12 So Betsy is going to be our timer.
 13 She has a time clock up there that's
 14 visible to most. If you can't read it,
 15 holler at us. And if you have any
 16 questions about that, holler.

17 I'm going to ask again that you
 18 reserve or hold -- out of respect for
 19 our speakers and their time and everyone
 20 else's here, no applause, no catcalls.
 21 Let's let everyone make their
 22 statements.

23 So with that being said, any

1 Lake Pickwick this year as well. So we
 2 go the entire state.

3 We are made up between 7th and
 4 12th-grade students. And they're, of
 5 course, male, female, all kind of
 6 different backgrounds and abilities that
 7 they have. We have several students
 8 that have some physical impairments and
 9 those type things.

10 But just to kind of give you an
 11 introduction about who we are and what
 12 we're doing, we have roughly about 2,000
 13 members now. We started out with about
 14 60 or so in 2000. So it's grown
 15 tremendously. And we see a lot of
 16 positive things coming through this.

17 One of the things that I just want
 18 to bring your attention to is that this
 19 is one of the most rewarding things I've
 20 ever done working with these young
 21 people. We are very, very proactive on
 22 taking good conservation measures. We
 23 have a very good record of returning the

1 questions from the board? Any comments?
 2 (No response.)

3 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: All right. Our first speaker
 4 today is Mr. Barry Corbman. If he will
 5 come up to the microphone.

6 The speaker after Mr. Corbman is
 7 Mary Carole Jackson. Both are on
 8 freshwater fishing.

9 MR. CORBMAN: Good morning. I'm Barry
 10 Corbman, and I serve in a couple of
 11 capacities. I'm Wetumpka High School's
 12 fishing team coach, but I also serve as
 13 president of the Alabama Student Angler
 14 Bass Fishing Association.

15 We're a large group that started in
 16 2000 with high school fishing. This is
 17 truly a team event. The way that we are
 18 set up there, each high school team will
 19 take five boats to our tournaments with
 20 two anglers and a boat captain in the
 21 boat. We're currently right now on Lake
 22 Eufaula right now fishing. We travel as
 23 far south as Eufaula, but we'll be on

1 fish back to the waterways alive. So
 2 far this year we've had two tournaments.
 3 We're on our third one today. We have
 4 had approximately a thousand fish or so
 5 caught during those two tournaments and
 6 returned to the water with the exception
 7 of losing three fish in those two
 8 tournaments. So those came to us in bad
 9 shape to start with. So we have a very
 10 good record of putting them back into
 11 the waterway.

12 Because of some of these type
 13 things -- we have some very young
 14 anglers that are learning the process,
 15 and because of that, we want to try to
 16 give them every opportunity to be
 17 successful. So what I'm calling on you
 18 today to ask is that some means of being
 19 able to reduce the slot limits and/or
 20 size limits on lakes on these high
 21 school tournament trails that we have
 22 out there to give our anglers a better
 23 chance to be successful and have a good

1 day on the water, making them better
2 fishermen and conservation-minded during
3 the process.

4 There are a lot of advantages to
5 seeing what's happened with us. I think
6 the fishing licenses have gone up
7 tremendously since we're doing this.
8 And one -- a couple of guys have told me
9 that it's very difficult to get a used
10 boat anymore because of all the high
11 school folks we put on the water.

12 So I thank you for your time, and
13 we'd like for you to consider this as
14 either a change or an application
15 process that we could make this a little
16 easier to accommodate --

17 MS. JONES: Time.

18 MR. CORBMAN: Thank you.

19 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Any questions?

20 MR. HARTZOG: Mr. Chairman?

21 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Mr. Hartzog.

22 MR. HARTZOG: Barry, I just want to thank you.

23 In fact, I talked to a bunch of kids

1 appearance there. But in order to
2 continue the effort towards improvement,
3 we are proposing the creation of a
4 quality zone which would impact only
5 less than a mile of the stream which is
6 14 miles long.

7 So that area that we're proposing is
8 from the fence below the dam to the
9 middle of the pump house downstream.
10 This does not include the Alabama Power
11 fishing pier, nor does it include the
12 ADA-compliant ramp. It also does not
13 include the two easy pullouts that have
14 access less than 20 feet from where you
15 park.

16 The other added part to the proposal
17 would include single hook, artificial
18 only, no bait, and barbless hook.

19 The creel study by DCNR in 2017
20 demonstrated use and economic impacts.
21 The quote, quoting from the study, the
22 majority of the fly and lure angling
23 parties were contacted while fishing

1 yesterday that were filling up their
2 boats in Eufaula. This morning when I
3 came to the meeting I passed the boat
4 landing in which they were all putting
5 in. And so the economy in Eufaula
6 appreciates these kids' tournaments, and
7 we appreciate the kids coming to
8 Eufaula.

9 MR. CORBMAN: Thank you. Enjoy being there.
10 Seen a lot of nice pictures coming out
11 of there of big bass too.

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

14 MR. CORBMAN: Thank you.

15 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: William Sulzby.

16 MS. JACKSON: I'm Mary Carole Jackson. I'm
17 from Walker and Cullman County.

18 First of all, I'd like to thank you
19 guys so much for all the help that
20 you've given us on improvements for the
21 Sipsey Fork over the years. It's made a
22 tremendous difference in the stream,
23 especially the added game warden

1 upstream of the pump house and --
2 88 percent and 68 percent respectively,
3 whereas only 50 percent of the parties
4 fishing with bait were upstream of the
5 pump house. So these figures of those
6 people fishing with bait also do not
7 include those people fishing off of the
8 fishing pier itself.

9 So this also demonstrated during the
10 creel survey that 63 percent of angling
11 effort was done by fly and lure anglers.
12 80 percent of the daily expenditure,
13 though, did come from those anglers as
14 well. So bait anglers also accounted
15 for 75 percent of the harvest.

16 The last part of this is that the
17 anglers on all sides would benefit from
18 this. The majority of fly fishing, lure
19 fishing, and bait fishing are taking
20 place in these opposite zones already.
21 The bait anglers increased catch rates,
22 according to the study, take place
23 outside of this zone as it is.

1 The creel study also said that
2 90 percent of the people surveyed were
3 in favor -- or did not oppose a -- did
4 not oppose the catch-and-release
5 regulation, which we are not asking for.
6 But it shows that they are okay with
7 extra regulation.

8 So we, also, ask on top of this that
9 the -- that you guys consider the
10 implementation of a fishery-wide single
11 rod so that you are reducing the number
12 of areas that a single fisherman can
13 have and then, finally, that the
14 no-culling regulation also have a
15 statement that catch-and-release --

16 MS. JONES: Time.

17 MS. JACKSON: -- immediate-release fishing is
18 also permitted.

19 That was a lot of stuff in three
20 minutes. That's all I've got. Do y'all
21 have any questions for me?

22 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Any questions?

23 MR. HARTZOG: Mr. Chairman?

1 position.

2 MR. SULZBY: I'm William D. Sulzby, Jr. It's
3 been my pleasure and privilege to hunt
4 and witness an increase in the wild
5 turkey population in Alabama since 1966.
6 And I'm appreciative for the efforts of
7 the Alabama Department of Conservation
8 and Natural Resources to provide such
9 opportunities for myself and others.

10 The concern has been expressed there
11 may be a decrease in wild turkey
12 population in Alabama. In spite of this
13 concern, there's been a change in
14 regulation which permits artificial
15 feeding of game and hunting in close
16 proximity of such feeding.

17 This change preventing artificial
18 feeding has been made on page 34 of the
19 publication "The Wild Turkey in
20 Alabama." The game biologists leading
21 the Wild Turkey Project advise:
22 Artificial feeding unnaturally
23 concentrates turkeys in a small area,

1 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Mr. Hartzog.

2 MR. HARTZOG: Not to Mary Carole. But how
3 long before Auburn finishes their study
4 on ...

5 MR. NICHOLS: This is Nick Nichols. I'm chief
6 of fisheries for Wildlife and Freshwater
7 Fisheries. We're about halfway through
8 that study. There will be another field
9 season this summer, and we would expect
10 the final report sometime early next
11 calendar year.

12 MR. HARTZOG: Thank you.

13 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Any other questions?
14 (No response.)

15 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Thank you.
16 Lebron Goodridge.

17 You're up.

18 MR. SULZBY: I'm William Sulzby.

19 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: I understand. But you're in
20 the "on deck" chair, and I'm calling the
21 next speaker.

22 MR. SULZBY: Oh, I'm sorry.

23 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: He's going to assume your

1 which is bad for several reasons. One,
2 disease transmission. Turkeys can
3 infect others through direct contact or
4 they can infect through droppings that
5 pile up around feeders, increased
6 poaching and predators and so forth.
7 But increased exposure to toxins,
8 mycotoxins such as aflatoxin and
9 fumonisin, occur in grain crops. Crops
10 contaminated with these toxins rendering
11 them unsuitable as human and domestic
12 food often find their way into
13 commercial wildlife feeds and may
14 ultimately poison turkeys. Feed too
15 contaminated for livestock is often sold
16 as wildlife food. Tainted feed may
17 contain high levels of aflatoxins that
18 are poisonous to wild turkeys.

19 On bags of corn labeled as "Deer
20 Corn" sold at but not limited to Bass
21 Pro, Walmart, Dick's, Academy and other
22 outdoor -- the following caution is
23 given: Not fit for human consumption.

1 Not fit for consumption for domestic
2 animals. Not fit for rabbits.

3 Lost my place. I'll go forward.

4 Why are these products and corn
5 contaminated and sold as "Deer Corn,"
6 and why are we going against what's
7 recommended by the state's biologists?

8 And then comes the question what happens
9 to us as humans if we consume the meat.

10 The intake of grain and other -- meat,
11 eggs, milk, and other edible products
12 from animals who consume
13 aflatoxin-contaminated feed are
14 additional sources of potential exposure
15 and that's to us as humans.

16 Thank you, gentlemen. My
17 recommendation is that we act in keeping
18 with the recommendation of our turkey
19 biologist --

20 MS. JONES: Time.

21 MR. SULZBY: -- Mr. Barnett, and stop this
22 practice. Thank you, sir.

23 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Any questions from the board?

1 magazine -- news magazine, the USDA
2 representative said that this poison
3 bait has to be made like M & Ms, you
4 know, melts in your mouth, not in your
5 hands.

6 We live in the state of Alabama.
7 What happens when a tornado comes, opens
8 this special safe feeder up, and takes
9 out 100 pounds of this feed and spreads
10 it through five counties and some little
11 child out there walks up, sees a couple
12 of pieces and pops it in their mouth and
13 eats it? Are we going to be responsible
14 for that child?

15 So back to the war on pigs. The
16 deer season regulations are designed to
17 protect deer so the herd will populate.
18 The problem with pig hunting, we're
19 hunting under the same regulations. You
20 can't protect pigs and expect to
21 eradicate them. They just keep
22 multiplying.

23 So what I'm asking for the board is

1 (No response.)

2 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Thank you very much.

3 John Fischer.

4 MR. GOODRIDGE: Hi. My name is Lebron
5 Goodridge. I'm from Flat Rock, Dekalb
6 County, Alabama. I'm here to help win
7 the war on wild pigs. Have you ever
8 asked yourself why we're losing the war
9 on pigs?

10 Before I continue, I want to address
11 this poison that the state and the USDA
12 is wanting to put out. I have two
13 questions: If this poison is so safe to
14 put out here in our atmosphere and in
15 our fields and everything, why did the
16 USDA have to develop a feeder that is so
17 special and so safe that it takes
18 30 pounds of lift force to open that
19 feeder? Because this poison is not
20 safe.

21 The second thing -- question I have
22 is, from the February print of
23 *Outdoor* -- I'm sorry -- *Alabama Outdoor*

1 that they make -- that you look at more
2 radical hunting regulations that
3 actually look at getting rid of the pigs
4 instead of protecting them. I'm looking
5 for maybe a liaison officer that has --
6 a hunter for years who has put foot on
7 boot -- or boots on ground -- sorry --
8 and has sat here and seen what these
9 regulations restrict every one of us
10 from doing, which is to eradicate a pig.
11 That has to be changed. We can't have
12 the same rules.

13 So there's four things that need to
14 happen in order to win this war on pigs.
15 And I'm only talking between May 1st to
16 August 31st. This seems to be the
17 special pig hunting season that has been
18 declared.

19 The first thing, this board needs to
20 start making new radical regulations
21 that include both private and public
22 land. This war must be fought on both
23 sides of the property line.

1 The second thing, continue trapping,
2 although trapping is time-sensitive.

3 The third thing, put the gun hunters
4 back in the night hunts. Let us bait at
5 our discretion. Let us use electronic
6 calls. Let us back into night vision,
7 and we'll kill more pigs.

8 And the third thing is --

9 MS. JONES: Time.

10 MR. GOODRIDGE: -- give the dog hunters the
11 same respect on private and public
12 lands. Thank you very much.

13 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Any questions, thoughts?
14 (No response.)

15 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Thank you very much.
16 Kevin McKinstry.

17 MR. FISCHER: Good morning. I'm John Fischer.
18 I'm with the Wildlife Disease Study at
19 the University of Georgia College of Vet
20 Medicine. Our organization has been
21 around since 1957, and we were founded
22 there by 11 southeastern states -- now
23 we number 19 states in our cooperative

1 and mule deer in Wyoming and elk in
2 Colorado. And there were some results
3 recently from Wisconsin that showed in
4 their endemic area that the animal they
5 tested -- they captured, tested,
6 radio-collared and released animals, the
7 animals that tested positive for
8 chronic-wasting disease and were
9 released were three times more likely to
10 die in the first year of that five-year
11 study. We have four more years to go
12 there.

13 The main thing that we need to do
14 here is -- we're still fortunate in the
15 Alabama situation. We have not detected
16 the disease here. We need to do
17 everything that we can to prevent the
18 introduction of that disease. We need,
19 also, to do everything we can to prevent
20 its establishment if it has crept in
21 here and we haven't detected it yet. We
22 need to be doing everything we can to
23 detect the disease because early

1 membership -- to investigate deer
2 mortalities that turned out to be
3 hemorrhagic disease. That's a disease
4 we continue to work on.

5 But I'm here to talk about
6 chronic-wasting disease today, and I
7 would really like to reiterate what
8 Director Sykes said as to the serious
9 nature of this disease. I think it
10 merits our full attention for a number
11 of reasons, but the top two motivations
12 are the potential impacts that this
13 disease can have on our free-ranging
14 cervid populations. And, also, I think
15 it's wise to limit human exposure to
16 this CWD disease agent based on past
17 history with situations such as mad cow
18 disease ultimately being responsible for
19 variant Creutzfeldt-Jakob disease in
20 humans.

21 On the population implication side,
22 we've seen population reductions in
23 heavily infected herds of whitetail deer

1 detection and early response is the
2 only -- offers the only possible chance
3 of containing this disease and possibly
4 even eradicating it.

5 We found the disease in 23 states in
6 free-ranging deer or elk or moose.
7 Mississippi was the 23rd state. But
8 there's been one state -- and that's New
9 York -- where the disease has not been
10 found since its original detection in
11 2005 when it was found in two
12 free-ranging deer there as well as in
13 two captive deer.

14 The most important aspect of this
15 prevention and detection is we must have
16 the support of the public in order to
17 have the correct policies and
18 regulations in place. We need to
19 justify these regulations and policies
20 scientifically. And there's plenty of
21 information out there; although I'm the
22 first to admit, there are still some
23 information gaps regarding

1 chronic-wasting disease.

2 But we need to move forward with

3 what we do know. We need to have the

4 support of the public as we do

5 everything we can to prevent and detect

6 this disease. And I'll stop there and

7 see if anyone has any questions.

8 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Thank you very much,

9 Dr. Fischer. To the board ...

10 MR. HARTZOG: It looks like I'm the only one

11 that's going to ask questions today.

12 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Please do. You have the

13 floor.

14 MR. HARTZOG: You said something that I didn't

15 understand. You said that in New York

16 they had cases in 2005, but they haven't

17 had any cases since?

18 THE WITNESS: That's correct. That's the only

19 state in which the disease has been

20 found in wild animals in which it's no

21 longer found in wild animals.

22 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Any other questions from the

23 board?

1 MR. McKINSTRY: Yes, sir. I'm Kevin

2 McKinstry. I'm a wildlife biologist

3 with the Westervelt Company. We're a

4 west Alabama family-owned company. We

5 own about 450,000 acres of land there.

6 We've been actively involved in

7 recreational hunting since the 1950s.

8 So that makes us a very significant

9 stakeholder in the whitetail deer

10 resource in Alabama.

11 Not only do we have a passion for

12 deer hunting and enjoy it every year

13 since the '50s, but we're also -- that's

14 our livelihood. That's how we employ

15 people. That's how we send kids to

16 school, feed our families. And so

17 chronic-wasting disease has been a

18 concern of ours for a number of years.

19 We've done a lot of research, talked to

20 a lot of folks, tried to stay current on

21 what's going on, and we also developed

22 our own action plans for our own

23 property.

1 Yes, sir.

2 COMMISSIONER BLANKENSHIP: Mr. Fischer, I just

3 wanted to publicly thank you for coming

4 over today from Athens and for the work

5 that you've done with the department not

6 just on CWD but on our other disease

7 work that's not just with deer but with

8 turkeys and other animals. Director

9 Sykes was telling me how valuable you've

10 been to our department and what a

11 resource you have been in allowing us to

12 stay ahead of some of the things that

13 happen here in our state. Just wanted

14 to publicly thank you for that work.

15 MR. FISCHER: Well, you're very welcome. And

16 I can't thank you all enough for your

17 strong support of our organization since

18 1957. We celebrated our 60th

19 anniversary last year, and we're looking

20 forward to a long cooperative working

21 relationship with y'all. Thank you.

22 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Thank you, Dr. Fischer.

23 Brian Murphy.

1 But I want to applaud the board. I

2 heard everybody mention chronic-wasting

3 disease this morning. That makes us

4 feel a lot better. The precautions at

5 the processors that the state already

6 has in place are good and already being

7 enforced -- actively enforced. Cases

8 are being made. People are being

9 prosecuted.

10 I will say this. With the case in

11 Mississippi, it certainly has triggered

12 us to have some more internal

13 conversations. It elevated our level of

14 concern a little higher. We actually

15 own land in Mississippi, but luckily

16 we're on the east side.

17 But in these conversations -- you

18 know, like I mentioned, we have our own

19 CWD action plan. We've challenged what

20 we had planned to do, what our

21 precautions are. We want to make sure,

22 like Dr. Fischer just mentioned, that we

23 do everything possible to protect

1 ourselves from contaminated deer on our
2 property. And so we have some active
3 conversations going on today.

4 I'm going to challenge the board to
5 do the same thing. Challenge yourself.
6 Challenge your own processes and
7 precautions that are in place now. But
8 it certainly sounds like everybody on
9 the board has already got that on their
10 mind anyway.

11 So we appreciate what you do. You
12 guys are the gatekeepers to protect us
13 from this disease. And I guess I
14 should, also, say that it might be a
15 little dangerous to assume that it's not
16 here already. The Mississippi -- the
17 county the Mississippi deer was found in
18 had been intensively sampled in the
19 past. They were very surprised that
20 that's where it was. So we should,
21 also, from a precautionary standpoint --
22 maybe we should think about, you know,
23 what we need to do not to facilitate the

1 spread, especially if the disease is
2 already here. I know that's not on the
3 table for this board. That's next door.

4 So we'll see what happens, I guess.

5 MR. RAYMOND JONES: Thank you.

6 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Brock Jones.

7 MR. BROCK JONES: Kevin, you said -- made one
8 statement about precautionary throwing
9 corn on the ground. Anything else
10 specifically that y'all are doing from a
11 precautionary standpoint?

12 MR. MCKINSTRY: Yeah. Brock, we've done a lot
13 of customer education. We've been very
14 active in helping the agency with their
15 monitoring program. We've engaged our
16 hunt clubs to collect heads to be
17 sampled, and they have been very willing
18 and happy to do so.

19 Right now it's basically been
20 education and awareness. There is --
21 there does seem to be a lot of apathy.
22 If you see some chatter on the Internet
23 about CWD, it doesn't last very long.

1 spread if it's here and we don't know
2 that it's here now. Thank you.

3 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Any questions?

4 Mr. Jones.

5 MR. RAYMOND JONES: Kevin, I guess, what are
6 you -- what is Westervelt -- what are
7 y'all going to try -- what are some of
8 these discussions?

9 MR. MCKINSTRY: Well, we've had some
10 precautionary things already put in
11 place to kind of protect us from a risk
12 and liability standpoint. Quite
13 frankly, some of the other conversations
14 we're having kind of revolve around
15 baiting and feeding deer on our
16 property, whether or not we should allow
17 that to continue if it's legal in the
18 state.

19 We have some concerns about the bill
20 that's proposed here in Alabama in the
21 House. We really don't think it's the
22 right time and place to throw more corn
23 on the ground that might facilitate the

1 You know, if you talk about dog hunting
2 or something more relevant to folks,
3 something they identify with, those
4 conversations go on for days and, of
5 course, baiting as well.

6 But I think that's pretty much what
7 we've been doing so far is -- and we've
8 taken some steps to reduce our liability
9 as well. We do have concerns if someone
10 were to harvest a deer on our property
11 that turned out to be infected that it
12 might -- you know, it could come back to
13 us, which is something we don't want.

14 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: When you talk about the
15 liability issues, expound on that just a
16 little bit. If the CDC, for example,
17 said that any -- the deer if it's
18 contaminated can transfer to human
19 beings, what would happen to the leases
20 and the leaseholders that --

21 MR. MCKINSTRY: That's still an ongoing
22 conversation. We have actually
23 discussed removing that property from

1 the lease program. It's not something
2 we would want to do. It would probably
3 be a last resort. But that hasn't been
4 decided yet what the best thing to do
5 is.

6 The other side of the argument is,
7 like in Mississippi where they're trying
8 to collect a pretty robust sample of
9 deer to be tested, you really do need
10 hunters' help to get those numbers. And
11 our hunt clubs are already showing that
12 they have interest to take action and
13 help with the monitoring system.

14 But we don't have -- we don't have
15 the answers. But, you know, again,
16 Mississippi has kind of raised the level
17 of concern a little higher like it has
18 for you guys. And I'm hoping you have
19 some conversations on the board about
20 additional precautions, maybe even
21 things that would facilitate the spread
22 if it's here and we don't know it.

23 MR. CAGLE: Mr. Chairman?

1 national nonprofit wildlife conservation
2 organization with a mission to ensure
3 the future of wild whitetail deer,
4 wildlife habitat, and our hunting
5 heritage. We're based in Georgia but
6 have members across the nation with
7 Alabama ranking in the top ten and
8 growing rapidly in membership.

9 I can also say that for the last
10 18 years I've been involved actively in
11 the CWD issue all over the U.S.,
12 particularly once it hit Wisconsin in
13 2002. So it's been something that has
14 consumed a lot of my time and energy for
15 the last nearly two decades.

16 We're here today to support the
17 proposed introduction of the new online
18 database for the licensed game breeders.
19 And why is a system like this so vital
20 today?

21 And if I can indulge one of the
22 board members to open the packet and
23 show the graphic of the movement of deer

1 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Yes, Mr. Cagle.

2 MR. CAGLE: I just want to thank Westervelt
3 for being proactive. I mean, I think
4 that's an important part of the
5 equation. It certainly turned out to be
6 in the relationship between landowner
7 and leaseholder, you know, a lot of how
8 that was identified so quickly in
9 Mississippi. So thank you for being
10 proactive.

11 MR. McKINSTRY: Thank you. And, like I say,
12 we've had a close relationship with the
13 wildlife guys in the agency for quite
14 some time, and we appreciate them
15 working with us too.

16 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Any other questions?
17 (No response.)

18 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Thank you very much.

19 MR. HARTZOG: Thank you, Kevin.

20 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Jimmy Jimmerson.

21 MR. MURPHY: Good morning. My name is Brian
22 Murphy. I'm the CEO of the Quality Deer
23 Management Association. We are a

1 in Pennsylvania just to the crowd. If
2 you could just show that to them. I can
3 put one up here.

4 It looks like a spider web. And
5 this is the known legal movements of
6 whitetail deer in the state of
7 Pennsylvania between the captive
8 facilities. It just demonstrates very
9 clearly why having a rapid database of
10 this nature like Director Sykes pointed
11 out allows trace-forwards and
12 trace-backs very quickly in real-time so
13 that you know where to look for this
14 disease should it enter the state of
15 Alabama.

16 But today I'd like to speak very
17 briefly to three points, that being the
18 cost to your state Wildlife agency
19 should CWD be discovered, the cost to
20 your state, and, finally, the impact on
21 your hunters. And to calculate the cost
22 to your state Wildlife agency, I used
23 the data out of our *Whitetail Report*,

1 which you have copies of. It's also
2 available online free.

3 I looked at three states that have
4 recently discovered CWD and looked at
5 the cost of the sampling prior to
6 discovery and post. And the average
7 increase in the number of samples after
8 discovery was about 3900 additional
9 samples. As Director Sykes pointed out,
10 you're currently pulling about five to
11 600 a year. So it'd be an increase of
12 about 3800 additional samples if you
13 follow like these other states. And at
14 a cost of roughly \$22 apiece, that's
15 about 80-some-odd thousand dollars.

16 It doesn't sound like a big number
17 until you look at the true cost of that.
18 Texas has estimated that the true cost
19 of collection and analysis is closer to
20 \$100 per sample when you look at all the
21 staff time and overheads. So that would
22 be roughly \$400,000. This does not
23 include the targeted surveillance,

1 from someone who is living in a part of
2 the CWD zone in Wisconsin where they
3 have among the highest prevalence rates
4 of CWD in the nation. And this was a
5 quote that one of our members sent me
6 recently: Having hunted in Iowa County,
7 Wisconsin, for the last 20 years, I
8 wouldn't wish CWD on my worst enemy.
9 Every buck we've taken in the last four
10 years has tested positive, and we no
11 longer see bucks older than
12 four-and-a-half years. Instead we now
13 find beautiful and promising young bucks
14 lying dead. I used to be so excited to
15 be on the property, but now it's like
16 walking across the landscape of a
17 black-and-white photo. This disease
18 hurts the psyche of the outdoorsmen as
19 much as the animals themselves.

20 So for all these reasons I echo
21 Dr. Fischer's comments. Caution is the
22 best principle at this point. Do
23 everything you can because once CWD hits

1 culling, the ID efforts of your agency,
2 additional staff and headaches. So
3 you're looking at easily in the upwards
4 of a million-dollar impact to your
5 agency in costs, and that does not
6 include the license sale or PR-dollar
7 decrease should the number of hunters in
8 your state decline.

9 The cost to the state of Alabama --
10 I'll refer you to an economic study done
11 by the University of Tennessee. And
12 they estimate that if CWD entered
13 Tennessee, that would cost their state
14 \$46.3 million in direct impacts and
15 \$98 million in total effects. And these
16 are things like fuel, lodging, et
17 cetera, et cetera. They did not include
18 the cost of -- or loss of revenue to the
19 state agency in that.

20 And, finally, I refer you to a quote
21 that I got directly from one of our
22 members in Wisconsin. This is the
23 impact on individuals, and this comes

1 your state it's a game changer. And
2 it's a game changer that is not one you
3 want to experience because I have lived
4 through it with a lot of other members
5 across this country. So thank you for
6 your time today.

7 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Thank you.

8 Questions from the board?

9 (No response.)

10 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Thank you very much.

11 MR. MURPHY: Thank you.

12 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Paul Jeffreys.

13 MR. JIMMERSON: I'm Jimmy Jimmerson, and I
14 live in Cleburne County. And the board
15 members has a manilla folder in front of
16 you. That's the information that I'm
17 going to be asking you to consider.

18 There's about seven or eight pages
19 of people that live there. 300 -- I
20 think over 350 people have signed that.
21 And what we would like to ask the board
22 to do is to allow gun deer hunting in
23 Cleburne County -- in the northern part

1 of Cleburne County moved up two weeks
 2 ahead of what the regular season is now.
 3 By doing this, it would allow us to be
 4 able to hunt the early rutting of the
 5 deer in this area. Choccolocco Wildlife
 6 Management Area is within this area, and
 7 people -- and the biologists knows the
 8 deer that were stocked there in the '40s
 9 and '50s -- those deer rut early, ahead
 10 of what we're normally being able to
 11 hunt.

12 Also, on the west -- on the east
 13 side of Cleburne County is the Georgia
 14 state line. Those hunters are being
 15 allowed to hunt one month earlier than
 16 we're able to hunt -- gun hunt the deer
 17 in our area. And we don't need the two
 18 weeks at the end of the season because
 19 our bucks are dropping their antlers
 20 during the month of January.

21 This petition that you have before
 22 you is endorsed by the Cleburne County
 23 Soil and Water Conservation Committee,

1 sampling each spring and summer, these
 2 areas a little bit earlier, this time of
 3 year right here. We're trying to
 4 delineate those zones a bit more precise
 5 to -- once we get to that time, we can
 6 later delineate those zones and possibly
 7 have different season structures in
 8 those areas.

9 MR. RAYMOND JONES: Thanks.

10 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Any other questions?

11 MR. JIMMERSON: You also have a map of the
 12 area outlined in your folder there for
 13 that part of the county. Thank you.

14 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Thank you very much.
 15 Johnny Johnson.

16 MR. JEFFREYS: Members of the board, I'm Paul
 17 Jeffreys. I'm from Lamar County, which
 18 is in District 4.

19 I come here to you today to commend
 20 you on preserving our ban on dog deer
 21 hunting in Lamar, Marion, and Franklin
 22 Counties. We started our mission 18
 23 years ago and received our ban -- total

1 the Cleburne County Farmers Federation
 2 Wildlife Committee, and the Cleburne
 3 County TREASURE Forest Association.

4 We'd also like to ask the board not
 5 to allow dog deer hunting back in
 6 Cleburne County. Thank you.

7 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Any questions from the board?
 8 Mr. Jones.

9 MR. RAYMOND JONES: Keith, have we -- what is
 10 the reproductive data that we've taken?
 11 Have we taken reproductive data from
 12 this area?

13 MR. GAULDIN: We have. We have. And
 14 throughout the state as well -- well,
 15 we've identified about seven different
 16 zones where we have different breeding
 17 populations. Back when the state didn't
 18 have any deer to begin with, we stocked
 19 what deer we had from sources, and we
 20 got deer from Michigan, North Carolina,
 21 and various places that have different
 22 breeding cycles like that. Our
 23 biologists -- and we do reproductive

1 ban 14 years ago.

2 In our area the deer hunting has
 3 improved. There are no complaints, no
 4 conflict between dog hunters and
 5 landowners. It has been nothing but a
 6 success story. And we just ask that in
 7 that area y'all maintain -- we ask that
 8 you please maintain that ban in Lamar,
 9 Marion, and Franklin Counties in the
 10 northwestern corner of Alabama.

11 And as landowners -- and I receive
 12 calls from landowners all the time
 13 wanting to maintain that ban. As
 14 landowners, we appreciate having the
 15 ability to hunt our land the way we
 16 choose to.

17 Thank you very much for what you do,
 18 and thank you for maintaining our ban
 19 thus far.

20 COMMISSIONER BLANKENSHIP: After Mr. Johnson
 21 will be Gene Miller.

22 MR. JOHNSON: I'm Johnny Johnson. And, board,
 23 I want you to know how much I appreciate

1 you people and what you do for the
2 Conservation Department.

3 I live in Tuscaloosa. I have a
4 place in Tuscaloosa, also Lamar County.
5 I'm a former member of this board. And
6 I know the problems that you have to
7 deal with, and we appreciate it. I'm
8 also the "National Conservation Educator
9 of the Year" award. So I know some of
10 those problems that we deal with, and
11 I've enjoyed it throughout the years as
12 a young person on to my present age.

13 In Lamar County especially we have
14 enjoyed -- and we've had some of the
15 problems knowing these problems that
16 we've dealt with concerning especially
17 dog deer hunting. As a landowner, you
18 should be able to control and do things
19 on your property that you like to do.
20 We cannot do this with dog hunters
21 coming through as we've gone through.
22 Let me say that where the dog deer
23 hunting has been banned, there's a

1 southern gentleman, this is who comes to
2 mind. So thank you.

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

5 The next speaker is George Robinson.

6 MR. MILLER: Good morning. I'm Gene Miller.
7 I'm from Clay County. I live in Delta
8 in the north end of Clay County. I
9 represent some landowners that border
10 the Ivory Mountain Walk-in Turkey
11 Hunting Area of the Talladega National
12 Forest. And you have a packet there
13 showing this.

14 We're having problems with dog deer
15 hunters, mainly the dogs coming onto our
16 land and keeping us from being able to
17 use it the way we want to. In Clay
18 County there are several dog-hunting
19 clubs. The difference in those clubs
20 and what we have, the clubs are being
21 made up mostly of people from Clay
22 County or people who have an interest in
23 that area. Second, they own their own

1 reason for every bit of it out there.

2 Let's keep this on course. Do not allow
3 it to be taken away.

4 Again, I appreciate this board. I
5 appreciate the Conservation Department.
6 And that's all that I have at the
7 present time.

8 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Thank you.

9 Mr. Jones, Brock.

10 MR. BROCK JONES: Mr. Johnson, I just want to
11 thank you for your service on this
12 board, and it was an honor to be your
13 successor six years ago. And thank you
14 for your help in getting me prepared for
15 being on the board the previous time.

16 MR. JOHNSON: I appreciate it. Thank you.

17 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Thank you.

18 Mr. Jones.

19 MR. RAYMOND JONES: I, too, wanted to echo
20 that. I had the privilege of serving
21 with Mr. Johnson several years ago. And
22 thank you for all your service through
23 the years. And when I think of a true

1 land and their hunting land that they
2 have leased.

3 The problem that we have in the
4 north end of the county, the people are
5 all from outside of Clay County. They
6 hunt no land that they own or lease.
7 All the land that they're hunting is
8 public hunting land or open-permit land.
9 And as landowners, we're asking for some
10 help so we can use the land that we own
11 and lease the way we want to without
12 interference from other people.

13 And that's short and sweet, but
14 that's it. Does anybody have a
15 question?

16 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Any questions from the board?

17 (No response.)

18 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Thank you, Mr. Miller.

19 MR. MILLER: Thank you for your time.

20 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Thank you very much.

21 The next speaker will be Jonathan
22 Bankston.

23 MR. ROBINSON: My name is George Robinson.

1 I'm a cattle farmer in Chambers County.
2 And I'm not a speaker and I'm not used
3 to getting up in front of people, but
4 I'll do my best to tell you what's going
5 on.

6 Our county is an absolute wreck on
7 this dog hunting. I mean, it is to the
8 point somebody is going to get killed.
9 The game warden told us originally get
10 all the video we could get. We get him
11 the video. He says that's not any good,
12 you got to start killing the deer --
13 excuse me -- catching the dogs.

14 They run these big hounds. You're
15 not going to catch one of them big
16 hounds unless you kill a deer. So you
17 got to shoot a little ole doe or a
18 little small buck like that that's
19 running through there with its tongue
20 hung out. So we started killing the
21 deer.

22 So what do they do? They won't come
23 get those dogs. They send their kids in

1 down at dark. Right now I run till
2 about six o'clock. I get on my phone
3 answering my calls, returning my texts.
4 It's about an hour after dark. I hear a
5 four-wheel drive coming down the road,
6 and I'm thinking that's sort of strange.
7 He sure is driving fast. Just wheels
8 into our place, a couple of hundred
9 yards in the -- I still see him coming.
10 I walk out in the road, and I'm standing
11 there. And he pulls up with his lights
12 on bright. What do you do in that
13 instance? Knock his lights out or
14 snatch him out of the truck?

15 And I go around there, and he says
16 he's looking for somebody to build a
17 fence. Just idiotic excuses why they're
18 going to be on your place. I called the
19 game warden, and I talked to him. He
20 says you need to call the sheriff,
21 that's a trespassing issue.

22 Then back on the intimidation side,
23 we had -- you just can't imagine. Every

1 there to get them. You want to have
2 hunters -- these people rent from us,
3 and we've had to cut our rates to keep
4 these hunters, a decent -- somebody that
5 you would want on your land. They're
6 just taking -- one of these tracts -- my
7 aunt is 80 years old, a retired
8 schoolteacher. We struggle keeping it
9 leased just for this reason. They go in
10 there and get set up. They just try to
11 shoot more of the mature-style bucks.
12 That's over when you start running these
13 dogs. They turn them loose on us and
14 then shoot them when they're crossing
15 the road. There's probably laws on the
16 books if they were just enforced.

17 The intimidation factor up our way
18 is through the roof. When I meet one of
19 them on the road, this is what I get
20 (indicating), just like that. That's
21 all year long.

22 Last week -- deer season is not even
23 in now. I was on a machine. And I shut

1 time we call the game warden, oh, they
2 just go through the roof. They come to
3 the property line and shoot shotguns,
4 pistols, and rifles and just -- I mean,
5 for 30 minutes on. The game warden
6 comes. He collects him a bag of
7 bullets. But nothing is ever done.

8 You just can't imagine. It's not
9 right. My daddy started this in the
10 '70s, in the '80s, and then he was hurt
11 in 2000.

12 MS. JONES: Time.

13 MR. ROBINSON: So I had to start dealing with
14 it. For 18 years I've dealt with it.

15 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Thank you, Mr. Robinson. A
16 question from me. How many acres do you
17 have?

18 MR. ROBINSON: The portion that I struggle
19 with the most is a 400-acre block, and
20 they have 100 acres that joins it. They
21 have 7500 acres to hunt, but they want
22 to make sure that that's where they
23 stay. Now, we cattle-farm more than

1 that. The timberland is what we're
2 struggling with.

3 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: That you lease to someone
4 else to hunt?

5 MR. ROBINSON: That's correct.

6 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: All right. Any questions
7 from the board?

8 Mr. Hartzog?

9 MR. HARTZOG: (Shakes head.)

10 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Thank you very much.

11 The next speaker is Don Knight.

12 MR. BANKSTON: My name is Jonathan Bankston.

13 I am a representative for an
14 organization called The Fallen Outdoors.

15 I'm not here to talk about my
16 organization but what the Alabama dog
17 hunters have done with my organization,
18 the good things they've done with those
19 guys.

20 Many of you guys have probably heard
21 about the 22 veterans a day that commit
22 suicide on a daily basis across the
23 United States, but many of you don't

1 probably even saved his life.

2 But I'm not here talking about
3 saving the life but the things that
4 these guys are doing -- what they could
5 be doing with my veterans who are
6 attempting to -- who are fighting these
7 demons. I want you guys to think
8 about -- I want to challenge every
9 single one of you guys to actually think
10 about the needs that the American --
11 that the Alabama Dog Hunters Association
12 have, the concerns, their demands or
13 whatever it may be they may be bringing
14 forth to you today. That's my point.

15 That's the reason why I'm here is to
16 stand up for the Alabama Dog Hunters
17 Association because they saved one of my
18 veteran's lives just this past weekend.

19 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Any questions from the board?

20 Mr. Martin.

21 MR. MARTIN: Excuse me. What group took y'all
22 hunting?

23 MR. BANKSTON: Alabama Dog Hunters

1 know about the 28 veterans in the state
2 of Alabama that consider committing
3 suicide on a daily basis.

4 This past year I was able to get in
5 touch with the Alabama Dog Hunters
6 Association. They actually came to me
7 and wanted to invite some vets to go on
8 a hunt. A lot of my veterans were
9 totally against dog hunting as a whole,
10 but a lot of them were open-minded and
11 wanted to give it a shot.

12 Well, many of these guys with the
13 organization did not know that there was
14 one veteran on my squad that was having
15 issues with his personal demons, who was
16 thinking about suicide, didn't know
17 where else to turn. So I invited him on
18 the hunt. The whole weekend we were out
19 there with the hunt he had no idea what
20 was going on, had never been on a dog
21 hunt, but when the dogs were running to
22 him, he had no -- he had no focus on
23 what was bothering him that weekend. It

1 Association. We had three or four
2 different chapters that took us out.

3 MR. MARTIN: I got you.

4 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Any other questions?

5 (No response.)

6 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Thank you very much.

7 Wynnton Melton.

8 MR. KNIGHT: I'm Don Knight. Just wanted to
9 let y'all know I'm back. I'm going to
10 ask one of Chuck Sykes' questions too.
11 I'm giving you an example.

12 Now, we used to drive from Anniston,
13 Alabama, to Eufaula after dark to hunt,
14 and we would see 50 deer, no problem, on
15 the side of the road. You can do that
16 today and you may see three. Now, it's
17 either the dogs have got -- I mean --
18 dang dog on the brain -- either the deer
19 have gotten smart enough to stay off the
20 roads or they're not there. Your
21 choice. But I'm telling you they ain't
22 there.

23 Now, in my club in Barbour County

1 we're drastically cutting down the doe
2 hunting, doe killing for next year to
3 try to help our herd. It's nothing like
4 it's been in the past. But just wanted
5 to let you know that.

6 Now I'm here to ask y'all's help. I
7 want y'all to come and help the dog
8 hunters instead of trying to put us away
9 and put us on the permit systems and
10 change territories and all that kind of
11 stuff. If you could help us educate the
12 deer -- I can't even talk -- educate the
13 people, the still hunters, that all the
14 information -- it's like Chuck said.
15 All the information out there, most of
16 it's wrong. There are good articles
17 where research has been done on dog deer
18 hunting that gives you good factual
19 information that may change some of
20 these people's mind, or if it don't
21 change their mind, at least let them
22 understand better what we like to do.

23 Okay. Now, y'all put out articles.

1 they're reasonable or not is the
2 legislature. This is according to the
3 Alabama Administrative Procedures Act.
4 Okay. I just want you to know that so
5 we don't have any problems.

6 We'd like to work with y'all every
7 way we can. And the deer herd is down.
8 I'd like for y'all to understand that we
9 see these things a little different from
10 you. When we get put on permit systems
11 and all that kind of stuff --

12 MS. JONES: Time.

13 MR. KNIGHT: -- for dog hunting and then we
14 look at the most tickets given on
15 anything in the state, it's probably
16 corn -- hunting over corn. These
17 people, we don't never hear anything
18 about putting them on a permit system.
19 We don't ever hear anything about
20 cutting them down for days or anything
21 else. But they're right there with a
22 ticket showing they did it, and ours are
23 just complaints. And some of them are

1 A lot of them write magazine articles.
2 You got a newsletter. If we could get
3 some of those articles in that, I think
4 it would be a big help to the dog
5 hunters.

6 We need to get along. That's what
7 the big problem is. We need to get
8 along. Putting us on a permit system,
9 putting -- changing areas and all that
10 kind of stuff is not going to help.
11 We've got to get the people problem
12 straightened out, and you can be a big
13 help with that. That's what you're here
14 for, to help protect hunting, all
15 hunting. So we're asking you to do
16 that.

17 Now, after I've asked for your help,
18 our Constitution reads -- the Alabama
19 Constitution reads we have the right to
20 hunt and fish by traditional methods
21 under reasonable rules. Okay. Now, I
22 have researched and found out that the
23 reasonable rules check or whoever says

1 valid. Some of them are not valid. But
2 you see what our people see and why they
3 get upset when they see these kind of
4 things happening.

5 So we ask you to leave -- no permits
6 new and no land changes. Leave us
7 alone. Let us try to help things. The
8 best way you can handle dog hunting and
9 landowner problems is let them set down
10 and do it. Let them figure out what is
11 happening.

12 My club has set down with our
13 landowner. We've got things worked out.
14 We don't have any problems. Grady can
15 tell you we don't have any problems.

16 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Thank you, Don.

17 MR. KNIGHT: Appreciate it. Thank you.

18 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Thank you very much.

19 Any questions for Mr. Knight?

20 MR. KNIGHT: No. They don't ever ask me
21 questions.

22 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Lonnie Miller is the next
23 speaker.

1 MR. MELTON: Wynnton Melton. Geneva County.
 2 If I look familiar, I think this is my
 3 50th consecutive year being at one of
 4 these meetings. So I've been here a
 5 while as an advocate for legal and
 6 ethical dog hunting, deer hunting, coon
 7 hunting, and everything with a hound
 8 dog. We enjoy it all. And I think
 9 50 years ago when I came here we had six
 10 counties that had no dog hunting, and
 11 now I think they have 40 that have some
 12 restrictions one way or another. We may
 13 be the most endangered species you all
 14 work with all the time.

15 What I'm here for is to implore you
 16 to be careful. Take your time. No
 17 knee-jerk-type action. I remember one
 18 time several years ago one of the board
 19 members had some problems up at
 20 Oakmulgee. So he mentioned it, and
 21 before he could turn around Oakmulgee
 22 was closed -- 52,000 acres, I think it
 23 was -- to dogs. Talked to Charles

1 been my last time last year. And
 2 Commissioner McMillan is part of the
 3 problem and he don't even know it.

4 I was at a retired teacher's
 5 meeting, and this fellow gets up to give
 6 a speech, Representative McMillan. I'm
 7 sitting back there. Now, I met
 8 Commissioner McMillan here a few times,
 9 I think, with rotary club and other
 10 places. This guy gets up here,
 11 Commissioner -- I mean, Representative
 12 McMillan. He gets to talking. I said I
 13 got to go home and lock the door behind
 14 me. I am crazy as a bat. I talked to
 15 that guy a year ago in Geneva and he was
 16 Commissioner McMillan. I go outside,
 17 get in a conversation, and this fellow
 18 said you might --

19 Is it your twin brother?

20 MR. McMILLAN: Yes, sir.

21 MR. MELTON: He said you might have met my
 22 twin brother, Commissioner McMillan,
 23 John McMillan, and I said thank you,

1 Kelley about two weeks later. Just ran
 2 into him. He said, Wynnton, let me tell
 3 you something. He said the board member
 4 didn't want to close Oakmulgee. He had
 5 about 2,000 acres he wanted to close.
 6 But before he could get through,
 7 52,000 acres was lost to the dog
 8 hunters.

9 So, again, I just implore you to be
 10 careful. These Garmin units are great.
 11 Talking about catching a dog. My
 12 goodness. Some of these boys are so
 13 good with them that they can catch them
 14 two miles away. They can stop them just
 15 like that. It's amazing. I'm not that
 16 good yet. I've got one. I'm trying.
 17 If you got a good friendly banker and
 18 you're a dog hunter, be sure and go
 19 borrow you several thousand dollars and
 20 get you one because they are great.
 21 They are great.

22 In closing, like I said, I've been
 23 here a long time, and I thought I had

1 sir.

2 Thank all of you. You got a hard
 3 job. You're never going to please
 4 everybody all the time. As a lifetime
 5 school administrator, I made folks mad
 6 every day. Some of them are still mad
 7 with me. But I understand in the people
 8 business we got to try to do what's
 9 fair, honest, and best for the most
 10 people for the longest period of time.

11 Thank you much.

12 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Thank you.

13 Any questions for Mr. Melton?

14 MR. HARTZOG: Mr. Melton?

15 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Mr. Hartzog.

16 MR. HARTZOG: Good to see you. We've been
 17 missing you. Anyway, you were the mayor
 18 down there, weren't you?

19 MR. MELTON: I was mayor, yeah. I've had a
 20 lot of opportunity to make folks mad,
 21 yeah.

22 MR. HARTZOG: One comment, though, because you
 23 and I have had some private

1 conversations and all. Your county is
 2 under permit; correct?
 3 MR. MELTON: Yes, we are.
 4 MR. HARTZOG: And haven't you said that has
 5 been a blessing to y'all?
 6 MR. MELTON: It's worked very well for us.
 7 Now, remember, we had no open-permit
 8 hunting land in Geneva County. So it's
 9 really worked fine for us. It's been a
 10 little bit of an aggravation. Early on
 11 there was some that really tried to get
 12 us put out of business, but after a
 13 little while they started getting along
 14 a little better. And it's worked fine
 15 for us, now. I don't say that about
 16 every place, but the permit system in
 17 Geneva County was all right. We had no
 18 open-permit land. It was all private
 19 land. And we just lease from a number
 20 of farmers, and it just works fine for
 21 our little group.
 22 MR. HARTZOG: Thank you.
 23 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Any other questions?

1 dog-hunting complaints -- there were 118
 2 complaints, somewhere around in there.
 3 So I do agree with these guys that are
 4 complaining about dog hunters. If
 5 there's an ethical -- an unethical dog
 6 hunter doing what he's not supposed to
 7 do, we're not for that. And I
 8 understand there's issues all throughout
 9 the state. But it's like I told
 10 Chairman Dobbs the other day, if you
 11 continue to chip away or to take it away
 12 and you eventually wipe it out, you're
 13 going to have a bunch of outlaws for
 14 sure. You're still going to have the
 15 same problem.
 16 You don't have to -- you don't have
 17 to deer hunt to run dogs. You can
 18 coyote hunt. You can rabbit hunt. You
 19 can do tons of hunting. And if the sole
 20 purpose is to -- to cut it out -- if
 21 that is the intent, then the deer
 22 hunter -- you may stop us from deer
 23 hunting, and if you cut -- I will stop.

1 (No response.)
 2 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Mr. Melton, we have great
 3 respect for you as this board. Thank
 4 you. Please come again.
 5 MR. MELTON: Thank you.
 6 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Susan Morrow.
 7 MR. MILLER: Good morning. I'm Lonnie Miller,
 8 the president of the Alabama Dog Hunters
 9 Association. It's hard to come back
 10 behind Mr. Melton. He's a great
 11 speaker. On the other hand, I'm not.
 12 What I want to say is this, that
 13 I've been talking to three or four of
 14 the members on the board, Chuck Sykes
 15 and different folks. What I'm going to
 16 say is this year we had 25 arrests,
 17 which to me is a substantiated
 18 complaint. You guys -- I think I
 19 emailed most of that stuff to you guys.
 20 There were a few of you -- and I think
 21 that Chief Weathers provided the
 22 documentation to you.
 23 So throughout the state the

1 I'm going to run rabbits or I may do
 2 something different.
 3 But what I'm trying to tell you is
 4 this: A permit -- the dog
 5 encroachment -- which I personally
 6 support, publicly support it. My
 7 association does not. However, there
 8 are ways -- us working -- Jeff Martin
 9 and Patrick Cagle, Joey -- we can work
 10 with these landowners.
 11 Don Knight is correct. We need to
 12 talk to the people with the problems.
 13 Shutting it down, closing the door is
 14 not fixing it. That is not going to fix
 15 it. And over the years -- this year
 16 alone we've improved from last year.
 17 Gunter Guy last year stood over in
 18 Guntersville, and he committed to Rick
 19 Baxter, the vice president, and I, if
 20 you guys will improve again or do as
 21 good as you did this year, we will do
 22 something for you. Of course, he's not
 23 here, but I'm relying on you guys to

1 uphold his word. We did our job.

2 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Any questions?

3 MR. MARTIN: I would just like to applaud
4 Lonnie. He's been a pleasure to work
5 with and always takes -- if there's ever
6 a problem, I can call Lonnie, and he
7 jumps right on it. So I appreciate your
8 efforts. I really do.

9 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Any other questions for
10 Mr. Miller?

11 (No response.)

12 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Thank you very much.
13 Donald Nelson.

14 MS. MORROW: Hi. I'm Susan Morrow. I'm glad
15 to see you back, Mr. Jones. You was
16 missed.

17 I'm here to talk to y'all about dog
18 deer hunting. I know that you have
19 these people that come up here and they
20 speak and they talk about how bad it is.
21 All of us are not that way. We have
22 worked very hard policing ourselves, and
23 we work harder every day to keep our

1 I wrote y'all all a letter, and all of
2 that is in there. And he said that the
3 dog hunters association had asked for
4 the complaints of dog hunting to be
5 recorded and that y'all wanted it. But
6 when I asked for a list of complaints --
7 for any other arrests or tickets that
8 had been wrote or complaints, there's
9 not one. You have to fill out a form
10 and go to y'all's legal department to
11 get it.

12 So to me that is profiling and
13 discriminating against the dog deer
14 hunters. We have been doing this, our
15 fathers, our forefathers. George
16 Washington did it. All we want to do is
17 have our little bit of time to do our
18 hunting the way we want to hunt. We're
19 not trying to change the way the others
20 want to hunt, but they're wanting to
21 change the way we hunt. And we have
22 worked very hard, and it seems like
23 y'all are constantly taking from us or

1 dogs on our properties. Most of the
2 clubs -- and when I say most, I'd say
3 85 percent of the clubs now will not let
4 you turn a dog a'loose without a GPS
5 collar on it. And they have people
6 around the areas to catch the dogs.

7 We're doing everything that we can.
8 This is the way we like to hunt. We
9 don't want to be profiled or
10 discriminated against, and it seems that
11 that's what's happening to us. And we
12 would like for y'all to look at all of
13 this. When you look at the arrests, I
14 see one, hunting without a license. If
15 we're not being profiled or
16 discriminated against, how come the
17 hunting arrests shows hunting off a
18 public road? What does that have to do
19 with a dog? Hunting without permission,
20 what does that have to do with a dog?

21 I talked with Mr. Williams, chief
22 enforcer, and he sent me a list of the
23 complaints and all. And y'all have it.

1 adding more restrictions to us. You
2 need to come and visit some of these
3 clubs and see how hard they are working.

4 And I promise you, your hunting
5 license sales have been down. If you do
6 away with the dog hunting, there's going
7 to be a lot of Alabamians that's not
8 going to hunt anymore. Y'all have no
9 way of knowing how many dog hunters you
10 have in this state. If you do, please
11 let me know how you can tell the
12 difference --

13 MS. JONES: Time.

14 MS. MORROW: -- to put the arrests or warnings
15 or tickets that is wrote and put it in a
16 dog hunting -- this is dog deer hunting
17 arrests or warnings. Hunting on private
18 property, if you catch somebody -- we do
19 not like any of these rogue dog hunters
20 doing what they do. But it doesn't
21 matter. There's good and bad in all
22 walks of life. And we, the majority,
23 90 percent of us, are doing our part.

1 And I thank y'all.

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

4 Any questions for Ms. Morrow?

5 Patrick, Mr. Cagle.

6 MR. CAGLE: Ms. Morrow, you know, I hope
7 you'll, you know, take some time to
8 recognize it and -- what that report is.

9 It takes a lot of staff time to prepare
10 that. And there's been a lot of
11 conversations about that to help with
12 the intent to be proactive and try to,
13 you know, figure out where problems are
14 occurring and what's the best way to go
15 about it.

16 You know, so the idea of trying to
17 have a list of all the other arrests to
18 compare, it's extremely burdensome on
19 the staff time. I mean, it took a lot
20 of effort for the enforcement section to
21 go figure out how to do that. And
22 that's what that's about. It's not
23 trying to deny you anything. It takes a

1 get -- the district commissioners get
2 bothered with. There is a solution.

3 I will give you -- I think a
4 situation happened last year that shows
5 the system will work if we use it here.
6 Mr. Miller got a call from Mr. Cagle.
7 And he said, Don, you need to call
8 Mr. Cagle and see what the problem is
9 down in Butler County. I said, yes,
10 sir. And there was a problem. And I
11 put an action plan together, and I
12 shared that in a letter to Pat and
13 Mr. Hartzog about what I was going to do
14 to eliminate the problem that my club
15 was having. One thing was there was an
16 area of land we didn't hunt no more. I
17 said, hey, it's not big enough to cause
18 problems with our neighbors, so we
19 eliminated it.

20 Another thing was, I said, hey,
21 we're going to cut a mile-and-a-half
22 road on some of our property to catch
23 our dogs. I spent three days up there

1 ton of effort for that staff to compile
2 that, and they've got a lot of other
3 work that's going on. So I hope you,
4 you know, will reconsider your --

5 MS. MORROW: I feel we have been profiled and
6 discriminated against. I'm sorry.

7 MR. CAGLE: You're certainly entitled to your
8 opinion.

9 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Thank you. The next speaker
10 is Evin Stephens.

11 MR. NELSON: Thank you, Mr. Chairman and
12 Commissioner and board members, for
13 allowing me to speak. I'm Don Nelson.
14 My family is property owners in Butler
15 County.

16 I am a member of the Alabama Dog
17 Hunters Association. I'm a member of
18 Mr. Miller's organization and
19 Mr. Knight, and I appreciate the work
20 they do in working with you. And what
21 I'd like to do this morning is to
22 encourage you to use them as a conduit
23 to eliminate these problems that y'all

1 in the spring on a tractor and bush hog
2 and bush axe working on that to make the
3 situation better. I said we'll be
4 100 percent of GPSs when we leave, and
5 we were. We eliminated about 40 percent
6 of our dogs, the number that we had from
7 the prior year.

8 We're going toward shock collars.
9 Now, I'm going -- I'm going to tell on
10 myself here in just a moment at the end
11 of this. But they work.

12 But the point is that Mr. Cagle got
13 calls. He talked to Mr. Miller. He
14 contacted me. And we worked on the
15 problem. And the gentleman that was
16 here last year said, hey, we had a
17 problem with them. Not a single dog on
18 my club stepped on his property this
19 past season. That's a success story.

20 And one thing -- and I'll -- we're
21 not perfect, but we're working on it.
22 As the gentleman said early, he's a
23 mayor. I spent 31 years as a mayor and

1 a councilman defending the constitution
2 of this state and upholding that, 30
3 years as a Marine Corps Colonel Retired.

4 What I'm saying is, I don't allow
5 nobody not to do anything right. My
6 grandchildren come. We have wives
7 there. We want it to be a family event.
8 Y'all know that. We appreciate it. But
9 I am encouraging you to use those
10 gentlemen there. And what it does is it
11 eliminates things that are valid and
12 things that aren't valid.

13 Case in point. We was having
14 problems last year with neighbors with a
15 yard dog, which you don't have a problem
16 at all, but it upsets the local stalk
17 hunter. But guess what? My club kind
18 of got blamed for these dogs running.
19 And that's fine. There's no leash law
20 in Butler County. But we made the local
21 conservation people aware of that, hey,
22 these all aren't our dogs.

23 Now, we're not perfect. I'll give

1 all require --

2 MR. NELSON: Yes, sir. And we're going to
3 shock collars, slowly but surely. I've
4 invested -- my wife -- don't nobody tell
5 her this. I've invested over \$3,000 in
6 collars. And I want to go to all shock
7 collars at this point. But it helps.

8 But the thing about what I was
9 saying, if you could utilize these two
10 gentlemen here -- and it's a
11 recommendation -- to help take the
12 burden off you and some of the calls --
13 if you call and say, Don or Lonnie, I
14 got a problem over here, will you please
15 get with the conservation man and go see
16 if you can resolve it, I think that
17 would help. Because every year you see
18 this and I see this. And I enjoy coming
19 and seeing y'all, but I know y'all have
20 got more important things to do.

21 And just to say one thing, folks. I
22 don't carry a shotgun when I dog hunt.
23 I walk through the woods with my dogs

1 you an example. This past season I was
2 hunting. While I was chasing some of my
3 dogs, I shocked my dogs, and they went
4 off my property. And they're walking
5 back down the road on another man's
6 property. I waited at the end of the
7 road, and I got my dogs. I took a
8 tongue lashing. All I could say is,
9 yes, sir, you're right, and be as polite
10 as I could. But my dog did walk down
11 his road to get to my truck.

12 MS. JONES: Time.

13 MR. NELSON: Any questions?

14 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Any questions?

15 Mr. Wolfe.

16 MR. WOLFE: Mr. Nelson, do all of your dogs in
17 your club -- does your club require all
18 the dogs to have collars?

19 MR. NELSON: Yes, sir. A GPS collar, yes,
20 sir. They don't get turned loose
21 because I give them my own personal
22 collar.

23 MR. WOLFE: Okay. So your dogs in your club

1 because I love them. And I kill -- I
2 didn't kill a deer last year. The year
3 before I killed an eight-point buck on
4 my family land. And I reported it.
5 Shot it with a rifle. So I'm out there
6 for the fellowship just like you are.
7 Did I answer your question?

8 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Any other questions from the
9 board?

10 (No response.)

11 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: We know that you make a
12 substantial investment in the dogs and
13 equipment that goes with it. We
14 appreciate that, and we hear exactly
15 what you're saying. Thank you very
16 much.

17 MR. NELSON: It's a pleasure to do that, once
18 again, just to try to keep that
19 privilege y'all allow us to have. Thank
20 you.

21 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Thank you.

22 Next is Avery Bates.

23 MR. STEPHENS: Hi. My name is Evin Stephens.

1 I'll be speaking on behalf of the
 2 Talladega-Clay County chapter of the
 3 Alabama Dog Hunters Association.
 4 We as the dog hunters in the
 5 Talladega National Forest has done what
 6 was asked of us. We have made Jeff
 7 Martin's phone stop ringing with
 8 complaints from residents and private
 9 landowners. This has been done for the
 10 past two consecutive years. We have
 11 went above and beyond what was directly
 12 asked of us.
 13 We have completed many hours of
 14 community service. We have -- we
 15 have -- many other groups and
 16 individuals from the area had multiple
 17 clean-up days. We have cleaned up roads
 18 in the Talladega National Forest,
 19 including the Clay County roads and
 20 public roads and State Highway 281
 21 leading to and from both counties.
 22 Trash and debris are consistently being
 23 dumped in the forest.

1 weekends. It was also suggested by the
 2 attending soldiers and veterans that
 3 they would like to have "Wounded
 4 Warriors" weekend -- a full day to hunt
 5 on that weekend and to make it an annual
 6 event.
 7 We've also -- we'd also like to give
 8 thanks to the forestry service for
 9 opening up Gate 637U. It has benefited
 10 all dog-hunting groups by keeping dogs
 11 contained and off the private land, in
 12 turn, helping to keep down complaints.
 13 We would also like to give a special
 14 thanks to the Talladega County
 15 Commissioner, Jackie Swinford, for a
 16 generous donation of our trash bins for
 17 our clean-up days. It really made a
 18 positive impact. And with all that
 19 being said, we hope that we've helped
 20 you see the impact that the
 21 Talladega-Clay County chapter of the dog
 22 hunters association has made for the
 23 communities. And we would like to be

1 We have also cleared roadways after
 2 storms, including the multiple snow and
 3 ice storms. This lends a helping hand
 4 to the fellow hunters and residents of
 5 the surrounding areas as well as helps
 6 take a load off the forestry service.
 7 We as ethical and upstanding hunters
 8 have planted nine food plots to better
 9 sustain healthy wildlife for the future
 10 generations to come. We have donated
 11 around a total of \$40,000 towards this
 12 act, 25,000 worth of man-hours of
 13 clean-up and clearing roads that has
 14 been filed and another additional
 15 305 hours towards the food plots that
 16 round off to be around \$15,000 in
 17 donations of equipment, rentals, fuel
 18 costs, transportation, all combined to
 19 equal that amount.
 20 We would also like to note the
 21 positive impression and impact we
 22 have -- that we have made during our
 23 youth hunts and "Wounded Warrior"

1 able to have more time back -- time in
 2 the day and more hours -- more days back
 3 to be able to hunt --
 4 MS. JONES: Time.
 5 MR. STEPHENS: Thank y'all.
 6 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Any questions from the board?
 7 Mr. Hartzog.
 8 MR. HARTZOG: Mr. Chairman.
 9 I just want to commend you on -- I
 10 think all of us went over the book
 11 showing your clean-up actions, and I
 12 just want to thank you for helping take
 13 care of the resource.
 14 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Mr. Martin.
 15 MR. MARTIN: You said there's
 16 20-something-thousand dollars that y'all
 17 filed. Does that go back to the
 18 forestry --
 19 MR. STEPHENS: Yes, sir. That goes back to
 20 the forestry service for future
 21 projects, which is at their discretion.
 22 MR. MARTIN: I mean, I just thought that was a
 23 good idea.

1 MR. STEPHENS: You know, it's their discretion
 2 to what they use --
 3 MR. MARTIN: Use it for. Okay. Great job.
 4 Y'all have done good.
 5 MR. STEPHENS: Thank y'all.
 6 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Any other questions?
 7 (No response.)
 8 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Thank you very much.
 9 The next speaker will be Blakeley
 10 Ellis.
 11 MR. BATES: I'm back again. I'm vice
 12 president of the Organized Seafood
 13 Association. My name is Avery Bates.
 14 And next Wednesday -- we've sent out
 15 some invites, but I want to cordially
 16 invite y'all to the "Seafood Bash" that
 17 our Chamber of Commerce, City of Bayou
 18 La Batre, the seafood capital of
 19 Alabama, are putting on over at the RSA.
 20 Chris is going to miss. You're just
 21 going to have to eat twice as much as
 22 Chris. But y'all are invited. It's
 23 good to see you. It's good to see you,

1 with good healthy seafood, whether it's
 2 crab, fish, oysters, or shrimp. We want
 3 to keep doing that. But if they're
 4 silting over our reefs -- some of our
 5 mother reefs up the bay -- they silt
 6 them in with mud.
 7 Generally a year's worth of natural
 8 sedimentation on some of the area is
 9 about this big. An oyster can stand
 10 that and a clam, but if you silt him up
 11 with that much silt, in a few weeks he
 12 can't stand that.
 13 So we see many acres of bottom that
 14 has been destroyed. Fishermen come to
 15 me and they say, Avery, we can't stand
 16 it, to see death to many different
 17 species that we've always worked around.
 18 Some of the fish do not have any habitat
 19 to go back to. The Corps of Engineers
 20 pumps millions of cubic yards of dirt in
 21 open-water dispersement, and they're
 22 going to plan on building a future
 23 island up the bay which would cause

1 Commissioner Dobbs.
 2 But we do have some problems in
 3 Mobile Bay and many other areas with our
 4 seafood. In fact, Ernie's boy won the
 5 science award this year to show some of
 6 his exhibits, and that's where the
 7 president is today.
 8 Working on some siltation problems
 9 we see in some of the projects like
 10 Marsh Island. Some of the fishermen has
 11 come to me -- a number of them -- Chris
 12 has been in some meetings that we had.
 13 The fishermen has brought it to their
 14 attention.
 15 My problem is dealing with the Corps
 16 at public hearings and even at the start
 17 of it, the Corps of Engineers who digs
 18 these channels, widens these channels,
 19 and improves the navigation and they
 20 decrease our navigation. They refused
 21 us to be at some of the meetings as
 22 stakeholders of Mobile Bay and to the
 23 seafood producers that produce y'all

1 total death to some grass beds. Grass
 2 helps marine life.
 3 We have been excluded from even
 4 giving our point of view and the
 5 problems that we see every day. The
 6 fishermen come up and they say we have a
 7 problem with our fishing area. Fish
 8 will not come back to mud when they're
 9 used to coming back to clams and oysters
 10 and productive oxygen levels.
 11 The things that we need to do is to
 12 stop some of this, get Alabama back
 13 where it needs to be. We're endangered
 14 species. Y'all are liking seafood,
 15 home-caught seafood. We want to keep
 16 y'all happy. The oysters that you saw
 17 on this thing just a while ago --
 18 MS. JONES: Time.
 19 MR. BATES: We never had anybody beat the
 20 public reefs until recently. We've put
 21 over 300 people to work.
 22 In Ecclesiastes 16, you'll read in
 23 Verse 49, we must remember Solomon had a

1 problem. One of the problems they had
2 was supporting the needy, helping them.
3 We have a need. The resource has a
4 need. Stop these people from smothering
5 our bottoms to death.

6 You talk about a problem with fish
7 eating all the fish in freshwater. You
8 want to know what's eating all the crabs
9 in saltwater? Redfish. Redfish is
10 killing us. They're even going into
11 crab traps eating the crabs. Redfish --
12 I don't know how they get in there. You
13 talk about jumping carp. You ain't seen
14 nothing when you see millions of pounds
15 of redfish, what happens to juvenile
16 oysters, juvenile crabs, and even big
17 crabs with the massive amounts of
18 redfish we have in the state of Alabama.

19 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Thank you, Avery, very much.
20 We appreciate you coming always. Thank
21 you.

22 Any questions for Avery?
23 (No response.)

1 they're working with them on the
2 evaluation that they're doing on the
3 ship-channel widening and how that could
4 affect any of our resources there.

5 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Any other questions from the
6 board?

7 MR. BATES: You already know, Chris, that
8 these people are not lying when they're
9 going out there and finding dead oysters
10 smothered to death. You've heard it at
11 other meetings we've been in. We know
12 that Mr. Sisk, who navigates the bay,
13 run aground where he's fished for
14 20 years in areas that crabbers can't
15 crab. Fishermen can't fish. Fish will
16 not return to dead silty bottom. Shrimp
17 and everything else is smothered to
18 death in some of these areas. That's a
19 fact.

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

22 The next speaker, Blakeley Ellis.
23 Thank you, Avery.

1 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Thank you very much. We
2 appreciate it.

3 MR. HARTZOG: Mr. Chairman?

4 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Oh, I'm sorry.

5 MR. HARTZOG: Not a question for Mr. Avery,
6 but a question -- has the state taken
7 any position on the siltation and the
8 Corps dumping -- ruining that much
9 habitat?

10 MR. BANNON: The Corps right now -- it's all
11 under review for the ship channel. It's
12 all open to public comment, and that's a
13 continual process. We attend some of
14 the same meetings. So, yeah, we -- it's
15 a monitoring phase right now of their
16 project plans. So we don't -- and
17 there's some other areas we can't
18 comment on.

19 COMMISSIONER BLANKENSHIP: Mr. Hartzog, we do
20 have our biologists that participate on
21 the project implementation committee
22 with the Corps of Engineers in Mobile,
23 and they attend those meetings. And

1 MR. ELLIS: My name is Blakeley Ellis. I'm
2 the executive director for the Coastal
3 Conservation Association of Alabama.
4 Primarily recreational anglers is who
5 I'm here to represent today. And I'm
6 not here to complain but to thank each
7 of y'all for your time and dedication to
8 conserving our resources.

9 Commissioner Blankenship, Chairman
10 Dobbs, Scott Bannon, and Kevin Anson,
11 y'all do a fantastic job. You all do a
12 fantastic job. I especially want to
13 thank -- thank them for all their hard
14 work with the red snapper issue. We
15 100-percent support the efforts to
16 continue moving towards state management
17 of our reef fish. We have 100-percent
18 confidence in our Department of
19 Conservation and the decisions they
20 make. And we're very proud to have them
21 represent us in any of these Gulf
22 Council meetings or in Washington, D.C.
23 And that was the main reason. I

1 wanted to come and thank them for their
2 hard work and thank y'all for supporting
3 them in that effort to gain control of
4 red snapper and have a state-managed
5 fishery. Thank you.

6 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Any questions of Mr. Ellis
7 from the board?

8 (No response.)

9 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Thank you very much.

10 This concludes our public comments
11 section of the meeting, and we're on
12 with the orders of the day.

13 Before we do, I want to roll back
14 one moment and go back to the mentored
15 hunts. What a great experience that was
16 for the people that were there. There
17 are several stories around that. But I
18 want to remind y'all, too, that a number
19 of the employees from the enforcement
20 section, from the hunter ed section,
21 Marisa and others, gave their time on
22 those weekends. They moved vacation
23 times around. They did everything to be

1 talk about another waterfowl project in
2 north Alabama. It's actually a
3 gadwall-banding project that's been
4 going on.

5 Since sometime in the 1930s we've
6 been banding ducks, but only
7 70-something gadwall bands have ever
8 been recorded that had ties to the state
9 of Alabama. So basically we don't know
10 where our gadwalls are coming from.

11 And so through the state, through
12 Keith's leadership and several of the
13 other people working, they're actually
14 banding gadwalls and they're putting GPS
15 collars or tracking devices on these
16 gadwalls. Every four hours that device
17 sends a signal to the satellite. So we
18 know where that duck is every four
19 hours.

20 And so it's been quite fascinating.
21 Obviously, it's very new in the study.
22 We don't know where these ducks are
23 going to go back to, in Canada or the

1 there to participate, to teach the gun
2 safety, to keep everybody who
3 participated -- and it was a wonderful,
4 wonderful time and a very special event
5 for the people that were there and for
6 the folks that gave.

7 So, again, thanks. We are going to
8 keep doing those. I think we're leading
9 the charge in the country providing
10 these opportunities. The SOAs, again,
11 are being met with just open arms.
12 Everybody is very appreciative. Thank
13 you, Patti, for participating as well.

14 So the next item is unfinished
15 business. Is there any unfinished
16 business?

17 Mr. Jones.

18 MR. RAYMOND JONES: This is really not
19 unfinished business, but if you'll allow
20 it, I failed to mention something of
21 importance in my report.

22 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Yes, sir.

23 MR. RAYMOND JONES: Okay. I wanted to also

1 Prairie Pothole Region. We just don't
2 know. We're about to find out.

3 And, also, it's been fascinating to
4 watch what these ducks do. We had the
5 big -- in north Alabama we had a freeze
6 that lasted about 12 days. I would have
7 thought they would have gone down to
8 Ben's place, but they stayed right
9 there. They moved from the potholes out
10 in the ag field to the big water. And
11 that's -- they did not go anywhere. So
12 it's been fascinating to watch.

13 But I wanted everybody to know,
14 again, that that's going on, and it's
15 been a neat project. And, again, we've
16 had more focus on waterfowl-related
17 studies, waterfowl-related efforts in
18 the state than we have in a very long
19 time. Thank you.

20 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Thank you. I'll add to that
21 very quickly that there's so many things
22 that you don't hear about that go on
23 behind the scenes, the turkey trapping,

1 the turkey tagging, the duck trapping,
2 the duck tagging, the deer, all -- and
3 the fish recruitment studies. It's all
4 so very important and vital to this
5 state, and this department does a super
6 job. They touch everybody's lives every
7 day.

8 Back to the mentored hunts again.

9 It was -- that was a wonderful
10 experience, the cooking, the eating. I
11 thank Gerry and Amy again for what they
12 did. We appreciate it.

13 So if there's no unfinished business
14 to be dealt with, let's move on to new
15 business. All the items have previously
16 been reported. We have, I think, some
17 motions that we want to talk about, one
18 in particular, an increase in licensing
19 fees.

20 Is there any new business?

21 MR. HARTZOG: Mr. Chairman?

22 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Mr. Hartzog.

23 MR. HARTZOG: Not a motion at this time but

1 been made. And if the resolutions are
2 not satisfactory, I will propose that we
3 put that county under a permit system.

4 MR. KNIGHT: What county is that, Grady?

5 MR. HARTZOG: Chambers.

6 And I will say this. I haven't
7 worked that much with Lonnie, but over
8 years past -- because Don is in Barbour
9 County, and Don will call me up and --
10 in fact, I helped Don a couple of years
11 ago when he was about to lose his lease,
12 and I called the landowner that I knew
13 the family. And so, you know, we
14 support dog hunting, but you got to do
15 it right.

16 And so, anyway, Don, if you and
17 Lonnie will do that and report back to
18 this committee at the next meeting, and
19 then I'll make a decision whether to put
20 the motion forward or not.

21 MR. KNIGHT: Well, you got one problem, Grady.

22 They're already under the permit system.

23 MR. HARTZOG: Well, why is the permit system

1 possibly a motion for the next meeting.

2 Lonnie and Don, we've had some
3 complaints on State Line dog hunting.
4 You heard the gentleman talk about the
5 harassment he received. And when they
6 go and surround him by three sides and
7 just unload guns for an hour and a half
8 or however long it was and the game
9 warden goes and collects the shells, I
10 mean, that's pretty disrespectful.

11 And trying to follow with Susan and
12 all, we want to support dog hunting.
13 But when you've got a bad apple out
14 there that puts a black eye on all of
15 y'all, we as a board have to address --
16 your freedom ends where the other guy's
17 freedom begins. And so we need to be
18 cooperative.

19 So I challenge you and -- Don and
20 Lonnie to get with this particular club
21 and get with the landowners. And I'd
22 like a report back at the next meeting
23 from y'all as to what resolutions have

1 allowing them to release on 100-acre
2 ground?

3 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: If you would please address
4 the questions to the chair.

5 MR. HARTZOG: Yes, sir.

6 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Same to the audience, please.

7 MR. KNIGHT: You bet you.

8 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: You have the floor,
9 Mr. Hartzog.

10 MR. HARTZOG: Well, under the permit system I
11 thought we set the sizes of the ground
12 they could release on.

13 MR. WEATHERS: Chambers County was one of the
14 first two counties -- I'm Matt Weathers.
15 I'm the chief of enforcement.

16 Chambers was one of the first two
17 counties put under the permit system.
18 It has a separate permit that only
19 applies to Chambers and Coosa. There's
20 no minimum acreage restrictions. And
21 private property owners in Chambers
22 County do not have to obtain a permit.
23 It's only leased lands.

1 MR. HARTZOG: Mr. Chairman, then, would also
 2 the department give us a recommendation
 3 on the size limits and all to go along
 4 with changing Chambers County, then?
 5 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: I suppose they -- yes, they
 6 can accommodate you on that. We can ask
 7 them, yes.
 8 MR. HARTZOG: Thank you.
 9 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Any other questions from the
 10 board?
 11 (No response.)
 12 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: All right. New business.
 13 Any motions that we have going forward?
 14 MR. RAYMOND JONES: Mr. Chairman?
 15 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Yes, Mr. Jones.
 16 MR. RAYMOND JONES: I would like to move that
 17 the Conservation Advisory Board form a
 18 CWD subcommittee to study issues related
 19 to the prevention of CWD and examine
 20 practical ways to engage taxidermists
 21 and deer processors in the effort to
 22 prevent the spread of CWD into Alabama.
 23 The subcommittee will report its

1 2018. The Conservation Advisory Board
 2 chairman will appoint CAB members to
 3 serve on the CWD committee.
 4 Is that correct? Is there a second?
 5 MR. CAGLE: Second.
 6 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Are there any questions, any
 7 discussion?
 8 Mr. Hartzog?
 9 MR. HARTZOG: Mr. Chairman, would it not be a
 10 good idea to put some of the Auburn
 11 people and people like Kevin McKinstry,
 12 who has a major interest, also on that
 13 committee to -- I mean, just your
 14 thought.
 15 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: If you would like to make an
 16 amendment to that or at the next meeting
 17 add that to --
 18 MR. HARTZOG: Well, just -- Chuck, why don't
 19 y'all -- excuse me -- you know, give
 20 that some thought as to whether we need
 21 additional, you know, biologists and
 22 researchers and interested parties on
 23 the committee or not.

1 findings and recommendations for the
 2 consideration of the full CAB board
 3 during the board's second meeting of
 4 2018. The CAB chairman -- you,
 5 Mr. Dobbs -- will appoint the CAB
 6 members to serve on the CWD
 7 subcommittee.
 8 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Okay. We have a motion on
 9 the floor. And I am -- if it's okay
 10 with you, I'm going to read the motion
 11 for you again, and then I'll ask that
 12 there be a second.
 13 I move that the Conservation
 14 Advisory Board, CAB, form a CWD
 15 subcommittee to study issues related to
 16 the prevention of CWD and examine
 17 practical ways to engage taxidermists
 18 and deer processors in the effort to
 19 prevent the spread of CWD into Alabama.
 20 The subcommittee will report its
 21 findings and recommendations for the
 22 consideration of the full Advisory Board
 23 during the board's second meeting of

1 DR. LEMME: Mr. Chairman?
 2 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Dr. Lemme, yes, sir.
 3 DR. LEMME: I think the committee can pull in
 4 resource persons that they want. So I
 5 don't think we really need that.
 6 MR. HARTZOG: Okay.
 7 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Discussion. I would agree
 8 with that, that you can pull and they
 9 can pull in and seek the advice of
 10 anyone.
 11 So we have a second. Any further
 12 discussion?
 13 (No response.)
 14 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Let's have a vote.
 15 All those in favor signify by saying
 16 "aye."
 17 (All board members present respond
 18 "aye.")
 19 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: All those opposed?
 20 (No response.)
 21 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: The "ayes" have it.
 22 So we will form that subcommittee.
 23 And I am prepared by the end of the

1 meeting to announce or ask the gentlemen
2 here to serve on that subcommittee. I
3 would ask Patrick Cagle, I would ask
4 Raymond Jones, and I would ask Brock
5 Jones to lead that committee, to lead
6 that charge, and liaise with the
7 Department of Wildlife and Freshwater
8 Fisheries.

9 Is that acceptable, gentlemen?

10 (All indicate in the affirmative.)

11 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Y'all are in agreement.

12 Thank you very much.

13 Any other motions or new business
14 today?

15 MR. CAGLE: Mr. Chairman, I have a motion.

16 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Yes, Mr. Cagle.

17 MR. CAGLE: I move that the board consider
18 modifying the existing Administrative
19 Rule 220-2-.25 to further disallow the
20 importation of all species Cervidae --
21 deer, moose, elk, caribou -- into the
22 state of Alabama from any state or
23 territory, not just those that have

1 vigilant as possible. And, you know,
2 the difference in Mississippi and
3 Tennessee, it's hard for folks to tell
4 where that deer originated when it's in
5 the back of a truck crossing the border.

6 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: We have a motion, and I am
7 going to reread the motion for clarity.

8 This motion modifies

9 Section 220-2-.25, subsection 2, and
10 further disallows the importation of the
11 species Cervidae -- deer, moose, elk,
12 and caribou, et al., any of that
13 species -- into the state of Alabama
14 from any other state, province,
15 territory, or country, unless said
16 Cervidae has been processed, and
17 processed as defined in reference to the
18 importation of any body parts of the
19 members of the family Cervidae as is in
20 the Regulation 220-2-.25, subsection 3.

21 Processed cervids: Meat from any of the
22 cervids from Section 2 of 220-2-.25 that
23 has been completely deboned, cleaned

1 already been found to be impacted by
2 CWD, unless the Cervidae has been
3 processed.

4 This motion further requests that
5 the definition of processing be modified
6 to define processed for cervid to mean
7 that the meat from any cervid be
8 completely deboned, cleaned skull plates
9 with antlers attached, if no visible
10 brain or spinal tissue is present; raw
11 capes, if no visible brain or spinal
12 tissue is present; upper canine teeth,
13 if no root structure or other soft
14 tissue is present; and finished
15 taxidermy products or tanned hides.

16 To clarify, this just simply means
17 that right now we've had the existing
18 rule that prevents the importation of
19 deer, any species of Cervidae -- other
20 species from states with CWD. This will
21 close the borders to all unless that's
22 been properly processed. With CWD being
23 found in Mississippi, we've got to be as

1 skull plates with antlers attached, if
2 no visible brain or spinal tissue is
3 present; raw capes, if no visible brain
4 or spinal tissue is present; upper
5 canine teeth, if no root structure or
6 other soft tissue is present; and
7 finished taxidermy products or tanned
8 hides.

9 Is that the motion as you understand
10 it?

11 MR. CAGLE: Yes.

12 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: We have a motion on the
13 floor. Is there discussion?

14 Yes, Mr. Commissioner.

15 COMMISSIONER BLANKENSHIP: You just need a
16 second.

17 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: I'm sorry. Is there a
18 second?

19 MR. McMILLAN: Second.

20 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Thank you. We have a second
21 for the motion.

22 Is there any discussion?

23 (No response.)

1 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Being no discussion, let's
2 take a vote.

3 All those in favor of the motion as
4 read, please signify by saying "aye."
5 (All board members present respond
6 "aye.")

7 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: All those not in favor,
8 signify by saying "no."

9 (No response.)

10 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: The "ayes" have it. Thank
11 you.

12 Do we have any other business before
13 the board today? Any other motions?

14 MR. CAGLE: Mr. Chairman, I have another
15 motion.

16 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Very good. Thank you,
17 Mr. Cagle.

18 MR. CAGLE: I move that the Conservation
19 Advisory Board limit anglers fishing on
20 the Sipsey Fork of the Black Warrior
21 River to the use of only one fishing rod
22 per person in an effort to provide equal
23 access to this unique fishery for all

1 MR. HARTZOG: Several years back I was asked
2 to look at this as a possible
3 catch-and-release zone and so on and so
4 forth, and at that time the fisheries
5 department really didn't know. We're
6 presently in an Auburn study which is a
7 year out. The limit is five trout. So
8 if you've got two poles out and catch
9 five trout or one pole out and catch
10 five trout, it's a five-trout limit. If
11 you've got two poles out, he's out of
12 the way quicker probably.

13 So I think we need to table the
14 motion until which time we get the
15 Auburn study. The recommendation of the
16 staff has been no changes on that.
17 Let's wait and get the Auburn study
18 before we look and see because the
19 majority of those fish are not being
20 taken anyway with the amount of trout
21 stocked versus amount taken. And I just
22 think that the counteraction I had with
23 the county commissions from both of

1 resource users. This limit shall extend
2 from the tailwaters below Smith Lake Dam
3 to the Highway 69 bridge.

4 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Okay. We have a motion, and
5 I'm going to read it again for clarity.

6 I move that the Conservation
7 Advisory Board limit anglers fishing on
8 the Sipsey Fork of the Black Warrior
9 River to use -- the use of only one
10 fishing rod per person in an effort to
11 provide equal access to this unique
12 fishery for all resource users. This
13 limit shall extend from the tailwaters
14 below Smith Lake Dam to the Highway 69
15 bridge.

16 Is that the motion as you have read
17 it?

18 MR. CAGLE: Yes, Mr. Chairman.

19 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Is there a second?

20 MR. STIMPSON: Second.

21 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Is there any discussion?

22 MR. HARTZOG: Mr. Chairman?

23 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Yes, Mr. Hartzog.

1 those counties when I was asked to look
2 at it, there's an awful lot of poor
3 families there that rely on those fish
4 for their supper and meals. And so
5 let's wait until the Auburn study is
6 finished before we look at something.

7 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Well, are you making a
8 motion, then, to table the motion?

9 MR. HARTZOG: Table it.

10 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: There's a motion before the
11 board. Is there a second?

12 MR. MARTIN: I'll second.

13 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Second by Mr. Martin.

14 Is there any discussion on that
15 motion?

16 (No response.)

17 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: There's no discussion. So
18 we'll have a vote on that motion.

19 All those in favor of Mr. Hartzog's
20 voiced motion, please signify their
21 acceptance by saying "aye."

22 (All board members except Mr. Cagle
23 respond "aye.")

1 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Those not in favor of
2 Mr. Hartzog's voiced motion, please
3 signify by saying no.

4 MR. CAGLE: No.

5 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: The "ayes" have it. We will
6 table the motion to another date which I
7 will set.

8 Any additional motions?

9 MR. HARTZOG: Mr. Chairman?

10 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Yes, sir.

11 MR. HARTZOG: Not a motion. But I know the
12 state is working on a CWD plan in case
13 CWD does make it. I would ask that when
14 Chuck and the department finishes that
15 plan that we be distributed a copy of
16 that plan, please, sir.

17 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Is that acceptable?

18 MR. SYKES: Absolutely.

19 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Acceptable, Mr. Commissioner?

20 COMMISSIONER BLANKENSHIP: Sure. Most
21 definitely.

22 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Thank you, Mr. Hartzog.
23 Any other motions?

1 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Thank you. There is a motion
2 on the floor.

3 Is there a second?

4 MR. HARTZOG: Second.

5 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Mr. Hartzog, second.

6 Is there any discussion on the
7 motion?

8 (No response.)

9 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: There being no discussion, we
10 will vote.

11 All those in favor of
12 Mr. Barksdale's motion as read, please
13 signify by saying "aye."

14 (All board members present respond
15 "aye.")

16 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Those opposed say "no."

17 (No response.)

18 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Motion carries. Thank you.

19 Any other business before us?

20 (No response.)

21 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Being no other business, are
22 there any announcements, any other
23 discussion with the board?

1 MR. BARKSDALE: Yes, sir. I have one.

2 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Mr. Barksdale.

3 MR. BARKSDALE: This motion is pursuant to
4 Section 9-11-68 and 9-11-69, Code of
5 Alabama, will allow the increase of
6 costs for all licenses and fees
7 associated with the Department of
8 Conservation and Natural Resources for
9 2018 and '19 based on the incremental
10 rise in the Consumer Price Index.

11 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: It's a motion, and now I'm
12 going to reread it for clarity.

13 This motion, pursuant to Section
14 9-11-68 and 9-11-69, Code of Alabama,
15 will allow an increase of the costs for
16 all licenses and fees associated with
17 the Department of Conservation and
18 Natural Resources for 2018 and 2019
19 based on the incremental rise in the
20 Consumer Price Index.

21 Is what I've read how you expect the
22 motion?

23 MR. BARKSDALE: Yes, sir.

1 (No response.)

2 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Thank you very much. So it's
3 up to us to set the date and time of the
4 next meeting. Right now it's my
5 understanding that we're going to be in
6 Tuscaloosa on May the 19th at Northport
7 High School.

8 MR. BROCK JONES: Northridge.

9 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Northridge High School.
10 Northridge High School. May the 19th.
11 So watch the "OutdoorAlabama" app to be
12 sure that that doesn't change.

13 That's everything before this board.
14 Thank you very much for being here.
15 Safe travels home. We're adjourned.

16 (Meeting adjourned at
17 approximately 12:10 p.m.)

REPORTER'S CERTIFICATE

STATE OF ALABAMA:

MONTGOMERY COUNTY:

I, Tracye Sadler Blackwell, Certified Court Reporter and Commissioner for the State of Alabama at Large, do hereby certify that I reported the foregoing proceedings of the Alabama Department of Conservation and Natural Resources Advisory Board Meeting on March 3, 2018.

The foregoing 204 computer-printed pages contain a true and correct transcript of the proceedings held.

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

This 18th day of April 2018.

Tracye Sadler Blackwell
ACCR No. 294
Expiration date: 9-30-2018
Certified Court Reporter
and Commissioner for the State
of Alabama at Large