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STATE OF ALABAMA DEPARTMENT OF
CONSERVATION AND NATURAL RESOURCES

ADVISORY BOARD MEETING

Department of Agriculture and Industries

Richard Beard Auditorium

1445 Federal Drive

Montgomery, Alabama

March 5, 2022

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TRANSCRIPT OF PROCEEDINGS

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Proceedings taken before Stacey L.
Johnson, Certified Court Reporter and
Commissioner for the State of Alabama at Large,
at the Department of Agriculture and Industries,
Richard Beard Auditorium, 1445 Federal Drive,
Montgomery, Alabama, Saturday, March 5, 2022,
commencing at 9:00 a.m.

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BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT:

Mr. Joseph Dobbs, Jr., Chairman

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

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

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

Mr. Kevin Savoy

Mr. Grady Hartzog

Mr. Greg Barksdale

Mr. Jeff Martin

Mr. Brock Jones

Mr. Tim Wood

Mr. Raymond Jones, Jr.

Mr. Ben Stimpson

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1 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Let's let this
2 meeting of the first Conservation
3 Advisory Board of 2022 here on March
4 the 5th -- a beautiful Saturday
5 outside -- come to order. Glad
6 you're all here. Hello to the usual
7 participants, and those of you that
8 are new here, glad to see you. Let's
9 have a productive meeting today with
10 some good dialogue.

11 To begin, I'm going to ask
12 our Board member, Mr. Brock Jones, if
13 he will please give our invocation
14 today.

15 MR. B. JONES: Let us pray.

16 (Invocation led by Mr. Brock
17 Jones.)

18 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Thank you,
19 Brock.

20 And I'll ask -- we're going
21 to have the color guard today, and as
22 part of that, I'm going to put my
23 hand over my heart as they begin.

1 (Presentation by the color guard.)

2 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: I'll ask Kevin
3 Savoy to please lead us in the Pledge
4 of Allegiance.

5 (Recitation of the Pledge of
6 Allegiance led by Mr. Savoy.)

7 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Thank you very
8 much, and thank you to the color
9 guard. That was great.

10 On our agenda, we have the
11 Sportsmen's Pledge. I do not have a
12 copy of it here to read along with
13 you, but you-all remember the
14 Sportsmen's Pledge. We shall -- we
15 won't say that. We won't speak the
16 Sportsmen's Pledge today.

17 So I want to introduce if I
18 can Representative Tommy Hanes in the
19 northeastern part of the state of
20 Alabama. There's Tommy. Thank you
21 for being here with us. It's always
22 good to see you and always good for
23 the Legislature to be represented.

1 Thank you.

2 Is there anyone else here
3 that that -- all right. Very good.

4 Mr. Secretary, do we have a
5 quorum today?

6 COMMISSIONER BLANKENSHIP: Yes,
7 sir, we do.

8 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Very good.

9 Let me ask about the minutes
10 of the meeting. Are there any
11 questions or anything to be noted
12 with regard to the minutes of the
13 meeting of May the 8th of 2021, by
14 the Board?

15 As there are no changes, the
16 Chair approves the minutes, but I'm
17 glad to ask for a motion and a second
18 to approve the minutes.

19 MR. R. JONES: So moved.

20 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: So moved.

21 All right. The minutes are
22 approved. Thank you, Ms. Johnson.

23 Thank you so much. Tracye is not

1 with us today. Thank you for being
2 here.

3 COMMISSIONER BLANKENSHIP: For
4 the Record, Mr. Chairman, that's the
5 approval of the minutes from the
6 3-6-21 meeting and the 5-8-21
7 meeting.

8 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Both meetings.

9 COMMISSIONER BLANKENSHIP: Thank
10 you.

11 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Thank you. Let
12 me ask each Board member if they will
13 to introduce themselves, note their
14 congressional districts, and please
15 provide us with a district report,
16 goings on in their district. Let's
17 start to my right with Mr. Barksdale.

18 MR. BARKSDALE: Good morning. I
19 am Greg Barksdale. I represent
20 District 4. There's not really any
21 major issues that I'm aware of that
22 happened in the district since our
23 last meeting. I have had several

1 conversations with some of the
2 hunters, one to do with hog hunting
3 on the WMAs, the other one about
4 Forever Wild property. I've had
5 several conversations with the turkey
6 guidelines, and then one with coyote
7 hunting during nighttime during deer
8 season as well as dog deer hunting in
9 northwest Alabama. But most of that
10 is just conversation, and probably
11 some of them will be here today to
12 talk about that. Other than that,
13 we're good. Thank you.

14 MR. MARTIN: Jeff Martin,
15 District 3. I think we had a really
16 good season this year. Only one or
17 two complaints on the dog hunting.
18 Lonnie Miller took care of those.
19 Fishing is kicking off like crazy.
20 Logan Martin Lake has just been
21 crazy. So all in all a good year.

22 MR. WOOD: I'm Tim Wood, and I
23 represent District 7, congressional

1 district. I live in Selma.

2 Basically I cover the Black Belt.

3 The deer season was
4 outstanding in the central part of
5 the Black Belt in Dallas County,
6 Wilcox. The numbers were up. But
7 for some strange reason, the rest of
8 my district actually was down flat.
9 For me to say what that was would be
10 speculation, so I'm just going to be
11 quiet. I don't know what it was.

12 As far as turkey season,
13 people are busy right now doing a lot
14 of burning. And if you are burning,
15 be careful. I'm going to be out this
16 afternoon if you want to come help,
17 feel free to come on.

18 As far as fishing, the
19 Alabama River and the Ala-Tom has
20 been extremely busy. Camden is --
21 they do as good a job as anybody in
22 the state promoting the Miller's
23 Ferry Lake down there, and they do a

1 great job with what they do. It's a
2 great economy for Wilcox County. And
3 also let me say -- and I don't know
4 if everyone knows, but what this
5 Department does in the background for
6 our local communities is outstanding.
7 I want to say thank you to Chris
8 Blankenship and also Ed Poolos and
9 Todd Mize because they are actually
10 getting Selma and Marengo back in
11 shape. And if -- I'm telling you
12 what these folks do in the
13 background, they don't get a lot of
14 publicity about it, but I'm going to
15 tell you I appreciate what they do
16 and what they mean to the community.
17 That's pretty much my report. Thank
18 you.

19 MR. HARTZOG: Good morning,
20 everybody. Grady Hartzog, District
21 2. Just not a whole lot of reports.
22 No dog hunting claims at all. This
23 morning you could not put another car

1 trailer on Lake Point State Park boat
2 landing. The fishing has been
3 phenomenal. The numbers of fishermen
4 are phenomenal. On the way up, I saw
5 turkeys on the way up. So everything
6 is looking good.

7 I talked to the deer
8 processors in our area. All the
9 processors feel like their numbers
10 are up. One thing that -- in fact,
11 one of the processors this morning
12 called me because I generally -- he
13 knows I'm headed to the meeting, just
14 following up, that, you know,
15 Barbour County is the only county in
16 the state that has a point
17 restriction limit on it. And he
18 says, Grady, every year we're getting
19 bigger and bigger and better bucks
20 coming into the processors. He said,
21 we're seeing 170-class deer pretty
22 regular, and he says, I just wish the
23 Department might consider adding

1 additional counties. And the only
2 other thing he said is, I wish the
3 Department would up the fine for the
4 people that are not abiding by the
5 point limit and maybe make some
6 believers out of them and they'd let
7 some of these deer grow. But he did
8 say he wished that several of the
9 adjoining counties would also follow
10 the lead from Barbour County and go
11 to the point restriction. So other
12 than that --

13 And the only other thing is
14 we had some complaints concerning the
15 turkey season and taking the -- some
16 days -- the decoys away from the
17 kids, and I propose to make a motion
18 to try to fix that for next season.
19 So that's all my report. Thank you.

20 MR. SAVOY: Good morning. Kevin
21 Savoy, District 2, Dothan, Alabama.
22 We had a good dove season. I was
23 contacted by a group of dove hunters

1 about looking at our Wiregrass
2 counties a little bit differently due
3 to the peanut harvest.

4 I was also contacted by a
5 gentleman -- and I believe he's on
6 the agenda today -- with Alabama
7 Hawking Association. He's outside my
8 district, but he also happens to be a
9 customer of ours so he reached out to
10 me and he is on the agenda today.

11 I also was contacted, like
12 Greg, by a farmer about hunting feral
13 hogs and coyotes through the season,
14 year-round actually. And I got an
15 interesting call or a message from a
16 gentleman who suggested amending the
17 baiting program and registering
18 feeders. So I thought that was an
19 interesting concept, but I thought I
20 would share that with y'all.

21 And I had -- we had no deer
22 hunting issues that I was aware of
23 this year. I was contacted by a

1 local dog deer hunting association.
2 I had a great conversation with them.
3 We don't have any issues in
4 Henry County where we primarily are,
5 but I know -- I think we have one
6 person on the agenda today that might
7 bring some issues up with that. But
8 overall, we had a good year. Thank
9 you.

10 MR. PATE: I am Rick Pate. I'm
11 the Commissioner of Ag and
12 Industries. And, of course, we
13 welcome you here. This is our
14 building, and we're proud to host the
15 Conservation. I am the Commissioner
16 of Ag and that's why I'm on this
17 Board. But if you look at these
18 posters on the side, these are really
19 the six divisions that we visit.
20 Hardly anybody knows what we do, the
21 responsibilities we have with food
22 safety and peanuts and pesticides and
23 weights and measures. And so I will

1 sort of wrap around.

2 The Sweet Grown Alabama is a
3 new initiative we started three years
4 ago. We realized that people in
5 Alabama couldn't identify what was
6 local and what wasn't. And there's
7 a lot of things being sold that maybe
8 originated in Mexico or California
9 that looks like some farmer grew
10 them. But we're proud of that.
11 That's probably the third year of
12 that program. And appreciate
13 Representative Hanes and the
14 Legislature who supported it.

15 We did last year for the
16 first time ask for some money for the
17 farm and school program. It was very
18 disappointing with COVID and all that
19 was going, the supply side issues.
20 We realized how little the school
21 system was buying from local farmers.
22 And if one thing you want to solve is
23 a supply side issue, you buy from ten

1 miles down the road where the kids
2 that are going to your schools family
3 is growing. And so we're real proud
4 that the Legislature give us several
5 hundred thousand dollars -- \$120,000
6 last year and 200- this year, and
7 that has been a huge hit. We're
8 selling so much more local food in
9 our school system now than we were.

10 We had a half-million dollar
11 grant from USDA really to begin the
12 discussion about mental health in
13 rural Alabama. We have seen some
14 statistics that show, you know,
15 farming, rural life, by nature is a
16 little more isolated than urban life,
17 and then with closing the churches
18 and schools, it became even more.
19 Statistics were showing there were
20 higher rates of mental health issues.
21 And so we begun that. And Department
22 of Conservation and Natural Resources
23 attended our sort of kickoff for

1 that. But we met with 12 different
2 stakeholder groups, the Cattlemen and
3 Farmers Federation and the Poultry
4 and Egg. But anyway, we're proud of
5 that.

6 And then in sort of
7 closing -- and that's what we call
8 The Healthy You Healthy Farm. We
9 actually partnered with RC&D in what
10 they call Veterans at Ease, and we've
11 got a little bit of money we can give
12 to a veteran farmer. That veteran
13 agrees to allow other veterans to
14 come onto his farm and then allows us
15 to bring other veterans out on his
16 farm once a year. And we kicked that
17 off up in Arab maybe around November,
18 I think, and it was very gratifying.
19 We probably had 20, 25 Vietnam War
20 veterans show up on a veteran's farm.
21 But anyway, we've got a lot of balls
22 in the air, but we appreciate having
23 y'all here and you're always welcome.

1 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Thank you very
2 much, Commissioner Pate. You and
3 your staff -- it's a great need that
4 works very well for us every time and
5 we appreciate it so much. Thank you.

6 Next?

7 DR. PHILLIPS: Good morning,
8 everybody. My name is Mike Phillips.
9 I'm the Director of the Alabama
10 Cooperative Extension System. I've
11 probably got the best job of anybody
12 in this room. I say that because we
13 get to work with all of these
14 organizations. We do educational
15 outreach statewide. We provide a lot
16 of educational resources, work with a
17 lot of these agencies in extending
18 our outreach. So it's truly an honor
19 for me to sit on this Board. And I
20 hope we have a great day today.

21 MR. STIMPSON: Ben Stimpson,
22 District 1, Mobile. This year was --
23 well, I wouldn't say -- it was pretty

1 quiet. There weren't really many
2 complaints. I talked to a lot of
3 people. I talked to several
4 people -- and I wouldn't call them
5 complaints -- that were requesting
6 permits for the dog deer hunting in
7 Mobile and Washington County. And I
8 think someone will be on the agenda
9 today to speak to that.

10 I had several conversations
11 with different duck hunters from the
12 Delta. They had a good season mainly
13 early. The biggest concern that I'd
14 say with two or three people was
15 they're starting to talk about that
16 there appears to be some over
17 hunting, but, you know, they've been
18 talking about that for years.

19 Had a lot of people, of
20 course, that talked about the new
21 turkey season and limit and had a lot
22 of questions, but they were mainly
23 people wanting to understand, you

1 know, why we did it and how it was
2 going to work. But it took up a lot
3 of time. Everybody wants to talk
4 about it. But other than that, it
5 was relatively quiet.

6 MR. R. JONES: Raymond Jones,
7 Congressional District Number 5,
8 which is in North Alabama. Fairly
9 quiet in my district as well. The
10 deer season was good. I don't know
11 that I would say great, but it was
12 good. Duck season was poor.
13 Unfortunately, it just never got cold
14 enough to push many ducks in our
15 direction.

16 Biggest news I guess that
17 happened is obviously we had our
18 first case of CWD in my district,
19 which is unfortunate. I attended the
20 CWD meeting in Florence, Alabama, to
21 represent the Department -- the Board
22 there. We also had an Avian flu in
23 an American wigeon that was just

1 announced. So that's another thing.
2 So from a disease standpoint not a
3 good year in our district.

4 MR. B. JONES: I'm Brock Jones.
5 I'm District 6. I live in
6 Tuscaloosa. District 6 is all of
7 Shelby County, part of Tuscaloosa
8 County, part of Jefferson County, and
9 a sliver of Bibb County. The season,
10 from what I understand in talking to
11 people in the district, was a good
12 quantity but not necessarily quality.
13 As far as complaints go, really just
14 got several calls about people hoping
15 that we could continue the coyote
16 night hunting and hog night hunting
17 through the season. I understand the
18 Department's position on that and
19 told them that, why that hasn't
20 changed. A lot of burning going on
21 right now as Tim said in our
22 district, which is good. And anxious
23 to hear what Chuck has to say about

1 the hog effort regarding the sodium
2 nitrites. So a lot of people anxious
3 to hear about that. That's pretty
4 much all I have.

5 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: All right.
6 Thank you, gentlemen. Thank you,
7 gentlemen. Good reports, up to date.

8 The next item on our agenda,
9 I'm not going to introduce or bring
10 to the table any of the directors of
11 the divisions. I'm going to turn it
12 over to the Commissioner who has a
13 wonderful report for us and ask him
14 to come up here. Thank you.

15 COMMISSIONER BLANKENSHIP:
16 Before I give my report, I would like
17 to recognize the service of one of
18 our Board members that rolled off
19 last year and was not able to make it
20 to our last meeting in May after he
21 rolled off. Can we get Patrick Cagle
22 to come up.

23 Patrick was on the

1 Conservation Advisory Board for
2 several years and served with
3 distinction, always had great
4 insight. He spent a lot of time
5 talking to people in his district and
6 really around the state, not just in
7 his district, on issues and brought
8 a lot to the Board. He was not able
9 to be reappointed because of his
10 position with Alabama Mining
11 Association, but I certainly can't
12 say enough about your friendship,
13 about your service to the Board, and
14 you are missed on the Board. But I
15 do appreciate your continued
16 involvement with the issues of the
17 Department, and I know that you will
18 always be a supporter and provide
19 input and wise counsel on issues that
20 impact the Department, whether you're
21 on the Advisory Board or not. So
22 with that, Mr. Chairman, let's walk
23 around, see if we can get a good

1 picture with Mr. Cagle.

2 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: And to Molly
3 who has helped lots of mornings
4 bringing snacks and treats and
5 keeping us in line, thank you.

6 COMMISSIONER BLANKENSHIP: I
7 appreciate Patrick being here and
8 Molly. I appreciate all the wives of
9 the men that are on the Conservation
10 Advisory Board. Those late night
11 calls and weekend calls and people
12 stopping you at the store and
13 everything else. I know that they go
14 a long way to support y'all and
15 appreciate the work that y'all all do
16 on the Board.

17 I do have a fairly lengthy
18 Commissioner's report. I will say
19 before I get into this that I culled
20 a bunch of stuff off yesterday
21 afternoon to make this a little bit
22 shorter, but we have had quite a
23 successful year I think with the

1 Department of Conservation. A lot of
2 that goes to the efforts of Ed
3 Poolos, our Deputy Commissioner;
4 Chuck Sykes, the Wildlife and
5 Freshwater Fisheries Division
6 Director; Patti McCurdy, our State
7 Lands Director; Scott Bannon, Marine
8 Resources Director; and then Greg
9 Lein, our State Parks Director; and
10 their staffs. They have had a very
11 active year, and I'll hit some of the
12 high points and be glad to take
13 questions after that. But I will say
14 I looked back at my report from last
15 year's March meeting that was pretty
16 lengthy and I think impressive about
17 the work of the Department and the
18 work they've all done to make sure I
19 didn't duplicate anything that I hit
20 the high points on last year, so all
21 this is new stuff. I mean, this is
22 stuff that happened really since the
23 May meeting last year.

1 I'm going to focus a little
2 bit more on Parks. This year we've
3 got a lot of stuff. It's been a
4 great year for our Alabama State
5 Parks. You don't hear a lot about
6 that from your constituents. I know
7 you're mostly dealing with hunting
8 and fishing, but Parks is a big part
9 of our Department.

10 This past year, we had the
11 highest grossing revenue in State
12 Parks' history, and we also had the
13 highest gross profit in State Parks'
14 history, and it was a very good year.
15 Legislature passed a bill to have a
16 constitutional amendment for an
17 85 million dollar bond issue that
18 will be on the ballot on May 24th.
19 So I hope that you'll all be
20 supportive of that for us to take
21 that money and continue to make
22 improvements to our Parks. And
23 you'll hear more about it over the

1 next couple of months as we work
2 towards that constitutional amendment
3 on the ballot May 24th. It will be
4 the only amendment on the ballot, so
5 when you go vote, just vote yes for
6 the only amendment on there.

7 We implemented beach parking
8 at the Gulf. That was an asset that
9 we have down there. Implemented that
10 last April, and that's going to
11 produce about a million dollars a
12 year at \$5 a car parking. That
13 money's going right back into the
14 Parks. We're taking the money that
15 was generated this past year and
16 adding bathrooms at the Romar Beach
17 access and other improvements within
18 the Parks, so we're putting that
19 revenue and the gross profit this
20 year -- we're putting it right back
21 into the park.

22 We built a new campground at
23 Cathedral Caverns. We didn't have a

1 campground there. Joe Wheeler State
2 Park was devastated by a tornado in
3 December of 2020, I guess, and we
4 rebuilt two-thirds of the campground.
5 We opened those up last week. We'll
6 have a ribbon cutting up there in a
7 few weeks, but they've already got
8 plenty of people camping there.

9 We're renovating the day use
10 area in Desoto Falls, electrical
11 upgrades at Monte Sano so we can have
12 the 50 amp service and really grow
13 that park, grow the revenue there.

14 And we built a new OHV trail
15 at Lakepoint State Park. There was
16 some untapped grant funds that
17 you-all pay into when you purchase
18 fuel or -- and we were able to use
19 that to do some -- a trail at Buck's
20 Pocket State Park a couple of years
21 ago, and we've done one now at
22 Lakepoint.

23 And that's a pretty fun

1 trail. I went up and rode it a
2 couple of weeks ago to see how it was
3 going to be, and I think it's gotten
4 pretty good use since we opened it.
5 But I will say the reason that we're
6 doing that is to kind of expand the
7 recreational opportunities to provide
8 business from some groups that may
9 not have stayed there before.

10 A great example is that
11 January I was up at Buck's Pocket
12 State Park and rode through the
13 parking lot, and on a cold January
14 day, there were about five campers
15 and all of them had four-wheelers or
16 off-highway vehicles parked next to
17 them. So the only reason they were
18 there camping in January was so they
19 could ride those trails. So we were
20 doing business that we would not have
21 done in January on a cold and rainy
22 weekend because people are using
23 those trails. So it's having the

1 desired effect.

2 If you noticed during the
3 Super Bowl all of the car commercials
4 during the Super Bowl were all for
5 electric vehicles. In Alabama State
6 Parks, we're trying to be ahead of
7 the curve on electric vehicle sales.
8 We have a partnership we're bringing
9 to install charging stations at all
10 of our Alabama State Parks so that
11 we'll have that as an opportunity for
12 our guests.

13 The World Games will be in
14 Birmingham in July. That's a big
15 deal for Alabama. Four of those
16 events are going to be at Oak
17 Mountain State Park. We've worked
18 with AT&T to upgrade our fiber
19 network. It's really a multimillion
20 dollar investment that AT&T is making
21 at Oak Mountain State Park to be able
22 to operate the cameras and all the
23 infrastructure that they need for the

1 World Games, and that will remain
2 after the World Games.

3 Another big and exciting
4 thing that happened this past year is
5 we purchased about 1650 acres -- or
6 the Forever Wild Board purchased
7 about 1650 acres adjacent to Oak
8 Mountain State Park. That's a great
9 addition to the fastest growing
10 county in the state to our park. I
11 appreciate the Forever Wild Board's
12 support of our State Parks.

13 And then we purchased some
14 property at Rickwood Caverns State
15 Park. That's the property above the
16 cave, so that keeps us from having
17 any issues in the future. So I'm
18 glad that came available and we were
19 able to work on that.

20 And one of the things I'm
21 most excited about with Parks is
22 we're in the process now of changing
23 out all of our mattresses -- all 1300

1 of them -- to -- we're leveraging our
2 partnership with Hilton and putting
3 Waldorf Astoria 2 plush mattresses in
4 all of our state parks. Those are
5 being swapped out now. And we also
6 have an agreement with a company in
7 Alabama to provide some high quality
8 sheets, and we'll be doing that from
9 an Alabama supplier. So if you go to
10 our State Parks in a couple of
11 months, you ought to get you a good
12 night's sleep. The mattresses and
13 sheets sure will be nice.

14 And on the negative side,
15 we -- looking at all our financials
16 and running Parks like a business, we
17 have -- do lose money on our
18 restaurants. We've contracted with a
19 food and beverage consultant to come
20 in and analyze our operations and
21 make some recommendations so that we
22 can at least break even on the
23 restaurants and still provide good

1 service to our customers.

2 People have asked me about
3 the pier, the portion of the pier
4 that was damaged in Hurricane Sally.
5 We're opening those bids later this
6 month. We're still waiting on our
7 final permit, but we're going to have
8 the -- we're going to go ahead and
9 bid it out and get it ready for
10 construction to start. As soon as we
11 get those permits from the Board of
12 Engineers and others, we'll be able
13 to start that construction.

14 The 18 cabins at Gulf State
15 Park that were destroyed during
16 Hurricane Sally, we have the design
17 done on those. We're ready to bid
18 those, and those should be all
19 constructed by the end of '22 or the
20 first part of 2023. No doubt be open
21 by spring of '23.

22 And the last thing on Parks,
23 I want to talk a little bit about our

1 partnership with ADEM for the rubber
2 modified asphalt. We have a project
3 at Guntersville State Park and Desoto
4 State Park that used this rubber
5 modified asphalt. So any time you
6 get your tires changed, they charge
7 you a \$2 a tire fee that goes into
8 this recycled tire fund. But Ed
9 Poolos, our Deputy Commissioner,
10 working with ADEM, we were able to
11 tap into that and came up with some
12 good projects, places that we needed
13 paving to use the recycled tire mix,
14 but then also some money out of that
15 fund to pay for the installation of
16 that. Just so you know as a Board,
17 that had never been done in Alabama.
18 That mix had not been certified, so
19 we had to work with Auburn University
20 and their transportation group there
21 to certify this mix. So now not are
22 we only using it on our Parks, but
23 this mix is available now to be used

1 anywhere in the state. So it makes
2 good use of those tires instead of
3 them going to a landfill or being
4 chipped up for something else. The
5 Department is pretty cutting edge on
6 getting that done.

7 For our Marine Resources
8 Division our red snapper season was
9 the longest in over a decade. It
10 started on the weekend of Memorial
11 Day and went all the way through
12 December. It was a very good season
13 this year. A lot of that had to do
14 with some bad weather days in June
15 where people couldn't fish because it
16 was either a tropical system where it
17 was too rough and so they didn't
18 catch the quota during some of those
19 weekends. We were able to stretch
20 that out and use that all through the
21 rest of the year. So that's the
22 beauty of the regional management
23 system that we're under now. If we

1 have bad weather or we have something
2 like that, you don't lose those fish.
3 The people get to go, and it's been a
4 good year. We plan to do the same
5 thing this year. We're sending a
6 news release out this next week,
7 opening red snapper season that
8 Friday before Memorial Day, and it
9 will be open Friday through Monday
10 weekends beginning that Memorial Day
11 weekend, and we'll fish until the
12 quota's met or until we get to the
13 end of the year, whichever happens
14 first. I won't go into a lot of
15 detail here. I may have a little bit
16 more detail at the May meeting, but
17 we're still working through some
18 issues with NOAA Fisheries that has
19 the potential to decrease the red
20 snapper quota for Alabama. Scott
21 Bannon and I were in DC last week
22 working with NOAA and our
23 congressional delegation to try and

1 mitigate those potential impacts. So
2 I'll expand on that a little bit more
3 when we have some time at the May
4 meeting.

5 And oyster season this year
6 was phenomenal. I think I see
7 Mr. Avery Bates is here. Hopefully
8 they'll say something good about the
9 oyster season when he comes up.
10 We're trending in the right
11 direction. We had 10,000 sacks in
12 2019. We harvested about 23,000
13 sacks in 2020, so we doubled from the
14 previous year. And this year, we
15 harvested about 50,000 sacks so we
16 doubled again in '21. So appreciate
17 Scott Bannon and Kevin and the work
18 that they're doing to help bring back
19 our oyster resources.

20 Our State Lands Division,
21 the Governor approved 41 million
22 dollars' worth of GOMESA projects on
23 the coast. There are 17 projects.

1 Those are managed by our State Lands
2 Division. With those GOMESA
3 projects, the Governor is extremely
4 interested in providing public access
5 to our waterways and to our lands,
6 and so that has been a priority for
7 her with the GOMESA projects. So we
8 have a lot of boat ramp building,
9 waterfront land acquisition, fishing
10 gear repair and development, and
11 other public access work in coastal
12 Alabama that's being done by our
13 Lands Division and our Marine
14 Resources Division. And that's just
15 so important for our citizens and our
16 visitors to have access to our waters
17 and our public land.

18 Through Forever Wild, we
19 purchased property in Butler County,
20 the Greenville area, and opened up a
21 new special opportunity area. I'll
22 talk a little bit about some land
23 acquisition, but since Governor

1 Ivey's been in office the last four
2 years -- or almost five years, DCNR
3 and its partners have acquired more
4 than 61,000 acres in Alabama for
5 public access. Over a short amount
6 of time, that's quite an
7 accomplishment, and I want to make
8 sure the Board's aware of the work
9 that's been done to get more property
10 for Alabama to hunt and hike and fish
11 and have access to. That will have a
12 long-term legacy impact, and we're
13 not done yet. We've got a lot more
14 to go. There's a lot more stuff in
15 the hopper.

16 For Wildlife and Freshwater
17 Fisheries, as you know, the hog and
18 coyote nighttime license passed last
19 year. We've sold about 16,000 of
20 those this year. I won't go into all
21 the work we're doing with Ducks
22 Unlimited. That progress report is
23 at each of your seats. If you look

1 over that, any questions you could
2 have for Chuck or Keith on that,
3 either during the meeting or after
4 the meeting, but we've got a lot of
5 work going on with them.

6 The reservoir management
7 legislation that was sponsored by
8 Senator Scofield passed last year and
9 that adds \$5 to each boat
10 registration, and that goes into a
11 fund that DCNR manages and will
12 provide some grants from that for
13 invasive species and aquatic
14 vegetation work, marine debris
15 removal, and regulatory and signage
16 projects around the state. That just
17 started in January, so that needs to
18 build up a couple of years before it
19 will allow money there to do a lot of
20 these projects.

21 And we're talking about
22 boating access. Governor Ivey
23 dedicated 2.7 million of the state's

1 3.7 million from the CARES EDA money.
2 That came to DCNR for fishing ramp
3 and access improvements, and so we're
4 using that money to do that. I
5 appreciate her giving the lion's
6 share of that money to the Department
7 to use for public access because we
8 know what those fishing tournaments
9 mean for the local communities to be
10 able to have those events.

11 We also have a really big
12 boat ramp project in Demopolis.
13 We're partnering with the City of
14 Demopolis and the county to put a
15 first-class ramp in downtown
16 Demopolis that can host big
17 tournaments in West Alabama. That's
18 something that's been missing for a
19 while. And as Tim mentioned, we're
20 working with Selma and coordinating
21 with ADEM to improve boating access
22 at the Selma marina. Two big
23 projects there in West Alabama in the

1 Black Belt.

2 DCNR received a little over

3 a million dollars in the Tyson

4 settlement, Tyson spill settlement

5 that happened in the Cullman County,

6 Blountsville area. We're using that

7 to increase public access on the

8 Mulberry or Bankhead Lake and some

9 other projects in that area. Just of

10 note for the Board, that's the

11 largest fish kill settlement in DCNR

12 history. I want to thank our

13 Fisheries section, Ed Poolos, and our

14 General Counsel Charlanna Skaggs, as

15 well as Attorney General Steve

16 Marshall for the work they did on

17 that to hold people accountable that

18 damage our natural resources and I'm

19 very, very pleased that that was

20 worked out. Hopefully, we won't have

21 those type things, but when we do

22 have them, it's nice to know that we

23 have a team that can make sure that

1 people that cause problems for our
2 natural resources are held
3 accountable for that.

4 I talked a little bit about
5 our CWD. Chuck's going to have a
6 presentation about that shortly. As
7 you know, in January, we became the
8 latest state to have CWD positive.
9 Our response, I feel like, has gone
10 very well. We were prepared in the
11 event that this ever happened. We'd
12 already developed a plan, had
13 practiced the plan, working with the
14 Department of Ag and Industries and
15 others. We've had tabletop exercises
16 so that if this came here, we
17 wouldn't be caught flatfooted. When
18 it happened, we implemented the plan.
19 Chuck, Amy, Keith, and their staff
20 have been on this from the very
21 beginning.

22 I want to thank Commissioner
23 Rick Pate and Dr. Frazier with the

1 Department of Ag and Industries.
2 They provided a great turnaround on
3 almost a thousand samples that have
4 been taken from deer in the chronic
5 wasting disease zone since January.
6 And I also appreciate the cooperation
7 of the legislators, the hunters, the
8 landowners in the area. Chuck will
9 talk a little bit more about it in
10 his presentation, but I just wanted
11 to say I appreciate Raymond Jones
12 coming to the public meeting and
13 personally thank our staff for the
14 good work that they've done in
15 responding to this. Out of the 966
16 additional samples since we had the
17 first positive, there was one deer
18 that came back positive as well, so
19 we have two positive deer out of
20 almost a thousand samples. So the
21 prevalence is very low, and we'll
22 continue to monitor that. And Chuck
23 will talk a little bit more about it

1 with some regulatory changes that we
2 are making to try and keep that
3 spread down.

4 The Deepwater Horizon, I'll
5 give a full report at the May meeting
6 on all the work from the Deepwater
7 Horizon section, but I want you to
8 look at your calendars. If you're
9 available, especially the ones from
10 the southern district, May 19th, the
11 Governor is having a Deepwater
12 Horizon Restoration Summit in Spanish
13 Fort. It will be that evening about
14 five o'clock, five to seven, five to
15 eight. If you could put that on your
16 calendars. I think it might be of
17 interest to you. Again, another
18 thing we handle in the Department
19 that you probably don't hear that
20 much about as Board members. But to
21 date since the Deepwater Horizon, we
22 have over a billion dollars' worth of
23 projects that we're managing in

1 Mobile and Baldwin Counties to our
2 Deepwater Horizon section and our
3 Lands Division and our Marine
4 Resources Division working on those.
5 So between Deepwater Horizon and
6 GOMESA, it's over a billion dollars
7 worth of work that's underway down
8 there right now and being managed by
9 DCNR.

10 In legislation, this is a
11 light year for us. We didn't have
12 any -- no Department bills. As a
13 recap, we passed 12 pieces of
14 legislation in this quadrennium.
15 Really that was in two years, because
16 in 2020, they didn't have a real
17 session because of COVID. But this
18 year I think we've accomplished all
19 of the goals that we had in this
20 quadrennium, so we're kind of sitting
21 this year out.

22 There has been a piece of
23 legislation that would establish a

1 paddlefish season. I think that you
2 have that at your spots here. That
3 was introduced, but it has not had
4 any movement since it's been
5 introduced. And there was some
6 legislation introduced last week that
7 would create a special deer season
8 for deer breeders that would be
9 earlier than the current season.
10 Just in short, the Legislature had a
11 lot of structural issues in forming
12 and it's just not a very -- it's not
13 an effective piece of legislation,
14 and we need a lot of changes, not to
15 mention some management issues. But
16 that was just introduced this past
17 week, and Charlanna and our team are
18 reviewing it and are meeting with the
19 sponsor and the committee chair and
20 can provide some more feedback on
21 that through the process. I'll just
22 do that through an email since we
23 won't meet until after the

1 legislative session.

2 And then again as another
3 topic for our May meeting, we are
4 working with the Governor and the
5 finance director and the Legislature
6 on a broad outdoor recreation plan to
7 be accomplished, the ARC funds that
8 the state's receiving. We're getting
9 about 1.1 million dollars in June or
10 July that will be deposited, and we
11 are working with them to do a lot of
12 things to improve outdoor recreation
13 and things that I think that y'all
14 will be impressed with. And I'll
15 give a full report on that in May
16 when we have a little bit more time.
17 And with that, Mr. Chairman, I think
18 that's enough. I talked long enough.

19 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Thank you,
20 Commissioner. That was a very
21 comprehensive report, very capable.
22 I'm proud to be associated with in
23 any way all of what this Department

1 is doing. So it's a new day, a build
2 better and build more for Alabama.
3 We're way ahead of the curve for the
4 federal government, their build back
5 progress.

6 It is my understanding now
7 that Director Sykes is going to give
8 us a slide presentation on CWD and
9 any other items; is that correct?

10 MR. SYKES: Yes, sir, if you
11 want me to.

12 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Oh, there you
13 are. I couldn't see you. Yes,
14 please. You want to come up here or
15 -- you're going to do it right there.
16 Very good.

17 And let me say one thing at
18 the beginning, be respectful. And
19 any questions or comments for Chuck
20 ask me so I can get it to you,
21 because Ms. Johnson is new and she
22 has promised to key my car if she
23 doesn't get all of this down proper.

1 So work through me if you don't mind.
2 Work through the Chair. Thank you.

3 MR. SYKES: Thank you, Chairman
4 Dobbs.

5 As the Commissioner said,
6 unfortunately, we knew it was going
7 to happen. We prolonged as long as
8 possible by implementing proper
9 regulations and educational programs
10 to, in our opinion, prevent
11 artificial introduction of CWD, but
12 we knew as close as it was in
13 Mississippi and Tennessee, it was
14 coming eventually. When we got the
15 call in late December -- the
16 Commissioner thanked a few people,
17 but I want to take just a second of
18 personal privilege to allow people to
19 understand just a little bit about
20 the staff that I have that is working
21 on this.

22 When I first took this
23 job -- and I think there's still

1 a lot of people out there that think
2 it's a State employee, they don't
3 care, they can't get a job anywhere
4 else so they're just working for the
5 State and making a paycheck. In
6 addition to Keith and Amy and
7 Marianne and Billy, Chief Weathers,
8 and Captain Michael East, we were all
9 locked up in my conference room for
10 two weeks preparing for the release
11 of the information. And I'm going to
12 put Michael East on the spot. He was
13 scheduled to retire the following
14 month after a long, very decorated
15 service with our Department. He
16 chose not to because he did not want
17 to leave the person that would be
18 backfilling his position with us just
19 having CWD. That's the kind of
20 people that work for this agency. He
21 postponed his plans, his family's
22 plans, where he could do his job and
23 represent our Department and the

1 citizens of this state and the
2 natural resources of the state. So,
3 Michael, thank you.

4 Y'all can see the two dots
5 up there, the two green dots. As the
6 Commissioner said, unfortunately, we
7 did find one more. I'll go over that
8 here in just a second.

9 On January the 7th when we
10 announced that we had CWD, the first
11 thing we did was establish a chronic
12 wasting disease management zone that
13 was comprised of a high-risk zone, a
14 buffer zone. The high-risk zone is
15 there in red. The buffer zone in
16 yellow. All season and daily bag
17 limits were removed for that CMZ. We
18 had 30 days left in deer season
19 basically to acquire samples. We
20 needed hunters out there hunting and
21 giving them all the opportunity they
22 could to provide us samples. So
23 that's why we removed the season and

1 daily bag limits for that area. It
2 was mandatory for all deer harvested
3 within the HRZ, or the high-risk
4 zone, to be tested for CWD, and
5 hunters were strongly encouraged to
6 submit CWD samples for all deer
7 harvested within the buffer zone.

8 And then, of course, we had
9 carcass transport restrictions on the
10 CMZ. We were extremely pleased with
11 the participation we got from the
12 majority of the hunters. Of course,
13 there's going to be a couple in every
14 crowd, but for the most part,
15 everything went exceptionally well.

16 We had 966 total samples
17 from that CMZ. You can see the
18 breakdown right there. 497 were from
19 Lauderdale County, 469 were from
20 Colbert County. Out of those 966
21 samples, only one additional deer
22 tested positive for CWD. So we have
23 a .005 percent prevalence rate.

1 Raymond's well aware of this -- we
2 took quite a bit of criticism when we
3 removed the season and daily bag
4 limit. We were going to kill them
5 all. We're going to destroy deer
6 hunting in the CMZ. They're going to
7 starve the people to death in the
8 future because we were going to kill
9 all of the deer. If you look at that
10 top graph, during the 2021 season, we
11 killed 1481 deer in that CMZ during
12 that time frame January 7th to
13 February the 10th. This year with
14 the removal of the season and daily
15 bag limit, we killed a grand total of
16 1707. We did not destroy the deer
17 herd in that area. We did not kill
18 them all. There will be plenty there
19 next year. And if you look at the
20 next line down, the next graph down,
21 you'll see that for the season in
22 Lauderdale and Colbert Counties we're
23 below the harvest of what we killed

1 last year. So even with our new
2 regulation, everything is still fine.

3 Overall statewide, we were
4 down a little bit with deer harvest
5 this year to last year. What I want
6 the Board and members of the public
7 to take away from this, this did not
8 catch us off guard. Nothing we did
9 was a kneejerk reaction. This is not
10 a government conspiracy. We were
11 prepared, we put a plan in place, and
12 it's working. We have an incredibly
13 talented staff that has been working
14 on this for over a decade. We work
15 with professionals around the country
16 looking at the good and the bad and
17 the ugly of these other states that
18 have been dealing with CWD for
19 decades. We're going to be fine.
20 We're going to manage through this.
21 Things are just going to be a little
22 bit different.

23 So what we've proposed for

1 new regulations for 2023 in the CMZ,
2 the entire CMZ will fall in the
3 boundaries of Zone A this year.
4 Parts of Zone -- of the CMZ zone were
5 in Zone C last year. So we have
6 moved all of that to Zone A. The
7 seasons and daily bag limits will be
8 Zone A. Baiting and supplemental
9 feeding of wildlife will be suspended
10 within the CMZ. The only exceptions
11 are feed in an active hog trap or
12 bird feeders located within a hundred
13 feet of a building or occupied
14 dwelling. Rather than have mandatory
15 testing of every deer killed within
16 the HRZ, we're going to have certain
17 time periods where we can look at
18 Game Check data and our biologist
19 data from our WMAs where we can make
20 the most of a few weekends to get the
21 desired number of samples that we
22 need. So we will do some mandatory
23 testing dates and locations within

1 the HRZ and the BZ, and all of that
2 will be published online and in the
3 Digest. And we still -- even though
4 it's not mandatory testing, we still
5 strongly recommend that all deer
6 harvested within that CMZ be
7 submitted for testing.

8 Commissioner, that's it.
9 And I'll be happy to take any
10 questions.

11 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Thank you,
12 Director Sykes. We'll entertain
13 questions from the Board.

14 MR. HARTZOG: Mr. Chairman?

15 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Mr. Hartzog?

16 MR. HARTZOG: On the nonfeeding
17 in the hot zone, would it be possible
18 or wise to maybe consider no feeding
19 within the buffer zone also?

20 MR. SYKES: It is. It's within
21 the entire CMZ, which is the HRZ and
22 the buffer.

23 MR. HARTZOG: Okay.

1 MR. SYKES: It's both counties,
2 Lauderdale and Colbert.

3 MR. HARTZOG: Good plan. Thank
4 you.

5 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Any other
6 questions? Mr. Commissioner?

7 COMMISSIONER BLANKENSHIP:
8 Chuck, I don't want to put you on the
9 spot. I know you've not really
10 planned to talk about it, but would
11 you be able to talk about the
12 toxicant, the status of that, or you
13 want to...

14 MR. SYKES: I can. We have been
15 working with USDA APHIS for the past
16 three or four years working on a
17 toxicant to help with our feral hog
18 problem. I want to make one thing
19 perfectly clear. This is never going
20 to be something that Tim is going to
21 be able to sell at the co-op on the
22 shelf. It's not going to happen.
23 This is going to be much like a

1 restricted use herbicide or chemical
2 application where professionals that
3 are licensed and bonded, USDA APHIS
4 agencies, are going to be able to
5 use. We do not want a toxicant
6 spread indiscriminately across the
7 landscape. We all want to get rid of
8 hogs, but there's nontargets that
9 have to be considered.

10 Texas and Alabama have been
11 on the ground floor of this. We've
12 been working with USDA through their
13 registration process. The first year
14 with the trials, we had some
15 nontarget issues. The bait
16 composition wasn't what it needed to
17 be, and the timing of the use of it
18 coincided with migratory flights of
19 neotropical migrant songbirds. So we
20 had more collateral damage than we
21 needed to.

22 So we went back to the
23 drawing board with the bait

1 composition timing and now the
2 delivery mechanism. All of that is
3 still progressing through the
4 process. It's not quick. When
5 you're talking about registering a
6 toxicant, you have got to cross every
7 T and dot every I. So this is still
8 several years down the road, but we
9 are -- Alabama has been on the
10 forefront of it.

11 The product is sodium
12 nitrite, not nitrate. It is very
13 effective at humanely dispatching
14 hogs. Basically they eat the bait,
15 they walk away, they get sleepy, they
16 go to sleep, and they don't wake up.
17 It depletes the oxygen in their
18 blood. So it's very humane, it's
19 very quick, and it's very effective.
20 And it does not keep killing down the
21 line where a lot of toxicants if you
22 kill one animal and a buzzard eats
23 it, it kills the buzzard. If an

1 opossum eats the buzzard, it kills
2 the opossum. This doesn't do that.
3 This breaks down quick in the
4 bloodstream.

5 All I can tell y'all is be
6 patient. Nothing like this goes as
7 quickly as the private sector wants.
8 Many of y'all may not know, but I did
9 come from the private sector so I
10 understand that side of it. I would
11 love it to be here tomorrow. It's
12 not going to happen, period. Right
13 now, the best tool we have for
14 removing the number of feral pigs
15 that we need to remove is whole
16 sounder removal trapping. No ifs,
17 ands, or buts. Shooting pigs is fun.
18 Shooting pigs is a recreational
19 activity. You cannot eliminate a
20 problem with a gun or we would have
21 done it over the past 30 years. The
22 same goes with coyotes, bobcats,
23 raccoons, whatever. The best

1 disposal method at our fingertips is
2 trapping.

3 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Thank you. May
4 I ask -- or ask you to add about the
5 USDA's trapping program that is
6 available in, I think, five or seven
7 counties. If anyone doesn't know
8 about it, it's very effective. It's
9 cost-effective.

10 MR. SYKES: It is. USDA
11 receives grants. Most of it is down
12 in the Wiregrass. They basically
13 overlaid agricultural usage with
14 feral hog populations. They picked
15 Sumter County in West Alabama and
16 picked the Wiregrass to target.
17 People can apply for cost share for
18 traps, or they can have actual USDA
19 come in with a professional trapper
20 and remove pigs. I know that -- I
21 had a call this week. I'm from
22 Choctaw County. We've got just as
23 many hogs as Sumter County does. We

1 could have been there too, but plain
2 and simple, they looked at ag versus
3 hog populations and that's how it was
4 determined.

5 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Thank you. And
6 know that trapping service is free,
7 and it's a 70/30 match to buy the
8 traps. I've just recently learned
9 about this. Thank you, Director
10 Sykes.

11 COMMISSIONER BLANKENSHIP:
12 Mr. Chairman, I just want to point
13 out to the Board and make sure we are
14 -- even though we are working with
15 USDA and actively involved from the
16 beginning, the certification of the
17 produce and all that is a federal
18 decision through USDA EPA. We're
19 not -- that's not a hold up on our
20 part. We don't really have any say
21 in that. That's going through the
22 federal process.

23 MR. SYKES: Correct.

1 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Very good. Any
2 questions or comments from the Board
3 with regard to that?

4 Very good. We'll move on to
5 the next -- we'll move on to the next
6 portion of our meeting, which is
7 special orders and/or public
8 comments.

9 So we've got a list of
10 speakers here. We will work through
11 that. I'm going to give you a set of
12 rules. I think we have 19. We don't
13 have a place for a ready chair, so I
14 believe that today we will just call
15 you. Please be prepared if you're
16 the next speaker, if you know that,
17 if you have a sheet, and I'm going to
18 ask each speaker as they come up to
19 be respectful. Point your comments
20 to me as the Chair. Don't interact
21 with the Board directly. Please come
22 through me. Again, I don't want
23 Ms. Johnson to key my car or Betsy to

1 turn the clock over on me. So direct
2 your responses to me. Don't engage
3 with the staff directly. Direct it
4 to me. To the folks out here
5 viewing, reserve your comments for
6 outside, no applause, no outbursts
7 during this, and respect these folks
8 and give them a chance to have their
9 say here today just like you would.

10 Okay. Our first speaker is
11 Christopher Lamb. Mr. Lamb, I'll ask
12 you like I ask everybody, please
13 speak into the microphone. And I'm
14 going to cut mine off.

15 MR. LAMB: Good morning. My
16 name is Christopher Lamb. I'm from
17 Somerville, Alabama, up in
18 Morgan County, and I came here to
19 raise some concern about
20 rehabilitation. I know this might
21 kind of be against what we just
22 listened to from this gentleman here,
23 but it is a concern that I believe

1 should be addressed in our state. It
2 seems like we have a lack of
3 resources when it comes to
4 rehabilitation of wildlife, injured
5 animals, sick animals we find on the
6 road.

7 Before I go any further, I
8 am an avid outdoorsman. I take my
9 kids hunting just about every
10 afternoon during hunting season.
11 We're out on the water just about
12 every nice day in the summer. So we
13 enjoy hunting and fishing all over
14 the state. It's some of the best
15 I've ever seen. I've lived all over
16 the country. One thing that I do
17 have a concern over is when my
18 children ask, you know, what do we do
19 for injured animals besides just
20 shooting them. We have that lack of
21 resources for rehabilitation here.
22 What I try to ingrain in my children
23 is ethics. Leaving an animal to die

1 when it could be saved, rehabbed,
2 what have you, it's an ethical
3 concern. So it's kind of going
4 against the whole ethical thing we
5 teach our kids just to kill something
6 when it gets injured or sick.

7 My children are also taught
8 to have compassion towards these
9 animals. When we harvest a deer or
10 any sort of game, you know, we thank
11 that animal, we thank the Creator for
12 providing us with that food, that
13 nourishment. So it's again kind of
14 backwards when we don't have the
15 resources to rehab these injured
16 animals.

17 The State does a great job
18 when it comes to hunting and fishing.
19 I take, you know, every benefit I
20 can, and I'm showing my kids to do
21 the same. So I'm not really a crazy
22 hippy out here to, you know, disrupt
23 the government or anything, what you

1 guys have going on, but I would like
2 to bring up a concern for this. And
3 I would like to see Alabama wildlife
4 thrive with the increasing
5 population. Especially that we see
6 in North Alabama, you know, wildlife
7 is suffering. I don't think there's
8 any argument against that. So with
9 that being said, I would like
10 everybody to please consider allowing
11 more opportunities for rehabbing in
12 this state so we can keep Alabama
13 wild. Thank you.

14 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Thank you,
15 Mr. Lamb.

16 Any questions from the
17 Board?

18 Thank you very much for
19 traveling here.

20 Our next speaker is
21 Mr. Terry Morse -- or Ms. Terry
22 Morse.

23 MS. MORSE: Good morning. My

1 name is Terry Morse, and I'm a Board
2 member of the AWCRS. I am here today
3 to suggest proposed changes to our
4 current wildlife rehabilitation
5 program beginning with an open
6 dialogue.

7 Many rehabbers and citizens
8 feel that the WFF is putting the
9 Alabama citizens' safety and lives at
10 risk by discouraging new wildlife
11 rehabilitators in Alabama.

12 Compassionate citizens who find wild
13 animals in need of help cannot turn a
14 blind eye and let nature take its
15 course when the reason is most likely
16 human imposed. Human imposed injury
17 is not a natural injury. Therefore,
18 intervention is the responsible
19 action to be taken.

20 We are fully aware that WFF
21 does not want wildlife rehabilitators
22 in Alabama because Director Sykes has
23 told us so, but the citizens of

1 Alabama feel we are needed. We
2 propose that we form an independent
3 committee of established and
4 experienced permanent wildlife
5 rehabilitators, veterinarians, AWCRS
6 members, and other pro wildlife
7 representatives to develop a stable
8 program that benefits our native
9 wildlife and to protect our citizens,
10 give them a place where they can turn
11 for appropriate advice, education,
12 and a safe place to bring a wild
13 animal that is truly in need of help.

14 Wildlife rehabilitators also
15 deserve better treatment and respect
16 from this State agency. With
17 approximately 5 million citizens in
18 Alabama and only 13 rehabbers, it
19 simply doesn't make any sense.
20 Permitted rehabbers that provide a
21 free service to the public are
22 turning away many of the animals that
23 are called about for lack of space

1 wardens are no longer allowed to take
2 the animals to wildlife
3 rehabilitators according to Marianne
4 Hudson. WFF does not encourage a
5 positive wildlife rehabilitation
6 program, nor issuing new permits.

7 Marianne Hudson says she is
8 not getting any new applications, and
9 this simply is not true. The AWCERS
10 has confirmed several citizens that
11 have applied over the last five
12 years --

13 MS. JONES: Time.

14 MS. MORSE: -- and they never
15 get a response. Their applications
16 were sent via certified mail, email,
17 and they have tried to call
18 Ms. Hudson. Citizens of Alabama
19 deserve responses and reasons their
20 applications are being ignored or
21 denied. We truly want to be a part
22 of this solution in this matter.
23 Thank you for the Board letting us

1 talk.

2 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Thank you,
3 Ms. Morse.

4 Any questions from the
5 Board?

6 MR. WOOD: You did say there are
7 13 rehabbers in the state; is that
8 correct?

9 MS. MORSE: Yes.

10 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Do you want to
11 speak to that, please?

12 MR. SYKES: Mr. Chairman, can we
13 go through all of these and then get
14 --

15 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Choice idea.
16 Thank you. I see that we have three
17 or four more.

18 The next speaker is
19 Ms. Kimberly Sheham.

20 MS. SHEHAM: Good morning. My
21 name is Kimberly Sheham from
22 Priceville, Alabama, in Morgan
23 County.

1 On three separate occasions,
2 I was in need of a wildlife
3 rehabilitator. The first time I
4 found an injured squirrel, the second
5 time a baby opossum, and the third
6 time I found several bats that were
7 no more than a few days old. I
8 immediately sought help for these
9 animals.

10 I researched online to begin
11 to call licensed rehabbers. I was in
12 shock that Alabama only has 13. And
13 that is absolutely ridiculous because
14 not all 13 can take all species of
15 animals. I thought you could take a
16 deer to any of these people, a bat to
17 any of these people, and that's not
18 the case. There's only three for
19 rabies vectors, such as your fox,
20 your skunks, your bats, so forth. So
21 in that situation, the few
22 rehabilitators we had, I had to seek
23 alternate methods for help.

1 There are a lot of people
2 that are underground, and that's
3 where my animals went. I'm not
4 ashamed of that. I'm not going to
5 teach my children that I'm just going
6 to let this animal suffer, possibly
7 be eaten alive by ants, freeze,
8 starve to death. That's not moral.
9 You guys just said a prayer for our
10 wildlife and you sit here and let
11 this happen. So I'm asking you to
12 actually do something about it this
13 time. Thirteen in 67 counties. I
14 had to drive two hours either way I
15 wanted to go just to get help.
16 That's ridiculous. That needs to
17 change. Children are being raised to
18 believe it's okay to kill all these
19 animals, but they can't help them.
20 They can't help -- I'm not raising my
21 children that way. Sorry I'm
22 passionate about this. That's all I
23 have to say.

1 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Thank you very
2 much.

3 The next speaker is Mr. John
4 Morse.

5 MR. MORSE: Mr. Pate, I've seen
6 your name so many times when I gas
7 up, but I do not hold you accountable
8 for the prices.

9 MR. PATE: Thank you.

10 MR. MORSE: Your luck.

11 Good morning. I'm John
12 Morse. I'm speaking for the citizens
13 of Alabama.

14 Starting in 2012, citizens
15 have been working with WFF trying to
16 get the wildlife rehabilitation
17 program more formalized, organized,
18 and workable. 2012 is the last time
19 WFF worked with the rehabbers.

20 In 2013, WFF started their
21 adversarial relationship when
22 Director Sykes sent out letters that
23 stated rehabbers were required to

1 euthanize seven species of animals.
2 Six were rabies vectored species.
3 Rehabbers and citizens fought that
4 action because it was not based on
5 science. Director Sykes was the
6 first and only wildlife director in
7 the United States to classify the
8 opossum as a rabies vectored species.

9 During that meeting,
10 Director Sykes stated wildlife
11 rehabilitators were not needed in
12 Alabama and the wildlife
13 rehabilitation is unnecessary evil.
14 During that meeting, he also stated
15 that if there was an animal that
16 doesn't belong on this Earth, it was
17 a raccoon and they need to be
18 eradicated. We asked him when do you
19 know you have enough to meet your
20 desired -- he stated that too many --
21 if too many animals were killed, the
22 federal government would take over
23 and make it a special program.

1 That's not right. Working with WFF
2 has been a take or leave it attitude.
3 No transparency and no cooperation.
4 You don't protect citizens. You
5 don't protect citizens' rights. If
6 you would read the rehabilitation
7 permit, you would find that you
8 probably would not sign it. It's a
9 take it or leave it. You don't want
10 to rehab, you don't sign it. That's
11 wrong.

12 In 2012, there were over 100
13 wildlife rehabilitators in the state
14 of Alabama. Due to the guidance
15 coming from Wildlife and Freshwater
16 Fisheries, it is -- it's almost
17 impossible for a citizen to get a
18 wildlife permit. We want it. It's a
19 free service. We do what we need to
20 do. Why do we do it? We take the
21 animals away from good intended
22 citizens and we don't want them to
23 have it. They have good intentions,

1 but if they can't find somebody they
2 will not listen to a phone call.
3 Leave it alone, put it back in
4 nature, let nature take its course.
5 I'm going a little bit long. I hope
6 you give me that time.

7 We started today with a
8 prayer. We're in the Bible Belt of
9 the whole country. People read the
10 Bible.

11 MS. JONES: Time.

12 MR. MORSE: I hope --

13 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Please make
14 your point. I understand that, but
15 please make your point.

16 MR. MORSE: We started off with
17 a prayer, we read the Bible. We are
18 stewards of this land. You can't
19 blame a person to say I want to do
20 something for this animal. We're
21 only talking about -- there was a
22 small little portion that Director
23 Sykes said, .005. We do

1 .001 percent. We do it just because
2 we want to do it and get that animal
3 back into nature. We're only talking
4 about a very few people -- or a very
5 few animals, but we do need to have
6 that so that people can give it to
7 somebody that can do it.

8 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Thank you. We
9 understand. There are others that
10 we're infringing on their time.
11 Thank you.

12 Any questions from the
13 Board? Any comments?

14 The next speaker -- and this
15 has to do with raptor conservation.
16 Shall we hear from this speaker
17 before -- Chief Gauldin, should we
18 hear from the speaker before we
19 ask --

20 MR. SYKES: No, we need to go on
21 and address this, if that's okay.

22 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Ms. Marianne
23 Hudson. Or are you going to do it?

1 MR. SYKES: First of all -- I'm
2 sorry, Legal Counsel. Get ready.
3 Unfortunately, we can't manage
4 wildlife off of emotions. We have to
5 manage wildlife off of science. We
6 also manage off of population, not
7 individual animals, populations.
8 That's what we do. That's our job.
9 We do that for the citizens of
10 Alabama. We have to make hard
11 decisions that make people mad.
12 That's part of it. It doesn't mean
13 that we're wrong. A lot of us have
14 differences of opinions. It's what
15 makes America America, but just
16 because you don't agree with my
17 opinion, does not make us wrong. The
18 quotes that Mr. Morse was making up,
19 y'all can look in the minutes of the
20 Board meeting because I pulled it up
21 where he thanked me and the
22 Department for working with him. A
23 bunch of y'all were sitting here when

1 that happened. We have to base our
2 recommendations on facts, not
3 emotions.

4 Now I will turn it over to
5 Ms. Hudson because she has way more
6 facts than I do.

7 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Thank you.
8 Remind you again, please respect
9 Ms. Hudson's time at the podium.

10 MS. HUDSON: I'm Marianne
11 Hudson. I'm the Conservation
12 Outreach Coordinator and also serve
13 as our Wildlife Rehabilitation Permit
14 Coordinator.

15 Wildlife rehabilitation is a
16 volunteer activity, so every Alabama
17 resident who's interested in
18 conducting wildlife rehabilitation
19 volunteers and applies for this
20 permit.

21 Alabama's wildlife
22 rehabilitation policies are among the
23 most lax in the nation. I work

1 closely with other permit
2 coordinators in other states to see
3 what they're requiring and perhaps
4 consider upgrading the strictness of
5 ours due to what other surrounding
6 states require of their permit
7 holders.

8 With that being said, our
9 wildlife rehabilitation permits now
10 require a completed application
11 agreeing to the policies related to
12 the release and care of the animal
13 and also an inspection of enclosures.
14 Those enclosures are based on
15 recommendations by a nationally known
16 wildlife rehabilitation organization
17 called the NWRA, National Wildlife
18 Rehabilitation Association. So we
19 follow their recommendations
20 completely for enclosures. These are
21 not random requirements that we
22 created.

23 When we implemented that

1 standard of enclosures for the
2 animal, the number of rehabbers
3 dropped and that helped eliminate
4 some of the deplorable conditions
5 that myself and our officers
6 encountered when we inspected these
7 facilities and found animals kept in
8 dog crates for six months, beavers in
9 basement bathtubs for six to
10 eight months. So those minimum
11 standards of enclosures were very
12 important for the care and quality of
13 the animal and brought us up to speed
14 with national standards.

15 Since 2013, I have received
16 five completed applications and
17 requests for enclosure inspection.
18 All five of those applicants were
19 granted permits. I've received quite
20 a number of incomplete applications.
21 I've even gone to do facility
22 inspections and there have been no
23 enclosures there. But everyone who

1 met all the requirements of
2 enclosures and applied for a permit,
3 which has been five since 2013, have
4 received a permit.

5 When it comes to rabies
6 vector species, as they mentioned, we
7 only have three permit holders for
8 that. When you introduce rabies into
9 the conversation, you introduce
10 public health, so our conversations
11 about that include cooperation with
12 the USDA and the Alabama Department
13 of Public Health.

14 Alabama is really on the
15 front lines. It's really a
16 battleground state to help prevent
17 the spread of rabies to other states.
18 As you know, the USDA spends millions
19 of dollars in our state alone to help
20 prevent spread of rabies.

21 Rehabilitators congregating
22 animals in cages and releasing them
23 away from their county of origin is

1 in direct conflict with public safety
2 issues and the efforts of us to
3 control wildlife diseases and also
4 public safety concerns of the USDA
5 and the Alabama Department of Public
6 Health. All our recommendations for
7 the animals are for the safety of the
8 animals, the well-being of the
9 animals, and despite that, although
10 we only have a small number of
11 permitted rehabbers now, I do get a
12 fair amount of complaints from the
13 public about these animals once they
14 are released. For example, squirrels
15 that are overly tame, deer that are
16 overly tame and cause nuisance issues
17 in the areas where they have been
18 released by rehabbers.

19 When it comes to rabies, we
20 have other concerns. We have
21 documentation for permitted rehabbers
22 releasing rabies vector species away
23 from their county of origin, and even

1 in the counties that are currently
2 naive to rabies, which, as you know,
3 is not just an issue for public
4 safety, but also the long-term health
5 of the wildlife population, which is
6 what we are concerned about the most,
7 preserving these wildlife populations
8 mixing these animals and releasing
9 them contributes to the spread of
10 disease.

11 In 2019, Big Bend Wildlife
12 Sanctuary, despite not having a
13 permit to possess raccoons, accepted
14 a rabid raccoon into their facility.
15 We did not get that information from
16 them but did hear later from the
17 Alabama Department of Public Health
18 about their call to try to find the
19 finders who were potentially exposed
20 to rabies through this endeavor.
21 Those people were never found.
22 However, it did lead to continued
23 conversations between our agency, the

1 Alabama Department of Public Health,
2 and the USDA about how we handle
3 permits to members of the public to
4 handle animals that could potentially
5 increase the risk of human health
6 dangers.

7 So rabies vector species,
8 which do not include possums in our
9 state or any other state, are
10 restricted more than the other
11 species due to concerns for human
12 health and wildlife population.
13 Allowing these animals to mix in
14 cages and then be spread out to
15 counties where they're not currently
16 found, as far as the disease is not
17 currently found, is not something we
18 can sanction for both the wildlife
19 health and human safety issues.

20 Those folks that we've heard
21 from today that are concerned about
22 the lack of resources, we invite them
23 to apply. As I mentioned, this is a

1 volunteer activity which takes a lot
2 of time, money, and resources, and
3 it's an extremely expensive hobby and
4 not a lot of people once they call
5 and find out the enclosure
6 requirements and the type of money
7 that they will be spending out of
8 their own pocket are, frankly, not
9 willing to do it. It's not a
10 facility we can drop on every street
11 corner. It's a volunteer activity.
12 And when people volunteer, they are
13 volunteering again their time, their
14 money, and resources. Of the five
15 people that have volunteered since
16 2013, each have received and
17 currently hold a permit.

18 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Thank you,
19 Ms. Hudson.

20 Any questions from the
21 Board?

22 Any comments?

23 Thank you very much.

1 MR. PATE: Of course, I didn't
2 realize this was an issue. So there
3 actually is a program where you can
4 be an official rehabber. I mean --
5 and so I don't know what -- you know,
6 we all know now, I think -- or y'all
7 maybe disagree -- you know, you're
8 not supposed to find a deer -- a
9 young deer by itself, you don't go
10 get the deer and go try to find its
11 mama. I think we're not talking
12 about that, right? We're talking
13 about -- and so I don't really
14 understand what y'all's grind is if
15 there's a program there. And what
16 would you have them do?

17 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: I'll have to
18 ask you to come back to the podium.
19 I'm going to give you just a couple
20 of seconds. Go ahead, Marianne.

21 MS. HUDSON: Since possession of
22 protected wildlife is not legal
23 otherwise, we do issue permits for

1 wildlife rehabilitation, and so
2 basically these permits are in place
3 so when a member of the public finds
4 an animal that is in need of care and
5 rehabilitation action to remedy
6 whatever its injuries or ailments
7 are, they are legally able to hold
8 that animal temporarily in captivity,
9 euthanize it if it needs to be
10 euthanized, or perhaps keep for a
11 period of time until its injuries are
12 healed and then release it back out
13 into the wild. And in order to
14 receive that permit, permit holders
15 have to have required enclosures and
16 agree to release the animal within
17 certain guidelines.

18 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Thank you.
19 Does that answer your question?

20 MR. PATE: Not really. So what
21 would be the animal -- I need
22 something more concrete. If a bird
23 falls out of a nest and has broken

1 its wing, is that what we're talking
2 about?

3 MS. HUDSON: Yes. Let me give
4 you an example. I receive animal
5 reports from wildlife rehabilitators,
6 and the majority of the animals that
7 come into the facilities are those
8 that should have been left where they
9 are. So these are animals like baby
10 deer that are waiting on the doe that
11 are removed from the wild although
12 they should have been left. These
13 are fledglings or brancher developing
14 birds that should have been left. So
15 most often these animals are removed
16 by well-meaning members of the public
17 when they should have been left where
18 they are. However, there are times
19 where there may be a bird with a
20 broken wing or an opossum that's been
21 hit by a car, something that can
22 recover from those injuries within a
23 short period of time under the care

1 of a permitted individual.

2 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Is that
3 substantial?

4 MR. PATE: I want to hear their
5 side. They don't agree with that.

6 MS. SHEHAM: The problem is that
7 there was over a hundred rehabbers at
8 one time and it dropped down to 13
9 and the people are still rehabbing
10 underground. So they're still
11 putting them in these tiny cages.
12 They're still putting themselves at
13 risk. That's the issue. Without
14 getting them education and the
15 ability to actually rehab, you're
16 just keeping people underground. And
17 they're afraid, so they don't network
18 with each other.

19 MR. PATE: What would you have
20 us to do? I mean --

21 MS. SHEHAM: There are
22 several --

23 THE REPORTER: Hold on. Hold

1 on.

2 MR. PATE: I mean, I guess the
3 question is there's a program in
4 place and so -- and it sounds like --

5 MS. SHEHAM: I tried to --

6 MR. PATE: -- it's a nationally
7 recognized sort of program. I don't
8 know why people went underground.
9 People do that in lots of industries,
10 whether it's not getting hunting
11 licenses or different reasons people
12 do that. But what would you have us
13 do?

14 MS. SHEHAM: The problem is I
15 wanted to apply after finding these
16 animals and there was nothing online
17 that I could fill into. There was no
18 application. It said not accepting
19 applications at this time. And that
20 was over probably a year period. So
21 you're not giving us the option.
22 There's only one point of contact if
23 you'd like to be a rehabber. You

1 have to call that person. And the
2 people I've talked to because I'm a
3 part of another organization, they've
4 all been talked to like they're
5 idiots, and they're talked to rudely
6 when they call the Department because
7 they don't want rehabbers because
8 it's not bringing them money like
9 fishing licenses and hunting
10 licenses. They don't spend money on
11 things they don't want to spend money
12 on.

13 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Thank you. It
14 seems that there is a solution to the
15 problem, that is, applying for an
16 approved rehabber permit, be
17 inspected, and be part of it. That
18 seems obvious, and that's what I
19 would recommend that you do. You
20 have your understanding of what the
21 rehabbers do and that there is a
22 program available for additional
23 rehabbers. That is correct. I'm

1 sorry. I'm not taking any
2 questions --

3 MS. MORSE: That's not fair,
4 sir.

5 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: -- from the --

6 MS. MORSE: The problem is we
7 don't have a two-way conversation
8 with the Department. It is their way
9 or the highway.

10 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Ms. Morse, that
11 is a matter -- something to be dealt
12 with with the person that manages
13 that.

14 MS. MORSE: They won't. We have
15 tried.

16 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: I find that
17 hard to believe, and I'm not going to
18 accept any dialogue with you here
19 unless you're at the podium.

20 We'd like to move on to the
21 next --

22 MS. MORSE: I'll move back to
23 the podium and explain this further.

1 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: There are other
2 people here. And we understand
3 exactly --

4 MS. MORSE: It's not fair.

5 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: -- what you're
6 saying.

7 MS. MORSE: I want to go on
8 Record this is not fair. This is the
9 --

10 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Then it's on
11 the Record that it's not fair.

12 MS. SHEHAM: We have 11,000
13 signatures that says it needs to
14 change in Alabama.

15 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Very good.
16 Let's work to be part of the
17 solution.

18 MS. SHEHAM: I'm trying very
19 hard.

20 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Next? Yes,
21 Mr. Hartzog?

22 MR. HARTZOG: Could I ask that
23 maybe the Department -- we have a

1 nongame section, correct?

2 MR. SYKES: (Nods head.)

3 MR. HARTZOG: Why not appoint
4 several members of the nongame
5 section to work with Marianne and to
6 work with these people. The people
7 that are underground -- I mean, the
8 way I'm hearing this is the people
9 that are underground probably
10 couldn't pass inspection. Well,
11 they -- if they're going to rehab,
12 they need to pass the inspection.

13 MS. SHEHAM: And any education.
14 There's no education.

15 MR. HARTZOG: Okay. But maybe
16 if the Commissioner would set up a
17 committee with Marianne and a couple
18 members of the -- go ahead, Chuck.

19 MR. SYKES: I'm sorry. We
20 already have a committee. Marianne
21 doesn't do anything unilaterally.
22 She works with law enforcement, she
23 works with nongame, she works -- it's

1 already there.

2 MR. HARTZOG: Okay. But it may
3 be to try to -- take one step to try
4 to is acceptable to me, say, within
5 the next -- before the next meeting
6 to have them report back to --

7 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Mr. Hartzog, it
8 seems that the procedures are in
9 place within the Department. It's
10 not something that I think we as a
11 Board have to reinvent. That is
12 something that's in place. It's
13 available. I do believe that there
14 are educational opportunities for
15 these rehabbers. Somewhere I have
16 read that there are educational
17 opportunities. I won't debate. But
18 thank you, but I think that that's in
19 place. Am I right, Ms. Hudson? Not
20 the education, but there's a process
21 in place?

22 MS. HUDSON: That's right. So
23 we have our website, we have a

1 contact information list on the
2 website, folks can contact us and
3 inquire about permits. I get
4 inquiries, a few a week, and when
5 people find out that they need to
6 have minimum enclosures, quite often
7 they just do not want to proceed
8 because, as you mentioned, a lot of
9 people would rather just do it in
10 deplorable conditions at times and
11 they do. And we cannot stop people
12 from doing it illegally. All we can
13 do is sanction and recommend people
14 do it well, and we do have a system
15 in place for that.

16 COMMISSIONER BLANKENSHIP:

17 Mr. Chairman, I would just suggest
18 that I will review the procedures and
19 process with our staff and make sure
20 that we feel that it's adequate what
21 we're doing and bring the report back
22 to the Board at the May meeting.

23 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: That sounds

1 like a perfect example of a solution.

2 Thank you very much.

3 Let's move on. Our next
4 speaker is Mr. Matt Whitfield.

5 MR. WHITFIELD: Chairman,
6 gentlemen of the Board, thank you for
7 your time. I'm a little bit nervous.
8 I've never had this many game wardens
9 watching me.

10 MR. BANNON: That you know of.

11 MR. WHITFIELD: I am the
12 president of the Alabama Hawking
13 Association and also the
14 representative of the Alabama
15 Falconry Raptor Council. So I am a
16 permitted general falconer and small
17 game hunter in the state of Alabama.
18 And let me give you just a brief
19 description of falconry.

20 Falconry is the taking of
21 wild quarry in its natural state with
22 a trained raptor. Falconry does not
23 include keeping the birds of prey for

1 any other reason other than hunting.
2 Because our birds are a natural
3 resource, we have obligations to
4 ensure that the continued
5 availability of that resource is
6 plentiful.

7 Falconry offers the highest
8 form of protection of an animal by a
9 human. We feed them, nurse them when
10 they're sick, protect them from
11 predators, and we also give them a
12 step up while they're juveniles to
13 help learn to survive by the next
14 winter.

15 Now, there is a high
16 mortality rate in birds of prey just
17 by nature. Humans also play a
18 harmful role in that mortality rate
19 due to lack of education. And we're
20 proposing a poster be generated and
21 sent out to help with this. I've
22 included that poster I think with the
23 packet that you gentlemen have

1 received.

2 Indiana has a similar
3 program like what we're proposing,
4 and I think there's a potential donor
5 paper that I've handed you that might
6 have some of the donors we've used to
7 handle the money for that. And those
8 posters we'd like to put in State
9 Parks or, you know, maybe schools or
10 other places of education.

11 Falconry and rehabilitation
12 programs, even though they're
13 different, different-type programs,
14 have been dramatically successful
15 throughout the years in helping
16 conservation of birds of prey, and we
17 hope that us as falconers can partner
18 with you, the Conservation Board, to
19 help with that. I've got 45 seconds.
20 I can say whatever I want.

21 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: You certainly
22 may, but let me take some of that
23 time and ask the Board if they have

1 any questions for you.

2 All right. Thank you very
3 much.

4 MR. PATE: There again, what
5 is -- is he asking us to do
6 something?

7 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: It's my
8 understanding he had a point and we
9 appreciate the knowledge that you
10 brought to us.

11 COMMISSIONER BLANKENSHIP:
12 Mr. Pate, we have received the
13 information from him earlier in the
14 week, and we've passed that in our
15 Department and there was some -- we
16 want to work with him on the poster
17 material provided to make sure that
18 it meets -- it has some grammatical
19 problems and a few other things that
20 we're not opposed to trying to get
21 worked out with their group and what
22 they do and educational things around
23 the State Parks and others. It fits

1 well within our mission.

2 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Our next
3 speaker is Randy Blelew.

4 MR. BLELEW: Thank y'all for
5 being -- taking the time out of your
6 Saturdays. I'm here to talk about
7 the limits on fishing.

8 It's been called to my
9 attention you can catch a limit
10 today, say -- let's skip everything
11 on this list except crappie. You go
12 fishing today and catch a limit.
13 Tomorrow -- it's been called to my
14 attention I can't go fishing tomorrow
15 for crappie because I got a limit
16 that I caught legal today. Chapter 2
17 right here it says it's unlawful to
18 possess more than one limit. Where
19 does that limit, the possession, come
20 in? And I'll put this limit in the
21 freezer. Where does that limit --
22 that possession stop and start. And
23 that is my question. I can't get an

1 answer from nobody to -- does it
2 carry on until I eat that limit or
3 what?

4 COMMISSIONER BLANKENSHIP: I
5 think the best thing to do would just
6 have you talk with one of our game
7 wardens at a break or afterwards.
8 But you're asking if you can have
9 more than one limit on the boat at a
10 time?

11 MR. BLELEW: No. In my home in
12 my freezer, where does that
13 possession stop and start? I've been
14 told for me to go fishing tomorrow
15 because I got a limit, I need to take
16 ten, give it away. I can go catch
17 ten instead of my daily limit.

18 COMMISSIONER BLANKENSHIP: I
19 think the best thing to do would be
20 to talk to one of our game wardens
21 about that. This is not a statewide
22 issue that there's -- people are
23 having problems with that

1 understanding of the possession
2 limit, I don't believe.

3 MR. BLELEW: It's right here in
4 the book.

5 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Again, as the
6 Commissioner said, my recommendation
7 is you pick one of these gentlemen.
8 They all know the rules and
9 regulations, what then is redeemed to
10 your possession or becomes in your
11 possession that would then allow you
12 to go catch more fish. They can
13 explain that to you succinctly.

14 Thank you very much. Our
15 next speaker is Mr. Tim Mullek.

16 MR. MULLEK: Good morning,
17 Chairman and gentlemen of the Board.
18 I am asking this Board to consider
19 recommending a regulation change from
20 one unantlered deer per day to two
21 unantlered on private and leased
22 lands.

23 I am a cotton and a peanut

1 farmer in Robertsedale, which is
2 Baldwin County. You guys may ask why
3 do we need a regulation change. This
4 summer and for several years, I have
5 applied for and received depredation
6 permits from the DCNR. Working with
7 them is easy. No complaints there.
8 I counted when I was sitting in the
9 back, this summer we shot 228 deer.
10 This problem is not unique to
11 Baldwin County. It is in Dallas,
12 Barbour, Russell, Mobile, and
13 Escambia.

14 Why would a regulation
15 change be better for everybody?
16 First of all, when we shoot them in
17 the summer, we have to let them lay
18 and that's a waste. If hunters could
19 shoot them in the winter, they can
20 clean them and eat them.

21 Secondly, during the hunting
22 season, a hunter can very easily
23 distinguish between a doe and a

1 yearling easy. Does have got the
2 long nose. Yearlings are smaller.
3 When we shoot them in the summer with
4 a thermal, you see the deer. Can I
5 see horns? Yeah. I don't -- that's
6 not my problem. But when you shoot
7 an unantlered deer in the summer, a
8 certain percentage of them are males,
9 and so I think the hunter can do a
10 better job than a farmer can in the
11 summer. And that's all I have.

12 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Okay. So to
13 sum that up for us, you're
14 recommending a two-doe limit in what
15 part of Baldwin County?

16 MR. MULLEK: I think it should
17 be statewide. If an area does not
18 have a deer problem, people will
19 self-regulate. They'll only shoot
20 one or none. And I think in the old
21 days the regulation read two deer a
22 day, you can only have one buck and
23 one doe. So you can't -- we're

1 not -- you can't have a buck and two
2 does. We're not asking for three.
3 But to be able to kill two unantlered
4 deer per day every day of the season
5 not on management area.

6 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: I understand.
7 I understand what you're asking for.

8 Are there any questions from
9 the Board?

10 Thank you, Mr. Mullek. We
11 understand.

12 Our next speaker is
13 Mr. Glenn Cox.

14 MR. COX: Thank you, Mr. Dobbs
15 and the Board. My request today is
16 pretty simple. I'm from Gadsden,
17 Alabama. This is about Zone E up in
18 Cleburne County, Cherokee County,
19 Calhoun County. And I know it's been
20 going on a couple of years, and I
21 don't know if there's any data that
22 you have gotten back from that area
23 with the change to move the season up

1 two weeks as well as bring the end of
2 the season up two weeks. I know
3 going back and looking at the
4 minutes, it was recommended even when
5 this was being looked at is to maybe
6 leave the end of the season alone,
7 and that's really all that myself and
8 the other hunters and landowners in
9 that area that I've talked to --
10 that's all they're recommending or
11 would like to see is for the end of
12 our season to stay the same as
13 February the 10th, I believe it is.
14 Because right now what we've got is
15 the season has moved up -- and,
16 again, I understand that the data
17 showed that the rut was coming in
18 earlier up there, which we all knew
19 that, but for us, even with the
20 regular dates, we found the rut was a
21 week or two after the season opened
22 was really when things got started.

23 Now, we bow hunt, so for us,

1 around us in that area -- is do you
2 have any data you can provide that
3 shows that this is some great benefit
4 to not have the two weeks at the end
5 of the season; and the reason I say
6 that is at the end of our season, we
7 have a second rut which actually
8 starts -- it literally starts right
9 around the time now that our season
10 closes, and it runs from the end of
11 January around the 24th, 25th, all
12 the way through December 10th. And
13 we have trail cams, we have data, we
14 have all that to prove that.

15 MS. JONES: Time.

16 MR. COX: If I can go on just a
17 second.

18 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Get to your
19 point.

20 MR. COX: My point is we'd like
21 to get our February 10th date back.
22 We've been hunting it, and then all
23 of a sudden for the last two years,

1 we're sitting here looking at trail
2 cams and we're watching deer start a
3 whole second rut that we've always
4 been able to hunt and now it's just
5 like, sorry, you can't do that
6 anymore. So, again, my simple
7 request is we'd like to go back to
8 our finishing day of February the
9 10th in Cleburne County.

10 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Okay. You
11 spoke of Cleburne, Calhoun, and
12 Cherokee?

13 MR. COX: Yes, sir.

14 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Thank you very
15 much.

16 Any questions from my right
17 or the left about this? Any redress?

18 Thank you very much.

19 Our next speaker is
20 Ms. Martha Strange.

21 MS. STRANGE: I'm Martha Strange
22 from Talladega County.

23 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Good morning.

1 MS. STRANGE: My concern is with
2 the deer dog hunting. I've been a
3 property owner next to the Talladega
4 National Forest for 20-plus years.

5 MR. B. JONES: Speak up, please.

6 MS. STRANGE: And I don't want
7 to appear adversarial. I've actually
8 spent some good time talking with
9 some of the deer dog hunters here
10 today. But my point is I'm not
11 against hunting; I'm not against a
12 person hunting with his dog. I don't
13 hunt. My husband hunts and I've got
14 friends that squirrel hunt with their
15 dog, but they control their dogs.
16 What we're against is the person or
17 persons releasing a group of dogs to
18 run loose across our property, and we
19 see that -- our perception of that is
20 trespassing.

21 For example, the deer dog
22 hunters will drive up to two gates,
23 one next to the property and one

1 close to the property line, release
2 their dogs, and our perception is
3 that dog deer hunters know where
4 their dogs are. Their dogs are
5 wearing GPS collars, so the hunters
6 are allowing their dogs to trespass
7 on private property. Dog deer
8 hunters increase this risk when they
9 release their dogs with close
10 proximity to private property. And I
11 came today -- my intent was to ask
12 why we cannot ban dog deer hunting in
13 Talladega National Forest as is true
14 for the rest of the national forest
15 in Alabama.

16 And I have filed complaints
17 with Jerry Fincher. We've talked to
18 Jeff Martin. I talked with Lonnie
19 Miller, who is the dog hunter
20 association.

21 Now, Lonnie Miller gave me a
22 lot of good information. He said the
23 dogs can be trained to not go on

1 private property by -- I may not be
2 using the right word -- but shock
3 collar training. And if the dog deer
4 hunters can control their dogs, then
5 I have no issue. My issue is coming
6 on my property. But if they can't
7 control their dogs, then we don't
8 think they should be allowed to
9 trespass on our property.

10 I spoke with -- the premise
11 is why are dogs allowed with GPS
12 collars on and hunters know where the
13 dogs are to be able to run free on
14 other people's property. I spoke
15 with Lonnie this week -- and, again,
16 he's the dog hunting association --
17 and he did say he is willing to work
18 with us. He said he's willing to
19 work within next season, but I wanted
20 to -- I was told if you don't
21 complain -- like you said, there's
22 only one complaint -- if you don't
23 make a complaint, then guys don't

1 know that this is still an issue in
2 the Talladega National Forest. So
3 working -- I'd like to go forward
4 with Jeff and Lonnie and Kyle and
5 let's work next year and see can't we
6 do a better job with the dog hunting
7 in Talladega National Forest.

8 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Thank you very
9 much for your attitude. That's
10 wonderful. Please do stay in touch
11 with your representative, with Jeff
12 Martin. Please stay in touch with
13 him. I'm going to make a note here
14 for that too for me.

15 Our next speaker -- I'm
16 sorry. Are there any questions from
17 my right or the left?

18 Our next speaker is Mr. Max
19 Freeman.

20 MR. FREEMAN: Thank you--all for
21 your time. I'm a deer hunter. I
22 hunt the same woods that Ms. Strange
23 owns and the national forestry for

1 the last 44 years. I have not had
2 problems with the dogs until the last
3 three years where they've been banned
4 in other counties and stuff like
5 this. There's many other folks that
6 hunts the national forestry too that
7 don't want dogs.

8 We spend a lot of time and
9 money on our land beside the national
10 forestry to increase and develop good
11 deer and stuff like that, and now
12 we're having people to come from
13 other counties where it's been banned
14 from their county to come in our
15 county and destroy our population and
16 take all of our deer back home with
17 them.

18 They're not doing it right.
19 They're trashing our woods. They're
20 making our roads dangerous by flying
21 up and down the roads trying to cut
22 their dogs off with the GPS. They're
23 no longer standing the roads they

1 used to. They're riding the roads
2 and following their GPS tracking.
3 They're no longer turning their dogs
4 out in certain spots where needs to
5 be. They're going along the road
6 where they know the deer is behind
7 the population of houses and stuff
8 like that, turning them out from the
9 main road and then running them back
10 up in the national forestry and
11 waiting on them to come up through
12 there and then shoot them.

13 As a person with interest in
14 the hunting, I spend a lot of time in
15 the woods fixing my property and
16 other property to be able to hunt
17 without them interfering with us.
18 There's enough of them.

19 How come they don't have to
20 go and lease them some land to run
21 their dogs on? They've run other
22 people that's paying the forestry
23 taxes or whatever and buying the land

1 and leasing and stuff to -- they have
2 no concern over it. They're running
3 their dogs through it, and we can't
4 do nothing about it. I can't stop a
5 man running down the road. He stops
6 when you're not there, throw his dogs
7 out, and then runs up on the map and
8 waits for his dogs and he's tracking
9 a GPS. It's like shooting a deer in
10 the butt with a dart, you're going to
11 find it sooner or later. It's not
12 fair. It's not fair to the people
13 that's took time to prepare their
14 land and everything else for these
15 people to come from other counties
16 that they're already busted up and
17 done away with their welcome to come
18 to our part that borders the national
19 forestry and all and destroy what
20 we've worked so hard for and done
21 just because they have some dogs and
22 they want to get out there and ride
23 the roads and chase their deer with a

1 GPS. That's not hunting. That's not
2 sport.

3 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Understood.
4 Thank you for being here. Are you
5 saying that these dog deer hunters
6 cross your property, trespass on your
7 property?

8 MR. FREEMAN: Yes, sir.

9 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Not just on the
10 road?

11 MR. FREEMAN: Yes, sir. They're
12 going across everybody's property.
13 If I'm not mistaken, I talked to some
14 of the game wardens. They say as
15 long as they aren't within 50 yards
16 of a dwelling and on national
17 forestry, they can turn them loose.
18 Well, if they got a little bitty
19 50-yard spot of national forestry and
20 then the rest of it's privately owned
21 land, they go to that one little spot
22 right there, throw their dogs in, and
23 then run over to the big part of

1 national forestry and come through
2 our land, which we have put feed
3 plots and taken care of to keep the
4 deer around there, and run into them
5 by going through our land.

6 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Thank you. The
7 Board, I believe, has a sense of your
8 issue. And, again, thank you for
9 being here.

10 Any questions?

11 Thank you.

12 I'm sorry. Mr. Martin?

13 MR. MARTIN: Yeah, I would
14 suggest to get with Lonnie.

15 MR. FREEMAN: We have talked.
16 I'm with Ms. Strange, and we have
17 talked and we've had this problem and
18 it's coming from St. Clair County,
19 Pell City. And it's three major
20 groups that's doing this, and we
21 can't -- every time they tell us we
22 can't do nothing with the dogs. You
23 can't catch them. You catch them,

1 I appreciate the opportunity here to
2 speak today. I'm a property owner in
3 Covington County, and I'm here today
4 to get some issues resolved
5 concerning dog hunters, specifically
6 encroachment.

7 The activity that goes along
8 with dog hunting right around -- I'm
9 basically surrounded. I own a
10 hundred acres. I lease another 130
11 that we use for hunting and
12 recreation, and everybody knows you
13 can't compete with the dog hunters.
14 And like the gentleman just said, I'm
15 having the exact same issues.

16 And this is the third time
17 that I've brought this in front of
18 the Board. The previous two meetings
19 I sent an email to my district reps.
20 I was unfortunately unable to come to
21 the meeting. And after reading the
22 minutes, I believe it said that there
23 were no dog issues. However, I

1 submitted issues both those times.
2 The guy that had the lease that I
3 have now submitted a letter to the
4 Board having the same issues. Which
5 he had the lease for two years and
6 gave it up after that because of the
7 issues with dog hunters.

8 And like the gentleman said
9 before me, it's just the same. They
10 come up to the property line, let
11 their dogs out, and they run across
12 the property line and you have no
13 recourse of action.

14 On the west side and south
15 side of my leased property is all dog
16 hunting areas. They lease 12,000
17 acres around us, and as soon as
18 hunting starts, I get pictures of
19 dogs running all over my property. I
20 get pictures of GPS collared dogs
21 running through my property chasing
22 deer. For over an hour I get these
23 pictures of these dogs. That's not

1 an accident.

2 I've tried talking with the
3 president of the hunting club, and
4 last year when we first bought the
5 property, he said he'd throw it out
6 in front of the Board for a vote and
7 get back with me. He never got back
8 with me. I left two messages, two
9 phone calls, two messages, and I've
10 heard nothing.

11 So this year, I put out a
12 lot more cameras, and I got -- as
13 soon as hunting season started, I get
14 pictures of dogs running all through
15 my property. They're not the
16 neighbor's dogs. They're collared.
17 They're uncollared. So you've got
18 the rogue dog hunters. They're not
19 permitted. They're not a part of the
20 county. You've got the rogue dog
21 hunters that release their dogs
22 across the road running them through
23 the property.

1 I filed three reports with
2 the game wardens this year, and I was
3 sorry to waste their time. They come
4 up, they take the report, and say we
5 can't do anything. We don't know
6 whose dogs they are. Even though
7 they're collared and there's a dog
8 hunting club around me, they won't --
9 they can't do anything. Their hands
10 are tied. I've got a picture of a
11 dog hunter with a radio trespassing
12 on my property this year. Even the
13 game warden said, yes, it's probably
14 a dog hunter.

15 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Thank you. We
16 understand completely. Do you know
17 the names that are on the dog
18 collars? Do you know the dog hunting
19 club?

20 MR. STEWART: Sir, I don't have
21 the time to research this to go catch
22 dogs.

23 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Thank you. I'm

1 just curious.

2 MR. STEWART: But there is a dog
3 hunting club around. Yes, I know
4 what you're saying.

5 COMMISSIONER BLANKENSHIP: Are
6 you north or south of Highway 84?

7 MR. STEWART: South, sir.
8 They're not permitted in that part of
9 the county. But what I'm
10 specifically asking for if I could,
11 please, is a buffer zone for private
12 property owners. And there are two
13 issues, one is the constant dog
14 encroachment on the property. You're
15 chasing your tail. It's like putting
16 a Band-Aid on a gaping wound. Like I
17 said, when you get dogs running deer
18 an hour on your property and they're
19 whistle trained, it's not an
20 accident. And the other one is the
21 constant activity around the property
22 line. I got a -- what the dog
23 hunters call an 18-acre field and

1 I've got a shooting house on it. You
2 sit there in the morning. Well,
3 right at daylight here they come, so
4 you might as well just climb down and
5 go back to the house because ain't
6 nothing going to happen while you're
7 sitting there.

8 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Thank you.

9 MR. STEWART: A buffer zone for
10 private property owners on the dog
11 hunting.

12 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Thank you. Our
13 next speaker is Michael Bragg.

14 MR. HARTZOG: Mr. Chairman,
15 could I address -- because the
16 gentleman is from Kevin and I's
17 section.

18 We've gotten his letters.
19 The proposal that he made, it sounded
20 like in one of the emails he sent us
21 the club was trying to work and they
22 actually fenced so that the dogs
23 could not encroach, so it sounded

1 like the dog club was working with
2 him.

3 The other thing was he was
4 wanting a 500-yard buffer zone.
5 Well, you apply a 500-yard buffer
6 zone, the dog hunters get 500 also,
7 so if you do 500 yards, 500 yards,
8 500 yards, you've got a 200-acre
9 tract of land that you couldn't hunt
10 if you applied 500 yards.

11 So we've read his letter. I
12 understand his problem, but it
13 sounded to me in the email that Kevin
14 and I got that the dog club had
15 actually fenced one whole section to
16 try to keep the dogs from
17 trespassing, so, you know, maybe you
18 need to get with that club and see if
19 they will go and fence some of the
20 other.

21 MR. STEWART: I did that, sir.
22 I asked the club if they could make
23 that a stalk hunting area, and they

1 never returned my call. I tried
2 working with them, and when they
3 don't return your calls, that's
4 pretty much that we're not going to
5 work with you is what I got out of
6 that. So that's why I'm here today
7 is to try to get this --

8 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Mr. Hartzog,
9 what I would recommend is that you
10 help facilitate that program, that
11 you work through that with them and
12 help solve this.

13 MR. HARTZOG: Lonnie, if you
14 will get that particular dog club to
15 maybe meet with Kevin and I and we
16 can meet in my office in a conference
17 room. I'm sure Kevin will allow us
18 to use his conference room also.

19 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Thank you. No
20 other questions?

21 Mr. Bragg, I'm sorry.

22 MR. BRAGG: No problem, sir.

23 Thank you for your time,

1 Mr. Chairman, and thank you to the
2 committee for allowing us to be here.

3 My name is Michael Bragg. I
4 am a member of the Alabama Tracking
5 Alliance. I'm here today to speak
6 about Nose to Ground Alabama: Wounded
7 Game Recovery. I passed out
8 pamphlets for everybody to have. And
9 what Nose to Ground: Wounded Game
10 Recovery is we're a group of trackers
11 that believes in the ethical recovery
12 of wounded game and the use of
13 tracking dogs. We strive to provide
14 quality tracking service for all
15 Alabama hunters statewide. We also
16 encourage the group sport that we
17 love by assisting new handlers and
18 teams in the journey to become
19 successful tracking teams. And one
20 of our goals is that --

21 There's a lot of myths about
22 what we do, a lot of myths that -- a
23 trained tracking dog doesn't run

1 every deer in the woods. They are
2 trained to track one specific deer.
3 Our dogs are trained to track only
4 one deer. When we're in the woods
5 with our dogs, they're trained on an
6 individual gland to stay on that --
7 only one deer. And so by doing that
8 is why we are different than any
9 other dog that is used in the woods.

10 Our dogs are not deer dogs.
11 And so by that also is that we have a
12 group of guidelines that we suggest
13 to hunters is that don't call
14 everybody in the neighborhood to help
15 you look for your deer. And, you
16 know, we wait and we try to educate
17 the hunters by everything we do.

18 We also have a training
19 program to where -- we go through
20 United Blood Tracking Organization,
21 which is a worldwide organization
22 that helps train handlers and dogs
23 how to successfully help hunters

1 recover wounded game. Our
2 organization is the only organization
3 that helps hunters recover wounded
4 game, and that's what we're striving
5 to set ourself apart from any other
6 organization.

7 We are not against deer dog
8 hunting. We're not against any other
9 type of hunting that anybody wants to
10 do legally in the state of Alabama.
11 What we are asking is that we are not
12 included in any other laws that
13 pertain to deer dogs. We do not want
14 to be associated with any laws
15 pertaining to deer dogs.

16 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: We understand.
17 And I think I speak for the Board.
18 We understand that there is a
19 distinction.

20 Are there any questions?

21 No questions.

22 Thank you.

23 MR. PATE: Is there a problem?

1 I mean, is there a problem? Have you
2 been included?

3 MR. BRAGG: Yes, sir. Last year
4 in the SB 381, the Alabama Dog
5 Hunting Association with their bill
6 that they had drafted up included
7 tracking dogs. And they stated that
8 they were no different than deer
9 dogs, and we're completely different.
10 And so last year they moved that.
11 Also, it got to House Bill 381. And
12 then this year my understanding is
13 they're going to try to reintroduce
14 the bill, and I just want to state
15 that we are not the same.

16 MR. PATE: That sounds like more
17 of a political issue that you need to
18 talk to your representative.

19 MR. BRAGG: Yeah, we have done
20 that, but I also want to educate the
21 Board here that if you hear
22 something, we don't have any
23 complaints about our dogs and what we

1 do. We don't cross the property line
2 without permission. We tell people
3 before we even come if you don't have
4 permission, we're not coming. So,
5 you know -- and we follow the game
6 laws.

7 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: We understand.
8 Thank you very much.

9 Next speaker is Mr. Don
10 Knight.

11 MR. KNIGHT: I'm Don Knight. I
12 live in Anniston, Alabama, and hunt
13 in Fayette County. I moved out of
14 Grady's area where I'd leave him
15 alone.

16 Just to start right here, I
17 want to brag on these people that
18 just talked. And there is a
19 difference in our dogs. My dogs -- I
20 can speak on my dogs. My dogs run
21 the deer. They'll run the heck out
22 of it, but when I take those same
23 dogs out there to track a wounded

1 deer, if it's fresh, they'll find it.
2 If it's not that fresh and the deer
3 crosses -- another deer crosses,
4 whoop, there goes my dogs. They
5 going to the freshest smell.

6 Okay. I want you to
7 understand that because I think these
8 people are doing a tremendous great
9 job, the recovery people. And when
10 you see a young kid get that first
11 deer and these people track it for
12 him, they're amazing. It will make
13 your whole heart and your whole life
14 fess up a little bit. It's a great
15 thing to have going.

16 And I'd like to ask the
17 Board -- you know, last meeting I had
18 a little say about the permits. And
19 I'd like for y'all to consider
20 enforcing the permit system like it
21 was set up, because you're going to
22 want people to enforce things you're
23 doing today later on down the years

1 that you've made good. And the Board
2 was set up to give people after a
3 couple of years on the permit system
4 the opportunity to get off.

5 Now, let me tell you, most
6 of the people that I know that are on
7 the permit system right now would be
8 willing to get off the permit system
9 but they'd still hunt by it.

10 Okay. In most cases the
11 people I talk to, they'd still hunt
12 by the regulations. They've got used
13 to them. But they'd just -- it's
14 kind of like taking a shot. You
15 know, you want to make that decision
16 on your own. If you get a shot,
17 that's your business. If you don't
18 get a shot, that's your business.
19 And that's kind of the way we are
20 under the permit system. We'd like
21 for that -- y'all make them -- your
22 people right here make the decision.
23 Just talk with them and if you hadn't

1 had any problems with them, take them
2 off. They'll probably still hunt by
3 the rules and regulations. Most of
4 them I've talked to will. And so,
5 you know, we want you to be
6 represented and we want you to be
7 respected for holding up the laws
8 that other Boards have set up. It
9 don't just be if it ain't broke don't
10 fix it.

11 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: I agree. Thank
12 you, Don, for being here today.

13 Any questions?

14 MR. KNIGHT: My time is not up
15 yet.

16 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: It looked like
17 you had finished.

18 MR. KNIGHT: Well, I'm working
19 on it. No, my time's up.

20 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Thank you, Don.

21 Any questions?

22 None.

23 Thank you.

1 Next speaker is Koty

2 McCarley.

3 MR. MCCARLEY: Thank you,
4 Chairman. Thank you, Board, for
5 allowing us this opportunity.

6 I want to start by thanking
7 Board Member Raymond Jones. Raymond,
8 you may recall we had a situation in
9 the 2021 season where we had to deal
10 with a situation in Colbert County.
11 You chose to give us a line of
12 communication to work with you on
13 that, and I just want to say thank
14 you.

15 My primary reason for being
16 here today is a request for the
17 permit system that was just spoke
18 about. The request is that be
19 expanded into Franklin County. I
20 submitted some material. I hope that
21 you have that.

22 Franklin County was
23 completely closed in 2002, has never

1 been given the opportunity to be able
2 to hunt on this permit system. There
3 are currently 17 counties in Alabama
4 where the permit system is used to be
5 able to have a season for deer
6 hunting with dogs. Along with
7 certain other regulations, the main
8 requirement for this permit system is
9 500 continuous acres of property. I
10 am focusing this request primarily on
11 two hunting clubs. Both of these
12 clubs would qualify for these
13 requirements if it was just made
14 available to us. And you can see on
15 the map that I have submitted, you
16 can see that acreage that these clubs
17 have. And I've already submitted
18 some highlighted areas with Franklin
19 County, gave you a couple of
20 different options there you can look
21 at.

22 All throughout the state,
23 the permit areas are defined by

1 highways, city limits, waterways,
2 just different ways that these areas
3 are defined. And you can see I have
4 defined a few of those so you have
5 some options to look at.

6 I want you to notice that
7 this would be a small expansion. You
8 know, there are areas nearby where
9 dog deer hunting already exists.
10 It's not like we're making a real
11 large expansion. That's not what I'm
12 asking for.

13 And I want to point out
14 right here technology. I know this
15 has already been spoke about, but
16 things have changed a lot in
17 20 years. You know, 20 years ago
18 when we were closed down in Franklin
19 County, we did not have the ability
20 to look at our handheld Garmin unit
21 and say, hey, my dog's fixing to
22 cross onto this other property, I
23 better go catch it. We didn't have

1 that then, but we have that now.

2 And I want to point to the
3 Geneva State Forest hunt that we have
4 each year; that's just proof that
5 this technology works. We turn loose
6 a hundred dogs at a time multiple
7 times a day. We keep them all in
8 bounds. So if you're willing to use
9 it, the technology works. And I'm
10 confident that if you will expand
11 this with this technology, we can
12 make this work in Franklin County for
13 the hunters and for the property
14 owners as well. I can say this with
15 confidence because I have volunteered
16 in this Geneva hunt, and I am a
17 member of a club in Colbert County in
18 Mr. Jones' district where we use this
19 technology. Can I get just about 30
20 more seconds, please?

21 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Yes, 30
22 seconds. Go.

23 MR. MCCARLEY: I want you to

1 consider these questions. Is it
2 right that myself and my kids and the
3 other hunters of this generation are
4 still being punished for the previous
5 actions of the previous generation?
6 Is it right that -- or do we, the new
7 generation, deserve a chance to prove
8 to you that we can do this the right
9 way? So I just want you to consider
10 these as you consider this request.

11 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Thank you,
12 Mr. McCarley.

13 Any questions?

14 MR. WOOD: I do have a question.
15 Is all the property contiguous? Is
16 it all joined together, number one;
17 and number two, is there private
18 landowners kind of intermingled
19 inside of this property?

20 MR. MCCARLEY: No private
21 landowners in the interior. It's all
22 timber company land lease. Just
23 asking for an equal opportunity,

1 guys.

2 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Mr. Jones?

3 MR. R. JONES: First of all,
4 Koty, thank you very much. Koty's
5 been very helpful working out dog
6 deer hunting issues and all that. I
7 do want to point out, though, that
8 the area that was closed and what
9 he's asking -- if everybody was like
10 Koty in the state, it would probably
11 be okay. But this -- unfortunately,
12 not everybody in the state is
13 honorable like Koty is, and if we
14 open an area that's been closed, it
15 sets an incredibly bad precedent for
16 the entire state because now we can't
17 -- we'd have to open it for
18 everybody, and I just want to point
19 that out.

20 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: And, Koty, as
21 you know, all of these closures or
22 permit systems were worked through
23 for a number of years before any

1 actions were taken. It's been on and
2 ongoing like these folks here. So
3 it's, I'm sure, that the Board will
4 take under advisement and review.
5 Thank you for being here.

6 The next speaker is
7 Ms. Susan Morrow.

8 MS. MORROW: Good morning,
9 Chairman.

10 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Good morning,
11 Susan.

12 MS. MORROW: I just wanted to
13 come up here and say thank you to all
14 of y'all, Mr. Sykes, all the
15 Conservation Department, for not
16 putting any more restrictions on us
17 dog deer hunters. We have tried very
18 hard. And to the ones that have
19 complaints, we have disassociated
20 ourselves with bad dog hunters. And
21 in our areas where we hunt, we don't
22 turn a deer dog loose without a GPS
23 collar on it, and we do it the right

1 way. We can't control all of the bad
2 dog hunters, but we have
3 disassociated ourselves with them.
4 And I think that the Board and Chuck
5 and the Conservation Department can
6 probably tell you that we have done a
7 very good job in the last couple of
8 years. But I just wanted to thank
9 y'all.

10 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Thank you,
11 Susan. Always glad to see you here.

12 Our next speaker is Mr. Lane
13 Stephens.

14 MR. STEPHENS: Thank you,
15 Chairman and Commissioners. I am
16 Lane Stephens from Tallahassee,
17 Florida, with SCG Governmental
18 Affairs. I am the lobbyist for the
19 Alabama Dog Hunters Association. I
20 am not here asking for anything,
21 Commissioner. I just want to give
22 some thanks and give some
23 information.

1 First, back in December, I
2 had hoped to see Chuck at the
3 National Assembly of Sportsmen's
4 Caucuses. He unfortunately was not
5 there. But I thanked him then and
6 will thank him again now for the
7 continued success of the Geneva State
8 hunt that Koty mentioned earlier.
9 And this year, it was also expanded
10 to a one-day youth hunt. And we
11 thank him and his staff for allowing
12 that to occur. I was able to show
13 some pictures from that event at the
14 National Assembly of Sportsmen's
15 Caucuses meeting and the legislators
16 in attendance and those watching
17 really enjoyed that.

18 And that's one of the other
19 things I wanted to share with you was
20 at that meeting, Alabama Dog Hunters
21 Association, the Southeastern Dog
22 Hunting Association, Florida State
23 Dog Hunters Association, and the

1 North Central Dog Hunters Association
2 sponsored a session on the heritage
3 of hunting deer with families. I,
4 along with George Worthy, the
5 director of the Division of Hunting
6 and Game Management in Florida, and I
7 did that session. We talked about
8 the heritage. We talked about the
9 challenges that had faced this Board
10 through demographic changes, through
11 land use pattern changes, through
12 larger timber holdings being broken
13 up, and those have created challenges
14 and you have dealt with those
15 challenges. We have dealt with them
16 in Florida and other states. What
17 George and I talked about were how
18 effective stakeholder groups and
19 regulators can work together to
20 develop solutions that can protect
21 the sport and protect the rights of
22 private landowners, both landowners
23 who don't want dogs on their property

1 as well as landowners who would like
2 to be able to hunt with deer dogs on
3 their property. And we talked about
4 those things that work, about the new
5 collars, the GPS collars, the
6 correction collars. And correction
7 collars only work if you train your
8 dogs to use them. Just putting it on
9 there doesn't work.

10 But I was able to show a
11 video at that meeting, a video filmed
12 here in Alabama by several different
13 hunters, and the legislators there
14 and those watching at home got a real
15 treat. They got to watch these dogs
16 who were greatly trained break off
17 with some of the hardest races you've
18 ever seen and being thrown, and with
19 a whistle or more being sounded,
20 those dogs broke right off, came to
21 their master, loaded themselves up in
22 the dog box without ever being
23 touched.

1 After that meeting, I was
2 told by some of the senators that
3 were there from other states, we need
4 you to come show this to the folks in
5 our state. And it was very well
6 received.

7 I'm running out of time, but
8 I am going to ask this. Many of you
9 come to North Florida, to
10 Panama City, to vacation, Mexico
11 Beach. I would ask you to add them
12 to your prayers. A forest fire
13 started yesterday. It's already
14 spread to over 1400 acres, eight
15 homes have been lost, over 600 other
16 homes are threatened. All that
17 woodland destruction that took place
18 in '18, it's coming to fruition.
19 It's bad in Panama City, so pray for
20 those folks. Thank you.

21 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: I think we can
22 accommodate that. Thank you,
23 Mr. Stephens, very much.

1 Our next and last speaker is
2 Mr. Avery Bates.

3 MR. BATES: My name is Avery
4 Bates. I'm vice president of the
5 Organized Seafood Association of
6 Alabama. It's a blessing to be here
7 today.

8 I'll tell you, we have had
9 some good seasons this year,
10 especially on oysters. What a
11 blessing it was to see my brothers.
12 They're still able to oyster. You
13 can get an oyster that's worth more
14 than it's ever been worth. You sell
15 it to the public that should enjoy
16 it. It's a wonderful thing for a
17 properly licensed commercial
18 fisherman to be able to fish, supply
19 the fish to the citizens of this
20 state and this country. We love to
21 see people eat whether it's
22 freshwater catfish or whatever fish,
23 put it on the table like you put it

1 on his table.

2 Our Commissioner of
3 Agriculture, along with Patti and a
4 number of other people, got to enjoy
5 some good seafood at the seafood
6 banquet. The place was packed out.
7 They enjoyed good boiled shrimp. We
8 like to see people eat wild caught
9 seafood from our bays, our rivers.
10 We want to see y'all continue to let
11 these fishermen catch fish from our
12 waters, all kinds of fish.

13 You know, 9280 says --
14 that's to define what seafood is. It
15 is all saltwater fish. It says that
16 in 9280. But it also says in other
17 places in 911 section that you're
18 allowed to catch other species. We
19 want to include another species and
20 put it back like it was a few years
21 ago.

22 We support -- I talked to
23 our commercial fishermen. We support

1 this bill and House Bill 334, and I'm
2 just telling you that. But I want to
3 add some other things too.

4 This is important to keep
5 feeding America. What's sad to see
6 is imported China oysters on the
7 markets. We see them in a lot of
8 stores. China don't like us. Do
9 y'all know that? China does not like
10 us, but we buy a lot of stuff from
11 China. Russia does not like us, and
12 we're still buying fuel from Russia.
13 What's sad is when we don't put our
14 own people to work feeding our people
15 with our food. Thank goodness for
16 Grady giving us a fair shake.

17 And in all of that, Grady's
18 got \$200,000 to come up to make some
19 new oyster reefs. Anybody want to
20 match that here? I hope so. Why?
21 The more oysters you have, the more
22 fish you have. The more fish you
23 have, the more crabs you have and

1 everything else, cleaner water.

2 I'm here to tell you we want
3 to see our bottoms increase. And not
4 only that, but our Commissioner
5 working according to 924 part E with
6 the federal government putting,
7 whether it's GOMESA funding or what,
8 to clean our waters up. We've got a
9 pipeline that's been okayed. They
10 extended our waste treatment plant.
11 Dilution is the solution. How many
12 times have you heard that, Scott?
13 Scott, thank you for working with our
14 fishermen. There's approximately
15 over 300 oystermen out there, and it
16 was a blessing.

17 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Thank you. We
18 understand. Thank you so much.

19 MR. PATE: I would like to make
20 one point, and I'm talking about some
21 of the things we do in the Department
22 of Ag. One thing we're real pleased
23 that we were able to get a \$200,000

1 grant that we're going to be able to
2 use down in Baldwin and Mobile
3 Counties to help grow the seafood
4 industry. And so we're rolling that
5 out, I guess, within the next few
6 months. But we've put a real
7 emphasis and we're fixing to do some
8 things with the traveling to try to
9 promote Alabama seafood. There's a
10 huge international show about trading
11 seafood into the EU in particular,
12 and we're going to attend that. And
13 so we're trying to really support the
14 Alabama seafood industry.

15 MR. BATES: We love to see the
16 Department of Agriculture do what
17 it's been doing, standing behind our
18 working people that work on the
19 water. What a blessing it is to see
20 you showing up and supporting us like
21 you have and keep supporting us.

22 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Thank you,
23 Avery.

1 MR. BATES: We like to see
2 Alabama eat seafood.

3 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: We do too. We
4 love seafood. I do.

5 Our next speaker is Mr. Don
6 Nelson.

7 MR. NELSON: Thank you for
8 allowing me, Mr. Chairman, to speak
9 this morning. I'll make it as quick
10 as I can. It's hard for a mayor of
11 about 20-plus years.

12 I'm the mayor in Creola,
13 Alabama. And, Ben, I'd like to get a
14 chance to talk to you for a second
15 after the meeting. What I want to
16 talk to y'all about briefly is a
17 success story in Butler County. And
18 there's been no complaints for dog
19 deer hunting in Butler County last
20 year or the year before. And there's
21 five keys I want touch on. One of
22 them is the gentlemen sitting right
23 there, Mr. Grady and Ms. Pat. They

1 did a fantastic job working with my
2 group.

3 I'm the president of Big
4 Rack Hunting Club in Butler County
5 for over 50 years. When Grady calls,
6 I listen. When Pat calls, I listen,
7 because I know they've got something
8 that we need to take care of, and we
9 have that relationship that we do.
10 Mr. Don Knight has got up and talked
11 a little bit. Mr. Lonnie Miller has
12 called. I appreciate y'all utilizing
13 them gentlemen. That's the second
14 key that helps a good dog hunting
15 club do the things right. I
16 empathize and sympathize with y'all's
17 problems, and we don't want to go
18 there. And I appreciate y'all
19 bringing that up.

20 The third thing that we
21 found out is quality of the members.
22 And Susan touched on this a little
23 bit. I don't want bad members that

1 cause problems and gives dog hunting
2 a bad name. Don't want it. Don't
3 want to go there. Those people won't
4 be invited to my club. And they need
5 to be stopped from what they're
6 doing.

7 One thing additional is --
8 they touched on it this morning -- is
9 a tracking system. The Alpha System
10 is the best thing that's ever
11 happened for a dog hunter. You train
12 your dogs.

13 Now, I've got a flip phone.
14 I'm a dinosaur. I'm the only person
15 in here with a flip phone this
16 morning, but I'm learning how to use
17 my Alpha System. It works. Our club
18 invested over \$15,000. Everybody
19 when they turn loose a dog, they use
20 the Alpha System. So that helped us
21 right there.

22 And the last thing that's
23 probably the most key thing is your

1 conservation officers. My members
2 tell me what a great interaction they
3 have with your conservation officers
4 in Butler County. Please pass -- I
5 don't know if Mr. Reeves is here, but
6 pass it on that we appreciate that
7 relationship. They do a great job.

8 In looking around this
9 morning -- I'm an old retired Marine
10 Corps colonel of 30 years, and I can
11 see any one of your officers would
12 pass as a good Marine looking at
13 their appearance, their
14 professionalism, and their demeanor.
15 And I appreciate that.

16 It takes those five things I
17 think to make your job a lot easier,
18 and I hope it goes well. My club
19 appreciates what you're doing.

20 Any questions? That's as
21 quick as I've ever talked.

22 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Any questions?

23 Mr. Nelson, thank you very

1 much. Thank you for your service.
2 And our honor guard is sharp as a
3 tack. They're incredible. They're
4 well squared away.

5 Our next speaker is Mr. Eric
6 Ray.

7 MR. RAY: I'm not representing
8 any organization. I'm a property
9 owner in Talladega County. My
10 property is adjacent to the Talladega
11 National Forest. I've got about 80
12 acres. I've had problems over the
13 years with dog hunters, and basically
14 what I find is they release their
15 dogs on the county road. And there's
16 anywhere from four to eight property
17 owners between there and the national
18 forest, and I'm one of them. And so
19 they drive the dogs through our
20 property, and then in the national
21 forest.

22 And I applaud these dog
23 hunter associations and the clubs for

1 their high technology and their
2 ability to track their dogs and
3 control their dogs, so there's no
4 reason for them to do that. They
5 know that there's property between
6 where they release the dogs and the
7 national forest. So rather than just
8 complain, I think with the technology
9 that they have and the knowledge they
10 have about their dogs and control
11 they have over their dogs, that's
12 great. So they should not be adverse
13 to having severe penalties for
14 trespassing across people's property.
15 So rather than just complain, I
16 propose a solution. Let's penalize
17 the bad dog hunters, and the good dog
18 hunters shouldn't be concerned about
19 it because they're not going to be
20 violating people's property. So
21 let's just put a penalty on bad dog
22 hunters.

23 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Great idea.

1 Thank you.

2 Any questions from the left
3 or the right?

4 Well, that concludes our
5 public comments and speakers for the
6 day. And our next --

7 MR. HARTZOG: Excuse me,
8 Mr. Chairman.

9 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: I'm sorry.
10 Mr. Hartzog?

11 MR. HARTZOG: Can I have the
12 floor for a minute?

13 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Yes, you may.

14 MR. HARTZOG: When Mr. Avery
15 spoke, he spoke about oyster
16 restoration and he said about the
17 money that I would be matching. I
18 wanted to make it clear that the
19 quarter of a million dollars that's
20 being given for oyster restoration
21 came from Alabama Wildlife
22 Federation. And also we need to
23 thank this gentleman right here

1 because Officer Bannon can tell you
2 that we have a tremendous new
3 addition to the reef system because
4 of Kevin's family providing trucking
5 for the reefs. So the seafood
6 industry in Mobile Bay is greatly
7 enhanced by Alabama Wildlife
8 Federation and specifically by
9 certain Board members. And I want to
10 thank Kevin for doing that. But I
11 didn't put up the money for the
12 oyster restoration.

13 But two points I want -- is
14 that I would love Chairman Dobbs to
15 write a letter to Conservation
16 Officer Drake Hayes on behalf of the
17 Board recognizing him for his being
18 recognized by the NWTF. So I don't
19 know whether I need to do that in the
20 form of a motion, but I'd love to see
21 that done from the standpoint of the
22 Board recognizing Officer Hayes.

23 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: That is

1 something that we've discussed we're
2 going to do that. We can do that by
3 unanimous resolution. It was a
4 unanimous resolution, so no one
5 opposed that. So we have a
6 resolution that we're going to write
7 a letter of recognition and thank you
8 and congratulations to the gentleman
9 who won Officer of the Year from the
10 National Wild Turkey Federation.

11 Is that it?

12 MR. HARTZOG: No. Second thing.
13 This is from -- I'm probably going to
14 get a black eye but anyway.
15 Representative Hanes called me, oh, a
16 month or so ago concerning -- and
17 Mr. Bates brought it up about
18 commercial fishermen about the House
19 Bill 334. Mr. Hanes has talked to me
20 a lot. I've in turn called because I
21 always like to get both sides of
22 every story. And I've been talking
23 with the assistant director, and, you

1 know, I hear one thing on one side
2 and one thing on the other. In
3 reading Tommy's bill, it kind of
4 makes somewhat sense with them
5 wanting to increase license fees to
6 earmark that money strictly for
7 production of paddlefish.

8 And Mr. Fred and I have
9 talked, and I brought up the fact
10 that Tupelo Hatchery in Tupelo,
11 Mississippi, was raising paddlefish
12 and took the fish out of the
13 Pascagoula River, was raising them.
14 They quit about two years ago.
15 Mr. Fred told me this morning that
16 the reason they stopped was they got
17 the resource back into shape, that
18 the majority of the reason for them
19 doing that was the fact of the
20 hurricane devastating the population
21 there in Mississippi, you know,
22 several years back. But Tommy's bill
23 provides for an increase in license

1 fees, and the license money goes
2 directly to Fish and Wildlife for the
3 use of growing the fish.

4 It has been told to me that
5 a guy in a hatchery in Kentucky can
6 take two male fish and two female
7 fish from Alabama so the genetics
8 don't get messed up and produce a
9 hundred thousand fingerlings.

10 And I know we've got money
11 coming forward with the -- I want to
12 call it CARES -- from federal money
13 from the reclamation money of a
14 million and a half dollars. I know
15 Game and Fish is asking for some of
16 it and Parks and Game and Fish and
17 the hatcheries and all that. It
18 seems like it might be if the fish is
19 in an endangered situation why use a
20 hatchery anyway for raising these
21 paddlefish. But if you do -- 40
22 licenses at a hundred fish apiece,
23 that's only 4,000 fish coming out of

1 the resource. According to Mr. Avery
2 from the commercial fisherman down in
3 Mobile, the Delta, the paddlefish are
4 as thick as they can be.

5 I went back and read. The
6 main thing was the Department --
7 Fred's situation or what he said was
8 we closed the season because in the
9 fourth year of the season there was
10 135 violations. And I brought that
11 up to Tommy, and Tommy said, Grady,
12 he says, none of those violations
13 were for actual taking of the
14 improperly sized fish or taking too
15 many fish or anything. It was the
16 fact that maybe the net didn't have
17 the type of buoy on it or a boat left
18 the dock too soon or whatever. It's
19 my understanding that Tommy asked for
20 a list of all the violations so that
21 he could have those, and the
22 Department has yet to furnish those
23 to him.

1 It sounds like -- in one way
2 it sounds like a good bill if the
3 resource -- if it was -- if we're
4 going to add back more. If we're
5 going to take 4,000 fish out and
6 we're going to add a hundred thousand
7 back in, we're increasing the
8 population instead of decreasing the
9 population. But I went back and
10 pulled the actual press release from
11 the Department back when the season
12 was closed, and it says -- and I want
13 to ask after I get through. It says
14 this is when it was first allowed for
15 them to go back to fishing. And I'm
16 reading the article. It says, the
17 fish has recovered enough and
18 considered robust enough to support a
19 regulated commercial fisherman. In
20 2013, they initiated that. Okay.
21 Then when it was closed, it was cited
22 because of the 135 violations that
23 the analyst reports that some of the

1 paddlefish harvesters were -- and it
2 uses the word -- didn't say they ever
3 caught them. It said likely
4 falsifying reports. Okay. So
5 there's no documentation that there
6 was actually more fish taken than was
7 supposed to.

8 Further on in the same press
9 release that came from the State, it
10 said that based on reviewing the
11 biological information, the future
12 commercial paddlefish seasons
13 could -- didn't say would -- but said
14 could lead to overfishing and
15 jeopardizing long-term
16 sustainability. I would like to see
17 before this next meeting that list of
18 violations.

19 And also, Mr. Fred, or you
20 want to turn it over to Fisheries.
21 When was the last time any population
22 was done on the paddlefish?

23 COMMISSIONER BLANKENSHIP: On

1 this issue if you'll address the
2 questions to -- the legislation is
3 currently being -- has been
4 introduced, so I'd appreciate that.
5 I think that's more appropriate.

6 MR. HARTZOG: We couldn't pass a
7 regulation?

8 COMMISSIONER BLANKENSHIP:
9 You're speaking about some
10 legislation that's working through --

11 MR. HARTZOG: The process is we
12 had -- before when the Department
13 granted the four-year license, did
14 legislation do it or did the
15 Department do it?

16 COMMISSIONER BLANKENSHIP: It
17 was under a special permit from the
18 Department.

19 MR. HARTZOG: Okay. So I mean,
20 so this Board could do the permit for
21 the commercial fishermen if they so
22 desired?

23 COMMISSIONER BLANKENSHIP: This

1 Board could recommend that, yes.

2 MR. HARTZOG: Could I then ask
3 for that sampling and ask a question
4 on that sampling?

5 COMMISSIONER BLANKENSHIP: We
6 had a very robust presentation on
7 this last year from Chris Greene in
8 the Fisheries section about the
9 paddlefish, and I provided you
10 information. We discussed it.
11 Would -- I can't see staff to see if
12 there's -- I don't want to put you on
13 the spot with a particular question
14 about stock assessment. But we have
15 done population information on this
16 species along with the others.

17 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: What's the
18 question?

19 MR. HARTZOG: Has there ever
20 been any population studies on the
21 paddlefish for the last two or three
22 years?

23 MR. GREENE: Our staff has been

1 out and sampled --

2 MR. HARTZOG: And has the
3 samples shown --

4 MR. GREENE: A lot of data.

5 MR. HARTZOG: That's all I
6 wanted to try to find out.

7 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Remember,
8 direct these questions to me so I
9 don't get my car keyed by Ms. Johnson
10 when she leaves today.

11 Grady, you've got a lot to
12 do here. You've got \$250,000 money
13 to match with the oyster reefs and
14 probably a million dollars to do the
15 paddlefish thing.

16 MR. HARTZOG: Well, this guy
17 probably provided more than 250- in
18 transportation for free.

19 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: We're going to
20 -- the science -- it was what was
21 made in the past. There was a rule
22 made, and we're going to leave it
23 there for the time being.

1 So with that, we move on to
2 -- if there are no more questions, we
3 move on to unfinished business. Is
4 there any unfinished business before
5 this Board today? Any motions on the
6 table?

7 There being no unfinished
8 business, we have new business as an
9 agenda. And what new business do we
10 have today? Is there a motion?

11 MR. SAVOY: Mr. Chairman, I have
12 a formal motion.

13 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Thank you,
14 Mr. Savoy.

15 MR. SAVOY: In accordance with
16 the requirements of the Alabama State
17 Legislature, I make a motion to
18 approve the increase in all licenses
19 and fees levied by the Department of
20 Conservation and Natural Resources
21 where applicable based on the
22 increases in the Consumer Price Index
23 as published and using the formulas

1 for said increases as previously
2 approved.

3 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: All right.
4 There's a motion to increase the CPI.
5 May I read it again?

6 CPI motion, in accordance
7 with the requirements of the Alabama
8 State Legislature, I make a motion to
9 approve the increase in all licenses
10 and fees levied by the Department of
11 Conservation and Natural Resources
12 where applicable based on the
13 increases of the Consumer Price Index
14 as published and using the formulas
15 for said increases as previously
16 approved. That's the motion.

17 Is there any discussion?

18 Do I hear a second?

19 MR. BARKSDALE: Second.

20 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: And let's vote
21 on that.

22 MR. PATE: I was trying to get
23 in the discussion. I guess Chris and

1 I are in the same boat. I mean, we
2 don't do that at the Department of Ag
3 unless there's a need. I mean, is
4 there some financial shortfall, or is
5 this just something that y'all do
6 periodically or...

7 COMMISSIONER BLANKENSHIP: This
8 is something when the Legislature
9 changed the license structure in
10 2008, they implemented a provision in
11 there that to keep that license and
12 the revenue of the Department current
13 with that level of funding that when
14 the Consumer Price Index -- that when
15 we have an increase in that that
16 would keep small increases as we move
17 forward instead of having it in one
18 large increase every ten or 15 years.
19 So we're going with the statute that
20 was put in place for a small license
21 increase periodically.

22 MR. PATE: I wouldn't even think
23 we'd have to vote on it if you're

1 saying it's already --

2 COMMISSIONER BLANKENSHIP: The
3 law requires this.

4 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: All right. So
5 there's a vote before the Board
6 increasing the Consumer Price Index
7 based on federal government -- all
8 those in favor?

9 Let's have a show of hands.

10 It's unanimous.

11 MR. PATE: No, it wasn't either.

12 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: I'm sorry. I
13 thought you had your hand up.

14 MR. PATE: I did not.

15 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: So one nay. So
16 that passes.

17 Are there any other
18 unfinished -- or new business? Any
19 motions or anything?

20 MR. SAVOY: Mr. Chairman?

21 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Yes, Mr. Savoy?

22 MR. SAVOY: One statement before
23 I make a motion. I appreciate the

1 credit that my colleague next to me
2 has given to me for the oyster reef
3 program that we've been working on,
4 but I just want to mention the
5 individuals that made that happen.
6 If you want to know more about it, I
7 urge you to go to the Alabama
8 Wildlife Federation site. It's a
9 great program, very successful, and I
10 encourage everybody in Alabama along
11 the coast to go out and enjoy
12 themselves and look at the reefs.
13 Thank you.

14 The motion I have is related
15 to our turkey season. It was brought
16 to our attention. Several of us got
17 calls about this. And we would --
18 the topic is putting the days back in
19 place for our youth and disabled
20 veterans. So the motion I would like
21 to make would be to institute those
22 days back in there for those two
23 groups. Thank you.

1 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: That is a
2 motion, then, that you would bring
3 forth at the next meeting.

4 MR. SAVOY: Yes.

5 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Thank you very
6 much. We can expect that from you
7 then.

8 All right. If there's no
9 further business, our next meeting
10 will be in May. I think it is the
11 21st of May. And that will be in
12 Eufaula, Alabama.

13 Thank you very much,
14 everybody. Safe travels home.

15 Thank you.

16 (Proceedings concluded at
17 11:45 a.m.)

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REPORTER'S CERTIFICATE

STATE OF ALABAMA

AUTAUGA COUNTY

I, Stacey L. Johnson, Certified Court Reporter and Commissioner for the State of Alabama at Large, hereby certify that on March 5, 2022, I reported the proceedings in the matter of the foregoing cause, and that pages 3 through 180 contain a true and accurate transcription of the aforementioned proceedings.

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

This the 27th day of April, 2022.

/s/Stacey L. Johnson
STACEY L. JOHNSON, CCR
Commissioner for the
State of Alabama at Large
CCR 386, Expires 9/30/2022
COMMISSION EXPIRES: 6/22/2023