STATE OF ALABAMA DEPARTMENT OF
CONSERVATION AND NATURAL RESOURCES

ADVISORY BOARD MEETING

State Capitol Auditorium
Montgomery, Alabama

February 11, 2017

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TRANSCRIPT OF PROCEEDINGS

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Proceedings taken before Tracye
Sadler Blackwell, Certified Court Reporter, ACCR
No. 294, and Commissioner for the State of Alabama
at Large, at the State Capitol Auditorium,
Montgomery, Alabama, on Saturday, February 11,
2017, commencing at approximately 9:02 a.m.

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BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT:

Mr. Warren Strickland, Chairman
Mr. N. Gunter Guy, Jr., Commissioner
Dr. Gary Lemme
Mr. Jeff Martin
Mr. Raymond Jones, Jr.
Mr. Grady Hartzog
Mr. Joseph Dobbs, Jr.
Mr. T.J. Bunn, Jr.
Mr. Patrick Cagle
Mr. Ben C. Stimpson, Jr.
Mr. Gary Wolfe

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CHAIRMAN STRICKLAND: The February 11, 2017, Conservation Advisory Board Meeting is now called to order.

I hope every one of you had an enjoyable outdoor experience this past hunting season. The entire board would like to welcome all of you to our State Capitol in Montgomery, Alabama. At this point would everyone, please,
discontinue cell phone usage.

The first order of business is the delivery of the invocation.

Mr. Jones.

MR. JONES: Please bow your heads with me.

Our Heavenly Father, thank you so much for this beautiful day, this time that we have to come together as members and citizens of our great state of Alabama. Help us in the decisions we make. Help us as a board to listen to the individuals in the audience and for us to make wise decisions. Be with all of those that have gathered here today and be with them on their way home. In Jesus' name we pray, Amen.

CHAIRMAN STRICKLAND: Thank you, Mr. Jones.

The next order of business is the introduction of the ex-officio members of the Conservation Advisory Board:

Commissioner Gunter Guy,
Commissioner of the Department of Conservation and Natural Resources.
John McMillan, Commissioner of Department of Agriculture and Industries.

Dr. Gary Lemme, Director of Alabama Cooperative Extension System. Thank you.

Curtis Jones, Deputy Commissioner.

Gentlemen, we appreciate all of your hard work. And, once again, the board wants to recognize the service that you have brought forth over the years.

Next we will have the introduction of the board members. If you would state your congressional district and names. And we'll start from the far right.

T.J.

MR. BUNN: Okay. I'm T.J. Bunn. I represent Congressional District 7.

MR. WOLFE: Gary Wolfe, District 1.

MR. STIMPSON: Ben Stimpson, District 1.

MR. CAGLE: Patrick Cagle, District 2.

MR. JONES: Raymond Jones, District 5.
MR. MARTIN:  Jeff Martin, District 3.
MR. HARTZOG:  Grady Hartzog, District 2.
MR. DOBBS:  Joey Dobbs, District 6.
CHAIRMAN STRICKLAND:  Thank you, gentlemen.

   We certainly appreciate all of your hard
   work and your contribution to preserving
   the natural resources in the state of
   Alabama.

   May the minutes note that Mr. Austin
   Ainsworth is absent today.

   The next order of business is the
   approval of the minutes, actually, from
   the previous two meetings. That's March
   20th, 2016 -- excuse me -- February
   20th, 2016, and March 26th, 2016.

   Are there any corrections or
   addendums to those last two sets of
   minutes? If not, may I have a motion
   for approval.

MR. HARTZOG:  So move.
CHAIRMAN STRICKLAND:  Thank you, Grady.
MR. JONES:  Second.

   Any discussion?
(No response.)

CHAIRMAN STRICKLAND: All in favor?

(All board members present respond "aye.")

CHAIRMAN STRICKLAND: Opposed?

(No response.)

CHAIRMAN STRICKLAND: "Ayes" have it. Motion carries.

The next agenda item is Commissioner Gunter Guy's comments.

Commissioner.

COMMISSIONER GUY: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

And welcome, everyone. We have a really packed house tonight -- today, I should say, and I'm going to try to keep my comments short. But I do have just about three things I would like to say briefly, and then we're going to have a couple of PowerPoints by Director Sykes and Director Blankenship that I think will be informative as we move forward through the agenda.

The three things I would like to
do -- I hope I can keep it at three --
is you'll see some awards down here in
front. And Alabama Interactive is our
web license and Game Check service
provider. I know there was -- I think
there was going to be somebody here from
Alabama Interactive.

There he is. Robert, good to see
you.

I just put a couple of these down
front to note what a great job they do.
And there's going to be some more talk
about the Game Check, which we also do
for Snapper Check. And they help --
they help, you know, put those things
together for us and keep them running.

And I think if anybody really paid
attention and did their Game Check from
this year, you will see that that is one
of the easiest ones that there is in the
country. And, you know, we heard loud
and clear from everybody that, oh, you
know, this is -- there's a lot to do.
It takes about 20 seconds to do the Game Check -- for all of those who did it and I hope there was a lot that did it -- once you get your information downloaded. I don't think you'll find one better anywhere.

And I want to just -- I want to thank Alabama Interactive. They work very hard to get what you want and what we want. So just think about the hard work that goes into that, and I think the results speak for themselves.

Next, it is just about impossible for me to not mention this every time because I think there are a lot of people that just don't understand about our department. And so we have four divisions:

Parks Division. Mr. Greg Lein oversees the Parks Division.

I want to thank everybody that hopefully voted for Constitutional Amendment Number 2. It passed by 80
percent. So I would think that a lot of people in here were a part of making that possible. And I want to thank you on behalf of Greg and myself. He runs an excellent Parks Division with what he has. And, hopefully, in the future we -- he has plans to make it even better than before now that we have secured that funding from now on. And I want to thank Greg and his staff for what he does for our department.

Also, Patti Powell is our Lands Division director. She runs -- in addition to running, I should say -- the first-class Forever Wild program. Her and her staff also oversee the $1.3 billion that we have gotten in oil spill money, which is a whole job into itself, and manages all the state lands, oil and gas and different kinds of things like that. Overwhelming job. They do an excellent job in doing that, Mr. Chairman.
Chris Blankenship, Marine Resources
director, who will speak in a minute,
oversees all of our coastal fisheries.
He has worked -- if anybody cares
about -- and I think a lot do -- our
snapper fisheries -- has just been at
the leading edge of trying to get that
broken federal system fixed. And you
would just not -- you would not believe
what Chris has done as far as -- in that
way. He is a leader for the state of
Alabama, and the state of Alabama is a
leader in making that a better fishery
for the residents of the state of
Alabama.

And then, lastly, Chuck Sykes, who
also oversees all the Wildlife and
Freshwater Fisheries. His section
chiefs do -- and he do a wonderful job.

And I want to particularly commend
Chuck for -- many of y'all saw him this
year. I've never seen a director go out
and attend as many meetings as he did,
go on the road and talk individually to
the hunters in this state about what we
need from you and how this Game Check
was going to work. And I think y'all
have found out that he is a man who
speaks honestly, like the rest of our
division directors do, and tells you
like it is. And that's the way you
should want it.

We're as transparent an agency as I
think we've ever been. So when we tell
you we want to do something, we usually
have a reason that we back it up. And
if you don't believe it, just look at
the statistics.

So the thing that I want to add to
that is -- think of this: What I just
said about all of these division
directors and their staff, they create
an economy in Alabama -- I just got some
recent information.

So tourists and residents spend
approximately $7.5 billion annually,
Mr. Chairman, related to outdoor
recreation in Alabama. That creates
$494 million in tax revenues and
supports approximately $86,000 -- excuse
me -- 86,000 jobs -- supports 86,000
jobs, provides $2 billion in wages, and
has over $3 billion in economic impact,
and no tax dollars do we use to do that.
It's based on what you do to support our
agency and this state. None of your tax
dollars go to what we do.

Now, that is something to be proud
of by the hunters, fishermen, and
outdoor recreation people in this state.
And for our agency who -- you know, in
tough times where people want government
to be efficient, we are not using any
tax dollars to do that.

So, Mr. Chairman, I just want to
thank those people I mentioned. I think
it's worthwhile noting that our division
directors do a phenomenal job and make
it certainly very easy for me and for
this board, I think, to do their business. So I appreciate that.

CHAIRMAN STRICKLAND: Commissioner --

COMMISSIONER GUY: And could I say -- and then, lastly, I do want to say this: I want to thank our board up here. They have shown great leadership and, you know, have been willing to do some things. Change is always difficult. And I want to thank our board for the leadership they showed last year in the Game Check. And I think the proof is in the results that we have gotten, and Chuck is going to talk more about that. And I just want to thank our board for that.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

CHAIRMAN STRICKLAND: Thank you, Commissioner. Those words are well received. You know, we are so fortunate to have such an active, productive wildlife and biology staff and our board members. I think this is my tenth year serving, and
without a doubt, I feel that we have the
most engaged, the most experienced board
members that I have seen since I've been
here during this tenure.

Chuck, you and the division chiefs
have done a wonderful job. The state of
Alabama is very fortunate to have you
guys in that position. Thank you.

COMMISSIONER GUY: So, Mr. Chairman, at this
time if we could recess -- well, we did
have some seats here, but they're gone.

So we just need the board members,
if we can --

(Multiple speakers.)

COMMISSIONER GUY: We've got so many people
today, and we're sorry for everybody
who's standing outside. We're going to
try to make these -- we're going to try
to make these PowerPoint presentations
as quick as possible, but I think we
found they're very informative. So
we're going to start off with

Mr. Blankenship and then be followed by
Mr. Sykes, and then we'll get to your comments. Thank you.

MR. BLANKENSHIP: Again, I'm Chris Blankenship. I'm the director of the Marine Resources Division for the Department of Conservation. I'm going to give a summary of our Alabama Snapper Check program -- this is the third year of the program -- and then, also, a quick overview of the recommended regulation changes that we have.

This slide here is a little bit busy. It has a lot of information that we try and condense from our Snapper Check program, but I highlighted in red the areas that I really wanted you to see. And these are the total landings where we take the reported landings and the discards. And this is the correction factor that we have for the amount of nonreporting that we had and come up with the estimated pounds.

So one thing I do also want to point
out, this is the average weight for the total season, 8.71 pounds. A little over nine pounds was the average-size red snapper that was caught during the federal season. Back in the late 2000s, when the fishery was in trouble, the average-size red snapper was around three pounds. So we've more than tripled the average size of the fish as the fishery has rebuilt, which is part of the problem with the way it's managed federally now, is the fish are larger and so the quota is met sooner because the fishery has recovered and the management on the federal side has not caught up with the increase in the fishery that we have, especially off the coast of Alabama.

I want you to see this number, 206,000. We did have a longer season in state waters this year than we've had in the past, and the state waters were extended out to nine miles thanks to
some work from Senator Shelby and
something he put in the federal omnibus
spending bill. Having those extra state
waters -- those extra six miles of state
waters increased the catch from Alabama
state waters about -- about ten times.
That's -- that was about 20 or 25,000 in
previous years during the state season.

So our total for Alabama is a little
over 1.5 million pounds from the federal
and state seasons in 2016.

There are multiple methods where
people can report the red snapper catch.
They have an app. We have paper reports
at six of our select -- or seven of our
select boat ramps now on the coast.
They can do it online through the
Outdoor Alabama -- or through the
phone -- touch-tone phone.

As you can see, only eight percent
of the people used the phone. And we
had a very high rate of incorrect
reporting using the touch-tone phone,
but it -- so we have been successful at getting the ones that do report to either use the app or online. That's -- about 80 percent of the reports are coming in electronically.

This is just a slide I put up a couple of years ago, and we keep looking at this. It just shows the number of reports by county between the charter boats and the private fishermen.

As you can see, Baldwin County and Orange Beach have a -- it is the largest port -- the highest number of charter vessels in any one port in the Gulf is in Orange Beach, Alabama. So that's a big part of the fishery is in Baldwin County. So we're using this information to transition some of our staff from Baldwin County to Mobile County over time through attrition because we see that we're needing more officers, more personnel in Baldwin County as the fishery continues to grow.
So this is a quick slide for the comparison for the last three years. So you can see we estimated one-and-a-half million pounds of red snapper landed. The federal government estimates that almost 2.8 million pounds of red snapper were landed in Alabama in 2016. And that does not include the months of November and December, which there will be very, very few landings during that month. But you can see it. It is a big difference. And it follows the pattern. Since we started Snapper Check in 2014, there's the difference and the difference last year and 2015.

So the federal system overestimated 81 percent in 2014, 68 percent in 2015, and then 79 percent in 2016. It's very consistent how much they have overestimated the catch for Alabama, which when you're managing fisheries against a quota means that the fishery closes sooner because -- than it would
have if the landings information was correct.

I didn't put up all the boring confidence intervals and statistical information, but this -- we are much more confident in our 1.5 million pounds when you look at it statistically than their 2.7 million pounds. You know, we feel like ours is accurate, is more correct.

Just moving forward, we plan to continue the same program in 2017, continue the Snapper Check. One thing that we have added in 2016 and it has expanded for 2017 is there was a pilot program that National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, CLS America, and a couple of other groups were looking to implement where they would do electronic reporting for charter boats. They would have like an electronic logbook. So Alabama partnered with those groups since we had the largest charter fleet in any one
place, like I said, in Orange Beach. And so we have almost a hundred percent of our vessels that have been outfitted with these -- for free with these VMS systems and electronic reporting system. They're about $3100 apiece. And so through this pilot program they install these on the charter vessels.

And so now -- when I showed you that number of the ones that were reporting by app, some -- a lot of those came from this charter program that feeds directly into our system. So as a help to the fishermen, we're getting accurate information, and we've shown that that type of system will work. So, again, we're, you know, kind of cutting edge here in Alabama to show the rest of the Gulf what will work and give us better reporting numbers.

Our compliance was not nearly as high as I would like for it to be. In 2016, from the private vessels we
estimate about 25 percent of the people reported accurately and on time, within the time frame when they were supposed to, but about 70 percent of the charter vessels. So that is a big part of our push for 2017 will be to increase that compliance and make this program even better.

The whole purpose for doing this Alabama Snapper Check program was to show that the federal government is overestimating the landings for Alabama. We needed three years' worth of data to really have that program certified as the appropriate method for landings calculations for our state. We finished our third year in 2016. We've been diligently working with National Marine Fisheries Service for 2017 to have them use our program as what they will use to count the landings for Alabama and what they will use pre-season to estimate what the landings will be for Alabama to set
the season length.

So this should be granted imminently. We're very -- I had hoped we would have it before we came to this meeting today and I could tell you it was a success. But with the transition in the new administration, things have slowed down, but I think within the next week or two we will have that word and they'll -- so when they estimate the season length for 2017, they'll use our numbers. I won't say that the season will be longer than nine days in 2017, but it will be longer than it would have been if they didn't use our numbers.

We expect the nine-mile jurisdiction to remain for 2017. That is in -- currently we're in a continuing resolution for the 2016 budget where that -- that granted us the nine miles was included. If they pass a 2017 budget -- that is in the draft 2017 budget. So we expect to keep our nine
miles.

Just real quickly -- I won't go into all the details. But Senator Shelby also included $10 million in the budget last year to change the way the federal government does the stock assessment for red snapper to put together a new program to estimate the population of red snapper in the Gulf different from what they've been doing in the past. They put out an RFP, and they had these universities and consortia to provide a method of how to do this -- do this work Gulfwide.

I am happy to report that of the five valid proposals that were put forth, three of them mirrored exactly what we're doing in Alabama to estimate the red snapper population. So I think that was -- that says a lot about the work that we're doing cooperatively in the division and with the University of South Alabama and Auburn University to
estimate the populations of the red
snapper in the reef zones off of
Alabama.

So they're trying to take the
methods and the way that we're doing
things here and extrapolate that out
Gulfwide to get a Gulfwide estimate. So
I was very -- very happy to see that
when you get all the smartest minds in
the United States together to try and
figure out how to count red snapper,
they want to do it the way we do it here
in Alabama. We must not be that
backwards here.

Last year the red snapper season was
open from Memorial Day weekend through
the month of July. That seemed to be
very successful. People were happy with
that. They could fish the Memorial Day
weekend, all through the summer in June
and July when the kids are out of
school. We're still discussing what the
season should be for 2017, but I did
receive a lot of positive feedback from
fishermen last year.

And one thing that we're proposing
this year is to eliminate the phone
method for reporting in 2017. You saw
that only eight percent of the people
used the phone app to report -- or used
the touch-tone telephone method to
report, and our error -- our error rate
with those was extremely high. And so
we think that we can move forward with
just the app and having the paper forms
available at those seven select boat
ramps and still be able to get all the
information we need.

That's all about the Snapper Check
program. We just have a few slides with
a few regulations that we are proposing.

One would be to establish a bait
area near Fort Morgan. The legislature
changed the way we manage shrimp in
2016. We closed all of Mobile Bay for
the month of May, and then we reopened
Mobile Bay on June 1st. So for the month of May there is no place for people -- for smaller boats or for the live-bait catchers to catch shrimp for people that fish. So we propose to just create this one bait area at Fort Morgan.

We have other bait areas around Mobile Bay, but there was nothing in the Fort Morgan peninsula for people to be able to catch bait. So this would only be open during that one month when those waters open for commercial shrimping. And recreational shrimping, this would just be open like it -- like everything else, just -- this is something we're trying to do to help the fishermen and help the community.

Commercial crab regulations: It's time to -- our crab landings were down -- have been down substantially. The average crab landings in the late 2000s was about 2.3 million pounds a
year. The average for the last five
years has been about 1.4 million pounds.
This year was a better year than we've
had in the past, but our crab fishery is
not where it needs to be.

So we are proposing making a few
changes to the crab reg as a
precautionary measure to increase the
production of blue crabs. One would be
to return egg-bearing crabs to the
water, you know, where they have -- what
they call sponge crabs. If you've ever
cought a crab and it's got what looks
like a sponge on its belly, those are --
those are eggs. And so we would require
the commercial crabbers to throw those
back.

And then most of the -- all of the
other states require escape rings, which
are small rings that are put in the trap
so that undersized crabs can get back
out of the crab traps and not -- not be
captured. So we feel like by throwing
back the egg-bearing crabs and releasing
the juvenile crabs, that this will
increase crab production in the future.
So we're interested in trying that.

Louisiana is having the same
problems there, but they -- one thing
that they did in Louisiana was implement
a 30-day closure where nobody can crab
in the state of Louisiana from February
20th through March 20th. So we want to
try and do some of these things
preemptively before we get to that
situation in Alabama where we have to
have time where people just can't -- the
commercial fishermen just can't work.

And then there are some crab traps
that get lost. We have a derelict crab
trap program where we pick up traps that
are -- that people -- the floats get cut
off or they get lost. So in order for
those ghost-fishing crab traps to no
longer kill crabs if they're lost, we
are going to require a biodegradable
panel that would be on the side of the
trap that if the trap gets lost, after
30 days or 45 days that panel falls off
and any crabs that are in -- that get in
the trap can get back out.

And then we're proposing opening an
area in northern Mobile Bay that had
been closed to crabbing. It was a
channel. The channel is being taken out
by the Lake Forest Yacht Club. And so
we wouldn't allow them to crab in the
channel because it was a marked channel,
but now that that channel is being taken
out, this would open up about another
half a square mile of waters for
crabbing.

One of the fastest-growing segments
of the seafood industry is off-bottom
oyster aquaculture. I don't know if any
of you have had those at restaurants or
seen those or seen some articles about
that, but it's an extremely productive
industry that's taken off in south
Mobile County.

One of the ways that they -- we have always required oysters to be harvested and placed in sacks -- burlap sacks. That is not very efficient for the oyster aquaculture industry. They would like to have other types of containers, plastic containers, things that they can put the oysters in and stack differently and use for shipment.

So in trying to work with that industry as it grows, we're trying to modify our regulations to make it -- make those guys where they can be efficient and still meet our requirements for having certain size containers or sacks of oysters and to be able to tag those so we know where they came from in case people -- so in case people get sick eating an oyster or something, we'll be able to track those back.

So this is -- to make this one
change to add containers, we have to change about five or six regulations. But that's all the change is, is just to make -- to work -- we're working with the industry to help this industry grow, to make them more efficient and put people to work in Alabama. We don't want to be an impediment to people working if it's -- if we could do something that would help them.

Just a couple of other quick things.
The king mackerel recreational limit is increasing to three per person from two. That's a success story. Our king mackerel fishery is rebuilt, and it's just increasing the recreational limit.

And then there was a loophole in the regulations. If people went out in federal waters and caught certain species that didn't have a federal size limit or federal creel limit, they could bring those back into Alabama in any size or any number that they wanted if
they came from federal waters. So we would like to close that loophole and just say if they're fishing in federal waters and they left from Alabama that they can only bring back fish to Alabama that meets our size and creel limits. A very -- a minor change and it really just affects those three species right now: tripletail, sheepshead, and pompano.

And then we did want to clarify who can sell live bait. That's just a -- just another clarification in the regulation.

Any questions?

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Is that the egg sac?
COMMISSIONER GUY: Can we just save those, Chris, until after we get --
MR. BLANKENSHIP: Okay.

No. That's actually a male crab. I didn't have a good female crab picture with an egg -- an egg sac. That would have been -- that would have been much
nicer.

   And I would be remiss if I didn't stand up here and tell you that I think it would be a good idea if you eat seafood. Get this many group of people in a room and I ought to be able to tell you that seafood is good for you and healthy. And our commercial fishermen work really hard to provide this, and they would appreciate it if you'd eat a little bit more of it. You can go to "EatAlabamaSeafood.com" and find recipes or where you can find it. Thank you.

   MR. SYKES: If y'all don't mind, I'm going to do it from up here. Everybody doesn't love me like they do Chris. I want a podium in between me and the crowd before the bullets start flying.

   Last year when I came to the board, I showed you this map where we were one of three states that did not have some type of mandatory reporting system. And we went over the voluntary harvest
reporting. We had less than 20,000 deer reported during the first year, 16,000 the second year, 15,000 the third year. Doesn't that map look better?

We are one of two now. And just a little FYI. Mississippi is right behind us. Florida is going to be the last man standing when it comes to a mandatory reporting system.

As of February the 7th, we have had 78,157 deer reported in Game Check. That's a little bit more than the 15,000 that we had last year. Voluntary didn't work. I think we all knew that.

It's a little over 81,000 right now. There will probably be more people hunting today and tomorrow that hunted the past two days. So we may be up to about 85,000 by that time. So I'm -- look, I was cautiously optimistic that people were going to buy into it. It's still not a hundred percent, but it's a lot better than where we were.
Out of that 78,000 deer -- I'm going
to pose it to the board. I've got one
question for y'all: What's the
buck-to-doe ratio on that? Is it one to
one bucks to does? Two to one? Three
to one?

Four to one I heard.

Guess what, more bucks are reported
than does so far. Is that the way it
is, or are we killing more bucks than
does? Are people not reporting does and
reporting bucks?

I don't know. Time will tell. But
that was something that nobody that I've
asked that question has been able to get
it. Everybody assumes it's two to one
or three to one bucks to does.
And we had nine turkeys reported. I
don't know why.

Just a little tidbit of info for
you. Our staff has conducted some
informal surveys. We were betting
before all of this started that we would
have 20 to 25 percent compliance. It's looking like it's better than that. It's about 35. After the end of turkey season, we're going to do some scientific studies on it, but right now the staff members that have been conducting this, I'll bet that their data is going to show the same thing that a scientific data report is going to show.

So we're betting on 35 percent right now. I think Georgia had about 50 percent this year on theirs. 35 percent for Alabama for the first year, I think, is a monumental success. So that would be -- estimated bucks would be a little over 22,000 (sic), estimated does a little over a hundred. So we're rocking on about two-and-a-quarter. That's not too bad for our first year.

Unlike Chris, who had 80 percent reporting over online and app, we only had 46 percent. And I thought we beat
that horse pretty good in all the seminars that we did and magazine articles and newspaper articles. But we've still got 30 percent reporting their harvest through telephone.

Chris, please keep me updated on knocking that out in 2017. I would love to be right there behind you.

24 percent chose to report their harvest through the website. So we've basically got 70 percent that's doing it online. And, again, just like with Chris, the data that's coming in on the phone is substandard from what we get online and through the app.

And I do want to thank Robert and everybody with AI for doing the app. That was -- that was a huge success.

The mail survey that we've been using for the past 50 years has estimated approximately 295,000 deer were killed last year. As you know, voluntary Game Check said we killed
about 15,000. So we're going to fall somewhere in between the way it's looking right now.

Here are some really interesting facts as we've started to tease out some of this data.

Dallas County passed Jackson County last week for the first time in the four years that we did three-year voluntary and one-year mandatory. Jackson County was always number one. And as you see, Jackson County is sort of -- Dallas County is one now, but if you look on the mail survey results, it's number two. It's still good. But if you look at the difference in the blue line and the red line on bucks to does, the mail survey is estimating about three to one bucks to does. Same thing with Macon County.

Macon County is number one on the mail survey. You look at it over here on Game Check numbers. It's middle of
the road. Jackson County, which has
been number one up until last week for
reporting, if you look at the mail
survey, it is way toward the middle of
the pack.

So although overall numbers may be
close right now, it's the little things,
the buck-to-doe ratios, which counties
are doing what, which is what we've been
talking about the whole time. We need
much more specific information where our
guys in the field can make
recommendations and we can do the best
job that we possibly can.

All of this is preliminary. We're
not going to do anything one year with a
knee-jerk reaction, but this is the kind
of data that we're going to be looking
at. And, y'all, this is stuff that you
can go online. Y'all can look at it
just like we can. Go to the
"OutdoorAlabama" website. You can see
all of this data right there.
Some changes -- and the title is major changes, but really, compared to the past couple of years, these are minor changes for 2017-18.

Turkey season boundaries for a part of Geneva County that was previously closed are going to be opened up for a limited season.

The feral swine season that we did last year -- Joey and Jessica and members of the hog dog hunters association have been asking for years to be able to hunt at night with their dogs without having a permit during those summer months when it's hot. We allowed that last year, but there was a lot of confusion over whether you could use guns or not.

There is no confusion now. If you want to use a gun, get a permit, just like always, and you can use a gun. I don't think that's going to be a problem with anybody, but we wanted to spell it
out where there weren't any confusion this year.

U.S. Forest Service may have some restrictions a little bit further than what we have as far as small game. Some of the areas are looking at closing fox squirrel season or limiting the fox squirrel harvest. But it's their property. They can make restrictions more than we do. So we're just giving a heads-up that that may happen.

Pintail limit was reduced from two to one. That's not going to affect us in Choctaw County too much.

A segment was added to the regular goose season from October 7th to the 23rd in order to fully utilize the new federal framework.

And despite what's going around, the rumors on social media and everywhere else, no changes have been made for Swan Creek WMA at the present time. A survey by our biologists on the area asked
hunters some options of what they would like. As with most things, a little information can get twisted and turned. The governor has been getting calls. We've been getting calls that five people were going to vote to close Swan Creek. It's not going to happen. Y'all can settle down. Nothing is changing on Swan Creek right now.

The deer zone map, it worked last year. No changes other than calendar days.

At the request of the board, they have asked us to revise our depredation permits for deer, and we've done that. The permits will no longer be handled by our law enforcement section. They will be handled by our wildlife section, namely our technical assistance biologists. They will be issued separately from hog and coyote depredation permits.

There will be property inspections
to verify that there is damage. Maps of these areas will be given to the local CEOs where everybody knows you have a permit. The number of deer taken, the day and disposition of the carcass will be recorded on a data sheet. And in order to renew your permit, you're going to have to fill out these data sheets.

If hunters need to report their deer harvest, deer depredation permits are going to need to report their deer harvest. A dead deer is a dead deer whether it's killed in the summer on a soybean field or on a food plot in January. We need to know those numbers where we can do our job. No permits will be issued during the regularly scheduled deer season.

Some revised regulations: In order to close a loophole in 220-2-.142, the turtle dealer or turtle farmer regulation, verbiage was added to prohibit propagation of nonindigenous
turtles.

Standards of care for wildlife held for public exhibit needs to be amended to require them to also obtain a USDA permit in order to have a permit from us.

Organized field trial regulation limited to three free field trials per year per organization with an administrative fee of $50 per permit.

Nongame species reg was amended to require a permit before you can sell or offer to sell anything with a diamondback rattlesnack. In y'all's packet there's a little list of why, and basically U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is looking at the diamondback rattlesnake. It is a species of concern here. We want to get ahead of it.

For areas like the Opp Rattlesnake Rodeo, they can still get a permit from the Commissioner to obtain snakes for that. We're not eliminating it. All
we're doing is trying to get ahead of
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service listing
it where it's going to be a problem for
us as well as landowners.

And then the dog deer hunting reg,
y'all tried it last year. I'm sure
y'all are going to hear a lot of comment
on this coming up in the public section.

Look, we worked extremely well with
the Alabama Dog Hunters Association this
year, made monumental strides in
reducing landowner conflicts with dog
hunters. I know Lonnie does not
represent everybody. That's a shame
because we're working well.

Talladega went down to very, very,
very few complaints this year. Jeff had
to check and make sure his phone was
still working.

We worked with Lonnie and that group
to do the first ever dog hunt on the new
Geneva WMA. It went off without a
hitch. There was 250, 275 people there.
Used whistle-broke dogs. They stayed on the property. Everybody had a good time.

Y'all, it can be done. But I think that reg with our staff, that is the answer to the dog-hunting issue. Keep your dog on your property and have fun. When it crosses the line and impacts my ability to enjoy my property, that's where it's a problem.

The permit system. Look at Chilton County. A couple of people lost the right for that whole county. With this regulation, it places the burden on the individual, not the club and not the county. It promotes those of you that are doing it right and protects it. I don't know any other way to explain it better than that. The regulation puts the burden on the individual with the dog, not the club and not the county.

Last year the board changed some wording in the chronic wasting -- in the
Regulation 220-2a-.25 to prohibit bringing in certain parts of deer carcasses that came in from out of state that had CWD. 36 other states have this similar reg. It basically says you can't bring any spinal column, brain tissue -- anything that can carry that disease. Deboned meat, hides, and cleaned skull plate can come back.

Y'all, we're trying to do everything we can to keep this disease out of Alabama. This was just another step.

Our department is testing approximately 500 hunter-harvested, roadkill, herd health collection, deer depredation permit deer every year. The game breeders are testing approximately 500 deer every year. We're all working together to try to make sure this disease does not come to Alabama. So it is -- it's imperative that the hunters do their part as well and not go out of state, shoot a deer, and bring the whole
thing back.

Those are the states that are impacted with CWD. That map is on the "OutdoorAlabama" website. You can look at it. If you hunt in one of those states in that light color, please bone your deer out, cape it out, go hunt and have a good time, but then when you come back home, bring that deboned meat.

I was asked by several of our board members to give them what had been done with our law enforcement section this year. And I just picked a handful.

Y'all can remember last year I had a slide that showed that 3.7 percent of Alabama residents bought a hunting license last year. I'm happy to report we're up, 3.8. It's up from 178,000 to 182,000. So we're making progress. But, y'all, that's still not enough.

I had Acting Chief Lewis pull some numbers for me. Last year during the whole season we had written 375
citations for hunting without a license. If people don't buy a license, we don't have money to hire law enforcement officers. If we don't have law enforcement officers, people don't buy a license for fear of not getting checked. It's a vicious cycle.

We had saved money. We put ten more officers in the field this year. As of last week, we have contacted 475 people that were hunting without a license. So just by the addition of ten officers, in half the time more than a hundred people were ticketed for not hunting with a license.

Y'all, they're stealing from you, not from me. That's the biggest issue we have in this state is people hunting without buying a license, and the only way we can stop that is sell more licenses where we can hire more officers. It's a vicious cycle.

Y'all, please, tell your friends,
tell your family, purchase a hunting license. As the Commissioner said earlier, we receive no general fund money. The only way we can provide services to you is by people buying hunting licenses.

All right. I'll get off my soapbox on that.

We had two arrests and multiple warnings for bringing dead deer into the state from CWD-positive states. The regulation worked. We had people that brought deer in from Illinois and are still working on several others right now.

We had 16 arrests for illegal sale, transportation, release, or possession of live feral swine. That was an 18-month case that covered eight or nine counties in three states. Y'all, we've got enough hogs. We don't need to catch them and take them somewhere else and turn them loose.
Two arrests were made for illegal sale of wildlife. I'm sure most of y'all in this room have seen pictures of that piebald deer that was taken in Washington County. Tremendous trophy. It's now in our possession because it was illegally sold.

32 arrests, more than 40 warnings for failure to maintain accurate inventory, report transportation of white-tailed deer, and operating without the proper game breeder license. One arrest for illegal transportation of live white-tailed deer into the state of Alabama.

Y'all, we -- we don't want CWD here. As hunters and everybody else, we have got to come together and stop bringing things into the state that could cause us a problem. That carcass importation reg is important. If y'all see anything that looks suspicious, a dead deer or live deer, please let your local officer
know so we can check.

And that's it. And I'll entertain
questions from the board.

CHAIRMAN STRICKLAND: Are there any questions
from the board members that you would
like to direct to Chris or Chuck in
regards to --

(Brief interruption by the court
reporter.)

CHAIRMAN STRICKLAND: Attention. We're back
in session here.

Dr. Lemme, if you'd like to address
Chris or Chuck in regards to questions.

DR. LEMME: Chris, I had a quick question on
the biodegradable panels on the crab
traps. How often do they have to be
replaced on an active trap if it's not
lost?

MR. BLANKENSHIP: I think they -- it depends
on the trap and how -- where they use
them and how they powerwash their traps.
But I think that most of them would have
to be replaced probably annually to put
those -- to restring those or do some
maintenance on those traps, which they
do that anyway. They usually have to do
a lot of maintenance on their traps
throughout the year. And it is one more
thing that they'll have to do.

MR. HARTZOG: Chris, on the nine-mile limit --
of course, it's -- Shelby attached it to
the budget bill. Hasn't some states
already gotten permanent nine-mile, and
what's our chances of getting a
permanent nine-mile?

MR. BLANKENSHIP: The states of Florida and
Texas have nine miles, and that was
done, really, when they came back into
the Union after the Civil War. Alabama,
Mississippi, and Louisiana have three
miles. And so we're working with
Senator Shelby to have something that's
put in there more permanently than just
year to year in the budget. And so if
the '17 budget passes, we think that
we'll be in good shape to have that nine
miles from then on.

And then we're also -- you know, a new congress started in January. So any bill -- we had several bills that were making their way through congress that expired in December. So now we're having those reintroduced. Senator Shelby and then Congressman Byrne from Alabama have bills that would make that nine miles permanent, and we're trying to work those through the -- through congress.

MR. DOBBS: Mr. Chairman?

CHAIRMAN STRICKLAND: Yes.

MR. DOBBS: Question for -- for the crab traps, you spoke about everything being commercial. Will those rules and regs apply to recreational crab traps and crab trappers?

MR. BLANKENSHIP: Yes. Yes. I have Major Scott Bannon and our Chief Biologist Kevin Anson here as well.

CHAIRMAN STRICKLAND: Are there any further
questions from the board?

(No response.)

CHAIRMAN STRICKLAND: At this time we would
like to acknowledge the presence of the
press. We certainly appreciate you-all
being here today.

The next order of business is the
public hearing.

COMMISSIONER GUY: I'm sorry. I don't know if
they knew that Chuck -- y'all can ask
questions of Chuck, too.

CHAIRMAN STRICKLAND: I'm sorry.

COMMISSIONER GUY: That's all right.

MR. JONES: Patrick had a question.

CHAIRMAN STRICKLAND: You have the floor.

MR. CAGLE: Sorry. This question is for
Chris.

I know that your department has been
making major investments and putting a
lot of effort into rebuilding reefs and
creating new ones. Can you give us a
quick overview of some of y'all's more
recent efforts and what's -- what you
have planned in the future?

MR. BLANKENSHIP: Sure. We received about
12-and-a-half-million dollars from the
National Fish and Wildlife Foundation
for artificial reef creation on a
three-year program. We just refurbished
about $2.1 million worth of our inshore
reefs that have been built over the last
20, 25 years. We put new material on
those reefs. We just built a new
nine-acre reef inshore off of Point
Clear just out from the Grand Hotel.

Just this week we partnered with CCA
on a memorial reef for Bernie Heggeman.
He was a fishermen that died a couple of
years ago, drowned. And we had a -- CCA
and the Mobile Big Game Fishing Club and
others wanted to do a reef in his
memorial. So they raised $137,000 and
provided that to us, and we used some
matching funds. And we just built a
reef this week just south of Bayou La
Batre on a site where they used to have
a gas rig that was one of his favorite places to fish. And then we'll be starting next week on a new reef in Pelican Bay just south of Dauphin Island.

So those are our inshore sites. We plan to do about another couple of million dollars' worth of refurbishment on those -- on new inshore reefs next year.

We're building reefs offshore. We're building some 25-foot-tall pyramid reefs. We just sank -- we did a great partnership with Alabama Power Company and Cooper Marine and sank a 180-foot barge with two huge boilers from Alabama Power Company earlier this fall. That was a great partnership that didn't cost the state any money. It was all donated material from those two companies. We were excited to work with them on that.

We're opening bids in the next couple of weeks to sink two ships.
We're working to sink two large --
really large vessels offshore. And
those are out for bid now. We'll see
what kind of proposals we get from
different companies.

So we -- we have a lot of artificial
reef work going on offshore and inshore.
And we're trying to get a new -- new
reef zones permitted between six and
nine miles offshore. And as soon as we
get those permitted, we have the money
set aside to build 600 artificial reefs
within that six- to nine-mile range.

We're working with the Corps of
Engineers. They're holding us up on
going our permits. As soon as we get
that permit, we're ready to go. We have
the money set aside. We have the bid
documents ready to put out. All we need
is just a permit from the Corps, and
we'll be ready to build 600 more reefs
in that six- to nine-mile reef zone.

MR. CAGLE: Thank you.
CHAIRMAN STRICKLAND: You have the floor, Mr. Jones.

MR. JONES: I'm going to ask Chuck so he doesn't feel -- I mean, we've got to have equal time here.

Chuck, seriously, how many meetings did you attend this year on behalf of the Game Check system and in how many counties? Do you know that information?

MR. SYKES: Our staff conducted approximately 50 in 37 or 38 counties, and I did 44 of them.

MR. JONES: Thank you very much. We really appreciate that.

CHAIRMAN STRICKLAND: And, Chuck, one other question.

There was about 33-percent participation in Game Check?

MR. SYKES: Let's go 35. We'll be optimistic.

CHAIRMAN STRICKLAND: So what can we do to increase participation in Game Check? That's such valuable information that we're getting from our hunters out
there.

MR. SYKES: It's just going to take time.

Honestly, that's all I think. We -- we beat the bushes pretty hard last year. We're not going to quit. We're going to still continue to keep that on, educating people. And I think more people tried it, saw that it worked. We didn't send a drone in to give them a ticket when they got on their phone and reported it. So a lot of the conspiracy theories are fading away right now.

I just think it's going to take time. Honestly, 35 percent I thought was pretty good for our first year, and I think next year we'll bump on up.

CHAIRMAN STRICKLAND: Excellent job.

Commissioner.

COMMISSIONER GUY: Mr. Chairman, let me just add to that because Chuck may not want to say it. But just like the three-buck limit, Game Check -- we've been kind of discretionary. Officers have used a lot
of discretion about that and been pretty lenient, and they're going to start enforcing it. And so just be prepared.

We see that it's not that hard to do. Now you don't even have to carry that paper around. All of that is contained on the app. And our officers will start enforcing it if you're not Game-Checking the deer just like they do when you don't have a hunting license. That's the way they do it in every other state in the country, and ours is going to be the same. People want three-buck limits. We've got to enforce it. So I hate to add that bad news, but that's the way it's going to be.

CHAIRMAN STRICKLAND: Well, it's just such important data that we have to have to manage our resources. We start to, you know, see the results of the regulations that we put in place, buck restriction, Game Check, harvest limits. All those really impact the quality of deer
hunting that we have here in the state of Alabama.

Grady.

MR. HARTZOG: I've said it to Chuck. I had a question thrown at me concerning one of the proposed changes that he posted up there on the Geneva County change. And I reminded him of the situation where several years back when we had just a weekend-long alligator hunt out in -- on Lake Eufaula and one of the weekends a hurricane came through and nobody really killed anything.

But April the 21st through the 25th in Geneva, I asked Chuck if he would get with his biologists and see, you know, if that's a bad weekend when the tornadoes are coming through and the hunters don't really get it, then possibly look at the possibility of two weekends instead of one weekend. So that's the only question I have for Chuck, if he would talk to his staff and
bring it before the next meeting.

CHAIRMAN STRICKLAND: Thank you, Grady.

Any other questions from the board?

MR. DOBBS: Director Sykes, what will be --
what can we as a board do and what are
you doing and staff doing to alert or
bring about more awareness for chronic
wasting?

I've read some articles, and I know
that our members and a lot of people are
very concerned about it. The new cases
in Wisconsin and Michigan, if you could
speak about those, if you're aware, and
Arkansas, an almost neighboring state.

What are we going to do?

MR. SYKES: Y'all took a big step last year
with improving the language in the
carcass import reg. And, again, it's
about like Game Check. It's going to
take a little while for everybody to
understand. We did actually have
taxidermists calling us. We had
processors calling us. We did make
cases. We gave a lot of warnings this year. That's going to be more strictly enforced next year.

We're working closely with the deer breeders association to make traceability better where deer are going from one place to the other. When Texas found CWD, they were able to find out where it went -- where everything went, the spider web of affected areas quickly. And we've got an open line of communication with their association working on that.

Again, we are -- it's not always the good people that are -- it's the ones that don't abide by the deer association rules. It's the people that don't abide by ours. Just like the individual that brought deer in from another state. I mean, that's -- that's self-serving interest that's putting the whole state at jeopardy. The same thing with the people going -- and one -- I'll give you
a prime example.

We had someone hunting in Illinois. Shot a deer. Shot a buck, a nice eight-point. Threw the whole deer on his four-wheeler where everybody could see it coming back from Illinois and Kentucky and Tennessee and into Alabama where everybody would know what a good hunter he was. And it just happened that someone recognized the county tag on his truck, saw our press releases, and said that's an issue and called the local officer. And we were waiting on him when he came across the state line.

Illinois was happy because not only had he violated our rules; he had taken a buck on a doe tag. So everybody knows what a good hunter he is now, but it's going to cost him.

So I'm saying that because it's just -- it's going to take time. I mean, I think we're doing what we can. Y'all are doing what you can. But
it's -- it's up to these people. They're -- if it hadn't have been for

tips from the public that knew what was going on, that saw our literature,
understood what we were doing, there's no way we could get to all that.

So it's just going to -- we're going to continue to educate people. We're going to continue doing public meetings,
having magazine articles, newspaper articles, radio spots.

Look, it's up to the hunters. It's their deer. It's their resource. We're just the ones that's in charge of
managing it. So it's going to be up to them to help us and sell more hunting licenses where we can get more officers out there.

CHAIRMAN STRICKLAND: Chuck?

MR. SYKES: Yes, sir.

CHAIRMAN STRICKLAND: Do you feel -- we had a pretty severe drought this hunting season. Do you feel that that drought
will increase the susceptibility of our herd for CWD?

MR. SYKES: No, sir, I don't think so. I really don't. Just my personal -- not Director Sykes, "Biologist Chuck" talking to you, people had a bad year because we're stuck in a rut. We're used to going and sitting on that same food plot at three o'clock in the afternoon. There was no grass for the first two months. Then there was warm weather. Things in the woods started popping back out. Deer weren't coming to the plots because there was pressure there.

I think in another couple of weeks when the pressure is gone and people start running trail cameras inventorying what is there, they're going to be surprised that all those deer that left are miraculously back again. I think if we have a good spring that deer are going to get back healthy and they're
going to be in good shape and we'll have
a good season next year.

CHAIRMAN STRICKLAND: Thank you, Chuck.

MR. SYKES: Yes, sir.

MR. DOBBS: One additional comment.

   Director Sykes, what do you perceive
as the biggest threat from CWD? Is it
people bringing carcasses back? Is it
people bringing live deer?

MR. SYKES: It's both. I mean, a dead deer
can transmit the disease just like a
live one can. So that -- it's about
like hogs moving around. Natural
migration is pretty slow, but when it's
going 75 miles an hour down the
interstate, it can cover a lot of ground
quickly.

   So that to me is the biggest threat
we have is self-serving individuals only
worrying about themselves and not
worrying about the resource of the state
and be that bringing a live deer in or
be that going to Texas and killing a
deer and saying, well, you know, one
deer is not going to hurt anything; I'm
just going to carry it back and -- it's
an inconvenience to me to debone that
meat. It is. But I can assure you it's
going to be a greater inconvenience if
we ever get it here.

MR. BUNN: Chuck, these breeders that are
buying AI straws and breeding deer
here -- I know you can't check for CWD
until the deer is dead. How do you know
that some of these straws that they're
buying and artificially inseminating
der here don't -- are not carrying CWD?

MR. SYKES: We don't.

MR. BUNN: I mean, is it something we need to
look at and maybe we can't buy AI straws
from the states that are --

CHAIRMAN STRICKLAND: Chuck, isn't CWD a virus
pretty much that's in the central
nervous system?

MR. SYKES: It's a mutated protein prion that
can be transmitted from nose to nose,
deer to deer. The proof has not come
whether urine, feces, and all that does
it. It's just speculation right now.

So I don't know if AI straws is the
answer. I -- I think bringing the whole
deer is much more concerning to me than
that. I -- just a little sidebar, I've
been working with the Archery Trade
Association, which I know you're very
familiar with. They have a program
where they're working with the deer
scent industry. There's a lot of states
that have panicked and have banned the
use of deer urine even though there's
not a whole lot of scientific data out
there right now saying it can be
transmitted that way.

So the industry is working together
to put self-imposed restrictions on
themselves to ensure that their business
is protected as well as the resource is
protected, same thing that we're doing
working with Alabama Deer Breeders
Association, trying to make sure that their business interests are okay as well as the native resource, which is what we're all here for.

CHAIRMAN STRICKLAND: And since it is a virus, it really only takes one deer -- one infected deer to really create a problem. So all of us --

MR. SYKES: Yes, sir.

CHAIRMAN STRICKLAND: -- have to really understand that. You know, we have to be very diligent and make sure that we follow the regulations that our biologists have put in place to protect our herds here in the state of Alabama because it doesn't take much --

MR. SYKES: Yes, sir.

CHAIRMAN STRICKLAND: -- to become an epidemic.

MR. SYKES: It only takes one self-serving individual to mess it up for everybody.

CHAIRMAN STRICKLAND: Yes.

MR. WOLFE: How -- what's the process that
we're checking the breeders? I mean, is it your officers go in so often and check them? Is it computerized? How do we do that?

MR. SYKES: Have yearly inspections where the inventory is examined and paperwork is looked at, but it's in a three-ring binder about that big.

MR. WOLFE: Is that -- does that need to be updated? Are we looking -- are y'all looking at doing --

MR. SYKES: We are talking with the deer breeders association. We met with them about a month ago on some options, yes.

MR. BUNN: Chuck, one question. Are they mandated where if they have a deer die -- are they mandated to inform us? Are they mandated to check it for CWD?

MR. SYKES: If it is over one year of age, to comply with the CWD-monitoring regulations, it has to go be tested. That's where that 500 deer that I put on my slide -- we're checking 500 wild deer
a year. They're averaging anywhere from
four to 600 a year that goes to be
tested.

And, look, it's not just a CWD test.
We're looking for all kind of -- it's
just a disease-monitoring program.

MR. WOLFE: So right now there is a window
from day one to a year old --

MR. SYKES: To a year old.

MR. WOLFE: -- that they're not checked at
all?

MR. SYKES: That's right.

MR. DOBBS: One additional question.

CHAIRMAN STRICKLAND: Joey.

MR. DOBBS: Are the deer that people are
breeding -- are they Alabama deer or do
they come from other parts of the
country?

MR. SYKES: Well, they're -- what T.J. said,
straws can come in. So a Michigan deer
may be bred to a Texas deer. That
offspring may be bred to -- you know,
whatever. I -- but the deer on these
facilities -- I think 1997 is when the ban started on moving deer across state lines. I may be incorrect on that, but it was somewhere around that time.

So there's not supposed to be any live deer coming in the state, but we know it's happening. I mean, we caught one. So there's still some individuals that are trying to do that.

There is enough genetics, enough breeders in Alabama. There's no reason to do it. Because there's 206 or 208 licensed game breeders in the state of Alabama. So bringing deer from out of state is completely unnecessary.

MR. DOBBS: One follow-up question, please.

CHAIRMAN STRICKLAND: Sure, Joey.

MR. DOBBS: Where do most of those deer go that are being bred? Do people turn them loose? Are we shooting them?

MR. SYKES: From my understanding -- I'm not completely familiar with the market -- but they're going between each other
improving each other's genetics and they are going to enclosures to hunt. So as far as I know, there's two markets. There's a breeder market and then there's a shooter market.

MR. WOLFE: Mr. Chairman?

COMMISSIONER GUY: Let me just add to that. And, Chuck, you just answered a question to Joey. And remember that we passed a reg that said you cannot intentionally release a deer into the wild.

MR. SYKES: Yeah. They have to go inside an enclosure. They can't just be released into the wild.

COMMISSIONER GUY: Which is the reason for the need for the traceability.

MR. WOLFE: Mr. Chairman?

CHAIRMAN STRICKLAND: Gary.

MR. WOLFE: So, Chuck, are we looking at really running fast-track on this thing and try to get a hold of it, or where are we at right now with it? I mean, are we just looking at other states?
Are we looking at -- I know y'all caught somebody bringing deer in. But is there something we need to do and look at as a study to kind of fast-track this thing and make some decisions?

MR. SYKES: We have an online database that several of the breeders have tested. Tweaks have been made. And, again, we're in meetings with -- we met with them about a month ago discussing some options on that.

So we are proceeding -- look, it's just the traceability thing. If Deer "A" goes here, here, here, here, and here and we've got a three-ring binder, it's kind of hard to -- it's takes a while. Like I said, Texas did theirs in hours what would take us months.

MR. WOLFE: And that's what I'm getting at. I'm familiar with that. In Texas, the reason they stopped it is because they had the system in place and they jumped right on it and stopped it.
MR. SYKES: Well, not necessarily stopped it, but they at least knew where that deer -- all of the facilities that it had been in where they could quarantine and do the proper testing to make sure everything was safe there before anything else moved around.

Look, once it gets here, there is no stopping it. That's -- that's the major issue. It's not like EHD that we get every year. We lose a few deer. The ones that make it have an immunity to it. They're fine. Once we get it, it's here forever and ever, amen.

MR. BUNN: Chuck, going back, is this something we need to look at with these breeders bringing in AI straws from the states that are affected by CWD? Is this something we need to look into and maybe --

MR. SYKES: I will get my staff to look at the latest research as far as -- because I'm -- I would be talking out of turn.
I don't know what the latest research is showing on that. My gut feeling is there is not anything real specific right now, but we can -- we can look into it before the next board meeting.

MR. BUNN: Because, like you said, we've got enough breeders in the state now. It's really -- I don't see any reason for somebody needing to, you know, buy straws from Texas or Wisconsin or Michigan when we've got plenty of breeders here in the state they can trade between.

CHAIRMAN STRICKLAND: Any further questions from the board?

(No response.)

CHAIRMAN STRICKLAND: Chuck, thank you.

MR. SYKES: Thank you.

CHAIRMAN STRICKLAND: Chris and Chuck, excellent presentation.

Okay. The next order of business is public hearings. For those who participate in the public hearing, there
are a couple of rules you need to follow.

When your name is called, please come to the microphone. You are limited to only three minutes, and it will be strict adherence to three minutes, three minutes from the time you are called. State your name and the subject you wish to talk on. No interference from the audience will be tolerated. In addition, all board members are asked to please address the chair before taking the floor.

Okay. The first public hearing will be Mr. Avery Bates. Mr. Bates.

Mr. Bates is quite a familiar face here at the Conservation Advisory Board Meetings. Thanks for coming, Mr. Bates.

MR. BATES: You think I'm familiar here. You ought to be in Bayou La Batre.

My name is Avery Bates, vice president of Organized Seafood Organization.
I want to thank the board for all y'all's work for us over the years. For the last number of years you've put in for pompano, Spanish mackerel, and sheepshead to stay a commercial fish so everybody can enjoy it through our markets. You know, the property we enjoy, what we call the common property, is precious to us.

And while I'm here, real quick, I want to invite y'all November -- I mean, March the 7th we're going to have a Seafood Bash as normal. And the Commissioner comes. I hope he enjoys the seafood. We always enjoy seeing Chris and everybody else.

And we want to tell you right now on the three things that we have -- I think it's three for the commercial fishermen. We do not have any major problems. We have some commercial things -- I'd say cosmetic things that was done on the crab the one year -- and I thank
Mr. Hartzog for asking me, why cosmetic. And that being the true problem exists all up and down the Gulf Coast, especially in areas that has no -- the crab trap ban in Louisiana -- they have not allowed sponge crabs for many years, and they're the one that's running the crabber back out of here.

Now, we had a sponge crab law in the '40s here, a regulation. They took that away a number of years later. But our problem with the crabs, Louisiana's problem with the crabs, Texas' problem with the crabs -- you say, well, why is such a problem through the -- in the tonnage that you saw that was lost. You ask me and this is the reason why.

We've got a problem with red drum, black drum, too. Red drum is also a gamefish in these states that I mentioned and others. When you take one species and let it proliferate to such a degree -- and thank you for writing that
article in the paper about wild hogs. Tremendous multiplication.

Let me tell you something about redfish. They can live up to 60 years. And guess what? They eat tons of crabs. Clean some. What's the best bait for a redfish? Crabs. Crabs. It's up and down the Gulf Coast. They're going to run the crabber out of Louisiana, and they already don't allow sponge crabs. Why do we continually miss the main point of what's going on?

You think you got trouble with wild hogs. Do the math. When you got one redfish up to three to four years that can produce up to a million-and-a-half to five million -- I would love to see --

MS. JONES: Time.

CHAIRMAN STRICKLAND: Mr. Bates --

MR. BATES: I just started. Okay. -- the multiplication factor in what's being lost with these feral
redfish.

CHAIRMAN STRICKLAND: They're calling you, Mr. Bates.

MR. BATES: Many more things I want to say to y'all. But thank y'all for not allowing the gamefish status.

The letter that I handed y'all is just a preliminary letter, but we are tired of seeing our stuff covered up in Mobile Bay by this 150 thing that we see --

CHAIRMAN STRICKLAND: Mr. Bates?

MR. BATES: Believe it or not -- I mentioned it last time -- you're covering up what the good Lord put there, live natural oysters, live clam reefs. You are allowing -- or the State of Alabama is allowing --

CHAIRMAN STRICKLAND: Thank you very much.

MR. BATES: -- massive devastation in Mobile Bay and still --

CHAIRMAN STRICKLAND: Mr. Nelson, you're next.

Mr. Bates is taking up all your time.
You've got two minutes and ten seconds.

MR. MELTON: Can I talk from right here?

    Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Wynnton
Melton, Geneva County. I've been here a
lot of times, too, about 48 consecutive,
I think.

CHAIRMAN STRICKLAND: I don't think you've
missed a single meeting.

MR. MELTON: I know. It's been about 48 of
these in a row. Seen a lot come and a
lot go.

    I'm here speaking on behalf of all
the dog hunters, coon hunters, deer
hunters. It's a grand sport. I put a
picture of our club up there for you. I
wanted to say about that -- and I've
heard it said by conservation
officials -- that a deer killed on a
legal, honorable dog deer drive brings
more enjoyment to more people than any
animal harvested in the state of
Alabama. And I sort of want to document
their 18 deer. All those folks had a
great time with it.

    We're doing well. The improvement is unbelievable. In the last several years these tracking devices we have now are helping so much with dog control. You can train and track and keep up with it so much better. Nothing will ever be 100 percent, but it's getting pretty darn close.

    The rogue hunters are about gone in our part of the world. I can't speak for the rest. Don't know what 220 is, but I'm here to plead with you, hey, don't give us a bunch more regulations. We're doing quite well. We don't need the anxiety of having to go out and worry more and more and more. It's like punishing a child when they do bad. You get good results. Punishing a child when they do good, you get an angry youngster.

    So, please, we appreciate you. Seen a lot come and a lot go. Hunting with
hounds is a great tradition. We enjoy it. We just appreciate you and know you have a hard job. But, please, please, don't regulate us right out the door. Just let us hunt, have a good time, and we'll do our darndest to make it as easy on you as we can. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN STRICKLAND: Mr. Floyd Nelson.

MR. NELSON: I can say what I want to say in about two minutes.

That proposal number 50, we're against this that's on this marsh area.

Also, spending two-and-a-half million dollars on NRPA funds, what they're doing, they're dredging out Mobile ship channel up there, and they're covering our oyster reefs up. I've been up there. I work up there. I'm a fisherman. I can't catch no more fish up there. They're gone. I run aground where they piled the mud up in the water where we always run with our boat. Well, we run aground in that mud.
That's how much mud is up there.

Radcliff Materials dug all of our reefs up on the east side of the river. Now they want to dig all of them -- or cover them up on the west side. And that's our mother reefs. That's the ones that spawns -- let the spawns come down the Bay and catch on the reefs down there. And that's where we get our seafood -- our oysters from.

If they can get this two-and-a-half-million dollars, that's what they have to bear. That's the state docks. Well, they get another 20 million after they get that. And when they get the 20 million, no telling what they'll do with it.

That's all I wanted to say.

Appreciate it.

CHAIRMAN STRICKLAND: Thank you, Mr. Nelson.

Next we have Michael Best.

MR. BEST: Michael Best from Cullman, Alabama.

I have a form up there that's got my
name on it if y'all want to look through it. What I'm here for is -- I'm coming before you today to request changes in the current laws considering bowfishing. My request is so more people with disabilities can enjoy this sport.

I have friends that run the Fallen Heroes, Incorporated, a nonprofit, that is currently taking disabled veterans out bowfishing. During a discussion we saw a need to have changes made to the current laws to make it easier for all disabled vets to be able to participate in the sport.

The team at Fallen Heroes have specially -- specialty equipment to allow wheelchairs on their boats, but currently taking a vet out with missing arms or limbs or nerve damage -- they can take the vet out, but they do not have -- cannot participate basically. You know, if you can't pull a bow, you can't participate.
Alabama currently has a law that allows spearfishing or use of a speargun, but it's only if the gun is submerged under water. So my idea is to be able to fire a device above water that is powered the same as a speargun with rubber delivering the power instead of the limbs of a bow or crossbow. Being able to use the rubber would make the device more manageable to being fired one-armed.

I know several states have legalized slingbows. It's basically a slingshot designed to shoot arrows. You can find slingbows on the commercial market. I am asking something along these lines but with a grip so the arrow can be released by a trigger, basically a cross between a slingbow and a speargun.

I said I had designed a device -- and there's pictures of it -- that I would like to see if we could get legalized for use in the state. I
contacted -- now, this is -- when I
first built this was back last July.
And I contacted Chief Dodd with the
Alabama Game and Fish Division who said
he saw no problem with the idea other
than the fact that it didn't follow the
current law.

I appreciate the opportunity to
bring this to your attention, and if
there's something we could do to help
some of our disabled veterans out, I'd
appreciate it.

CHAIRMAN STRICKLAND: Thank you, Mr. Best.
MR. CAGLE: Mr. Chairman?
CHAIRMAN STRICKLAND: Yes.
MR. CAGLE: I have a question.
CHAIRMAN STRICKLAND: Patrick, you have the
floor.
MR. CAGLE: Are you proposing to have this
done with a reel on it so it will --
MR. BEST: Oh, yeah. That's -- well, that's
the whole thing. We can't -- I didn't
go any further with it because you can't
go test it if it's illegal.

MR. CAGLE: Got you.

MR. BEST: So it's going to have a reel on it.
The boat has -- you know, there's a crew
on the boat. So at least -- you know,
even if you're one-handed, you're able
to take the shot, and then the crew can
actually reel your fish in for you.

MR. CAGLE: So it would work off a standard
bowfishing line?

MR. BEST: Yeah. It's going to be a standard
bowfishing line, standard bowfishing --
you know, a 20-inch. Instead of the big
arrow, it would be the 20-inch
bowfishing arrow that's for a crossbow.

MR. CAGLE: Okay. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN STRICKLAND: I have one question.
What about safety issues? You know,
there's a -- when you're bowfishing,
it's a lot of movement. Is there a
safety on it? Once that thing is
cocked --

MR. BEST: Well, I mean, I'm -- we're not
quite there yet. Again, you know, I'm not sure -- and, you know, I'm not for positive that this design that I got will work.

CHAIRMAN STRICKLAND: I see. So it's in the developmental stage?

MR. BEST: It's in developmental stages. But, you know, if we can change the law where we can use rubber instead of just the power of the limbs of a bow or a crossbow, we could go a lot further.

CHAIRMAN STRICKLAND: There are a lot of people bowfishing, a lot of people in the boat, a lot of movement.

MR. BEST: Oh, yeah, yeah.

CHAIRMAN STRICKLAND: That could be -- you know, it's --

MR. BEST: Oh, I understand.

CHAIRMAN STRICKLAND: Safety has to be a consideration.

MR. BEST: I understand that. I understand that.

CHAIRMAN STRICKLAND: All right. Thank you.
MR. BEST: Uh-huh (positive response).

CHAIRMAN STRICKLAND: Next speaker will be Michael Carter.

MR. CARTER: First off, I want to thank the board for everything you do. We all appreciate it.

   My name is Mike Carter. I am a licensed fishing guide for Lake Guntersville and Tennessee River. My wife, Sharon, she has the main points of what we're here for, the Lake Guntersville Conservation Group, and I'm going to go over just a few things.

   What we're looking at is the decline of the fishing on Lake Guntersville. For years and years of Bass, FLW, everybody has always recognized Guntersville Lake as one of the top lakes in the country. One of the comments this weekend was the -- one of the elite bass-fishing lakes in the country. And with this decline that we've seen -- I've fished this lake all
my life, been a licensed guide for 12 years. And several of us have seen this
decline of this lake.

And, no, it's not a massive decline. I mean, there -- people are still
catching fish, but when you get a lot of people coming down in groups and
tournaments and they see the decline themselves, they don't want to come
back. They're looking at other lakes. Bass didn't even have them in the top
ten this year. Could be political or whatever. But that impact -- that
impacts the tourism when they see that. It impacts the tourism. They barely
made top five in the Southeast. Bass also had a rating of number two as the
most overrated lake -- number two in the country, the most overrated lake.

These are the things that hurts the economical impact of not only
Guntersville but Scottsboro or Marshall and Jackson Counties. And that's what
we're here to talk to you about is the possibility for the help to try to get something done for the lake, a restocking program, changing the creel limit, get something done to try to help the lake out.

We don't want to turn these tournaments away. We don't want to turn the tourists away. This is what we want. This is how we make our living, between your bait shops, your restaurants, hotels, et cetera. We want to try to do something to try to help this lake and get it back healthy where it used to be and get it back where it's more noticeable; instead of having a negative impact, get a positive impact and bring everybody -- bring everybody back to the lake. That's all I have.

CHAIRMAN STRICKLAND: Thank you, Mike.

MR. CARTER: Thank you.

CHAIRMAN STRICKLAND: Next speaker is Brandon Jackson.
MR. MARTIN: Excuse me, Commissioner --

Chairman.

Chris, do you mind giving us some of
the information -- you and I talked
about this earlier before the meeting.
We were talking about Guntersville. A
lot of people -- I hear it, too, that
Guntersville is low, but would you share
your thoughts that we had.

MR. NICHOLS: Yes. My name is Nick Nichols.
I'm chief of fisheries for the Wildlife
and Freshwater Fisheries Division.

We actually have heard a lot of
comments from some folks reflecting
these same concerns about Lake
Guntersville over the last year and a
half or so. Lake Guntersville is
probably one of the best-studied
reservoirs in the state. Besides the
work our own staff has done on Lake
Guntersville to standardize sampling and
creel surveys, we've actually had two
studies that we funded through Auburn
University that looked at the fishery at
Guntersville as well as Wheeler.

Right now the status of Guntersville
Lake is it's at its -- about what we'd
call its 30-year average in terms of the
quality of the fishery. It's right on
track with the way it's been for the
last 30 years that we have data on the
reservoir.

What has been seen -- what's been
perceived by some folks is we had a very
strong year class back in 2008. That
year class was like two-and-a-half times
larger than you would normally see on
the lake. And that year class -- since
the fish do have a longevity of ten
years or less, that year class has now
left the fishery. And it was also
followed by two weak year classes.
However, we've got some new year classes
coming on now, and we expect and
anticipate the fishery is going to turn
up a little bit.
But there's nothing in terms of a creel limit change or a stocking program that's going to have any biological significance on how that fishery performs. And that's basically our data. That's what it supports.

CHAIRMAN STRICKLAND: Thank you.

MR. CARTER: Thank you.

CHAIRMAN STRICKLAND: Our next public speaker is Brandon Jackson.

MR. JACKSON: Good morning. Thank you for the opportunity. We appreciate all the work that the board does. I wanted to thank DCNR and their conservation officers that police the Sipsey Fork area of our fishery. They do a great job -- an excellent job, actually, in making themselves known and greeting people and talking to them on the river.

But I'm here to talk about the Sipsey Fork and the trout fishing there. There is a -- a great opportunity with that fishery. It is a wonderful
opportunity, a singular opportunity
within the state for year-around
opportunities to catch rainbow trout. We would like to see more people have
that opportunity to catch those fish, have an opportunity to see them.

There is a study that will begin
this year in order to determine more
closely where those fish are going, what's happening with them, where
they're moving within the river, and we look forward to the results of that
study.

But in the meantime, we do feel that
there are certain recommendations. And you should have received a handout from
me concerning the recommendations that we would like to see implemented in
order to help this fishery and make it open to angling -- for anglers
throughout the state and throughout the U.S.

If the Sipsey Fork -- if you take
that river and look at it, it's
basically -- especially in the upper
sections -- a series of small ponds
connected to one another. And what's
happening now -- what we see happening
now is -- is that they stock our trout.
On the Sipsey Fork this year, in 2017,
we will hopefully be able to have --
it'll never be above for this next year
40,000 trout stocked in that river for
the year. It's going to be less than
40,000.

There is a -- what I think is a twin
sister to this river, and it's called
the Little Red River. It's the Greers
Ferry tailrace. So it's a tailrace just
like ours. It has very similar
topography, similar access, similar
opportunities, except for they have --
many of these regulations that we're
proposing, they have those in place
already, and yet they're stocking
180,000 fish. Same things. Just
different areas.

In order to preserve our 40,000, we propose a catch-and-release section and some other ideas there that you'll see within that in order to help those small ponds that are closest to the dam. Even though they're connected, when they stock, those fill up with fish, but right now anglers can come in and if they're the first ones there, they take all the fish out of those small ponds. And it takes a much longer period of time for those fish --

MS. JONES: Time.

MR. JACKSON: -- to come back.

CHAIRMAN STRICKLAND: Thank you, Mr. Jackson.

The next speaker is Michael Key.

MR. KEY: I would like to thank the board, our commissioner, our chairman, our directors, our chiefs, and our members of staff for this opportunity.

I know it's been mentioned among us trout fishermen about a quality zone in
an area below Lewis Smith Lake. We already have a quality zone. It's been established for decades. And I see no sense in trying to establish something we already have.

Family and friends and strangers have fished by different methods alongside one another for decades. Some sit on coolers. Some sit on five-gallon buckets. Some sit in chairs. Some wade. And they all enjoy the sport of fishing the way they like to fish.

You see, our quality zone, it's got the highest number of trout that we stock. You can hear kids when they catch a trout. You'll hear them -- they're so excited. And if you're within earshot, you can't help but smile. And they want to get right back in the water to try to catch another one. It's there for everybody, no matter how you fish or what method you fish by, as long as they're legal.
I have actually as an adult enjoyed fellowship and friendship with people I did not know. I met them there and actually just got to know one another from those experiences, through good experiences. And most of the time just being there means a whole lot. We relax under the strain of trying to catch a fish. Does that make any sense to y'all?

It's really part of recreation. And we want to make sure we don't lose any of our rights, any of our outdoor activities on the Sipsey Fork.

And we're also losing trout, but it's not because of anglers. We actually came in and remade the Sipsey Fork. We channelized it again. We knocked out three shoals that were barn doors to keep the stripers out except during generation or post-generation as the water was receding into Bankhead Lake.
Now, don't have nothing against the
striper. Hey, he's doing what he was
supposed to do. And our Chief Nichols,
he actually predicted the next world
record would come out of our Black
Warrior channels, and it did. And I'm
going to tell you what. It's not just
because of shad. And I'm not a
biologist, but I am --

MS. JONES: Time.

MR. KEY: -- an everyday man.

But that's part of the problem. If
I may, that is part of the problem. The
anglers are not taking those fish. Very
few are the anglers taking. We need to
try to get ahead of these stripers a
little bit. Let's increase the limit
after the studies are done in
anticipation of there being no limit.

CHAIRMAN STRICKLAND: Thank you, Mr. Key.

MR. KEY: Thank you, sir. Thanks to everyone.

CHAIRMAN STRICKLAND: Well, we certainly value
our Sipsey Fork trout fishing. It's a
huge recreational opportunity for Alabama.

The next speaker is Kevin Linn.

MR. LINN: Good morning. I'm Kevin Linn from Marshall County and Jackson County, Alabama.

COMMISSIONER GUY: Speak up. Speak up, please, sir.

MR. LINN: Kevin Linn from Marshall County and Jackson County.

We've got a tremendous asset in north Alabama with that Tennessee River chain. It's a tremendous asset, one that we don't even have to spend money on to bring people in that spend their dollars in our stores and businesses, et cetera.

Lately, I don't know if we need more attention to it or if we just need to get some teeth and some laws that can help our guys in brown enforce things. But we've got to -- we've got to kind of groom this chain of rivers up there to
be able to continue through economic
downturns, which there might be some
because of, you know, the health of the
fish and the downturn in the survey, et
cetera. You know, how long are we going
to have to pay for those downturns when
we could do some little things that
would change the lake in a positive
fashion.

If you go in and Jordan-Hare was
only 60,000 seats, you would build
40,000 more. Because that's what you
do. You know, you go in there, and if
there's a call and a demand for
something, you meet it. You know, if
you go and lease a piece of land or buy
a piece of land as a hunting property,
you go in there and you improve it. You
know, you don't go in and say, well,
we're in the middle of a 30-year norm
and we're on the downside of that; let's
not do anything. You go in and say
let's put some food plots in, you know,
let's create this kind of habitat.

So let's get this lake healthy again and be able to create some of the things we need to there. Even if we are within cyclical norm -- which I agree with the biologists. I know we're in that downturn of the norm, but why accept that. I don't feel like when we've got all these people coming in that we don't have to spend a dollar to get here -- to get, why accept them not coming in when we could make some small changes. And you'll hear about some of the other small changes that could be made when more people are going to speak to you today.

But we need some help there, folks, because we've got a great asset that we're not taking full advantage of. I hear things about needing more income from license fees and things like that. Send the guys in brown up there. And I know you have. In the last year I've
seen more up there than I have in the last ten years.

I've been living on the lake for 15 years, doing business on the lake for 25. I own Waterfront Tackle up there, too. So I get this from everybody coming in. It's not just my opinion. Talk to hundreds of people in the course of a year. I know you're coming to Guntersville next week -- or next month -- excuse me -- to visit us, and we'll have some more information then.

But, please, please, open up to the possibility of not just leaving something status quo but helping us make it better by small steps. Nothing big. Not saying any one will work. I'm saying the aggregate total of five or ten or 15 different plans that we've got I'd sure like for you to look at. We could use your opinion and support. And, in turn, when we keep bringing these people in like we have and these
big organizations come in, that's going
to continue to kick money back into the
coffers, and that's going to continue to
keep the excitement level up for buying
fishing licenses, et cetera.

So I guess my time is up.

MS. JONES: Time.

CHAIRMAN STRICKLAND: Thank you, Mr. Linn.

Our next speaker is Sharon Thomas.

MS. THOMAS: I represent, also, the Lake
Guntersville Conservation Group in
Jackson and Marshall Counties. And I,
too -- this is a vast body of water that
has increased pressure year after year
from anglers throughout the U.S.,
tournaments that are going to be coming
more and more each year such as the
Bassmasters, the BFL. We just had the
FLW tournament, ABT, ABA. Big Bass
Splash will be here in April. And local
tournaments, wildcat tournaments, high
school, and even college tournaments are
beginning to fish this lake. And that's
kind of a bucket list for everybody to fish Lake Guntersville.

And as Mike Carter said, this lake has dropped in standings as being overrated. And the biologists -- I know they have their paperwork to do and they -- they've got their stats. But these gentlemen that get out here and beat the water every day fishing -- whether it be a guide, whether it be just your local fisherman or someone like that -- they know what's going on. And there are so many people that say, you know, we're not coming back, people from Kentucky that I've talked with, Ohio, different places like that. They say the fish are not here. And where are they going?

They're going to the next adjoining state, Tennessee, to Chickamauga Lake where they stocked them back several years ago. And they are flourishing. And that's one reason I'm here today, to
ask the state -- which I sent papers to all of you, to the governor, to Gunter Guy and -- to help us in re-establishing what we did have in restocking and dropping the creel limit. And I know the creel limit has been discussed as not being that much, but every little bit helps.

We have programs that we are going to try to implement later on in trying to keep our fish alive, keep our fish well. And from that standpoint -- it's not just, hey, we want fish. It's just we got to work together in this. And north Alabama provides one of the best lakes in the country, and we want it to stay -- or get back up to number one rather than falling in the ranks.

That's all I've got to say to you.

Thank you so much.

CHAIRMAN STRICKLAND: Thank you, Ms. Thomas.

Next speaker, Tyler Moses.

MR. MOSES: I'd just like to thank y'all for
your service, and I'll decline the
opportunity. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN STRICKLAND: Thank you, Tyler.

Next we have Eddie Jolley.

MR. JOLLEY: Good morning. My name is Eddie
Jolley from Auburn in Lee County. And I
have prepared a document for you that
you should find, I think, in front of
you by now. It's dealing with the
approval of the use of crossbows to hunt
turkeys.

Okay. I think it's quite evident
across the country that crossbows are
very popular. In fact, you gentlemen
have seen fit to approve the use of
crossbows to hunt big game such as deer.
Big game are hunted across the country,
whether it's bear or caribou or moose or
elk. I looked to see how many states in
the South have approved the use of
crossbows for hunting turkey. 11 states
were surveyed, and I have excerpted some
information and presented it to you.
Out of those 11 states that were surveyed, ten of those have already approved the use of crossbows. One state has not done that, and that is Alabama.

So my question to you is would you approve the use of crossbows to hunt turkey in Alabama. There are a lot of benefits to that. Number one, we already know that the crossbow is a very effective weapon. Modern crossbows are very efficient. They are very accurate. And they can do a really nice job of harvesting an animal. We have many, many videos, television programs that depict the harvesting of wild turkeys with crossbows.

We also have to think about the ability to hunt certain areas of our state. We are experiencing urban sprawl. So some of our areas may not be suitable for hunting with guns because of that sprawl. So hunting with a
crossbow may be an alternative. Same
thing for hunting inside city limits
where it's approved.

Some individuals may have
limitations that prevent the use of
hunting with longbows or compound bows.
So being able to hunt with a crossbow
would be a viable alternative.

Okay. You're also able to bring in
family members to help -- to teach them
how to hunt; okay? And it's not a loud
noise. And it's a weapon that could be
easily used and trained -- or the
individual could be trained to use that.
In fact, this year my wife approached me
about hunting deer for the first time in
a long, long time, and I told her we had
to be able to practice and learn how to
use our crossbow. Within just moments
of practicing, she was ready to go.

Chuck, in fact, she bought a hunting
license. So that added to your
percentage increase; okay?
So, you know, we have an opportunity --

MS. JONES: Time.

MR. JOLLEY: So I'm asking you to go ahead and approve the use of crossbows. We're the only state in 11 states from Florida to Missouri, from Louisiana to North Carolina that haven't approved the use of crossbows to hunt turkeys. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN STRICKLAND: Thank you, Mr. Jolley.

Next speaker, Curtis Anderson.

MR. ANDERSON: If you don't mind, I would like clarification first from Mr. Sykes. Did he say that there was going to be no change at Swan Creek Management Area, or do I need to go ahead and make my presentation?

MR. SYKES: No, sir. You need to make your presentation. I said there were none at this present time.

MR. ANDERSON: Okay. Thank you.

Yes. My name is Curtis Anderson.
I'm here opposing options one, two, three, and four for changes at Swan Creek Management Area. The changes take no consideration in the fact that fathers and grandfathers want to carry their school-age children to Swan Creek. They get out at 2:40 in the afternoon. They jump in the back of a pickup truck and change clothes to try to get down there to hunt that afternoon. And closing at 12 o'clock, you can forget that.

You can't teach a child -- when he's out there on the soccer field, that's not one on one. When he's on the football field, it's not one on one. In that duck blind, that's one on one. How would you close at 12 o'clock and alleviate those children from hunting and from us teaching them?

Number two, one of the proposals -- how would the swing-shift people -- right there around Swan Creek you've got
Toyota swing shifts. You've got Daikin.
You've got Amoco, Montsano, 3M. You
know, you're just alleviating a
tremendous amount of people that want to
hunt Swan Creek Management Area. I
can't see that it makes sense.

I understand that Drew feels like
the count is way down -- the kill count.
you know, you can't control that. I
know people think you can. We haven't
had any cold fronts in three years.
Anybody that's a duck hunter knows -- we
shoot migratory birds. All these
resident ducks around here, all they are
is trading back and forth from one
place. And if you think that you're
going to outsmart them by closing at 12
o'clock, they're going to be in there in
the morning. As soon as they hear boat
motors, all the headlights -- it doesn't
take them long to figure out what's
going on.

I've been doing it -- I started
hunting at Swan Creek 53 years ago. I believe I know what Swan Creek needs, and it's not to close at 12 o'clock and it's not to cut out our hunting hours. I have different ideas and so do a multitude of other people, other hunters that they've asked me to represent here today.

So that's my speech. And I hope that you will please give us the opportunity before any decision is made -- let us have one-on-one conversation or group conversation. This is not the place for it. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN STRICKLAND: Chuck, do you want to address any concerns with Mr. Anderson? First of all, there has been no proposed changes, are there?

MR. SYKES: No.

CHAIRMAN STRICKLAND: And our biologists have basically sent out a survey, and from that survey -- I think 70 percent of the
hunters who turned in the survey suggested changes, that they felt that changes were necessary.

Chuck, can you go ahead and -- you probably have ...

MR. SYKES: Mr. Chairman, I'll be brief.

CHAIRMAN STRICKLAND: Okay. Sure.

MR. SYKES: What Mr. Anderson said y'all can take to heart. He's hunted Swan Creek for 53 years, and nothing has been changed in 53 years. How many other things are we doing the same way we did 53 years ago?

We're not trying to limit anything. We're trying to make it better. We haven't proposed anything. Drew simply sent out a questionnaire to all of the hunters there, got some options.

Mr. Stimpson helped us last year at Mobile and the Delta down there putting in some different management tools that was tremendous this year. That's all we're doing is looking at some options.
Nothing has been done right now. We're just looking.

CHAIRMAN STRICKLAND: Thank you, Chuck.

Mr. Anderson --

MR. ANDERSON: And we welcome management tools. We don't welcome cutting the hours that we get to hunt. You know, you buy a license, sir, to hunt 60 days, not to hunt 30 days.

CHAIRMAN STRICKLAND: So, Mr. Anderson, what happens is our biologists will take a critical look at what is best for our resources. These are federal migratory birds. And the changes that we -- if any changes are made -- and, again, there's no -- there's been no proposed changes. Those changes, if they are instituted, would be what we feel is best for, you know, our migratory birds in that area.

MR. ANDERSON: I understand. And I know you -- I understand that you --

CHAIRMAN STRICKLAND: And you want your
grandkids and their kids to continue to have great duck hunting there. That is a great resource. So I think now we're just in the process of discovery.

MR. ANDERSON: Thank you.

CHAIRMAN STRICKLAND: Grady, you have the floor.

MR. HARTZOG: Sir, one -- sir, if you would go back to the mic.

CHAIRMAN STRICKLAND: Mr. Anderson.

MR. HARTZOG: Mr. Anderson, if you would go back to the mic.

MR. ANDERSON: Sure.

MR. HARTZOG: Of course, I'm one of the waterfowl hunters that's on this board, and Raymond is on the board. And, like he said, last year we did some work through Ben's help in Mobile that everybody loved. We made changes. You said you could make some recommendations to make it better. What would you tell our biologists to make Swan Creek better?
MR. ANDERSON: The biologists?
MR. HARTZOG: Yeah. What would you say would make --
MR. ANDERSON: I've got a proposal.
MR. HARTZOG: -- Swan Creek a better management area?
MR. ANDERSON: I've got a proposal written, and we're having -- we're starting back up a club called North Alabama Waterfowl Association. It was there in our area for years. I was on the board. The great Tommy Carter helped us out. Right now Danny Crawford -- he's our representative for Limestone County. He is behind it a hundred percent. He even told me I could use his name today.

But cutting hours -- the only thing I'm here for is to say cutting hours -- you pay for a hunting license for 60 days. Cutting those hours by 40 percent -- there's a lot that could be done -- I know a tremendous amount can be done. DU -- I understand from
Drew -- I met with him personally Wednesday. DU is going to come in and help some. I'd like to know more about that. A lot of it is education.

It's not overhunted. I hunted down there this year. Every day I hunted in the afternoon I heard less than 20 shotgun shells go off. You're setting there saying -- people are talking and running their mouth, youngsters, that don't even -- on this survey --

MR. HARTZOG: When you get that report written as to what you feel would make Swan Creek better, get that report to us. Because --

MR. ANDERSON: I've got --

MR. HARTZOG: -- ducks need rest. Ducks need a place to feed and to operate. And so it's been a success in Mobile. You go to Arkansas, which is one of the best duck-hunting states. They close their management areas down. They rest their management areas.
So when you get your report written
as to what you feel like Swan Creek --
what would benefit Swan Creek, we would
love to look at it. Because I and
Raymond and Ben, all being waterfowlers,
anything we can do to make it better,
but we've still got our biologists that
tell us other than that. And so,
anyway, when you get the report, we
would love to see it.

MR. ANDERSON: Thank you.

CHAIRMAN STRICKLAND: Any other comments from
the board?

MR. JONES: Yes. Mr. Anderson, you referenced
a club. You do realize this is a public
area to hunt and a public thing, not a
club issue?

So I just want to stress that. This
is a public resource.

MR. ANDERSON: I absolutely understand. Thank
you.

CHAIRMAN STRICKLAND: Thank you, Mr. Anderson.

Any other questions or comments from
the board?

(No response.)

CHAIRMAN STRICKLAND: Next speaker, Joey

Flowers.

MR. FLOWERS: Morning, board members. My name
is Joey Flowers. I'm from Baldwin
County, Alabama. I'm representing the
Alabama Hog Dog Hunters Association and
speaking on their behalf.

The first topic I'd like to discuss
is the 2016 wildlife management area hog
dog hunt that we had from September 1st
through the 10th this year -- or this
past year. We had about 62 hunters that
reported back to me about their kills.
And we had about 217 hogs reported for
that two -- or ten days. We had 98
boars, 117 sows, and two barred hogs
within that ten days.

We're asking if we can try to extend
those days just to eliminate that much
more. A lot of these people that wanted
to hunt couldn't hunt those days because
they were working out of town or just
couldn't get off of work. So we're
asking if we can extend those days a
little bit more or even open up more
management area in other areas that will
help out with that cause also.

I don't think -- from what I was
told, there was no misconducts. No one
got in trouble, no transporting anything
illegal on the Lower Delta Wildlife
Management Area. So if the board would
consider trying to open up more days for
us and open up more wildlife management
area.

The next thing is our Wounded
Warrior hog hunts that we do every year.
It's been going really well. We're
getting a lot of people wanting to come
in and participate and hunt and stuff
like that, and we're getting a lot of
landowners that usually don't allow dog
hunting come forward and, you know,
letting us use their property, which has
been really successful. I think the
year before last we caught 52 in a day
and a half, and this past year I think
we caught 23 and real big, nice
trophies. And I think some of the
Wounded Warriors even had three of them
they were able to get mounted and put on
their wall. So it was really neat.

Our association is footing the bill
for these Wounded Warriors coming out
from out of state to pay for their
hunting license because most of them are
out-of-state Wounded Warriors. So we're
doing that.

My next topic of business is killing
hogs on the spot when we catch them,
especially during the summer months.
It's really hot. And most of the time
when you kill them, they're going to
waste. We cannot savour the meat unless
we're able to tie them up, stage them in
a certain place until after the hunt,
kill them, and take them home. And how
the laws are written we can't do that. So we would like to ask if the board would consider coming up with a regulation to where we can savour the meat so it's not being ruined in the summer heat.

I got a little saying out of Proverbs 12:27 that says "The man who hunts game and kills it -- it does not -- and does not take possession of it for eating is a slothful man." We don't want to be like that. So I would like for you guys to take that into consideration.

MS. JONES: Time.

MR. FLOWERS: And just real quick, my last topic was coming up with something to make it mandatory for all dog hunters to have tracking collars on their dogs. You heard some of the other people talk about it earlier. We need to come up with something that will help eliminate a lot of these dogs getting off their
property.

CHAIRMEN STRICKLAND: Thank you, Mr. Flowers.

MR. FLOWERS: Thank you.

CHAIRMEN STRICKLAND: And, Mr. Flowers, we certainly appreciate your hard work with the veterans.

MR. FLOWERS: Thank you.

CHAIRMEN STRICKLAND: Patrick, did you have a question?

MR. CAGLE: This question is for Chuck or Keith.

Can the department -- you know, I know y'all have been working successfully with the hog dog hunters association, you know, and I encourage y'all to continue to work with them to see if maybe there is some opportunities to extend days, maybe two weekends on management areas of the ones that can be opened up. You know, we appreciate their effort to work with the department, and I encourage the department to continue to work with them
to just, you know, find more
opportunities that don't cause conflict
with the other uses of the WMAs.
CHAIRMAN STRICKLAND: Thank you, Mr. Flowers.
MR. FLOWERS: Thanks.
CHAIRMAN STRICKLAND: Our next public speaker
is Tammi Hudson.
MS. HUDSON: Mr. Commissioner, Mr. Chairman,
and Board, I'm Tammi Hudson. I live in
Clarke County. I normally hunt the
disabled hunting areas, and I come every
year and thank you for those areas.

This past year I was -- this season
I did not get to deer hunt the disabled
hunting areas. I had a family member
that was very ill and did not get to
deer hunt this year. But y'all listened
and Mr. Sykes opened up one of them for
turkey hunting. So come turkey season,
I will be trying to harvest a turkey.

And Mr. Bunn says that I won't be
able to do that. So I hope I'll be able
to come back and show you that I did.
He says that that's not the way it works, but we're going to -- we're going to try to show you that I can get one; okay?

MR. BUNN: I hope you get one.

MS. FLOWERS: So I want to thank you for that, Mr. Sykes. And, hopefully, maybe we'll be able to try it on a few more next time.

And I just want to say that me and my family, we appreciate being able to hunt every different way that we can for deer hunting. We bow hunt, we stalk hunt, and we deer dog hunt, and we appreciate being able to do that. And we just appreciate our resources that we have. We appreciate the job that y'all do. Y'all try to do a good job managing our resources. We appreciate that.

I try to have a good story about the law enforcement each year when I come up. I wasn't -- didn't have any interaction with them this year. But I
try to let them know that we appreciate all that they do and appreciate the service that they do and the risks that they have every day when they go out on the job. And I want to say that we appreciate that.

Okay. And I want to say that -- like the first man that talked about deer dog hunting, I just want to put in that I would appreciate it if we would try to let -- we're all doing as good as we can to regulate ourselves with our tracking systems and so forth and if we could cut down on as little regulation as possible. Because we are doing a good job, I think, trying to regulate ourselves on that. And that's all I have to say today.

CHAIRMAN STRICKLAND: Tammi, I'm going to give you Mr. Bunn's e-mail address to send him a picture of that turkey this spring.

MS. FLOWERS: I have his e-mail address and I
will. I'm going to.

MR. BUNN: Send me some pictures.

CHAIRMAN STRICKLAND: Our next speaker is

Michael McAlpine.

MR. McALPINE: Morning. Michael McAlpine.

I'm with BHA, the Bow Hunters of

Alabama. You know, we established in

1967 to support hunting rights, and

we've worked hand in hand with the DCNR.

We've had a great relationship with

them.

This past few months it was brought
to our attention about the ATV use on
management areas and they was tearing
the roads up. One in particular was
Skyline Management Area. So we was
approached and wanted to know where we
stood with ATV use.

And we are a hunting organization.

We are not opposing any regulations that
y'all impose in closing roads because we
are a guest in y'all's house. So, you
know, anything we can do to help and
support DCNR with anything, you have full BHA support.

CHAIRMAN STRICKLAND: Thank you. I think the Bow Hunters Association do a great job in the state of Alabama. I'm a life member. And I appreciate all the hard work you guys are doing. We need to get more members involved. We need -- and we need to get more of you-all to sign up for BHA.

MR. McALPINE: Yes. And one other thing. I don't know if y'all know it or not, but the last weekend in February we're hosting a Reinhardt 100 tournament down at Lake Eufaula State Park. That is 50 North American game animals and 50 African game animals. It's a two-day event. So, I mean, we're actually going to have a life-size giraffe. He's 19-foot tall. So, you know, it's a --

CHAIRMAN STRICKLAND: It would be worth coming down to see that giraffe. Thank you.

The next public speaker is Kayla
Cooper.

Thank you, Ms. Cooper.

MS. COOPER: Thank you for giving me the opportunity to speak today. My name is Kayla Cooper. I am here today on behalf of the Alabama State Coon Hunters Association. I am their secretary/treasurer. I'm also a member of the --

CHAIRMAN STRICKLAND: Could you get a little closer to the mic?

MS. COOPER: Oh, I'm sorry.

Alabama State Coon Hunters Association. I'm also a member of the Alabama Hog Dog Association and a member of the United Blood Trackers Association. I do wounded-game recovery with my dogs in addition to hog hunting and coon hunting.

Thank you for allowing me to speak to you. And I especially want to thank the Alabama Conservation enforcement officers department which has approved a
thousand-dollar grant for our Coonhound Youth State Championship. And so we're really excited about that and everything we're going to get to do with the kids at our state championship in May.

The main reason I'm here today is concern for the new field trial permit that has been proposed. We have a lot of clubs in Alabama. They license events through multiple registries: UKC, AKC, PKC, ACHA, NKC. I'm licensed as a judge for several of them.

Proposing the new field trial to three a year cuts down tremendously on the clubs having people come from out of state. A lot of our clubs are struggling.

There was an article published in Field & Stream back in 2008 about competition hunting saved coon hunting. We as an association represent the pleasure hunters. We also represent the competition hunters. And this permit is
really, really cutting down on people
wanting to come from out of state.
Because we only get three a year per
club, and they're hosting 15, 30, 50
events. It doesn't cover it all.

We don't want to do anything to hurt
the participation with the clubs,
especially at a lot of the events we
have that are benefit events. I know
the Clarke-Washington County Coon
Hunters Association has donated over
$235,000 to St. Jude's in the past
several years with their events. These
type of events are stuff that we want to
keep going not only to preserve the
sport and the tradition but also for all
the good that they do for the youth
events, for the YEP program that runs
the UKC that gets kids into hunting.
And having that permit limits a lot of
those opportunities.

Thank you for allowing me to speak.

CHAIRMAN STRICKLAND: Thank you, Ms. Cooper.
Commissioner, you have the floor.

COMMISSIONER GUY: I just wanted to recognize Chuck to speak to Ms. Cooper's issues here because that's -- I appreciate your comments, but, you know, when you say limit you to three, that's three free ones. So I'm going to let Chuck address it.

And I would want to point out to the board -- and I think maybe we've talked a lot -- if not, we'll go over that, and we'll certainly consider any comments. But that reg was never meant to address anything but quail and duck field trials.

So we'll look at what you're requesting. But, Chuck, would you --

MR. SYKES: Well, I got to feel like Chris Blankenship for two speakers anyway.

Look, it is three free. They can have as many field trials as they want. All we're asking is buy a small game license. That's it.
We had one club that had 120 permits a couple of years ago. That's a little excessive. We did a -- Chief Dodd did a sweep of all the clubs that requested permits. The average was less than three per club. So we thought we were being very generous with allowing three free permits per each club. They can have a hundred after that. They just need to buy a license.

COMMISSIONER GUY: Chuck -- I'm sorry. And then, if you would, address the issue about the out-of-state -- out-of-state issue where somebody is coming from out of state, meaning that -- some of those places don't even allow them to do field trials. They get to come here and do them, at least up to three --

MR. SYKES: Some of the -- one phone call I got that really sticks in my mind -- and this may be not the norm. But I had a guy that says with this $20 license these people are not going to be able to
drive from Canada to come to my field trial, and if they can't come to this field trial, they're not going to be in the winning to win the truck. If you're bringing a truck, trailer, dogs, all your equipment from Canada and coming down to a field trial, a $20 license is not going to prohibit you from enjoying that activity. I'm sorry. And I'm not trying to be ugly. But that was a legitimate phone call that we got.

CHAIRMAN STRICKLAND: Commissioner.

COMMISSIONER GUY: And could I just make one more point?

So the other point, ma'am, is this, too: It takes a lot of effort, a lot of manpower hours, a lot of administrative functions to do what y'all are asking for. Consequently, as we mentioned earlier, we don't get state dollars, no general fund money. So we have to also look at what we provide to you through our law enforcement section, our
wildlife section, all the people -- just so you'll understand. I'm not trying to be ugly. I want you to understand.

When we help with these things -- because there has to be somebody that comes there, spends time, makes sure that people are obeying the laws and this kind of thing. So when we look at this, I just want you to know it wasn't some helter-skelter type of action on our part. It was to also try to support what you need when y'all put on these field trials through monies we need to get administratively.

MS. COOPER: And I absolutely understand that and would never have any problem with paying for a permit, never did. I was actually when I applied for the first one quite surprised they were free because I expected to pay a fee. No problem paying a fee.

What I might suggest is, if possible -- and I reread the e-mail I
was sent multiple times as I was sitting up here in the crowd before I came down. The way the e-mail was worded does not convey that the first three are free or that you're allowed any after that. And it says in the e-mail that, yes, it was originally designed for bird dog field trials, which I have participated in, also, but that they also issue them for raccoon, fox, squirrel, and it made mention of others. So that's why it became a concern of ours and was brought to our attention as an association by a lot of small game hunters.

COMMISSIONER GUY: And can I just -- and just briefly -- so I appreciate those comments. And that's what we're trying to do, get it right now.

MS. COOPER: Yeah.

COMMISSIONER GUY: It was a matter of interpretation over about 40 years that was causing us, like I say, a lot of manpower and that expense. So I promise
we'll work with you. Just work with us in understanding what we're trying to do here, and I think we'll all come to find a common place.

MS. COOPER: We'd absolutely love to work with you. And that's another reason I'm here today is to start establishing a working relationship between the state coon hunters association and the conservation board. Because a lot of our membership and our officers were very dormant for years and years until new membership and management took over.

CHAIRMAN STRICKLAND: Mr. Hartzog, you have the floor.

MR. HARTZOG: One question, Chuck. Is the fee per club event or per entrance?

MR. SYKES: Club event. So one -- they can have 150 participants for $50.

MR. HARTZOG: I mean, the entry fees that they take in can more than cover a $50 permit. I mean, that's not a problem.

MS. COOPER: We also pay portions back to the
registries. And I'm not sure how or where the board is and stuff of the license fee that we pay to UKC. We pay not only a license fee for the event, but we also pay per dog entered, so ...

MR. HARTZOG: I know.

CHAIRMAN STRICKLAND: Thank you, Ms. Cooper. We're looking forward to working with you. Thank you for coming forward.

MS. COOPER: Thank you so much.

CHAIRMAN STRICKLAND: Our next speaker will be Richard Wallace.

MR. WALLACE: Thank you. My name is Richard Wallace. I'm from Killen, Alabama, and that's in Lauderdale County.

I was a conservation officer for almost 39 years. I retired in 2010. 36 of those years was in Lauderdale County as a conservation officer. This past year we were part -- or a part of my county -- the east portion of my county was put on restricted doe days. We went from having a 57-day doe season to
having an 18-day doe season.

I worked that county as a
conservation enforcement officer, and I
have been from one end of that county to
the other for 36 years. There are just
as many deer in the east end of
Lauderdale County as there are in the
west end of Lauderdale County.

I sat in a shooting house with my
grandson this year who does not care to
hunt very much. And I explained to him
that, look, we can't shoot does; we'll
have to shoot bucks. Now, my grandson
comes and hunts with me probably twice a
year. And, like I say, he's not a
hunter. But he does like to go with his
grandfather.

We sat in that tree stand -- I mean,
that shooting house, and there were
probably 20 unantlered deer that came in
the field. He didn't get to shoot. Of
course, I didn't get to shoot. We go
home and he won't come back. He sat and
watched those deer and realized that he had better things to do by playing a video game.

If we had a problem -- and I worked hard to try to establish a deer herd in Lauderdale County. If we had a problem, I would be one of the very first ones to say something needs to be done. But we do not have a problem with deer in the east part of Lauderdale County. And I am requesting that whatever this board decides as far as a season for the east part of Lauderdale County, consider that I think whatever happens in the west end of Lauderdale County should happen in the east part of Lauderdale County.

Thank you.

CHAIRMAN STRICKLAND: Mr. Wallace, I know you have -- you have to have an excellent relationship with our conservation officers. I would suggest that, Chuck, maybe you could spend some time, you know, a few minutes with Mr. Wallace.
MR. WALLACE: I have.
MR. SYKES: We have.
CHAIRMAN STRICKLAND: Okay.
MR. WALLACE: I have already spoken to him,
and he was very receptive to me. And I
appreciate that. I do.
CHAIRMAN STRICKLAND: I feel that you
definitely deserve that.
MR. WALLACE: In my years -- my years of
experience working with the department,
I had probably the best job in the
world. I worked with -- Captain Johnson
was my last supervisor. Captain Askew
was a lieutenant for me. I enjoyed that
tremendously.
CHAIRMAN STRICKLAND: Well, we certainly
appreciate your service that you brought
to the state in the past.

Grady, you have the floor.

MR. HARTZOG: Mr. Wallace -- and correct me if
I'm wrong, Chuck. When we passed these
different zones and passed the different
seasons, did not we do it on a two-year
and so this would be the last year and
then we were going to try to readjust
those seasons for the following years?

MR. SYKES: The only thing that was sunsetted
with Mr. Cagle's motion was the extended
deer season. It didn't have anything to
do with the zones. The zone was -- if
you had property in that zone like
Mr. Wallace, the DMAP program is
tailor-made to handle those issues on a
specific landowner-by-landowner basis.
And I think that's what Mr. Jones was
wanting to speak about.

CHAIRMAN STRICKLAND: Ray, you have the floor.

MR. JONES: Yeah. And I was going to say the
deer management program -- Deer
Management Assistance Program, to be
precise, you can apply for that and have
that done on the specific -- if you've
got too many does on your property,
that's the way to handle that is to go
through that program.

MR. WALLACE: We spoke about that earlier.
Mr. Sykes and I spoke about that earlier. I -- if I thought I was the only person who was having that type of situation, but I'm not. It's -- it's all of east Lauderdale County.

I don't -- you probably -- I don't know how many of you have ever been to Joe Wheeler State Park, but you cannot drive through Joe Wheeler State Park without nearly running over a deer. They're everywhere. They're -- I mean, it's not -- it's not a situation where I've got a problem with more deer on mine. They're everywhere. I mean, it's not a -- it's not a centralized --

MR. JONES: I understand. And I think our biologists can look at that on a --

MR. SYKES: I offered and Mr. Wallace is going to outline what his lines should be. And we'll get with our staff and have something for y'all before the next board meeting.

CHAIRMAN STRICKLAND: Thank you, Chuck.
MR. WALLACE: I certainly appreciate y'all listening to me.

CHAIRMAN STRICKLAND: Thank you, Mr. Wallace. Thank you for coming.

The next speaker will be Billy Joe Johnson.

MR. JOHNSON: Thank y'all for the opportunity to speak with you today. I'm Billy Joe Johnson. I'm from Cherokee County. And just like Mr. Wally, I've got a problem with the split deer season -- split doe season. This was implemented into our county this year. And I talked with Mr. Sykes, and he suggested that we get together as a group up there and maybe propose some realignment of the lines.

I met with a little ad hoc committee we put together. Phillip Abney with the Natural Resources and Conservation Service, one of your retired biologists, Tracy Nelson, was on that, Harlan Starr, who is a sitting member on the National Wild Turkey Federation Board of
Directors, and myself. We talked about this redistribution of the lines, and it just -- it just didn't need it. We -- the whole county is completely full of the doe population that we seem to be wanting to protect here. And we couldn't decide any area that needed excluding to follow the guidelines.

So what we -- what we decided to do was to determine what problems this was creating for the county. There's some collateral damage going on with this. Don't know if y'all are familiar with our deer processors that we have around the state. I'm sure you are. But I went and talked to those guys. They're looking at somewhere between -- one of my buddies, my neighbor, is looking between seven and $9,000 down for this year income because of the provisions. This -- and a disturbing fact in this is the number of doe they've been -- I mean, bucks they've been processing.
Normally it's close to a 50/50 thing, maybe 60. They've been processing -- 70 or 80 percent of the deer they processed this year have been little bucks.

Like Mr. Wally, I have grandchildren that I hunt with. And with the number of days that we have to provide this information to them, provide the activity to them, it's hard for us to get out there and be able to teach those young folks about good solid deer hunting. I've always known that when bucks are on -- I mean, does are on the field, those are opportunities for -- to fill the freezer, to put meat in the freezer. A little buck comes on the field. You show him a chart that the Alabama Wildlife Federation has got that we have in each shooting house that shows you the need and what letting that little buck pass would do for the herd.

MS. JONES: Time.

MR. JOHNSON: We're killing those little bucks
in Cherokee County. That's what's really disturbing.

CHAIRMAN STRICKLAND: Mr. Johnson?

MR. JOHNSON: Yes.

CHAIRMAN STRICKLAND: That's your three minutes.

MR. JOHNSON: Okay. That's my three minutes.

Lastly -- I was waiting -- I was waiting for that young lady to give me my three minutes.

CHAIRMAN STRICKLAND: She actually did.

MS. JONES: I did. I said "time."

MR. JOHNSON: Oh, did she?

Oh, the last thing I want to add is that if y'all can do anything to help us with this -- with this split season, we would appreciate it.

CHAIRMAN STRICKLAND: Thank you, Mr. Johnson.

MR. JOHNSON: Thank you.

CHAIRMAN STRICKLAND: Our next speaker is Pete McCoy.

MR. MCCOY: My name is Pete McCoy. This will be really short.
First of all, I appreciate all that y'all do for us as hunters here in the state.

Also, I appreciate you extending the season this year, ten days for deer hunting. Yesterday I was able to harvest the largest buck of my life. Somehow this deer knew when January 31st was. I've been hunting this deer for three years. Got tons of trail camera pictures. And they've all been February 1st and after when he decided to start showing up. So yesterday morning I got out there early, and I was able to get him. He didn't get the e-mail that the season had changed. So I appreciate you extending the season.

CHAIRMAN STRICKLAND: Congratulations. Send us a picture, Pete.

Next speaker, Rick Baxter.

MR. BAXTER: Good morning. Rick Baxter from Washington County, Alabama.

First and foremost, I want to thank
every member that returned my phone call December the 27th. I was on an
information-gathering project. Some of you I didn't get ahold of because I
didn't have your phone number. But the ones that did, it was the week after
Christmas, and you took the time out of your day to call me back -- and I really
appreciate that -- with that information we were putting together to figure out
how many complaints we were having in the state against dog hunters hunting
for deer.

At that time I talked to seven different board members, I believe it was. We had three at that time in the whole state. All right. Since then it's up to 65. That number has increased. We knew that was coming. From last year, the report that you have, I'm sure, was 272. 75 percent decrease. As Mr. Melton said, we're doing -- we accepted a challenge from
the board, from Commissioner Sykes -- I mean, Director Sykes, Commissioner Guy
to clean up our act.

I'm a member of the -- I'm the vice
president of the Alabama Dog Hunters
Association. We work hard. Lonnie, the
president, has traveled. I have
traveled all over the country -- or all
over the state this year trying hard.
We have helped. We are not the end
result. The end result is the
individual hunter that has taken the
challenge to be better and be stewards
of what we do. And they've accepted
that, and they have exceeded.

So with that said, I'm in the same
boat Mr. Melton is in. If you've got to
put a regulation on us, then take one
away from us.

The encroachment law, that's -- I
want the individual held -- I want to be
accountable for what I do. I don't want
my cousin, my brother, or someone else
taking something away from me because of what he's doing. But with that said, with the encroachment law, if you're on a permit system, he could still do that.

I hunt in a county that half the county is on a permit system. I hunt in Clarke County. Highway 17 divides the permit. Okay. So Hebron, a 13,000-acre hunting club, they're over there with a permit system. Now you implement this. They could still have one guy -- and I have many friends that hunt that club. They have one guy. He gets a ticket for the third try, whatever. He gets a ticket. That could still shut his whole club down because it hurts the permit system. That to me is double jeopardy.

All I ask is you consider that and think about that when you're making the decisions on this. The permit system, I do think it had its place at the time. It's worked in places. It has helped us tremendously. One other thing that I
think has helped is the ten days back in December. The 272 complaints going to 65, I would attribute that -- cutting the dog hunting off at January the 15th to probably 50 percent of your complaint decrease.

MS. JONES: Time.

CHAIRMAN STRICKLAND: Thank you, Mr. Baxter.

MR. BAXTER: One last thing.

Mr. Wallace, to get that boy out from in front of those computer games and video games, bring him to Choctaw County. We'll put him in a buggy with a bunch of beagle puppies, and he won't play video games no more, I can promise you. Thank you.

MR. WOLFE: Mr. Chairman?

CHAIRMAN STRICKLAND: Yes, Gary. You have the floor.

MR. WOLFE: The number that he just spoke of, is that the updated number that's -- do we know that updated number of what he spoke of?
MR. SYKES: I'm going to let Chief Lewis answer that question.

MR. WOLFE: As a board member, I don't know what that number is. I'd like to know what that number is.

MR. LEWIS: End of the year total is 181 complaints that were received on dog deer hunting statewide.

MR. WOLFE: Okay. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN STRICKLAND: Our next speaker is Lonnie Miller.

MR. MILLER: I'm Lonnie Miller, the president of the Alabama Dog Hunters Association. I'm here basically to thank you guys for hearing us and hearing our voice.

The report that I got from Chief Lewis was 65 roughly. Last year when Kevin Dodd gave it to me, it was 242 complaints, not 272. And I did not and have not checked with him since the season went out. And, of course, as I've told several of you -- a few of you in the past week or so, the report is
not accurate. And I can tell you a prime example.

   Last year -- you know, well, the bottom line is we don't know if it's substantiated complaints or not. We don't know if it's a phone call, did they catch the dog -- is it a substantiated complaint or is it a phone call, if they call you guys or -- you know, and I'm not in no way here to disrespect Chief Lewis or the department. But what my point is and what I said last year, we have to have chain of command. It's got to go from the landowner that catches the dog to the top and back down through us and you guys. And if it don't do that, anybody can call and complain.

   I personally through -- Kevin Dodd sent me some information on some people that are here today at this meeting. And I called these people, and some of the stuff was valid. Some of it was
not. And I did research on my end, sent GPS documents, you know, from our Garmins.

So the point being, we need to -- that report needs to be valid, you know, not -- with all due respect to Chief Lewis, I asked him -- and Kevin Dodd and I were working on the report to get the proper number of acres, the proper number of clubs in the counties. And I had worked all spring and part of the summer with Kevin in doing that -- or Chief Dodd.

And, you know, of course, some people think that report is not important. It's very important. Like I told Jeff Martin yesterday on the phone, that report is very important because if -- it needs to be the proper number of acreage, the proper number of dog clubs. And I think in one county it may list 13 dog clubs. Well, there's 19 dog clubs in that county. Well, if you
start doing the math, maybe the problem
is not as bad as it really seems and,
then again, maybe it is.

I'm not here to say that there's not
problems because we do have a few hot
spots. But I can tell you we made a big
change. And we need to make sure
that -- I agree with what Mr. Melton
said. I don't want any type of
legislation or any kind of -- any more
laws or rules. Give us a chance and --
so what?

And people said it's a year. It's
only been a year.

MS. JONES: Time.

MR. MILLER: It's only been a year. But I can
tell you, we made a big change.

CHAIRMAN STRICKLAND: Commissioner, you have
the floor.

COMMISSIONER GUY: So Lonnie, first of all,
let me say this: I think the point that
needs to be made here is that -- and I
think I've said this publicly -- is that
y'all have worked well with us, and I appreciate the dog hunters association and you doing so. I know you take a lot of heat from your membership sometimes because I don't think they quite understand -- and I'm saying it publicly -- what we're trying to do.

So thank you, number one, for working with us. Thanks to all the dog hunters for trying to eliminate the complaints that we have, but we still have them; right?

So all we're trying to do -- and I want to be clear about this -- is to try to reduce those complaints. Those conflicts, as you well know, are probably the majority of the issues we deal with during the hunting season; right?

So we're not -- we are not -- let me state it unequivocally -- trying to do anything to, you know, stop dog deer hunting. We are just trying to work
with you guys to try to minimize those conflicts between dog deer hunters and others. And I promise you and I promise the people in here that if you'll continue to work with us and listen to what we're trying to do -- and we'll listen to what y'all's concerns are -- I think we will get there. But there has to be a mentality, like you've shown so far, of working through those issues for the benefit of everybody. And that's what I want to thank you for.

And so, yes, reducing those conflicts -- the number of complaints has been tremendous. And I thank you and I thank all of the people that have worked to get it there. And what do we always say?

It's always the bad apples that cause everybody else the problem; right? That's always what it is. Because as a whole -- it's not the dog deer hunter as a whole, just like there are bad stalk
hunters and bad this, that, and the other. So what we're trying to do is get to the -- is get to help you -- help you as an association address those bad guys that aren't really wanting to conform.

So I just want to say that publicly. I know that you've tried to make sure your organization knows that. And I want to thank you for sitting down with us and having some hard discussions.

MR. MILLER: And we appreciate the relationship that we've had with you guys as well. And, you know, it's a work in progress, but I can tell you that it's very important to get the complaints substantiated. And, you know, as far as the -- you know, if it's not a substantiated complaint -- you know, I used to be a prison guard, and if it wasn't in writing, it did not happen. And we have to -- we have got to document the case. And I agree with
what Rick said. It's my responsibility
to keep my dog on my property, period.
And that's what I say. And it's got to
be that way.

COMMISSIONER GUY: Let me just make one
clarification here. And I may be wrong.
I'll look to my folks.

So to substantiate the complaint,
though, isn't that after warnings --
written warnings or no?

MR. LEWIS: A substantiated complaint is --
when I say total, that's the total
number of complaints we received
regarding dog deer hunters. Within
those, if it's a permitted county, we
would have substantiated complaints
where an officer went out and
investigated this. We have a picture of
the dog where the dog is right there.

Of course, another --

(Brief interruption by the court
reporter.)

COMMISSIONER GUY: You have to stand up,
Chris. Our court reporter needs to hear what you're saying.

MR. LEWIS: Substantiated complaints are -- if we have a permitted county, permitted club, if we get a complaint, we'll go out and investigate that. And if we can verify a dog intrusion, we can verify with either proof of the dog there or the dog still there, we recover it, we call that a substantiated or confirmed complaint.

On permitted clubs, we get a call, a dog intrusion. We get out there. There's nothing there. We log that as an unconfirmed complaint. Either way it's still a complaint that we receive that we responded to.

If it's not a permitted county, it's just -- it's a complaint. We go investigate it. We don't do a report since it's not a permitted county.

Permitted clubs, we do reports for each club based on the number of
complaints they get. Each club will get
a letter at the end of the season if
they had complaints, confirmed or
unconfirmed. They will get a follow-up
letter at the end of the season: Hey,
this is what you had; what are we going
to do in the future to address it?
Those are on the permitted clubs.

Unpermitted clubs, we don't have --
we don't have relations with -- or we
don't follow up with them. We don't --
we go out there. We deal with the
problems. If they're there, they're
there. If they're not, we don't contact
them afterwards.

COMMISSIONER GUY: So do you have that, then,
about substantiated and unsubstantiated
broken down?

MR. LEWIS: With the permitted -- if it's a
permitted club, yes.

COMMISSIONER GUY: If it's not --

MR. LEWIS: If it's not, it's just a --

COMMISSIONER GUY: So I would just ask you to
do this: Provide that to the board and
we can -- and we'll talk to Lonnie about
those.

MR. LEWIS: Okay.

COMMISSIONER GUY: All right. Thank you.

MR. WOLFE: Mr. Chairman?

CHAIRMAN STRICKLAND: Yes.

MR. WOLFE: So do I understand the ones that
you're talking about is just the numbers
that are permitted counties? Did I
understand that right, or that
includes -- the number you gave us was
everything?

MR. LEWIS: The number I gave you is
everything we received statewide --

MR. WOLFE: Statewide.

MR. LEWIS: -- whether it's a permitted county
or not. And some of those complaints
come from counties that have been closed
to dog deer hunting for years, and we'll
get complaints there.

Some of the complaints, you know,
it's hard -- they're complaints we
receive, but they're from dogs in
Mississippi -- hunters in another state
running into Alabama. But, again, it's
a dog deer complaint, and we record all
of those.

MR. MILLER: One complaint on the report was a
dog in a pen barking on a hunting club.
That was a complaint. And so --

MR. LEWIS: I strike those from my total. I
had some complaints about dog deer --
deer dogs being shot. I strike those
from our report, too, at the end of the
year.

MR. MILLER: But in Butler County -- and I
know Butler County had one issue. Me
and Mr. Hartzog talked about it earlier.
As a prime example, there's a pack of
yard dogs running deer and, you know --
and so, you know, if a landowner calls,
hey, I got some hunting -- you're dog
hunters -- yeah, we're dog hunting or --
you know, I don't hunt in Butler County.
I hunt in Covington County.
But it's not fair for the dog hunters to get complained -- you get complaints because somebody has got dogs out and they run deer. It just happens. That happened in Baldwin County this year, you know. And that's what I'm saying.

And don't get me wrong. I really appreciate what Chuck has done and Chris and all the folks. I'm good with that, and I want to continue a relationship. But I cannot accept more punishment or restrictions at this point in time. My membership is not going to want to do that. It's not me. It's my membership. And we're going to vote on whatever you guys decide to do as to what they want to do. But I know it's my responsibility to keep my dog in my -- in my -- on my property. I agree with that 100 percent. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN STRICKLAND: Thank you, Mr. Miller.

Next public speaker -- excuse me,
Chuck.

MR. SYKES: I'm sorry.

CHAIRMAN STRICKLAND: No problem.

MR. SYKES: I understand their position on
unsubstantiated complaints. I
understand it. That's why the way that
reg is written now, whether you're in a
permit county or not a permit county,
you have to get two written warnings by
one of our officers, not word of mouth,
not a made-up, trumped-up complaint.
It's got to be investigated just like on
a permit county. That would solve the
problem.

CHAIRMAN STRICKLAND: Thank you, Chuck.

Any questions from the board?

(No response.)

CHAIRMAN STRICKLAND: Next speaker, William
Allen.

COMMISSIONER GUY: Go ahead. You've only got
three minutes.

MR. ALLEN: Well, I may concentrate on one.

My name is William Allen. Everybody
calls me Andy. I live in Andalusia, Alabama, Covington County. But this concerns the -- actually being in favor of the implementation of a permit system for Butler County, particularly the area between Highway 10 and Highway 106.

I lease approximately 250 acres of Soterra land there. And I'm surrounded by some leased land, Willard Timber Company, which is leased by a dog-hunting group which basically is giving dog hunters a bad name. They have little or no respect for adjoining landowners or lessees. They do all they can to bend the rules solely for their benefits. They get my pattern down. Adjoining club members, they get their pattern down. They come in there. They throw their dogs out.

I supplied the board -- each of you have -- I think it's 14 pictures of those dogs on my food plots that you'll see those times in the middle of the
day, or there's Sunday when I as a
minister am not there. So they're doing
this at times when they think they can
get away with it.

This year, on the 26th of November,
I caught them setting up part of my land
and their land as well to run it. And
they had not throwed the dogs out. And
once I got there, within about five
minutes they all came and they all got
up to the gate and all left. But the
story was that they were trying to cut a
dog off that had come in from way far
away. The trouble is they have no land
in that area that they're supposed to be
running. It's permit land, and their
lease specifies from their own overseer
they are not to run dogs on this
property.

So they also -- when they're caught,
they use the old statement that, well,
we're trying to cut this dog off running
from two miles away. Also, they have an
attitude. We've done it for 40 years. We'll keep doing it. You're just going
to have to live with it.

Also, they use the statement that my
dog can't read property lines. So,
therefore, you know, they're on my road.
They're lined up on my road. So they've
got their gun right here at the driver's
seat. You know, they're not trying to
cut a dog off. They're trying to shoot
that deer when it crosses the road going
through the middle of my property.

So they're also mixing alcohol,

MS. JONES: Time.

MR. ALLEN: -- all at one time.

Thank you for your time. Thank you

for listening.

CHAIRMAN STRICKLAND: Thank you, Mr. Allen.

Which board member is Butler County?

Patrick, you may want to talk with

Mr. Allen and address some of his

concerns, and if you could report back
to us the next board meeting. Thank you.

Next speaker is Michael Eiser.

ME. EISER: Hey, I'm Mike Eiser. I represent a still hunt club in Coffee County, and we're highly encouraging you or begging you to please put a permit system in Coffee County.

And let me preface this by saying that I have nothing wrong -- nothing wrong with dog hunting. It's fun. It's exciting. I've done it before. But when you've got the type of encroachment we have in our club in our area, it's not fun anymore.

We've got -- this year alone we have six documented cases of dogs being captured on our property. We have tons of our hunts being ruined by rogue dogs running across our property. And I can't for the life of me figure out how Coffee County has escaped the permit system so far.
We're not dealing with the Lonnie Millers of the world. We're not dealing with the guys he described as do it and do it right and do it well and do it by the law and engage the techniques that help cut down on complaints. We don't have those guys here in Coffee County. We got the guys that don't give a crap. And our recourse -- what is our recourse if we come up with a single man -- if he -- this happened recently. We know -- we have caught those dogs -- we've got a guy criminally trespassing -- charges and arrest made for criminal trespassing on our property.

So if you can't get the type of guys that we want to have deer dog hunting privileges in Coffee County, give us the permit system. Give us something. Give us something with some teeth, some recourse to protect our interests. Because there's nothing more aggravating
than working your butt off for years and hundreds of hours and all off season.
Oh, you sit down on your stand the first day you can get there and have dogs come running across your property. When you do catch them, you bring them out there. They say, oh, well, my dog can't read signs. Well, I get that. Well, give us the permit system. Give us something to hang our hats on.

And, again, nothing against any dog hunter in this property -- in this room. You're doing it and doing it right. It's the jerks that are in our county that are ruining it for us, and they're ruining it for you.

CHAIRMAN STRICKLAND: Patrick, I think that's your congressional district.

MR. CAGLE: Yes.

CHAIRMAN STRICKLAND: If you could get with Mike.

MR. CAGLE: I've been discussing this with folks in their club and folks in the
adjoining club, and it's a discussion
we're going to need to continue to find
the best resolution.

MR. EISER: Can we get a vote or get a -- how
do we get you guys to vote on a permit
system for our county?

MR. CAGLE: Anything we vote on would be at
the next board meeting --

MR. EISER: Okay.

MR. CAGLE: -- on March 4th.

MR. EISER: Well, I'm begging. Anybody who is
opposed to the Coffee County permit
system, please call me and tell me why.
I want to know.

And recently we had an incident that
involved a dog hunter who escalated to
the point of pulling a gun on us.
That's got to end. This is a powder keg
in Coffee County. You can't have that.

(Multiple speakers.)

MR. EISER: Read the police report. Read the
police report. The sheriffs were
called. They had -- we had to -- his
members had to physically restrain --

CHAIRMAN STRICKLAND: Hey, Mike --

MR. EISER: -- him from getting his gun.

CHAIRMAN STRICKLAND: Let's go ahead. We'll take this up.

MR. EISER: Fair enough. Thank y'all. Now I'm going to get out of here before I get shot.

CHAIRMAN STRICKLAND: The next speaker is Kaelyn Fillingim.

MS. FILLINGIM: I like to move around too much to keep the mic in the stand.

My name is Kaelyn Fillingim, and I am from Coffee County. I have several memories in my childhood about hunting with my daddy. He would let me name all the dogs after my favorite princesses. We had Cinderella, Snow White, and even Sleeping Beauty.

It breaks my heart when I realize how much hunting participation has dropped. 50 percent of hunters are over the age of 47. With declines like these
and cuts and restrictions on any type of hunting, this will negatively impact license sales and potentially affect everyone in the room.

The proposed encroachment or leash law states it shall be unlawful for any person for the purpose of deer hunting to permit a dog to enter onto, cross, or remain upon property of another after request not to allow entry of said dog onto property has been communicated to that person by the owner of such property of authorized person.

I'm here representing all dog hunters in Alabama, not the Alabama Dog Hunters Association.

So you mean to tell me with this law that my pet "Shooter" who wears sweaters and takes selfies will suddenly be deemed unlawful if he chases a butterfly across a property line? What determines that that dog is a deer dog or that that dog was actually chasing a deer? Who
makes this determination?

For this proposed law to be enacted, every landowner will have the ability to act as an animal control officer. This law will turn neighbors against each other.

Why are we not promoting hunting? We are all hunters. We should not distinguish one type of hunter from another. Whether you're a stand hunter, coon hunter, quail hunter, dog hunter, or bird hunter, we are all aiming to achieve the same purpose. More restrictions do not fix problems. They simply create them. I know many of your childhoods, like mine, were formed around the memories we made hunting with our daddies, brothers, uncles, and friends.

Social media plays a prevalent role in all of our lives. Anti-hunting groups are constantly trying to prove hunting to be unethical. Some have even
called dog hunters barbaric. We need
every hunter in the room to join
together to keep those childhood
memories alive because before this fight
is over we will need everyone and all
types of hunting.

Dog hunters are no longer
apologizing when we are not guilty of
anything. The days of bowing down are
over, and we are here standing up for
what we all know is right. I know that
I will be a dog hunter in Alabama as
long as I live with the hopes that this
advisory board and Conservation
Department does not put this sport to an
end. Dog hunters are here following the
rules and restrictions that are in place
just like every other type of hunter in
this room.

CHAIRMAN STRICKLAND: You have the floor,

Mr. Wolfe.

MR. WOLFE: I don't know who can answer the
question. The law you read, I'm not
familiar with that law that pertains to
what we're talking about.

MS. FILLINGIM: It's the leash or
encroachment --

MR. WOLFE: Chuck, can you -- can anybody
here -- is that a local law that you're
talking about in your area?

MR. SYKES: That -- that was last year's reg.
The one this year says two written
warnings -- it's in y'all's packet --
two written warnings by a conservation
enforcement officer, not any other law
enforcement branch. So it's not a
verbal warning. This is a
substantiated -- which is what the dog
hunters association wanted. This is a
substantiated complaint.

MS. FILLINGIM: The proposed questions would
still be in place even if they were
written warnings; correct? I mean,
because you're still going -- you're
still going to have the question of
whether the dog is a deer dog or if the
dog was chasing a deer. I'm not sure how you make the differentiation or how that would work.

MR. WOLFE: Yeah. But you've got to investigate it. You've got to find out whose dog it is and invest -- I mean, that's what the officers are for.

CHAIRMAN STRICKLAND: Thank you, Kaelyn.

MS. FILLINGIM: Thank you.

CHAIRMAN STRICKLAND: Next speaker, Susan Morrow.

MS. MORROW: Good morning, Chairman -- afternoon. I don't know what time it is now. I'm Susan Morrow. I'm from Mobile County. I'm here to talk to y'all about dog hunting.

Dog hunters in the last several years have worked very, very hard. We have disassociated ourself with the bad dog hunters. We do it right, and we keep getting more and more restrictions put on us.

Dog hunting is fun. As she said
earlier, we should all band together to keep all types of hunting going. You do away with dog hunting and you're going to lose a lot of license sales. You think you won't, but you will. And we've worked so hard. And, now, if there is a problem -- and as you said -- the officers, they need to arrest these people.

We have disassociated ourself with the bad dog hunters. We are not law enforcement. We cannot arrest them. And they will continue to do it anyway, whether y'all stop dog hunting in Alabama or you don't. And the only way that that complaining is going to stop is for somebody to start arresting these people and getting them. I mean, you know, you can set up a sting or something if you have to, but show us that it's actually happening this way. And so I'm asking y'all to, please, look at that.
And I'm also asking for more WMAs to be opened. I understand that a lot of the counties have been closed to dog hunting. But this is a state property that you lease or Forever Wild. Mr. Guy, he can open it up just on that state property for a hunt.

Yes, we lost Scotch. And I know all of you that's been here have heard me say. Scotch was the best organized dog hunt you would ever go on. It was. We lost Boykin. So y'all gave us Geneva. And, yes, I went to the Geneva hunt, and I will say this: I took my seven-year-old grandson, and he got to stay out of school to go. And when we got there, after we -- we was told to get our little numbers and all and get in line -- well, show our license.

And so we got in line, and then they had a little meeting, called us all over there. And we was sold by Mr. Miller that do not put your hands on our dogs;
do not catch our dogs; we will catch our
dogs. He said -- and somebody said, 
why? And he said, well, it could be 
that you put two male dogs in a box and 
they go to fighting, and we don't want 
our dogs hurt. Then he come up with the 
dogs might bite you. And I'm thinking, 
oh, Lord, what kind of dogs are we in 
the woods with? Because there was 
nowhere to --

MS. JONES: Time.

MS. MORROW: -- register your dogs to go.

CHAIRMAN STRICKLAND: Ms. Morrow --

MS. MORROW: Ask me a question so I can 
continue.

But, please -- I will wind it up.

But my grandson asked me -- he said, 
Mawmaw, does this mean that if a dog 
comes up and looks at me with them big 
eyes I can't catch him? I said, yes, 
son, that's what it means. He says, 
let's go home right now. It was not 
family oriented. It was like get in
line, stay right there. It was -- if it would have been my first dog hunt, it would have been my last.

And I wish that y'all would look at opening up some more. They can be organized hunts. It was done with state people. So I wish y'all would do that.

And, also, Lonnie Miller does not speak for me as a dog hunter in this state and a lot of other dog hunters in this state.

CHAIRMAN STRICKLAND: Thank you, Ms. Morrow.

MS. MORROW: Thank you.

CHAIRMAN STRICKLAND: The next speaker, Donald Nelson.

MR. NELSON: Thank you, gentlemen, for allowing me to speak this morning. I'm going to try to be as quick as I can. I am friends with Mr. Lonnie Miller and Ms. Morrow back there, so I love them both.

Okay. I'm Colonel Don Nelson, United State Marine Corps Retired. Some
of y'all know me as Mayor Don Nelson -- ex-mayor now -- 16 years in our little town. But what I'm saying is 32 years I took an oath to defend the freedoms of this country, also the states -- the state of Alabama. I'm a deacon at my church. I'm a trustee at my church. And the reason I'm telling you this is not to beat my chest. It's to say I'm not an outlaw and I'm not a renegade. I'm just a good American that was raised in this country, and I appreciate that.

I killed one buck deer this year on my family's 200 acres, confirmation number 172B80924202. And I had a flip phone, so it was a challenge to do that.

I dog hunted for over 50 years, and I enjoyed that in the area I hunted. I haven't killed a deer on that club in ten years. I don't even carry a shotgun no more. I enjoy going with my dogs.

And I'm -- and, like I say, what I want to do, I want to thank Pat Cagle
for calling me this year. There was a complaint on the club that I belong to, and I appreciate Pat for calling me and alerting me to that problem about a dog intrusion. Left 80 acres of my land, went over for 30 minutes. The landowner called me. I'd already put some safeguards in place. Got chewed out and I took it. I can take it from a man. I'm a marine. I can -- if I do wrong, I'll own up to what I did.

But I thank Pat for calling me. I had already said no more dogs on that property, that we have to alleviate that problem. And there's been no more complaints, I don't believe, from that piece of property there.

We've purchased over -- my group of folks I hunt with, we purchased over $50,000 worth of tracking collars, all the systems that's associated. We're getting ready to buy another $5,000 worth of shock collars. We're trying to
implement the whistle training of these younger dogs. My dogs are 12 to 14 years old. They're like me. An old dog is hard to teach a new trick, but we're trying.

We also put a perimeter road that is a mile around the perimeter of our property to stop this problem here. We have had one problem in our area, and I think the young lady talked about it. These dogs, they're pets. And where I hunt at, there's two Labs -- two black Labs. There's a Collie dog. He looks like a wolf. I'm surprised he hadn't got shot because he looks like a coyote. And a tri-colored Walker dog. They've been reported to Lieutenant Randall Lee, I believe, in Andalusia through one of our members there that those dogs had been running all summer. They're still running right now. And my members have seen them. They ran three bucks under one of them during stalk season. I do
both stalk hunt and dog hunt, and I
enjoy both. I take my grandson, and I
hope I have the opportunity.

I'm -- we haven't had a complaint in
the past two years. We did this year.
Every year I come here I ask Mr. Hartzog
and I ask Pat since he's been on the
board have you had any complaints the
last two prior years, no. This year,
yes. We slipped up. I regret that we
had the complaint.

MS. JONES: Time.

MR. NELSON: But I feel like we've rectified
it. The only thing I would ask you to
do is, please, don't put us on the
permit system in Butler County and that
that regulation about -- that you
consider that you wouldn't do that.

Thank you for your time.

CHAIRMAN STRICKLAND: Thank you, Mr. Nelson.

MR. NELSON: Any questions?

MR. CAGLE: Mr. Chairman?

CHAIRMAN STRICKLAND: Patrick, you have the
floor.

MR. CAGLE: Don, I want to thank you. I did hear some complaints in Butler County. I talked to Lonnie. I talked to Don. Before I talked to them, I talked to Nate Foster, the enforcement officer in the area, and, you know, figured out there were issues that needed to be corrected.

Don came forward at my request to work with Lonnie, and they came up with a set of recommendations that they're going to voluntarily impose to prevent the problem. That's the model we all need to be following. Because just fighting every year at this board meeting, you know, one side against another is not going to get us anywhere.

At the end of the day, the goal is to minimize conflict. We'll never end it all. But if everyone takes responsibility for their own actions and keeps their dogs from continuously going
on others' property, the sport is going
to continue and we're going to have less
problems. And taking these voluntary
actions and -- you know, under Don, you
know, with him leading his club in that
direction and Lonnie's help, that's the
model we need to be following.

If there's a problem, let's identify
a real problem and come up with a
voluntary solution to solve it. It
makes it easy on us, and it makes it
easy on the club. Because, you know, at
the end of the day it's -- if dogs
continuously come on a neighbor's
property, it's a problem that's going to
get fixed one way or another. The best
way is the easiest way. So thank you.

MR. NELSON: Thank you for alerting me to that
problem. I will correct anything, shut
my dogs down to let other people hunt
theirs. It is a privilege, and I thank
y'all for your time and what you do.
Thank you, gentlemen.
CHAIRMAN STRICKLAND: Thank you, Mr. Nelson.

Our next public speaker is Larry Ollis.

MR. OLLIS: My name is Larry Ollis. First I'd like to start by thanking each of y'all for allowing me to be here and speak to y'all this morning.

I'm a dog hunter in Talladega National Forest. This past season our dog season was shortened from 58 days to 36. Of the 36 days we were allowed to hunt, we had to have our dogs out of the woods and in the box by noon. Of the 36 days that we had to run dogs in the national forest, only nine of those fell on -- or 11 fell on Saturday or Sunday.

Most folks have got to work Monday through Friday. We can't hunt during the week. Of the 11 that fell on a Saturday and Sunday, two of those were Christmas Eve and Christmas Day.

I want to know what's being done by this board to give us our season back,
if anything, what's being looked at to
give us our season back in the Talladega
National Forest.

Mr. Miller his self said that a lot of the complaints that have come in -- when he sat down and worked with the board to reduce our season, a lot of the complaints that have come in about dog hunters in the national forest were unfounded, unsubstantiated, whatever he wanted to call it. The bottom line is, without any proof -- if there's no investigation, if there's no proof that our dogs have even trespassed, then why was our season took away? Why were we cut down?

That's about the only question I really got this morning. Other than that, I'd just like to say that -- just like Ms. Morrow said, the ADHA no longer represents every dog hunter in the state of Alabama. Lonnie Miller does not represent every dog hunter in the state
of Alabama. He don't represent me. He
don't represent the guys I hunt with.
He don't represent half the guys in
Talladega National Forest. He has no
business speaking for us. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN STRICKLAND: Mr. Martin.

MR. MARTIN: I want to say working with Lonnie
has been an absolute pleasure.
Talladega National Forest had a lot of
big issues. He called me the other day,
and I said, I mean, I've had one
complaint, and it wasn't -- and said,
hey, it's not perfect, but it's a heck
of a lot better than it ever has been.
So I wouldn't slam Lonnie that bad. I
mean, he's -- what's been going on has
been working. So, you know, I say
continue on.

But, Lonnie, I appreciate everything
you've done because it's been -- it's
been a pleasure working with you, and I
think we have a great working
relationship.
CHAIRMAN STRICKLAND: Any other questions from the board? Comments?

(No response.)

CHAIRMAN STRICKLAND: Our final public speaker is Joe Thomas.

MR. THOMAS: I just -- I know that a lot of y'all heard from me on the telephone calling complaining about dogs. I don't have nothing against dog hunting, people who hunt dogs. But when a man owns a piece of property and he's not allowed to hunt it because they're running dogs over it and you're offending your neighbor, that ain't right no matter what. I mean, you know, if I was offending my neighbor and stopping him from hunting, he'd be down here raising Cain about me. Well, I hadn't stopped him from hunting. I mean, you'll never hear a dog hunter say that --

And I ain't talking about the good dog hunters. I'm talking about folks that are outlawing.
-- come up and say, oh, those still
hunters messed me up; they went in the
woods; they're too quiet.

I mean, there ain't but one argument
here. The dog hunters don't want to
stop dog hunting, of course. I don't
want to see it stopped. But the whole
argument is you got still hunters that
can't hunt their land like mine. I
drove an hour and a half to hunt my
land. I get up there -- and I caught
the dogs twice. One man said, oh, it
was his yard dog. Well, it -- you can
ask the game warden. It wasn't. But, I
mean, he was just, you know, using any
excuse he can. I mean, if you got to
lie about doing something, you know you
ain't up to no good anyway.

But the last dogs I caught, I called
the game warden and sent pictures and
all that, but -- they hunted in Escambia
County, which I -- my land is at the
back of -- starts at Escambia County. I
live in Baldwin County. Well, Baldwin is under a permit system. Mr. Wolfe and Mr. Stimpson told me about it. But in Escambia County, they run their dogs across there and, you know ...

I asked that fellow when they took him his dogs back, you know -- I said, did y'all hunt? He said, oh, yeah, we had a good time today. I said, I didn't get to hunt; I had to catch your dogs. I mean, he -- you know, he didn't care. He's going to do the same thing the next day. He said he was going hunting the next day, you know. And you couldn't stop him.

So, I mean -- you know, I mean, I understand they got the right to dog hunt. I'm not asking the board to stop that at all. What a man does on his property to me is his business. But he ought to be able to do what he wants to on his own property. He ought to have the right to. He pays a note and taxes,
you know. I mean, if a dog come over --
your neighbor's dog come over and turned
your garbage over every day, you'd get
ticked eventually. You know, it ain't
right. And I thank all.
CHAIRMAN STRICKLAND: Thank you, Mr. Thomas.
MR. DOBBS: Real quick, Mr. Chairman.
Mr. Thomas, one question. Where do
you hunt? Where exactly? You said
Escambia --
MR. THOMAS: No. Baldwin. In Lottie,
Alabama, the Baldwin and Escambia County
line.
MR. DOBBS: I don't know where you're -- what
road? What county road?
MR. THOMAS: Highway 61 is the highway. It
goes up towards Atmore. My address is
Atmore.
MR. DOBBS: Okay. Thank you.
MR. THOMAS: Thank you, sir.
CHAIRMAN STRICKLAND: Commissioner.
COMMISSIONER GUY: So I want to make one
comment. I probably shouldn't make it,
but I'm going to make it anyway.

So I heard a lot of people bashing Lonnie. And that's fine. You're entitled to your opinion. There might be others that bash other folks in the dog deer hunting association or whatever.

Here's what I was listening to and trying to make sure you understand: You know, the one thing that I think we've appreciated about Lonnie is that we're trying to make decisions based on real facts, real issues, and we're trying to work and have been trying to work through things that are true. Be careful who you listen to about issues because this -- and I always talk about it like social media or whatever. You know, somebody hears something and they thinks it's the gospel. Better make sure whoever are your leaders are telling you truthful statements about what we are trying to do. I admonish
you in that because if you base your
emotions on false information, you're
making a mistake, no matter who your
leaders are.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

CHAIRMAN STRICKLAND: This concludes the
public hearing.

Grady, you can have the floor.

COMMISSIONER GUY: Patrick.

CHAIRMAN STRICKLAND: Excuse me. Patrick.

MR. CAGLE: Go ahead. I'll come behind him.

CHAIRMAN STRICKLAND: No. Go ahead.

MR. HARTZOG: Go ahead, Patrick.

MR. CAGLE: I just want to remind everyone
that the regulation that Director Sykes
has talked about -- I believe it's -- I
believe it's well written. It would
take -- you know, you would get two
documented written warnings that your
hunting dog -- and the idea that it
would not be hunting dogs is not the
case. I mean, our officers have enough
on their plates. They're not going to
be chasing yard dogs deciding whether they're hunting dogs. You know, to have a legal hunting dog, you have to have a collar on them. You know, that's all just -- but a regulation that would allow a landowner to report the dog, you would have to see the collar. If the same member of your club has their dogs caught three times and the first two times are a warning on a neighbor's property, that third time there's a problem. I think that's a simple -- a simple regulation.

But the choice here isn't nothing or something. The choice is between continuing to add counties on a permit system where there's documented problems or going to this system that holds individuals accountable. So it's important to remember that. We're not talking about doing nothing or doing something. It's simply the choice of what mechanism we use, are we going to
hold individual club members responsible
or is the whole club going to suffer for
the actions of a few bad actors. Thank
you.

CHAIRMAN STRICKLAND: Mr. Grady Hartzog has a
special presentation.

MR. HARTZOG: David, could I get you with your
camera and all, please, sir?

Could I ask Shawn Battison with
Ducks Unlimited to come down?

I'd like Gunter and Chuck to come
down. I would like Raymond and Warren
to come down.

You know, guys, the Conservation
Department -- I sit on the board of
Ducks Unlimited, and Ducks Unlimited is
a viable organization that does an awful
lot of good in the state of Alabama and
the prairies of Canada to produce ducks
which migrate down and -- so we can have
them at Swan Creek and all the other
WMAs. But, you know, over the years the
department as well as Ducks Unlimited
has had a special friend that has helped
the department as well as Ducks
Unlimited get some legislation passed
that helped both the Conservation
Department and Ducks Unlimited.

Last year we had the scientific-data
collection, which I think Fred will tell
you they had been trying for years and
years and years to get passed. This
individual helped lobby the legislature
and pushed for it and got it passed.
Ducks Unlimited wanted an increase in
the Duck Stamp bill, and this guy worked
his ass off and got the legislature to
approve a Duck Stamp bill.

We had a lot of help from different
senators. We had Senator Whatley. We
had McCutcheon, which always got us on
the floor to finally get the bill
passed. Reed Ingram and Randy Davis.
We had an awful lot of friends in the
legislature.

But at this time I'd like to call
Chauncey Wood forward to receive an
award from the Conservation Department
as well as from Ducks Unlimited.

And, Gunter, if you will read the --
here you go, Gunter.

COMMISSIONER GUY: All right. Thank you.

In recognition as a Ducks Unlimited
conservation leader, for your support of
the Alabama Department of Conservation
and Natural Resources, and on behalf of
the Alabama Duck Stamp to further
waterfowl conservation in Alabama and on
the breeding grounds of Canada, we
recognize Chauncey D. Wood, III.

Chauncey.

MR. HARTZOG: Again, thank you, Chauncey.

And just to tell you how Chauncey is
still working, the Conservation
Department presently has two bills in
the house. One is a college license so
that the college students can buy
in-state licenses and also working on
increasing the age limit on license, and
Chauncey is doing that.

I can tell you that you don't want Chauncey on your bad side because he can get a lot done in the legislature, and he has been a great friend to the Department of Conservation and to Ducks Unlimited.

So thank you, Chauncey, for all you've done.

CHAIRMAN STRICKLAND: Chauncey, once again, congratulations.

The next order of business is a motion for approval of license for CPI. I think that's Raymond Jones.

Do you have a motion?

MR. DOBBS: Mr. Chairman, I would like to propose that motion.

That pursuant to Section 9-11-68 and 9-11-69 that we approve -- I make a motion that we approve the increase of the hunting and fishing licenses and fees based on the increases as set forth in the consumer price index.
CHAIRMAN STRICKLAND: Can we get a second?

MR. JONES: Second.

CHAIRMAN STRICKLAND: Any discussion?

(No response.)

CHAIRMAN STRICKLAND: All in favor?

(All board members present respond "aye.")

CHAIRMAN STRICKLAND: Opposed?

(No response.)

CHAIRMAN STRICKLAND: Motion carries.

Is there any other old business from the board?

(No response.)

CHAIRMAN STRICKLAND: If not, we will move to new business.

Is there any new business that needs to be discussed from the board?

Grady.

MR. HARTZOG: Mr. Chairman, all I would like to do is -- I'm talking about promoting hunting and promoting the kids. Barbour County Youth Hunt is February the 25th. It's the largest youth hunt in the state
of Alabama. It's the third largest in the country.

So on February the 25th, if you've got some kids that want to have a good time, bring them down to the Barbour County Management Area. I guarantee you they'll be fed well and they'll have a good time. They'll learn skeet shooting, archery, BB guns. It's a -- they actually carry them out and squirrel hunt, raccoon hunt. So February the 25th, put that on your calendar and come out and let the kids have a good time.

CHAIRMAN STRICKLAND: Joey, do you have a motion?

MR. DOBBS: Additional new business,

Mr. Chairman, a general statement that -- regarding the proposed regulations included in our packets from both Marine Resources Division, Fish and Game, Wildlife and Freshwater Fisheries, as well as the additional packet that
was with those to be added, that those
will be voted on at our next meeting as
new business.

And another piece of new business,
things that we have discussed in the
past about the dog deer encroachment
rule, which is part of this package, to
be further clarified, some minimum
acreage requirements that we discussed
in the past for leaseholders for dog
deer hunting. And that is all that we
have discussed.

CHAIRMAN STRICKLAND: Thank you.

And these will be considered for
voting the next meeting; am I correct?

MR. DOBBS: Yes, that's correct.

CHAIRMAN STRICKLAND: All right. Let the
minutes reflect that.

Grady, you have the floor.

MR. HARTZOG: Mr. Chairman -- and I've gotten
with Chuck and Keith. There is a typo
error in the waterfowl that we can kill
11 mallards, not four. So that needs to
be changed before we vote on it at the next meeting.

CHAIRMAN STRICKLAND: Thank you, Grady.

Any further new business from the board?

(No response.)

CHAIRMAN STRICKLAND: If not, the final agenda item is announcement of the date and the location of the next meeting. And that next Conservation Advisory Board Meeting will be March 4th, 2017, at Guntersville State Park.

If there's no further business, this concludes today's meeting. We appreciate everyone coming out. See you on March 4th.

(Meeting adjourned at approximately 12:26 p.m.)
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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 February 11, 2017.

The foregoing 214 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 15th day of May 2017.

Tracye Sadler Blackwell
ACCR No. 294
Expiration date: 9-30-2017
Certified Court Reporter
and Commissioner for the State of Alabama at Large