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STATE OF ALABAMA DEPARTMENT OF  
CONSERVATION AND NATURAL RESOURCES  
ADVISORY BOARD MEETING  
Auburn University  
College of Architecture,  
Design and Construction  
362 Duggar Concourse  
Auburn, Alabama  
February 24, 2024

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TRANSCRIPT OF PROCEEDINGS

\* \* \* \* \*

Proceedings taken before Tanya D.  
Cornelius, RPR, Certified Court Reporter, and  
Commissioner for the State of Alabama at Large,  
Auburn University, College of Architecture,  
Design, and Construction, 362 Duggar Concourse,  
Auburn, Alabama, Saturday, February 24, 2024,  
commencing at 9:00 a.m.

Page 2

1 BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT:  
 2 Mr. Joseph Dobbs, Jr., Chairman  
 3 Commissioner Christopher M. Blankenship,  
 Ex-Officio Secretary  
 4  
 Dr. J. Mike Phillips, Ex-Officio,  
 5 Alabama Cooperative Extension System  
 6 Mr. Kevin Savoy  
 7 Mr. Grady Hartzog, Jr.  
 8 Mr. Greg Barksdale  
 9 Mr. Jeff Martin  
 10 Mr. Brock Jones  
 11 Mr. Tim Wood  
 12 Mr. Raymond Jones, Jr.  
 13 Mr. Ben Stimpson  
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Page 4

1 if he will, please -- no. I'm going to ask Mr.  
 2 Raymond Jones if he will do the invocation for  
 3 us today.  
 4 MR. R. JONES: Bow, please.  
 5 Heavenly Father, thank you so much  
 6 for this time that you've allowed us to come  
 7 together and meet to discuss and to appreciate  
 8 our natural resources in the great State of  
 9 Alabama and all those that fight to protect  
 10 those.  
 11 Heavenly Father, thank you so much  
 12 for the officers in our room that also go out  
 13 there every day to try to help manage our  
 14 resources, and for everyone in this room that  
 15 came to this meeting.  
 16 We want to ask your blessing on this  
 17 meeting. We want to ask blessings on each and  
 18 everyone, and we want to ask everyone to have a  
 19 safe drive home, and keep us safe until we meet  
 20 again. In His name we pray, amen.  
 21 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Thank you, Mr.  
 22 Jones, very much.  
 23 Today we are most honored to have the

Page 3

1 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: It's about time  
 2 this morning. We'll just go on and get started.  
 3 I think everybody that's going to be here is  
 4 here, and welcome to you all. I'm glad you're  
 5 here to the first meeting of the Conservation  
 6 Advisory Board for 2024, and happy that you're  
 7 all here and safe.  
 8 Today let's be diligent,  
 9 responsible, and considerate for everybody and  
 10 have a good meeting.  
 11 I would like to give a special  
 12 thanks today to those who arranged this great  
 13 venue here on the loveliest village on the  
 14 plains, to Dr. Mike Phillips on our Board and  
 15 extension director and his executive assistant,  
 16 Ms. Camille Davis. Thank y'all so much for  
 17 putting this venue together for us.  
 18 Matthew Warren, our IT fellow, who  
 19 has done a great job and still doing it.  
 20 So the Lord has blessed us with a  
 21 beautiful day and fair weather. Let's have a  
 22 good meeting.  
 23 I'm going to ask Mr. Greg Barksdale

Page 5

1 Conservation Enforcement Officers color honor  
 2 guard to begin our meeting. Please give them  
 3 your full attention.  
 4 (Presentation by the honor guard.)  
 5 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: If you'll remain  
 6 standing, I'll lead us in the Pledge of  
 7 Allegiance.  
 8 (Recitation of the Pledge of  
 9 Allegiance by Chairman Dobbs.)  
 10 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Thank you. Take  
 11 your seats.  
 12 One piece of -- one piece this  
 13 morning of sad news, we're without one of our  
 14 best today, Captain Marisa Futral. She was our  
 15 head of hunter education and our safety  
 16 coordinator and did a whole lot of things,  
 17 mentored women, and I could go on.  
 18 I'd like to, if I can, just take a  
 19 moment to read to you part of the celebration of  
 20 life for Marisa. And we invite you to celebrate  
 21 her life with us.  
 22 Marisa was a passionate and loving  
 23 soul that touched the lives of so many throughout

Page 6

1 her life. She was a cherished wife, daughter,  
2 sister, friend, and colleague.  
3 Marisa was nationally known for her  
4 passion and dedication to improving hunter  
5 education, safety, and an inspiration and mentor  
6 to many colleagues and countless sportsmen and  
7 women. She taught my wife how to shoot. Crazy  
8 about her.  
9 Anyway, we invite family, friends,  
10 and colleagues to join us March the 30th at the  
11 Shelby County shooting range to celebrate and  
12 honor Marisa. Lord, she's in your force now.  
13 I'd like to -- we don't really have  
14 anybody -- commissioner here that I don't have --  
15 I haven't seen anybody.  
16 COMMISSIONER BLANKENSHIP: No.  
17 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Okay. Let me take a  
18 moment to thank Wanda McCullers and her staff and  
19 Betsy Jones for helping us put all this together  
20 and keeping us on the right track. Betsy will be  
21 keeping time today for the nine speakers we have  
22 in the public speaking portion of our meeting.  
23 Thank you all for being here with us.

Page 7

1 We have -- and we're going to be kind  
2 to her. Ms. Tanya is going to be here as our --  
3 she is here as our court reporter today, and  
4 we're proud to have her.  
5 Thank you for being here.  
6 THE REPORTER: Thank you.  
7 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: I'm going to ask our  
8 Board members to start at the far end, if you  
9 don't mind, please, and stand up, state your  
10 Congressional district, and if you will, give us  
11 a brief district report.  
12 MR. MARTIN: Jeff Martin, District 3.  
13 All and all it's been pretty good. The weather  
14 hasn't really cooperated a whole lot with us, but  
15 -- I'm Jeff Martin from District 3. All and all  
16 it's been pretty good. The weather has been kind  
17 of a factor at some times.  
18 I had a couple of issues in the  
19 national forest, but we will discuss those later  
20 in the meeting.  
21 MR. BARKSDALE: Greg Barksdale,  
22 District 4. Pretty quiet across my area as far  
23 as I know. I didn't hear a lot. I did speak

Page 8

1 with Koty. I think he's going to speak today as  
2 well.  
3 I did have some conversations with  
4 some folks that want to try to night hunt coyotes  
5 during deer season. I think I forwarded them on  
6 to the department to have conversations with  
7 that.  
8 We did -- Tim, I, and Chris met with  
9 the Farmers Federation of Alabama in September  
10 with some concerns that they have over deer  
11 populations and the destruction of their crops  
12 and that kind of thing, and we educated them on  
13 the policies and stuff that we have to try to  
14 help them out.  
15 Other than that, that's all I have to  
16 report.  
17 MR. WOOD: I'm Tim Wood,  
18 Congressional District 7, which is basically the  
19 Black Belt. Deer season was outstanding in our  
20 part of the country. Dallas County alone, we had  
21 almost twenty percent increase in deer harvest,  
22 which is -- that's outstanding.  
23 And it also addresses what Barksdale

Page 9

1 was talking about with the depredation of crops.  
2 I think there's more concentration on trying to  
3 reduce these doe numbers during the season, which  
4 is what we do it for.  
5 As far as the fishing industry, it's  
6 picking up quickly. With the department's help,  
7 we have been able to go through and revamp the  
8 marina in Selma. As soon as we dredged it, as  
9 soon as we put in new docks, and we're doing some  
10 landscaping currently now, the major bass  
11 tournaments are already starting to announce,  
12 which is what we want to do.  
13 So we're out there plugging away  
14 every day, and we thank y'all for your support.  
15 MR. SAVOY: Good morning, Kevin  
16 Savoy, the new District 1 now. I was formerly in  
17 District 2. Thank y'all for being here today in  
18 Auburn. War Eagle.  
19 We had a pretty quiet fall season in  
20 the Wiregrass area. I'm from Dothan. I did  
21 field two calls from farmers, that same kind of  
22 issues that Tim spoke about, crop issues, put  
23 them in touch with the department. The

Page 10

1 department handled it beautifully. Everybody was  
2 happy.  
3       And I fielded numerous calls and had  
4 numerous letters from folks wanting us to  
5 consider some changes to the dove season in the  
6 south zone. So that was pretty much -- pretty  
7 quiet overall.  
8       MR. HARTZOG: Good morning, Grady  
9 Hartzog, District 2. Real quiet this year. No  
10 deer dog complaints at all, which was the first  
11 time ever, but anyway, everything was quiet.  
12 Everybody was happy.  
13       The -- we want to thank the  
14 department and the foundation. We just got  
15 through having the Barbour County youth hunt.  
16 There was over two hundred kids and about a  
17 hundred or so parents. They had a tremendous  
18 event, even though it was cold. They really had  
19 a great, great, great event. Pat said it was  
20 probably the best.  
21       I really want to thank the wardens,  
22 because Pat Kott, the lady that started the  
23 event, has gotten on up in age and is real

Page 11

1 feeble. This is probably her last year to help  
2 put on the event, but Johnny has stepped forward,  
3 taken the event, and probably going to have,  
4 instead of the Lions Club sponsoring the event in  
5 the future, the Game Warden Association actually  
6 sponsoring the event.  
7       Every morning when I go to work, I  
8 drive by the state park, and the fishing has  
9 really picked up. The parking lot is full. So  
10 anyway, good season. Thank you.  
11       MR. PHILLIPS: Good morning,  
12 everybody, I'm the extension director, so I don't  
13 represent a district, per se, but I'm glad to be  
14 on this Board and help out every way that I can.  
15       I do want to say one thing, and I'm  
16 so impressed with what this organization does in  
17 terms of facilities, safety, helping others out  
18 there throughout the state. And this state is  
19 truly a leader in conservation of natural  
20 resources, and I hope you all think the way I do.  
21       MR. STIMPSON: Good morning. I'm Ben  
22 Stimpson from Mobile, the old District 1. I  
23 don't know what I represent now. It's still

Page 12

1 District 1 from what I understand.  
2       But it was -- over the last year, it  
3 was a lot of conversation, the same old, I would  
4 say, issues, I mean, from fishing to oysters to  
5 dove season to other seasons.  
6       And I am very proud to say that I  
7 think the department is addressing all of them  
8 and doing a great job of it, and I appreciate  
9 everything they do.  
10       MR. R. JONES: Raymond Jones. I  
11 represent District 5, which is in north Alabama.  
12 Unfortunately, this is one of the more active  
13 seasons I've had in my area, and most of that  
14 revolved around the duck season. Of course,  
15 North Alabama is known for having quite good duck  
16 hunting.  
17       There was -- we had quite a few  
18 issues at some of our wildlife management areas.  
19 I really think the department is doing a great  
20 job of addressing those, and I'm sure we'll hear  
21 more about that later.  
22       We also had a number of complaints.  
23 The federal framework allows us to extend our

Page 13

1 duck season to January 31. We -- and I know for  
2 the next three years, because of the way the  
3 calendar works, that's going to happen, but I  
4 heard from a lot of duck hunters in that area  
5 wanting us to take full advantage of the federal  
6 framework.  
7       Our deer kill was actually off about  
8 twenty-five percent across the board, which I  
9 thought was kind of surprising. We had -- unlike  
10 the rest of the state, we had a tremendous mast  
11 crop, and the deer seem to be very scattered. I  
12 don't think we have an issue as far as the deer  
13 goes. I just think the deer were very scattered  
14 and very full and did not have to get out very  
15 much.  
16       But anyway, thank you very much.  
17       MR. B. JONES: I'm Brock Jones,  
18 District 6. Used to be District 7, and District  
19 6 doesn't seem to be nearly as active as District  
20 7 was. It includes most of Tuscaloosa County,  
21 Jefferson County, Shelby County, and a sliver of  
22 Bibb County.  
23       Deer hunting was pretty flat from

Page 14

1 talking to the various processors. Feral hogs  
2 continue to be a problem. Hopefully, we're going  
3 to have a solution on that in the next two or  
4 three years. A few coyote complaints, desires to  
5 do night hunting.  
6 And other than that, that's about all  
7 I've got.  
8 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Thank you. Y'all  
9 keep that one, I have one, please, for comments.  
10 And I take just a moment to thank  
11 Deputy Director Ed Poolos for all his hard work  
12 with us, with the legislature, and working with  
13 our resource users and constituents.  
14 And also to say thank you to  
15 Charlanna doing the same thing, she and her  
16 staff, as well as keeping us in line, us being  
17 the Board and sometimes the department. She  
18 works with the legislature as well and her staff.  
19 Thank y'all so much.  
20 On the agenda today that we have, we  
21 have the Sportsmen's Pledge. It's very important  
22 to me. I think it's important to us, and it's  
23 important to our resources. It keeps things in

Page 15

1 perspective.  
2 So I'm going to ask Mr. Brock Jones  
3 if he will please read the conservation  
4 statement. If you have it or know it, read along  
5 with him. I'm going to read with him.  
6 MR. B. JONES: Conservation  
7 Statement: Since the State in its sovereign  
8 capacity occupies the attitude of guardian and  
9 custodian of the people's welfare, it is  
10 therefore the duty of the State, by enactment of  
11 appropriate legislation, to endeavor to extend  
12 adequate protection to those resources in which  
13 the people have collectively a natural right.  
14 Wise and discreet individuals who  
15 feel no inclination to make assaults on nature's  
16 storehouse should have their rights protected by  
17 the enactment of strong laws to restrain the  
18 hands of the wanton and reckless, whose vandalism  
19 would annihilate every visible thing of fin, fur  
20 or feather, to gratify their savage instincts.  
21 That was written by John H. Wallace,  
22 Jr., State Game and Fish Commissioner, 1908.  
23 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Thank you, Brock,

Page 16

1 very much. I think that rings through to today  
2 for sure.  
3 Mr. Secretary, do we have a quorum  
4 today?  
5 COMMISSIONER BLANKENSHIP: Yes, sir,  
6 Mr. Chairman, we have a quorum.  
7 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Thank you very much.  
8 With that, before us would be the  
9 minutes of the May 2023 meeting. I'll poll the  
10 Board.  
11 Are there any corrections to those  
12 minutes?  
13 As there are no corrections, the  
14 Board approves those minutes, and we will move on  
15 from there.  
16 I'd like to say, there's not many  
17 folks here, but to everybody that's here, these  
18 guys are who you need to call, your  
19 representatives and your Congressional  
20 representatives. If you have issues or problems,  
21 or you want to say thank you, give them a call.  
22 Their phone numbers, their e-mail addresses, and  
23 their mailing addresses are in the digest, in the

Page 17

1 guide. So thank you very much.  
2 Mr. Commissioner.  
3 COMMISSIONER BLANKENSHIP: Thank you,  
4 Mr. Chairman. I want to thank Dr. Phillips for  
5 hosting us here on the campus of Auburn  
6 University today. I think there's a lot of  
7 different things going on around the campus, it  
8 looks like some ball games and parents' weekend,  
9 and a lot of activity around the campus, and I  
10 appreciate you finding us a venue and having us  
11 here on the campus.  
12 We are really blessed in Alabama with  
13 our natural resources and with great people. I'm  
14 very thankful to be the Commissioner of the  
15 Department of Conservation and to work with this  
16 Board and our staff to enhance the resources and  
17 protect the resources of our state, and I'm just  
18 very blessed to be able to do that every day.  
19 I'm going to give a quick report on  
20 some different things that have happened in the  
21 last year since we met. I know last year and the  
22 year before that I gave a fairly long list of  
23 projects that were underway or ongoing.

Page 18

1 The list today has another long list  
 2 of projects and things that are happening. And  
 3 this is not a rehash of things from the last  
 4 couple of years. These are all new things that  
 5 have gone on really in the last year. So this is  
 6 kind of a testament to the work of our staff and  
 7 the people of Alabama and the legislature and  
 8 others that have given us the ability to do good  
 9 things.

10 So we still have -- the only thing  
 11 that is kind of a rehash from last year is we  
 12 have one billion dollars of projects approved,  
 13 completed, or underway in Mobile County from the  
 14 Deepwater Horizon oil spill funding sources.

15 There will be probably another five  
 16 to six hundred million dollars of projects that  
 17 will continue down there through 2031 when the  
 18 last deposit is made from BP. So I will continue  
 19 to update you on those projects as we move  
 20 forward.

21 But just this year underway, we have  
 22 about a hundred and fifty million dollars in  
 23 projects in coastal Alabama that have started

Page 19

1 over the last three or four months. Gulf Shores,  
 2 Orange Beach, Gulf State Park beach renourishment  
 3 is underway. It's about a thirty-three million  
 4 dollar project; a twenty-two million dollar  
 5 project on the east end of Dauphin Island for a  
 6 beach renourishment project; a twenty-six million  
 7 dollar Dauphin Island Causeway protection and  
 8 habitat enhancement project; a twenty million  
 9 dollar project at Theodore Industrial Canal for  
 10 marsh restoration and protection of the marsh  
 11 habitat there just south of Theodore Industrial  
 12 Canal.

13 Mobile County Bayfront Park has a six  
 14 million dollar renovation underway. Dauphin  
 15 Island Ecotourism has a two million dollar  
 16 project there when you first come onto Dauphin  
 17 Island.

18 The Gulf State Park cabins, as you  
 19 recall, were destroyed in Hurricane Sally. Those  
 20 twenty cabins have been rebuilt for about nine  
 21 million dollars and are now open to the public as  
 22 of February 1st, renting those out again. They  
 23 are beautiful. They are first class, and I think

Page 20

1 you and your families and your friends will enjoy  
 2 those new cabins on Lake Shelby in Gulf State  
 3 Park.

4 The Romar Beach access, parking, and  
 5 bathroom facility was just completed. The Gulf  
 6 State Park pier that was damaged during Hurricane  
 7 Sally is undergoing a fourteen million dollar  
 8 rebuild as we speak. Hope to have that back open  
 9 to the public later this summer.

10 There's a nineteen million dollar  
 11 Bayou La Batre sewer outfall project that's been  
 12 about ten years in the making, through permitting  
 13 and engineering and design, and all that has gone  
 14 to move that outfall about four more miles  
 15 offshore.

16 Where that's important for this Board  
 17 is that that will help with the oyster industry,  
 18 both public grounds and the oyster aquaculture  
 19 industry by opening up more areas that will be  
 20 in -- classified as open growing waters, approved  
 21 growing waters once that outfall is relocated.

22 Governor Ivey awarded sixty-seven  
 23 million dollars in GOMESA projects last July for

Page 21

1 twenty-six projects in Mobile and Baldwin  
 2 Counties. There will be more projects that are  
 3 awarded in the spring or early summer of 2024,  
 4 likely in the thirty-five to forty million dollar  
 5 range that will be available. We have not  
 6 received the deposit yet from the Department of  
 7 the Interior for those offshore oil and gas  
 8 revenues, but once we have those, that deposit  
 9 will be moving forward with the Governor's office  
 10 for new projects.

11 Just of interest, I think, to the  
 12 Board, maybe the public, the Alabama Department  
 13 of Conservation Natural Resources has been moved  
 14 to a Tier 1 agency in the state's administration,  
 15 which means that we are being recognized as one  
 16 of the larger state agencies that handle a lot of  
 17 money and a lot of projects.

18 Now, we are -- ALDOT, Department of  
 19 Revenue, Department of Human Resources, Finance,  
 20 and the Department of Conservation are in that  
 21 Tier 1 of agencies now in the state.

22 We're commencing a new focus on  
 23 boating access, water access. More than thirty

Page 22

1 million dollars in boating access projects in the  
 2 next several years will be completed with about  
 3 fifteen million dollars in boating access  
 4 projects in '24 that will bleed into 2025 to  
 5 finish the construction, but I'm excited about  
 6 that.

7         We have more waterways in Alabama  
 8 than -- navigable waterways than any other state,  
 9 and we are committed to providing access to our  
 10 public, and I appreciate Wildlife and Freshwater  
 11 Fisheries section, the State Lands Division, and  
 12 our Marine Resources Division, and our state  
 13 parks where we'll have boating access at all of  
 14 those properties or facilities around the state  
 15 from one end to the other.

16         Tim Wood mentioned the Selma boat  
 17 ramp. That was completed with multiple funding  
 18 sources, and it's almost completed, and we were  
 19 glad to be partners in that project. And I  
 20 appreciate Deputy Commissioner Poolos helping  
 21 bring a lot of resources together from different  
 22 state agencies and different places to do that  
 23 project.

Page 23

1         That is going to be a great thing for  
 2 Selma to have that, and it really fills a need in  
 3 that part of the river for us to be able to, like  
 4 I said, host those fishing tournaments and bring  
 5 some much needed revenue to that part of the  
 6 state.

7         We have shooting range expansion  
 8 that's underway in Columbiana. And we'll have  
 9 other shooting sports improvements over the next  
 10 two years. Just of interest maybe to the Board,  
 11 shooters that do not necessarily hunt are the  
 12 largest contributors to the Pittman-Robertson  
 13 Program.

14         That is -- that was kind of eye  
 15 opening when we had a survey that went and shows  
 16 that people that just shoot, the excise tax on  
 17 guns and ammunition are what feed into the  
 18 program that help us manage all of the wildlife  
 19 in the state. And so with them being the largest  
 20 contributors, we plan to do more to support them  
 21 and continue increasing revenue for that program.

22         As you know, and a little  
 23 self-serving, I guess, on our part, but the more

Page 24

1 people buy guns and the more people shoot, that's  
 2 more revenue that goes into the Pittman-Robertson  
 3 fund to put back on the ground and do good work.  
 4 So we feel like we're making an investment, not  
 5 only for the shooters but also for the other  
 6 wildlife of our state by doing some work and  
 7 providing more shooting opportunities for people.

8         As mentioned by Tim, and Greg  
 9 Barksdale, we are working with ALFA and others to  
 10 get the word out about our deer management  
 11 program for landowners and our crop depredation  
 12 permit for farmers and landowners. The Wildlife  
 13 and Freshwater Fisheries Division has done  
 14 seminars in all of the districts around the  
 15 state.

16         We've done a media push to try and  
 17 get the word out about how people that are having  
 18 problems with deer and other wildlife with their  
 19 crops or they want to better manage the deer on  
 20 their own leases or hunting property, we have  
 21 programs in place that will help them take more  
 22 does and to get the care and capacity for their  
 23 properties in the right balance. And we're

Page 25

1 hoping that more people will take advantage of  
 2 those programs over the next couple of years.

3         The oyster season was a success  
 4 overall again this year. We are having some  
 5 issues with the resurgence of oyster drills due  
 6 to the drought we had during the late summer and  
 7 fall, and we didn't have a great spat set, the  
 8 baby oysters, we didn't have a good spat set this  
 9 spring because of the floods and freshwater  
 10 during that critical time.

11         So during the season this year, even  
 12 though we had over thirty thousand sacks  
 13 harvested, we did feel like we needed to be  
 14 conservative on the amount of harvest to make  
 15 sure that we're accounting for total mortality,  
 16 both on the -- with the oyster drills and what  
 17 we're seeing on new oysters for next year and the  
 18 years forward.

19         Red snapper season was a good season  
 20 this year, despite a reduction in our quota. We  
 21 had a full summer season and some weekends this  
 22 fall, and we'll talk a little bit more about red  
 23 snapper at our May meeting. We'll have hopefully

Page 26

1 a quota increase by then, and we'll be in the  
2 process of vetting the red snapper season for  
3 this year by the May meeting.

4       We have a hundred and twenty million  
5 dollars in parks projects from the bond, income  
6 from our parks, and about fifty million dollars  
7 in water and sewer improvements that are taking  
8 place in our parks that are either in  
9 construction, in design, or about to bid.

10       The three largest projects will be  
11 the new Cheaha Hotel and Lodge. That will be a  
12 brand new hotel and beautiful on the edge of the  
13 bluff at Cheaha that will be built with mass  
14 timber construction using wood from Alabama  
15 properties and from hopefully the Department of  
16 Conservation properties that we'll be able to use  
17 to build this facility, and then sustainably  
18 replant those areas where the harvest was done  
19 with longleaf, and we're really -- good stories  
20 on how we will do that project.

21       The Lake Lurleen State Park, we have  
22 almost a total rebuild. And the Gulf State Park  
23 will have a campground expansion into the old

Page 27

1 golf course property. Those three projects will  
2 -- altogether will be in about the fifty million  
3 dollar range. And we'll bid later this summer  
4 and have a little more information on those by  
5 our May meeting where we stand on those three  
6 projects.

7       So all of these projects that I'm  
8 going to list are underway or will soon start  
9 construction. The Oak Mountain State Park  
10 campground is being rebuilt now, and it's about a  
11 twelve million dollar project.

12       The Guntersville Golf Course cart  
13 path and pro shops just bid, and we'll have cabin  
14 renovations there. It's about a four million  
15 dollar combined project.

16       The Desoto State Park pool house and  
17 hotel rooms will be updated. Meaher Campground  
18 will have an expansion, along with adding cabins  
19 and an administration building and store, about a  
20 seven and a half million dollar project. Most of  
21 that is paid for with some of the Deepwater  
22 Horizon funds.

23       Monte Sano Campground is undergoing

Page 28

1 an update as we speak. And the day use facility,  
2 there will be improvements there, and the CCC  
3 cabins will be updated. And Wind Creek, there  
4 will be new cabins built, and the campground will  
5 be renovated, about eleven million dollar  
6 project.

7       At Joe Wheeler State Park, the lodge  
8 will be updated. The pool is being reworked now  
9 at Joe Wheeler and will be ready for the spring  
10 season.

11       And we just paved all the roads in  
12 Joe Wheeler State Park, about seven miles of  
13 paving, in conjunction with the Alabama  
14 Department of Environmental Management, using  
15 some of the rubber-modified asphalt on that  
16 project. Great partnership with us and ADEM.

17       Rickwood Caverns State Park, the pool  
18 is being renovated, and a new pool house that  
19 will be ADA compliant and accessible will be  
20 under renovation very shortly.

21       There will be lodge room  
22 modernization at Lakepoint State Park, cottages  
23 refreshed and cabins all were renovated at

Page 29

1 Lakepoint in 2023, and we hope to have an event  
2 over there to unveil those later this spring.  
3 I'll make sure that y'all are invited.

4       We have new bathrooms in the day use  
5 area and modern playgrounds at multiple parks,  
6 and dog parks will be added in many places this  
7 year. The driving range at Oak Mountain State  
8 Park is now lighted; that will produce income for  
9 us in the evenings.

10       It was a project that Deputy  
11 Commissioner Poolos and I heard about from the  
12 public that we can't afford to build a Top Golf  
13 facility, but we can put lights on the driving  
14 range we've got and get people out in the  
15 evenings and capitalize on that facility, both  
16 during the day and after dark when it's a little  
17 cooler out for people to practice.

18       The lodge at Gulf State Park is doing  
19 great. 2023 was our best year so far. Tourism  
20 department funded a twenty-five-foot tall Eagle  
21 statute at Guntersville State Park that will be  
22 used as a social media tool. We've already seen  
23 hundreds of pictures of people in front of that



Page 30

1 Eagle statute promoting the park and promoting  
 2 Lake Guntersville tourism. That was a great  
 3 partnership with Lee Sentell and Tourism, another  
 4 state agency. They've been great partners, not  
 5 only on the statute, but they did the Year of  
 6 Alabama Outdoors a couple of years ago. This  
 7 year is the Year of Alabama Birding, and next  
 8 year will be the Year of Alabama Trails, and  
 9 we're able to take those designations through  
 10 Billy Pope in our Communications and Marketing  
 11 section and the marketing team at the Department  
 12 -- at the State Parks Division and capitalize on  
 13 that and drum up business and bring people into  
 14 our state, into our parks.

15 The Forever Wild Field Trial area in  
 16 Greensboro, we are making a two million dollar  
 17 investment there, building a meeting facility and  
 18 pavilion, expanding the barn and paddock, adding  
 19 bathrooms in the field trial area and other work  
 20 to existing structures to support the more than  
 21 thirty-five dog trials and events that are held  
 22 there each year. And with this new facility, we  
 23 hope to be able to host more regional and

Page 31

1 national and even international dog trials there  
 2 at that facility.

3 Earlier this year I had the  
 4 opportunity to testify at the House Natural  
 5 Resources Committee about offshore continental  
 6 shelf oil and gas leasing and the recently  
 7 released five-year plan and the need for more  
 8 lease sales in the Gulf of Mexico.

9 I was able to share what we're doing  
 10 in Alabama with the GOMESA funds, and it was very  
 11 well received by the Congressional members on  
 12 that committee, and I appreciate Congressman  
 13 Jerry Carl inviting me to come and for his  
 14 support for the work that we do, not only on the  
 15 offshore oil and gas, but also the things that  
 16 we're doing in the Department of Conservation.  
 17 He's been a staunch supporter.

18 Besides the great loss of Marisa  
 19 Futral, that is going to be a very difficult  
 20 person for us to replace in the department. We  
 21 will miss her, we will miss her and her work  
 22 ethic and what she's done with shooting sports  
 23 and hunter education in the department for a long

Page 32

1 time. I appreciate Chairman Dobbs acknowledging  
 2 that as we began our meeting.

3 Also, there was the passing recently  
 4 of Jack Biddle, who was a former conservation  
 5 advisory Board member. He was a representative  
 6 and senator in our state.

7 And many of you know Big Daddy Lawler  
 8 from Wilcox County, who promoted the hunting and  
 9 fishing in the Black Belt and really got the word  
 10 out throughout the state and really the country  
 11 on what we have in that part of our state, what  
 12 we have to offer, and he will be missed. We plan  
 13 to have an event, celebration of life -- I've  
 14 been talking with his brother and others in the  
 15 Wilcox County area -- probably in early April,  
 16 and I'll make sure that y'all receive word on  
 17 that.

18 I would like to recognize a few  
 19 positive announcements from the recent National  
 20 Wild Turkey Federation convention in Nashville.  
 21 Alabama received the acreage award for the most  
 22 acres of habitat conserved or enhanced. A  
 23 hundred and sixty-one thousand acres were

Page 33

1 enhanced in Alabama for turkey habitat, either  
 2 acquired or enhanced. That's great partnerships  
 3 with NWTF, and it really -- primarily Wildlife  
 4 and Freshwater Fisheries, but we did prescribed  
 5 fires in our state parks. We've had projects  
 6 with Forever Wild and in our State Lands  
 7 property.

8 And so it's really good to see all of  
 9 the work that's gone on with that in Alabama, to  
 10 be recognized for the work that the department  
 11 has helped with and other work that NWTF and  
 12 their partners have done all around the state.  
 13 It's great for turkeys and great for hunters of  
 14 Alabama.

15 Also, Wildlife and Freshwater  
 16 Fisheries director Chuck Sykes received the  
 17 prestigious C.B. McLeod Award for his productive  
 18 and enduring career as a wildlife manager and his  
 19 dedication to conservation.

20 That is one of the premiere awards of  
 21 the National Wild Turkey Federation, and we're  
 22 very proud of Chuck for his work to this point to  
 23 be recognized with that award.

Page 34

1 Chuck is also the national president  
 2 of the Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies  
 3 this year, and I appreciate his service, not only  
 4 to Alabama, but also what he's doing right now on  
 5 a national level, bringing some of the successes  
 6 that we've had in Alabama to other states and  
 7 being able to share some of the good work here,  
 8 and hopefully that will make a difference in  
 9 other states like it has made here in Alabama.

10 So please give a round of applause  
 11 for these accomplishments.

12 Now, for another very prestigious  
 13 award I'm happy to share, the National Fish and  
 14 Wildlife Foundation Guy Bradley Award. In 1905,  
 15 Guy Bradley, a Florida game warden, became the  
 16 first wildlife law enforcement officer killed  
 17 while performing his duties to protect the  
 18 nation's wildlife.

19 Law enforcement agents like Bradley  
 20 are essential to virtually every aspect of  
 21 wildlife conservation, from recovering endangered  
 22 species to managing waterfowl and big game  
 23 resources.

Page 35

1 In honor of Guy Bradley, the National  
 2 Fish and Wildlife Foundation established a  
 3 national award in 1988 to recognize individuals  
 4 for achievements in wildlife law enforcement.  
 5 The award focuses on activities which directly  
 6 aid or advance the law enforcement goals and  
 7 mission of the state and federal wildlife  
 8 agencies. It is an opportunity to recognize  
 9 these officers who put their lives on the line  
 10 for wildlife during their careers or do  
 11 innovative and long-lasting enforcement  
 12 initiatives.

13 Each year, a number of awards are  
 14 presented to worthy recipients by a variety of  
 15 agencies and organizations. The Guy Bradley  
 16 Award, however, seeks to recognize extraordinary  
 17 individuals who have made an outstanding lifetime  
 18 contribution to wildlife law enforcement,  
 19 wildlife forensics or investigative techniques.

20 The award is presented to one state and one  
 21 federal recipient each year.

22 This year, the state recipient is one  
 23 of our own.

Page 36

1 Chuck, please come up and present the  
 2 award.

3 MR. SYKES: Thank you, Commissioner.

4 This is a big deal, and unfortunately  
 5 the recipient of this award is not going to be at  
 6 the national convention in April to receive it,  
 7 so we pulled a few strings, got some things done,  
 8 and we're going to have just a small presentation  
 9 here.

10 But before I do that, I want to say  
 11 that I talked to one of the members of the awards  
 12 committee who called me after receiving the  
 13 nomination and said not only was the recipient  
 14 extremely qualified and it was a no-brainer who  
 15 was going to win, but that the application and  
 16 the nomination packet was probably the best  
 17 packet that they had ever seen.

18 So I want to give credit for that to  
 19 Karen Looney, Bryan Fisher, Heath Walls, and  
 20 Jonathan Stone for putting together an incredible  
 21 nomination for Chief Matt Weathers, who is this  
 22 year's recipient of the Guy Bradley Award.

23 MR. WEATHERS: Well, obviously, this

Page 37

1 was not something I knew was coming, but I  
 2 appreciate it.

3 We've done a bunch, and we're doing a  
 4 bunch, and this -- some of the people that Chuck  
 5 mentioned as writing this, who I'll be  
 6 fist-fighting in the parking lot after this, they  
 7 make this possible.

8 Chuck, Commissioner, all of our staff  
 9 have stood behind our initiatives. As times  
 10 change with game and fish issues, we've got to  
 11 find new ways of funding, and, you know, having  
 12 the people who kind of see our vision and tow  
 13 everything in the same direction makes it real  
 14 easy for us.

15 I didn't do a thing here. There's a  
 16 bunch of folks that put us where we are. So  
 17 anyway, thank you, guys.

18 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Thank you, Chief  
 19 Weathers, and most congratulations. That's a  
 20 wonderful award. Thank you.

21 Thanks, Commissioner, thank you,  
 22 Chuck, for putting that together. That's  
 23 excellent.

Page 38

1 I want to take one second and go back  
 2 to what Dr. Phillips said about nationally  
 3 recognized, and this is two great examples of  
 4 this state and this department and how far  
 5 forward we are leaning, how far -- more so than  
 6 most, if not all, other states.  
 7 When you go to these symposiums, it's  
 8 amazing where Alabama is and how Alabama is  
 9 viewed with regard to our conservation. So I  
 10 just -- I can't say that enough.  
 11 Anyway, back to -- I don't think that  
 12 we have any directors' reports today?  
 13 COMMISSIONER BLANKENSHIP: No.  
 14 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: I'll introduce them  
 15 so you'll know. Chuck, Wildlife and Freshwater  
 16 Fisheries; Greg Lein with State Parks, Patti  
 17 McCurdy with State Lands, and Colonel Scott  
 18 Bannon with Marine Resources Division. They're  
 19 the folks that put all this together with all of  
 20 their staff and folks that work. It's very, very  
 21 important, very important. And I appreciate them  
 22 very much.  
 23 Our next order of business today is

Page 39

1 public commentary. Our public commentary is very  
 2 important to this Board and to the department.  
 3 And I'm going to lay out just some  
 4 basic ground rules. We have nine speakers today,  
 5 and I'm going to ask as the speakers come to the  
 6 podium, be respectful, let's reserve our  
 7 comments.  
 8 And I'm going to ask for clarity for  
 9 Ms. Tanya for all of the Board members to refer  
 10 to the Chair for the floor. I'm going to ask the  
 11 speakers to please refer to the Chair and don't  
 12 engage with the Board directly, only because I  
 13 have to appease Ms. Tanya. She's got to get it  
 14 all down. It's not because I want to talk to you  
 15 the whole time, but I have to. So, again, let's  
 16 be courteous.  
 17 And I'm going to ask our first  
 18 speaker to come to the microphone. When I do,  
 19 remember that Ms. Jones keeps time over here, and  
 20 you have three minutes.  
 21 So I think that's about it. If  
 22 anybody else has got anything that I ought to be  
 23 doing up here, you tell me. But I think that's

Page 40

1 it, as simple as it's going to be today.  
 2 Our first speaker is Mr. Brent  
 3 Armstrong.  
 4 Go right over there, and I guess  
 5 you're going to be holding that.  
 6 MR. ARMSTRONG: I should be referring  
 7 to you?  
 8 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Please speak into  
 9 the microphone so that they can hear you.  
 10 MR. ARMSTRONG: Yes, sir. Good  
 11 morning. My name is Brent Armstrong. I'm from  
 12 Glenwood in Pike County, and I represent the  
 13 owners of pets of native species in Alabama. I'm  
 14 here to petition the Board to amend Code 220-2-26  
 15 by striking the following species from the  
 16 prohibited possession list: Raccoon, Virginia  
 17 possum, red and gray fox, and striped skunk.  
 18 I'm aware that by the letter of the  
 19 law, it is legal to possess these animals if  
 20 obtained within the state, but so far that has  
 21 neither stopped district attorneys from issuing  
 22 seizure warrants nor enforcement from carrying  
 23 out said warrants.

Page 41

1 Excuse the shaking.  
 2 I was told there were good reasons  
 3 for restricting these species, yet I have heard  
 4 none. Here are some reasons why the restriction  
 5 should be lifted: These animals are not  
 6 dangerous. They are small, docile, and easily  
 7 trainable. They're regarded as excellent pets  
 8 across America and have been possibly for well  
 9 over a hundred years. They are common but  
 10 somewhat still subjected to depletion by the  
 11 exotic pet trade and is a problem with legal  
 12 foreign species.  
 13 They are no more likely to spread  
 14 disease than any other pet and can be treated and  
 15 vaccinated as one would any dog or cat. They do  
 16 not carry rabies, and any social stigma that was  
 17 once surrounding them has long since faded. They  
 18 can be vaccinated against it when kept in a home  
 19 environment or many are most likely to get it  
 20 from their wild counterparts as the virus can  
 21 only be spread by direct contact with a  
 22 symptomatic animal.  
 23 Enforcing the current code is

Page 42

1 impossible. You don't know where these animals  
 2 are or who has them. The only thing this law  
 3 does is prevent pet owners from seeking  
 4 veterinary care and creating the scenario where  
 5 enforcement will come and rip their pets from  
 6 their loving homes to be killed and decapitated  
 7 to perform a rabies test, which we all know will  
 8 be negative.

9 This law has never reduced rabies  
 10 numbers. The reduction of rabies cases can be  
 11 attributed entirely to advances in vaccine  
 12 technology and higher vaccination rates.

13 In 2022 we had just forty-five total  
 14 rabies cases, over half of which were from bats  
 15 and stray dogs and cats. Not one was from a  
 16 seized native pet.

17 We are missing out on economic  
 18 opportunities, and legal states enjoy an economic  
 19 boost from pet services, festivals, and general  
 20 commerce supported by a thriving native and  
 21 exotic pet community. We know that these animals  
 22 are worth much more than their meat and fur, and  
 23 we have the opportunity to turn these animals

Page 43

1 from an economic trend into a valuable asset.

2 I have much more to say, but I'm on  
 3 limited time. We have a deep love and respect  
 4 for these native species, and we want to  
 5 celebrate them in our own way. We want to treat  
 6 them with kindness as we have this entire time.  
 7 All we need is for the government to get out of  
 8 way and respect the freedoms that this country  
 9 was built on.

10 I'm prepared to address any questions  
 11 or concerns you may have and speak at length  
 12 about any topic concerning these animals.

13 Thank you. Sorry, I'm a nervous  
 14 public speaker.

15 COMMISSIONER BLANKENSHIP: You did  
 16 good.

17 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: That's okay. You  
 18 did fine.

19 Now, are there any questions from the  
 20 Board?

21 MR. B. JONES: Brent, which ones  
 22 would you prefer?

23 MR. ARMSTRONG: Personally?

Page 44

1 MR. B. JONES: Yeah, personally.

2 MR. ARMSTRONG: I'm partial to  
 3 raccoons myself given they're quite smart and  
 4 easily trainable. They're also generally a lot  
 5 easier to obtain, and I have a lot more  
 6 experience with them as well. I'm from Orlando  
 7 where they're legal to have, and I'm actually  
 8 friends with a breeder.

9 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Any other questions?

10 MR. ARMSTRONG: Please, I'm happy to  
 11 answer any.

12 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Thank you very much.  
 13 The next speaker is Mr. Andrew  
 14 Contrell.

15 MR. CONTRELL: Thank you. My name is  
 16 Andrew Contrell. I'm from Huntsville, Alabama,  
 17 Madison County. Thank you, Chair, for allowing  
 18 me the opportunity to speak.

19 I'm here on behalf of Southeast PARC,  
 20 which is Partners in Amphibian and Reptile  
 21 Conservation, also known as SEPARC, and as a  
 22 concerned citizen. I'm here to talk specifically  
 23 about the Eastern Diamondback Rattlesnake and the

Page 45

1 continued collection for the Opp Rattlesnake  
 2 Rodeo.

3 The first document that is in the  
 4 packet that I gave y'all is a letter that I sent  
 5 to y'all earlier this week. I included it in the  
 6 packet just in case you haven't had a chance to  
 7 review it yet.

8 I won't go into detail about the  
 9 rodeo itself because of time, but the fact of the  
 10 matter is we're dealing with a species of  
 11 greatest conservation concern in every state they  
 12 inhabit, including Alabama. And the state has  
 13 continued to allow the removal of these snakes  
 14 from the wild for monetary gain.

15 This species is also currently under  
 16 review on the federal level, and I just want to  
 17 be clear that if it doesn't get listed on the  
 18 federal level, that means that conservation  
 19 organizations such as ours, our state and federal  
 20 agencies charged with managing our wildlife and  
 21 even Opp Rattlesnake Rodeo have failed. No one  
 22 wins.

23 Another document I provided is just

Page 46

1 the first page of a scientific article that came  
 2 back in 2009 from Bruce Means on dealing  
 3 specifically with rattlesnake rodeos, including  
 4 Opp. Based on his conclusions, he recommended  
 5 collection bans, but at the very least, some  
 6 regulatory measures.

7 I always was taught that management  
 8 should be backed by the best science. Well,  
 9 here's the science that's been out for a while,  
 10 and anyway, I haven't seen any paper to refute  
 11 that.

12 In the end, us as an organization, we  
 13 just want to make sure that laws and regulations  
 14 are being followed, but also if there's any other  
 15 conservation measures that the state could take  
 16 into consideration.

17 I did reach out to the state to see  
 18 what the rules and regulations were. I've been  
 19 doing this for years now. I've received zero  
 20 response back.

21 This brings us to the third document  
 22 included, which is a quick comparison of the  
 23 stipulations and requirements of having a

Page 47

1 scientific collecting permit versus the permit  
 2 that's issued to Opp.

3 I think you'll notice pretty quickly  
 4 the lack of information on the special use permit  
 5 side for the rodeo. We can only assume the  
 6 answer is no or none to some of those, but I  
 7 truly hope I'm wrong. Some of you may know the  
 8 answers to those questions; but if not, I do  
 9 encourage you to try to find out. And if the  
 10 answer is no or none to some of those, I think a  
 11 review of the state's policy on this topic are  
 12 warranted.

13 I think it raises a bigger question  
 14 of allowing -- of the taking of any species of  
 15 greatest conservation need for monetary gain.  
 16 And with that, I want to thank you for your time  
 17 and consideration on this matter.

18 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Any questions from  
 19 the Board?

20 Okay. Thank you so much.

21 Our next speaker is Mr. Brandon  
 22 Jackson from Walker County, fly fisherman.

23 MR. JACKSON: Yeah, Brandon Jackson

Page 48

1 from Walker, Cullman Counties speaking on the  
 2 Sipsey Fork trout fishery. I wanted to start by  
 3 saying thank you. Thank you for picking some  
 4 awesome places for these meetings. Over the last  
 5 fifteen years, I've been able to go to places in  
 6 the state I wouldn't have otherwise gone in order  
 7 to attend, and I appreciate it. It's been really  
 8 neat to be able to go to so many different  
 9 places.

10 Second, thank you for addressing some  
 11 of the problems affecting our fishery. Years ago  
 12 we were able to pass a no culling regulation to  
 13 address the problem of a single angler and their  
 14 ability to decimate the fishery. And so that  
 15 rule and that regulation really helped address  
 16 that problem.

17 We, a couple of years ago, were able  
 18 to add a two rod regulation to address the  
 19 problem of a single angler taking over access to  
 20 the river, and that's been a great benefit.  
 21 That's really helped to mitigate that problem and  
 22 to offset it.

23 And this year with Representative

Page 49

1 Matt Woods and assistant director -- what's your  
 2 title, assistant commissioner?

3 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Deputy commissioner.

4 MR. JACKSON: Deputy Commissioner  
 5 Poolos, we were able to look at some regulation  
 6 or some benefit that would address the  
 7 fluctuation and catch rates at the river. And so  
 8 we're looking at additional stockings to help  
 9 address that situation.

10 And so the big thing is thank you.  
 11 Thank you for listening to some of the problems,  
 12 addressing those problems, and helping to create  
 13 solutions for them.

14 In Jasper in 2021, Mr. Paul Kennedy,  
 15 the director of the Walker Area Community  
 16 Foundation, and one of the members of the Alabama  
 17 Commission on Higher Education addressed the  
 18 Board with a plea that steps be taken to, quote,  
 19 aggressively plan for the development of the  
 20 Sipsey Fork and the Black Warrior River as a  
 21 world class tourism fishing destination.

22 And what I'm thankful for is that we  
 23 can and have worked together with the Board and

Page 50

1 the department to address the problems that we've  
 2 seen on the river, and hopefully that we can  
 3 follow Mr. Kennedy's stated goal of planning  
 4 aggressively for the future. And that's what I  
 5 hope, and I'm thankful for all that's been done  
 6 so far.

7 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Thank you.  
 8 Any questions from the Board?  
 9 Brandon, thank you always for being  
 10 here. Thank you for your tenacity in staying  
 11 after these things very much.

12 Next speaker is Mr. Nathan  
 13 Worthington.

14 MR. WORTHINGTON: Good morning.  
 15 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Good morning.  
 16 MR. WORTHINGTON: My name is Nathan  
 17 Worthington, and I would like to thank you for  
 18 allowing me the opportunity to speak today. I  
 19 also would like to say thank you to the  
 20 Department of Natural Resources. They do a  
 21 phenomenal job managing our state and all the  
 22 natural resources that go with that.

23 I also would like to thank Dr.

Page 51

1 Godwin. He's been in communication with myself  
 2 on the topic I'm about to discuss, and I really  
 3 appreciate it.

4 As a representative of Bow Hunters  
 5 Alabama, BHA, I've been asked to express the  
 6 organization's concern regarding the dwindling  
 7 number of bow hunting only weekends on some of  
 8 our wildlife management areas.

9 If you would look on the second page  
 10 of the handout, you'll see this defined.  
 11 Specifically, the BHA has asked that you consider  
 12 allowing at least one bow hunting only weekend  
 13 per month on the WMAs during firearms season.

14 And you may ask why. Many bow  
 15 hunters are uncomfortable hunting along with  
 16 firearm hunters, like during the scheduled gun  
 17 hunts on WMAs.

18 By allowing one bow hunting weekend  
 19 per month, bow hunters would not only feel safer,  
 20 but they also would be able to participate in  
 21 hunts within a reasonable distance of their  
 22 residence.

23 Finally, weekends are prime times for

Page 52

1 working bow hunters that have a full-time job.  
 2 In general, allowing one bow hunting only weekend  
 3 per month would allow these bow hunters to hunt  
 4 on some weekends during firearms hunting season.

5 So, basically, you know, some of our  
 6 bow hunters, you know, can't afford hunting  
 7 leases and stuff like that. WMAs are a  
 8 tremendous opportunity.

9 You know, we're just hoping that, you  
 10 know, by giving us -- you know, allowing us to  
 11 keep at least one bow hunting only weekend, you  
 12 know, that's only going to help recruit more  
 13 hunters and allowing us to keep the bow hunters  
 14 that we do have.

15 I appreciate y'all's time. Any  
 16 questions?

17 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Are there any  
 18 questions from the Board?  
 19 MR. WORTHINGTON: Thank you.  
 20 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Thank you, Mr.  
 21 Nathan.  
 22 Next speaker today is Ms. Sheila  
 23 Gray.

Page 53

1 MS. GRAY: Good morning.  
 2 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Good morning, Ms.  
 3 Gray.

4 MS. GRAY: First of all, my husband  
 5 and I would like to extend our condolences to the  
 6 department and the State of Alabama on the  
 7 passing of Captain Marisa Futral. It's been --  
 8 it's a tremendous loss, and we recognize that.

9 Secondly, our information is on the  
 10 second page, by the way. I'm sorry. And I'm  
 11 here to talk about the dog deer hunting. Okay.

12 So secondly, we're not against dogs.  
 13 We love dogs. We have dogs. I was a dog handler  
 14 in the military. I was also an assistant dog  
 15 warden many years ago for the Alabama Department  
 16 of Corrections. We ran dogs.

17 It's not exactly the same thing, but  
 18 in the overall picture, we did the exact same  
 19 thing. But we communicated with landowners and  
 20 had a good relationship with them.

21 I'm speaking on behalf of several  
 22 landowners who cannot attend because of having to  
 23 work today. Last year when we attended the CAB

Page 54

1 meeting, I spoke of the issues we've been having  
2 with dog hunting and how it personally affects us  
3 as landowners.  
4 Many of us still hunt for a variety  
5 of reasons. Some land owners are afraid to speak  
6 out or even write letters, but at the same time  
7 they have to witness these dogs going through  
8 their property year after year.  
9 Some of these folks have substantial  
10 property but have not seen a deer or turkey in  
11 years. Some of these folks have been challenged  
12 and threatened. That should never happen.  
13 Those of us who have spoke out  
14 against the practice of running dogs to hunt deer  
15 have pretty much said the same thing, such as how  
16 it destroys our hunt, interferes with natural  
17 balance of the countryside, communication is  
18 nearly impossible.  
19 We hear the same thing from the dog  
20 deer hunters when they collide with the spear  
21 hunters on their property. We either hear how  
22 the dogs do not know the property lines, we also  
23 hear how the deer dog hunters have been doing

Page 55

1 this for years. And they will actually tell the  
2 property owner they've been doing it for many  
3 years and will continue to do it, and there's  
4 nothing we as landowners can do about it.  
5 One of the landowners who could not  
6 be here today because of having to go TDY to  
7 Nevada asked me to convey to the CAB, Mr.  
8 Chairman, they were hunters from Randolph County,  
9 local hunters who are all part of creating a  
10 nuisance for spear hunters through the season. I  
11 am conveying that message to you.  
12 Also, there is a screenshot -- I have  
13 a packet. There's a screenshot of a post warning  
14 the deer dog hunters to actually stay off private  
15 property. I do know some of the dog deer hunters  
16 actually do make an effort to do right and try to  
17 make the others do the right thing. I understand  
18 that is a difficult thing to do.  
19 Every year I get calls, text messages  
20 from hunters who were hunting on their hunts and  
21 -- they're hunting on their property and their  
22 hunts were ruined because the dogs have been  
23 flying by, because sometimes they are hard to

Page 56

1 catch.  
2 We understand the heritage and  
3 tradition of hunting with dogs can be a personal  
4 issue, and hunting with dogs can be enjoyed to a  
5 point. However, there seems to be a total  
6 disregard for us and the property we worked hard  
7 to be able to enjoy. When that happens, heritage  
8 has very little to do with it.  
9 There are more land owners now than  
10 there were in years past. There's little or no  
11 respect for those of us who own land and we've  
12 worked hard for. We do not welcome the  
13 intrusion.  
14 After spending a lot of money each  
15 year to plant food areas --  
16 MS. JONES: Time.  
17 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Please finish your  
18 point right there, please.  
19 MS. GRAY: Okay. After spending a  
20 lot of money each year to plant food areas, our  
21 ability to hunt our properties is deeply hampered  
22 when the deer dogs run across our properties and  
23 ruin the hunt. We can't build.

Page 57

1 And last year, we were promised one  
2 more year and then something would be done, and  
3 we are asking Mr. Chairman and the members of the  
4 Board to honor that.  
5 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Okay. Thank you,  
6 Ms. Gray.  
7 Any questions? Mr. Martin?  
8 MR. MARTIN: Mr. Chairman, I would  
9 like to ask Sheila to get with Lonnie Miller and  
10 myself after the meeting and to discuss this  
11 further.  
12 MS. GRAY: Yes, sir.  
13 COMMISSIONER BLANKENSHIP: Mr.  
14 Chairman, just for clarification, most of these  
15 problems you're talking about are happening  
16 adjacent to or around the Talladega National  
17 Forest?  
18 MS. GRAY: Yes, sir.  
19 COMMISSIONER BLANKENSHIP: All right.  
20 Thank you.  
21 Our next speaker is Mr. Koty  
22 McCarley.  
23 MR. MARTIN: Mr. Chairman?

Page 58

1 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Yes, Mr. Martin?  
 2 MR. MARTIN: I would like to add  
 3 something.  
 4 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Please.  
 5 MR. MARTIN: Can Lonnie Miller come  
 6 down? And is Jerry Fincher here? I haven't seen  
 7 Jerry.  
 8 MR. MCCARLEY: (Indicating) right  
 9 here.  
 10 MR. MARTIN: Do you mind coming down  
 11 for a second? We had a couple of issues in the  
 12 national forest this year. A guy named Mike  
 13 Champion texted Lonnie and I on several  
 14 occasions. I'll just wait for him to get down  
 15 here.  
 16 He said that he had spoke with our  
 17 game wardens and everything, and I just want to,  
 18 with these two guys down here, for y'all to be  
 19 able to tell kind of what all went on in that  
 20 situation and what the Alabama Dog Hunters tried  
 21 to do with the backup of Mr. Fincher.  
 22 MR. MILLER: Jeff has put me on the  
 23 spot here. I'm not a public speaker. Chris

Page 59

1 Turner has reached out to us several times. Last  
 2 year I shared my phone number with him, and of  
 3 course every time he reaches out to me, I'm not  
 4 in Talladega, I'm in Covington County. So I call  
 5 my guys in Talladega and Clay County, that some  
 6 of them are here today. They'll go to the  
 7 location or try to find out who it is and what  
 8 it's about.  
 9 You know, as you all know, Talladega  
 10 is public land. There's no possible way to know  
 11 everybody that's on the public land. So it is a  
 12 problem. There's also there's no way to know  
 13 that -- they're not in our association. Some  
 14 people have nothing to do with us, and some  
 15 people are just sold out and really support us.  
 16 So as far as this goes, I can't tell  
 17 you the amount of texts and messages that I've  
 18 got from him, and my reply to him was: Have you  
 19 called the law enforcement people? I'm not a  
 20 game warden. I'll try to help you, and I've  
 21 tried to get -- and we have had Paige and some  
 22 different folks, some of the folks in that chat  
 23 group go and find out who it is.

Page 60

1 You know, the other problem is it may  
 2 or may not be a deer dog. And I'm not speaking  
 3 about Ms. Gray's issues. I'm talking about in  
 4 general. It may be a yard dog. There's no leash  
 5 law, and so just because somebody heard a dog  
 6 bark, that doesn't mean that there's an issue.  
 7 I don't understand the dynamics of  
 8 the Talladega National Forest, but what I know is  
 9 Mike Champion was another person that called me  
 10 several times, and of course Chris Turner, and  
 11 they are somewhat -- I think they're related.  
 12 Look, it's a community in the Mumford  
 13 area. The dog hunters are related to these  
 14 people. They're neighbors. It's just a real  
 15 mess to deal with to try to appease everybody.  
 16 But the deal is that wherever the  
 17 land is, from what I understand, that the dog  
 18 hunters are turned loose up on the mountain, and  
 19 there's no way at daylight -- and I think Officer  
 20 Nixon, he and I had a discussion. There's no way  
 21 that the dogs -- where the dog hunters are  
 22 turning loose at, they can't be down in the --  
 23 Paige, what do they call that?

Page 61

1 In the watershed, in the watershed.  
 2 I don't know what a watershed is. I don't have  
 3 watersheds in Covington County. You know what I  
 4 mean?  
 5 But the point is where the dog  
 6 hunters turn loose at, there's no way the dog  
 7 hunters can -- the deer dogs aren't going down  
 8 there at 5:00 in the morning or 6:00 in the  
 9 morning when these guys are hunting. So it is an  
 10 issue. I don't know how to solve the issue.  
 11 I can tell you that the dog -- like  
 12 Ms. Gray said, you've got the people that want to  
 13 do right and the people that want to do wrong.  
 14 It's an age old problem. It's easy to shut it  
 15 down and punish the ones that are doing right.  
 16 MR. MARTIN: Your guys also put out  
 17 cameras trying to catch the guys.  
 18 MR. MILLER: Look, we've put cameras  
 19 out. We've been down there. Some of these guys  
 20 have given up their days of hunting to patrol and  
 21 look and listen. And we've communicated, went to  
 22 the campgrounds. We've done everything that we  
 23 can do.



Page 62

1 Again, it's a public land. There's  
 2 no possible way that you can do that. And when  
 3 you shut down Ivy Mountain, just as an example,  
 4 the people from Ivy Mountain go to Talladega, but  
 5 when you shut down this area, they go to  
 6 Talladega, because it's public land, and they  
 7 feel like they don't have to worry about their  
 8 dogs. You know, it's much like the Blue Springs  
 9 deal that we're dealing with in Blue Springs.  
 10 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Thank you.  
 11 All right. Lonnie, Jeff, anything to  
 12 add to that?  
 13 MR. MARTIN: The only thing is what I  
 14 was going to ask Mr. Fincher.  
 15 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: I want to hear from  
 16 other -- we want to hear from Mr. Fincher as  
 17 well.  
 18 MR. FINCHER: I would reiterate what  
 19 Lonnie said regarding the systematic closure of  
 20 the property -- private lands to dog hunting. It  
 21 has increased pressure on public lands, and that  
 22 has been a source of a lot of problems, people  
 23 coming in that are not familiar with the area.

Page 63

1 Most of the people in the area, the  
 2 dog hunters are working together, making a  
 3 concerted effort to attempt to stop the problem.  
 4 I set up a meeting -- y'all probably  
 5 remember Ms. Strange, Martha Strange, that's  
 6 usually at this meeting. I set up a meeting back  
 7 in the summer between her and the Talladega  
 8 County chapter of the Alabama Dog Hunters  
 9 Association, and as a result, we did not get a  
 10 complaint from Ms. Strange or Mr. Freeman this  
 11 year, which we usually do.  
 12 I was impressed that the Dog Hunters  
 13 Association offered to fence her in excess of  
 14 five hundred acres, provide all of the labor and  
 15 half of the money required. I thought that was  
 16 standing pretty tall.  
 17 She did not accept their offer, but  
 18 we did not have any complaints there this year,  
 19 nor did we have any complaints coming in from the  
 20 Ivy Mountain area.  
 21 I haven't talked with Ms. Gray this  
 22 year. I will. I would love to be at that  
 23 meeting with y'all afterwards. Because if there

Page 64

1 is a problem, and there are problems, that's why  
 2 we're there, and we want to address those.  
 3 We have determined that there are  
 4 some people come in -- have come in this year  
 5 from up in the Steele area of St. Clair County  
 6 that have been the focus of most of the  
 7 complaints, and we want to work on that. And  
 8 we've identified three areas in the Talladega  
 9 National Forest that generate most of our  
 10 complaints. One is around Mumford in the Lake  
 11 Joy area. One is on the Germany Mountain part of  
 12 the national forest, which is sort of centrally  
 13 located, and south of there around Sycamore.  
 14 We had a total of nineteen complaints  
 15 generated from the Talladega National Forest on  
 16 the forest and private lands adjacent to the  
 17 forest this year from a total of ten different  
 18 complainants. Five of those came from Mr.  
 19 Turner. So just to give you some kind of  
 20 understanding of the size and scope of the  
 21 problem that we are facing.  
 22 But it is better than it has been, I  
 23 would say, in years past. Is it perfect, no.

Page 65

1 It's tough on us to catch those people, because  
 2 we're not there. I have one officer assigned to  
 3 Talladega County right now and myself. And by  
 4 the time we get the call and get there, what was  
 5 going on, usually I can't observe it.  
 6 We only encountered one dog after we  
 7 were called, and it was on national forest  
 8 property. The guy was on public right-of-way  
 9 calling it off to him. So it was not on private  
 10 property.  
 11 I did receive two different pictures  
 12 of deer dogs and deer collars that were confirmed  
 13 encroachments on private property, but I also  
 14 received a photo of a yard dog. So that's the  
 15 lump sum of what we received this year.  
 16 MR. MARTIN: Thank you, guys.  
 17 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Thank you both.  
 18 Thank you for your professionalism.  
 19 MR. SMITH: Could I add to that  
 20 point? I didn't realize I had to get on the  
 21 agenda.  
 22 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: I'm sorry. Who are  
 23 you?

Page 66

1 MR. SMITH: I'm Darryl Smith. I'm a  
 2 landowner down in the area that they're talking  
 3 about, and I was just --  
 4 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Mr. Smith, if you're  
 5 not on the agenda, I'm sorry, I apologize, but  
 6 no.  
 7 MR. MARTIN: Just come talk to us  
 8 afterwards.  
 9 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: You may have a  
 10 private conversation with Jeff and these  
 11 gentlemen.  
 12 MR. SMITH: I'll be glad to.  
 13 COMMISSIONER BLANKENSHIP: Thank you,  
 14 Lonnie. Thank you, Jeff.  
 15 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Thank y'all very  
 16 much.  
 17 Our next speaker, Mr. Koty McCarley.  
 18 MR. MCCARLEY: Thank you, Chairman.  
 19 I've heard all my life that the third time is a  
 20 charm, right? So for the third time in three  
 21 consecutive years I'm bringing to the department  
 22 today a request to allow the dog deer hunting  
 23 permit system for the Hodges Hunting Club that is

Page 67

1 located within Franklin County.  
 2 I won't go through all the details,  
 3 because you've heard them over the past couple of  
 4 years. I just do want to mention that I'm not  
 5 asking for anything new. I'm not asking for  
 6 anything that is not already within or already in  
 7 use within the department. I'm not asking for  
 8 you to swing the doors wide open.  
 9 I think it would be great if you  
 10 would give me just a few days or maybe even just  
 11 one day. I do want you to know that I'm only  
 12 asking for a very small portion of the county  
 13 that would be affected by this. I want you to  
 14 know that this hunting club meets and exceeds all  
 15 the requirements for the current permit system.  
 16 So since the denial of this request  
 17 two years ago, I have asked some questions about  
 18 why it's been denied. I'm just looking for the  
 19 logical and reasonable answers. The only  
 20 response I have had was one of the Board members  
 21 stated that granting this request would set a  
 22 precedent.  
 23 Well, I think it's fair to say that

Page 68

1 denying this request also sets a precedent. And  
 2 so I want to look at that precedent that's being  
 3 set by denying this request.  
 4 By denying this request, the  
 5 department sets a precedent that punishes current  
 6 and future generations of hunters for things that  
 7 we didn't do, things that happened over twenty  
 8 years ago.  
 9 The department is setting a precedent  
 10 that does not allow an equal opportunity to hunt  
 11 by a system that is currently available in  
 12 fifteen other counties. I want you to keep that  
 13 precedent in mind, and I will ask you to turn to  
 14 the back page of the packet that I presented to  
 15 you.  
 16 I want you to look at that definition  
 17 of hunting, and I want you to notice that word  
 18 "pursue." Now, that word "pursue" means that if  
 19 we are pursuing a game animal, then we are  
 20 hunting according to this definition.  
 21 And so we got these track and  
 22 recovery dogs all over the state, including in  
 23 Franklin County where it's closed. These track

Page 69

1 and recovery dogs are hunting by definition.  
 2 Well, this department overlooks that. And so now  
 3 we're talking about a precedent.  
 4 So let's consider everything I've  
 5 said here. I think it would be fair to say that  
 6 by denying this request, the department is  
 7 setting a precedent that is unjust, that is  
 8 dishonest, is unfair, it's biased, and it's a  
 9 precedent that overlooks illegal hunting.  
 10 If I'm wrong about any of this,  
 11 somebody please come up here and correct me. And  
 12 if this request is going to continue to be  
 13 denied, please give me some logical answers why.  
 14 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Thank you, Koty.  
 15 Stand for just a moment.  
 16 May I ask Director Sykes, could you  
 17 address the legalities or shall we ask Chief  
 18 Weathers? Pursuing game and hunting in a -- with  
 19 dogs in a non-dog deer hunting county or portion,  
 20 let me say that's illegal.  
 21 MR. SYKES: Law enforcement can give  
 22 the definition.  
 23 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Will you speak to

Page 70

1 that, Chief Weathers?  
 2 CHIEF WEATHERS: Yes, absolutely.  
 3 So Michael Weathers, Chief of  
 4 Enforcement. When it comes to tracking and the  
 5 difference between dog deer hunting and tracking  
 6 of a game animal, in a closed county, if a dog is  
 7 turned loose and the deer is live and it begins  
 8 to chase it, that's got to stop. It's got to  
 9 stop.  
 10 A recovery dog goes out and finds a  
 11 deer that is dead. There is no pursuit of it.  
 12 So that would answer that.  
 13 If they're running that deer to other  
 14 properties, baying it down, that sort of thing  
 15 where it can be killed later, yes, that would be  
 16 dog deer hunting in a closed county. You are  
 17 absolutely correct.  
 18 So in those instances that are  
 19 brought to our attention that are within the  
 20 scope that we can -- you know, it's happened  
 21 within at least a year, that sort of thing,  
 22 absolutely, we would prosecute that.  
 23 Tracking dogs just for the sake of

Page 71

1 recovery and not baying it down and killing it  
 2 would be legal.  
 3 COMMISSIONER BLANKENSHIP: Thanks,  
 4 Chief.  
 5 MR. MCCARLEY: May I respond?  
 6 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Yes, please respond,  
 7 but watch your time, please.  
 8 MR. MCCARLEY: So when we turn these  
 9 tracking and recovery dogs loose, we don't know  
 10 if that deer is dead or alive. All we know is  
 11 we're pursuing a deer. We're going to find out  
 12 if it's dead or alive as the process goes on.  
 13 CHIEF WEATHERS: Well, you're  
 14 attempting to locate a deer. Where there's  
 15 pursuit or not is the point that you would stop.  
 16 MR. MCCARLEY: Right. Well, we are  
 17 pursuing, and we are hunting by definition.  
 18 CHIEF WEATHERS: If you know the deer  
 19 is still alive, then you should not release the  
 20 dog.  
 21 COMMISSIONER BLANKENSHIP: Thank you.  
 22 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Thank you, Koty.  
 23 MR. MCCARLEY: I want to say that I'm

Page 72

1 for this. I'm not against the tracking people.  
 2 I'm glad they are able to recover those deer. I  
 3 think that's the right thing to do, but this  
 4 double standard, that's one --  
 5 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Thank you, Koty.  
 6 And the one thing that I wanted to make clear is  
 7 that's illegal. It's illegal. It's illegal.  
 8 It's not going to change.  
 9 MR. MCCARLEY: Right.  
 10 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Thank you.  
 11 All right. Donald Nelson is our next  
 12 speaker.  
 13 MR. NELSON: I've got an admin  
 14 comment. If y'all later today notice that Mr.  
 15 Avery or I are wandering around on the campus,  
 16 it's probably two reasons. One is it's a  
 17 beautiful campus, and another one we're probably  
 18 lost. So y'all just take that into account right  
 19 there.  
 20 Two things this morning. Once again,  
 21 thank you Board for allowing me the opportunity  
 22 to come up and talk with you this morning.  
 23 Dog hunting in Butler County, zero

Page 73

1 complaints last year, and that's conversing with  
 2 Mr. Grady and some of the conservation officers,  
 3 and that's our goal is to prevent any problems,  
 4 and we're glad that it's working out there.  
 5 And Mr. Grady asked me, Why is it. I  
 6 said, Well, probably a couple of reasons. One is  
 7 the tracking system is a fantastic tool that  
 8 allows us to stop the dogs at our property. And  
 9 also the second thing is the good hunters are  
 10 realizing it's a privilege that y'all allow us to  
 11 hunt in our counties, and that's one way why  
 12 we're trying to police it as best we can. So  
 13 thank you for that.  
 14 The second thing that more pertains  
 15 to the Commissioner this morning is the City of  
 16 Creola will be submitting a GOMESA grant in the  
 17 coming months once those are out right yonder,  
 18 and those are funds that would allow different  
 19 cities and different agencies to do a lot of good  
 20 projects. Our project is an Ecopark in the City  
 21 of Creola.  
 22 There's a lot of good things going on  
 23 in Mobile County right now. One is the watershed

Page 74

1 consortium, which I've been in conversation with  
2 them daily. It kind of twines together what  
3 we're wanting to do.  
4       The Blue -- correct me, Patti. Is it  
5 Blue Water or Blue --  
6       MS. MCCURDY: Blue Wave.  
7       MR. NELSON: Blue Wave is a canoe and  
8 kayak trail. Well, guess what, our area that  
9 we're proposing is right in the middle of all  
10 this. And there's a lot of opportunities for  
11 boat launches that you talked about earlier,  
12 kayak launching, hiking trails, and that's what  
13 we're working toward providing our citizens of  
14 the state with that opportunity to enjoy the  
15 beautiful Delta in our area right yonder. So  
16 there will be -- that will be coming down the  
17 road real soon.  
18       I appreciate the board's support on  
19 that, understanding about thirty plus million  
20 dollars and probably about a hundred applicants  
21 wanting to do that. But we feel like we've got a  
22 strong package to bring a lot to the community  
23 and the state when it comes to protecting our

Page 75

1 wildlife.  
2       And one good thing about that area is  
3 it's infested with black bears. I actually saw  
4 one coming out this morning about 3:00 before I  
5 drove up here. I said, Look at that little  
6 rascal going across the road. So we're trying to  
7 protect the bears and everything else that we've  
8 got in that area right there. So this is an  
9 opportunity we do not want to allow to slip by.  
10       Once again, thank y'all.  
11       CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Thank you, Mayor. I  
12 think the commissioner has got some comments for  
13 you.  
14       COMMISSIONER BLANKENSHIP: Thank you,  
15 Mayor. I appreciate your hospitality a couple of  
16 months ago when I had a chance to ride around  
17 Creola and look at all the new things y'all have  
18 going on down there.  
19       And I met with the company that's  
20 doing that Western Delta Watershed Management  
21 plan just this week when we were down in Tampa  
22 together, and that's coming together good. I  
23 think there will be some good information coming

Page 76

1 out of that that will be beneficial to your  
2 community as well as Saraland and how the  
3 watershed from the Delta impacts y'all and is a  
4 benefit to your communities.  
5       And I look forward to getting your  
6 proposal. And when y'all get that Jack's  
7 finished, let me know, I'll come down, and we'll  
8 have a cup of coffee there at Jack's.  
9       MR. NELSON: We'll take it to the  
10 Jack's. We just got the Raceway open.  
11       One thing about the watershed, the  
12 Gunnison Creek watershed is the largest watershed  
13 in Mobile County, and right now it has a minimum  
14 amount of things going on for it. Thank y'all.  
15       COMMISSIONER BLANKENSHIP: Thank you.  
16       CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Thank you, Mayor.  
17       Next speaker is Mr. Lane Stephens.  
18       MR. STEPHENS: Good morning,  
19 Commissioner and Chairman, commissioners, all of  
20 you. Lane Stephens. I represent the Alabama  
21 State Dog Hunters Association.  
22       A couple of things I would like to  
23 bring up to you today and are some thank yous. I

Page 77

1 want to thank the agency once again for allowing  
2 the specialty hunts to take place in Geneva State  
3 Forest. The association and some of its members  
4 had great hunts for both youth and adults down  
5 there this past fall. They were highly  
6 successful.  
7       We also wanted to thank the officers  
8 who reached out to the leaders of the association  
9 during the season and worked with the regional  
10 leaders to try to address some of these concerns,  
11 and specifically those that were mentioned  
12 earlier around Talladega. I had those points  
13 that I was going to make.  
14       The association continues to support  
15 the idea of creating a deer dog trespass  
16 regulation, and we are working with the  
17 legislature once again to try to put forth  
18 something that we hope will help improve that  
19 issue.  
20       Today your officers can't write a  
21 citation, because it's not illegal for that dog  
22 to trespass, and we think it should be. Those  
23 rights should be protected, just as the rights of

Page 78

1 folks who do want to have dogs on their land  
2 should be allowed to make those decisions.  
3       And finally, I will say, and this is  
4 going in a different direction, and I spoke with  
5 Chuck about this before the meeting just to make  
6 sure I didn't get in front of him, but being a  
7 North Florida resident, we finally had a CWD case  
8 pop up in North Florida. It was found in June of  
9 2023 in Holmes County. If you know where Bonifay  
10 is, it's about ten miles south of the state line.  
11 And the FWC in Florida created a CWD management  
12 area.  
13       You all know where 231 is, and you  
14 might know where State Road 81 is at I-10. That  
15 is the confinement area up to the state line.  
16 They have tested a lot of deer since then.  
17 Fortunately, no more have been found.  
18       But I know I spoke with Chuck about  
19 this beforehand, and I think he's actually  
20 meeting with Roger Young and folks in Florida  
21 next week to discuss the issue. But having it  
22 border your state, I just wanted to bring that to  
23 your attention. And I'm happy to answer any

Page 79

1 questions.  
2       **CHAIRMAN DOBBS:** Any questions for  
3 Mr. Stephens from the Board?  
4       Thank you, Lane. It's always a  
5 pleasure to have you here.  
6       Our last speaker today is Mr. Avery  
7 Bates.  
8       If you speak loud, Avery, you can  
9 stay right there.  
10       **MR. BATES:** Aged and crippled helps  
11 out sometimes, don't it?  
12       Well, good morning to all y'all on  
13 the Board, and it's good to be back and be able  
14 to come and meet y'all.  
15       Before I get started too much, as  
16 she's probably got me timed right now, I want to  
17 invite y'all March the 20th -- Chris, your wife  
18 has done said she'll be there -- at our  
19 Montgomery Seafood Bash. Y'all on the Board are  
20 all invited. Thank y'all for participating last  
21 time we was there.  
22       But we have some problems in our bay  
23 that was brought to me. I say problems. I

Page 80

1 called Grady Hartzog, and he called Chris, and  
2 we're having some stuff monitored, some siltation  
3 that my brother, who oysters quite frequently,  
4 and Johnny Harris, who oysters quite frequently,  
5 said we have a lot of silt coming down the bay.  
6       There's ways that you can control  
7 that and use the proper skirting. And we was  
8 concerned with them seeing it down south, because  
9 it was a massive amount of digging up north along  
10 the causeway to try to stop some erosion, but if  
11 you don't try to skirt it, it comes down the bay  
12 and covers the oysters.  
13       It can actually kill more oysters  
14 than conchs, because if you have a hundred  
15 percent covering of siltation, it will smother  
16 the little oysters to death.  
17       And we're also glad to hear Chris say  
18 something about the pipeline at the mouth of  
19 Bayou La Batre. Seems like I worked on that for  
20 fifteen years. But anyway, we've been to  
21 meetings with that.  
22       And I've always heard from the Coast  
23 Guard on down, dilution is the solution for

Page 81

1 pollution. And if you move it out from four and  
2 a half feet, according to the FDA, David Wiggins,  
3 and get it out four and a half miles, the  
4 dilution factor is far greater.  
5       We will be able to claim more land in  
6 shore for oystering habitat and get it upgraded  
7 to conditionally approved rather than prohibited  
8 or conditionally prohibited. So we appreciate  
9 Chris and them working on that. I thought I'd be  
10 dead before they would get this pipeline started.  
11       But I want to tell y'all, the amount  
12 of honey trucks, which is septic tank trucks,  
13 coming through the bayou has increased  
14 tremendously. That means more sewage is going  
15 overboard in Portersville Bay and causing  
16 problems that we heard from Barry Vittor back  
17 fifteen years ago.  
18       So we've got to do something fast,  
19 Chris, because the number of people is increasing  
20 down South.  
21       We thank y'all. Hope to see y'all  
22 March the 20th. Come on down and get some good  
23 seafood. And if y'all need any questions

Page 82

1 about -- the amount of shrimp this year was  
 2 tremendous. We have -- some of our shops had so  
 3 many boats, they had to keep shrimp.  
 4 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Thank you, Avery.  
 5 Commissioner has a question, comment.  
 6 COMMISSIONER BLANKENSHIP: I just  
 7 want to say thank you, Avery. There are two  
 8 other projects in Bayou La Batre that are being  
 9 funded through GOMESA and then through the Deep  
 10 Water Horizon Restore Act.  
 11 There are separate sewer projects in  
 12 Bayou La Batre and Coden and in South Mobile  
 13 County in the Fowl River area to get a lot of  
 14 those homes off of septic onto sanitary sewer,  
 15 that that would also be good for the oyster and  
 16 the growing waters soon.  
 17 MR. BATES: Thank you, Avery.  
 18 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Thank you, Avery.  
 19 Always glad for you to be here.  
 20 Let's move on now from our public  
 21 speaking, public comments section of our meeting.  
 22 Well done.  
 23 And I believe that we're on to

Page 83

1 unfinished business. I think that most all of  
 2 the requests or reports or requests for  
 3 information and any reports from the department  
 4 have been complied with.  
 5 Is there any unfinished business  
 6 before the Board today?  
 7 There being no unfinished business, I  
 8 move on to new business.  
 9 MR. HARTZOG: Mr. Chairman?  
 10 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: I'm sorry, Mr.  
 11 Hartzog?  
 12 MR. HARTZOG: New business, I would  
 13 like to make a motion, please.  
 14 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: All right. Yes.  
 15 MR. HARTZOG: This motion is pursuant  
 16 to Section 9-11-68 and 9-11-69 Code of Alabama  
 17 which will allow the adjustment of the cost for  
 18 all licenses and fees associated with the  
 19 Department of Conservation and National Resources  
 20 for the '24-'25 season based on the incremental  
 21 rise in the consumer price index, CPI. I make  
 22 that motion.  
 23 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: All right. May I

Page 84

1 read -- I'm going to reread the motion for you.  
 2 This motion pursuant to Section  
 3 9-11-68 and 9-11-69 will allow the cost of all  
 4 licenses and fees associated with the Department  
 5 of Conservation and Natural Resources for  
 6 2024-2025 based on the incremental rise in the  
 7 consumer price index, or the CPI.  
 8 Is there a second?  
 9 MR. R. JONES: Second.  
 10 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: We have a second.  
 11 Any questions, any discussion?  
 12 (Whereupon, a discussion off the  
 13 record was held regarding an audio system issue  
 14 that suddenly arose.)  
 15 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: We'll talk loud.  
 16 I'm sorry. I thought I was doing the right  
 17 thing.  
 18 COMMISSIONER BLANKENSHIP: You made  
 19 the dinging stop.  
 20 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: I did.  
 21 Any discussion with regard to the  
 22 motion?  
 23 There being no discussion, let's have

Page 85

1 a vote. All those in favor of the motion, let it  
 2 be known by raising your right hand.  
 3 The ayes have it.  
 4 Is there any more new business before  
 5 this Board?  
 6 MR. MARTIN: Mr. Chairman?  
 7 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Yes, Mr. Martin.  
 8 MR. MARTIN: Based on the  
 9 conversation that we had with the national  
 10 forest, I would like to ask Chuck and Matt to  
 11 check on the legal ramifications of making it  
 12 mandatory that -- make it mandatory that anybody  
 13 that's dog hunting in the national forest has to  
 14 have a GPS tracking whistle broke collar. That's  
 15 it.  
 16 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Okay.  
 17 MR. MARTIN: Now, we'll address it  
 18 next week.  
 19 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Thank you, Mr.  
 20 Martin.  
 21 Any other business before the Board?  
 22 Mr. Chairman?  
 23 COMMISSIONER BLANKENSHIP: The

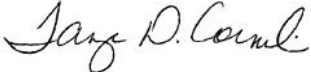
Page 86

1 only thing --  
 2 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Commissioner.  
 3 COMMISSIONER BLANKENSHIP: -- is on  
 4 the packets that you received for the season and  
 5 bag limits, I placed Page 17 on your -- in front  
 6 of your chairs this morning. Just please replace  
 7 that in your season and bag limits page for us to  
 8 discuss and vote on at the May meeting.  
 9 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: All right. Thank  
 10 you.  
 11 Any further business?  
 12 MR. R. JONES: Question.  
 13 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Mr. Jones with a  
 14 question.  
 15 MR. R. JONES: Is this -- what we're  
 16 seeing, is this going to be made public soon  
 17 before our May meeting or not?  
 18 MR. SYKES: That's above my pay  
 19 grade.  
 20 COMMISSIONER BLANKENSHIP: Sure.  
 21 MR. R. JONES: Okay. Thank you.  
 22 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Any other questions  
 23 or any other discussion? Mr. Savoy?

Page 87

1 MR. SAVOY: No, sir.  
 2 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Thank you.  
 3 That concludes our new business. I  
 4 have no announcements that I can think of.  
 5 Commissioner, any announcements? No  
 6 announcements.  
 7 The date and location of the next  
 8 meeting will be determined. We are working on  
 9 that. So that's it.  
 10 Have a wonderful trip home. It's a  
 11 beautiful day. Enjoy it. Take a walk around  
 12 this great campus. War Eagle. Thank you.  
 13  
 14 (Whereupon, proceedings concluded at  
 15 10:30 a.m.)  
 16  
 17 END OF PROCEEDINGS  
 18  
 19  
 20  
 21  
 22  
 23

Page 88

1 CERTIFICATE  
 2  
 3 STATE OF ALABAMA )  
 4 JEFFERSON COUNTY )  
 5  
 6 I HEREBY CERTIFY that the above  
 7 and foregoing proceedings were taken down by me  
 8 in stenotype, and the proceedings were  
 9 transcribed by means of computer-aided  
 10 transcription, and that the foregoing represents  
 11 a true and correct transcript of said  
 12 proceedings.  
 13 I FURTHER CERTIFY that I am  
 14 neither of counsel, nor of any relation to the  
 15 parties to the action, nor am I anyway  
 16 interested in the result of said cause.  
 17  
 18   
 19  
 20 TANYA D. CORNELIUS, RPR  
 21 ACCR #378 Expires 10/1/2024  
 22 Notary Expires 9/13/26  
 23

<b>1</b>	<b>30th</b> 6:10	49:5 51:20 56:7	78:19 80:13
<b>1</b> 9:16 11:22 12:1 21:14,21	<b>31</b> 13:1	58:19 72:2	<b>ada</b> 28:19
<b>10</b> 78:14	<b>362</b> 1:7,21	79:13 81:5	<b>add</b> 48:18 58:2
<b>10/1/2024</b> 88:21	<b>378</b> 88:21	<b>above</b> 86:18	62:12 65:19
<b>10:30</b> 87:15	<b>3:00</b> 75:4	88:6	<b>added</b> 29:6
<b>17</b> 86:5	<b>4</b>	<b>absolutely</b> 70:2	<b>adding</b> 27:18
<b>18339</b> 88:19	<b>4</b> 7:22	70:17,22	30:18
<b>1905</b> 34:14	<b>5</b>	<b>accept</b> 63:17	<b>additional</b> 49:8
<b>1908</b> 15:22	<b>5</b> 12:11	<b>access</b> 20:4	<b>address</b> 43:10
<b>1988</b> 35:3	<b>5:00</b> 61:8	21:23,23 22:1,3	48:13,15,18
<b>1st</b> 19:22	<b>6</b>	22:9,13 48:19	49:6,9 50:1 64:2
<b>2</b>	<b>6</b> 13:18,19	<b>accessible</b> 28:19	69:17 77:10
<b>2</b> 9:17 10:9	<b>6:00</b> 61:8	<b>accomplishme...</b>	85:17
<b>2009</b> 46:2	<b>7</b>	34:11	<b>addressed</b> 49:17
<b>2021</b> 49:14	<b>7</b> 8:18 13:18,20	<b>account</b> 72:18	<b>addresses</b> 8:23
<b>2022</b> 42:13	<b>8</b>	<b>accounting</b>	16:22,23
<b>2023</b> 16:9 29:1	<b>81</b> 78:14	25:15	<b>addressing</b> 12:7
29:19 78:9	<b>9</b>	<b>accr</b> 88:21	12:20 48:10
<b>2024</b> 1:9,22 3:6	<b>9-11-68</b> 83:16	<b>achievements</b>	49:12
21:3	84:3	35:4	<b>adem</b> 28:16
<b>2024-2025</b> 84:6	<b>9-11-69</b> 83:16	<b>acknowledging</b>	<b>adequate</b> 15:12
<b>2025</b> 22:4	84:3	32:1	<b>adjacent</b> 57:16
<b>2031</b> 18:17	<b>9/13/26</b> 88:22	<b>acquired</b> 33:2	64:16
<b>20th</b> 79:17	<b>9:00</b> 1:23	<b>acreage</b> 32:21	<b>adjustment</b>
81:22	<b>a</b>	<b>acres</b> 32:22,23	83:17
<b>220-2-26</b> 40:14	<b>a.m.</b> 1:23 87:15	63:14	<b>admin</b> 72:13
<b>231</b> 78:13	<b>ability</b> 18:8	<b>act</b> 82:10	<b>administration</b>
<b>24</b> 1:9,22 22:4	48:14 56:21	<b>action</b> 88:15	21:14 27:19
83:20	<b>able</b> 9:7 17:18	<b>active</b> 12:12	<b>adults</b> 77:4
<b>25</b> 83:20	23:3 26:16 30:9	13:19	<b>advance</b> 35:6
<b>3</b>	30:23 31:9 34:7	<b>activities</b> 35:5	<b>advances</b> 42:11
<b>3</b> 7:12,15	48:5,8,12,17	<b>activity</b> 17:9	<b>advantage</b> 13:5
		<b>actually</b> 11:5	25:1
		13:7 44:7 55:1	<b>advisory</b> 1:3 3:6
		55:14,16 75:3	32:5



<p><b>affected</b> 67:13  <b>affecting</b> 48:11  <b>affects</b> 54:2  <b>afford</b> 29:12  52:6  <b>afraid</b> 54:5  <b>age</b> 10:23 61:14  <b>aged</b> 79:10  <b>agencies</b> 21:16  21:21 22:22  34:2 35:8,15  45:20 73:19  <b>agency</b> 21:14  30:4 77:1  <b>agenda</b> 14:20  65:21 66:5  <b>agents</b> 34:19  <b>aggressively</b>  49:19 50:4  <b>ago</b> 30:6 48:11  48:17 53:15  67:17 68:8  75:16 81:17  <b>aid</b> 35:6  <b>aided</b> 88:9  <b>alabama</b> 1:1,8  1:19,22 2:5 4:9  8:9 12:11,15  17:12 18:7,23  21:12 22:7  26:14 28:13  30:6,7,8 31:10  32:21 33:1,9,14  34:4,6,9 38:8,8  40:13 44:16</p>	<p>45:12 49:16  51:5 53:6,15  58:20 63:8  76:20 83:16  88:3  <b>aldot</b> 21:18  <b>alfa</b> 24:9  <b>alive</b> 71:10,12  71:19  <b>allegiance</b> 5:7,9  <b>allow</b> 45:13  52:3 66:22  68:10 73:10,18  75:9 83:17 84:3  <b>allowed</b> 4:6 78:2  <b>allowing</b> 44:17  47:14 50:18  51:12,18 52:2  52:10,13 72:21  77:1  <b>allows</b> 12:23  73:8  <b>altogether</b> 27:2  <b>amazing</b> 38:8  <b>amen</b> 4:20  <b>amend</b> 40:14  <b>america</b> 41:8  <b>ammunition</b>  23:17  <b>amount</b> 25:14  59:17 76:14  80:9 81:11 82:1  <b>amphibian</b>  44:20</p>	<p><b>andrew</b> 44:13  44:16  <b>angler</b> 48:13,19  <b>animal</b> 41:22  68:19 70:6  <b>animals</b> 40:19  41:5 42:1,21,23  43:12  <b>annihilate</b> 15:19  <b>announce</b> 9:11  <b>announcements</b>  32:19 87:4,5,6  <b>answer</b> 44:11  47:6,10 70:12  78:23  <b>answers</b> 47:8  67:19 69:13  <b>anybody</b> 6:14  6:15 39:22  85:12  <b>anyway</b> 6:9  10:11 11:10  13:16 37:17  38:11 46:10  80:20  <b>anywise</b> 88:15  <b>apologize</b> 66:5  <b>appease</b> 39:13  60:15  <b>applause</b> 34:10  <b>applicants</b>  74:20  <b>application</b>  36:15</p>	<p><b>appreciate</b> 4:7  12:8 17:10  22:10,20 31:12  32:1 34:3 37:2  38:21 48:7 51:3  52:15 74:18  75:15 81:8  <b>appropriate</b>  15:11  <b>approved</b> 18:12  20:20 81:7  <b>approves</b> 16:14  <b>april</b> 32:15 36:6  <b>aquaculture</b>  20:18  <b>architecture</b> 1:5  1:20  <b>area</b> 7:22 9:20  12:13 13:4 29:5  30:15,19 32:15  49:15 60:13  62:5,23 63:1,20  64:5,11 66:2  74:8,15 75:2,8  78:12,15 82:13  <b>areas</b> 12:18  20:19 26:18  51:8 56:15,20  64:8  <b>armstrong</b> 40:3  40:6,10,11  43:23 44:2,10  <b>arose</b> 84:14  <b>arranged</b> 3:12</p>
--	--	---	--

<p><b>article</b> 46:1  <b>asked</b> 51:5,11  55:7 67:17 73:5  <b>asking</b> 57:3 67:5  67:5,7,12  <b>aspect</b> 34:20  <b>asphalt</b> 28:15  <b>assaults</b> 15:15  <b>asset</b> 43:1  <b>assigned</b> 65:2  <b>assistant</b> 3:15  49:1,2 53:14  <b>associated</b>  83:18 84:4  <b>association</b> 11:5  34:2 59:13 63:9  63:13 76:21  77:3,8,14  <b>assume</b> 47:5  <b>attempt</b> 63:3  <b>attempting</b>  71:14  <b>attend</b> 48:7  53:22  <b>attended</b> 53:23  <b>attention</b> 5:3  70:19 78:23  <b>attitude</b> 15:8  <b>attorneys</b> 40:21  <b>attributed</b>  42:11  <b>auburn</b> 1:4,8,20  1:22 9:18 17:5  <b>audio</b> 84:13</p>	<p><b>available</b> 21:5  68:11  <b>avery</b> 72:15  79:6,8 82:4,7,17  82:18  <b>award</b> 32:21  33:17,23 34:13  34:14 35:3,5,16  35:20 36:2,5,22  37:20  <b>awarded</b> 20:22  21:3  <b>awards</b> 33:20  35:13 36:11  <b>aware</b> 40:18  <b>awesome</b> 48:4  <b>ayes</b> 85:3</p>	<p><b>barbour</b> 10:15  72:17 74:15  87:11  <b>bark</b> 60:6  <b>barksdale</b> 2:8  3:23 7:21,21  8:23 24:9  <b>barn</b> 30:18  <b>barry</b> 81:16  <b>based</b> 46:4  83:20 84:6 85:8  <b>bash</b> 79:19  <b>basic</b> 39:4  <b>basically</b> 8:18  52:5  <b>bass</b> 9:10  <b>bates</b> 79:7,10  82:17  <b>bathroom</b> 20:5  <b>bathrooms</b> 29:4  30:19  <b>batre</b> 20:11  80:19 82:8,12  <b>bats</b> 42:14  <b>bay</b> 79:22 80:5  80:11 81:15  <b>bayfront</b> 19:13  <b>baying</b> 70:14  71:1  <b>bayou</b> 20:11  80:19 81:13  82:8,12  <b>beach</b> 19:2,2,6  20:4  <b>bears</b> 75:3,7  <b>beautiful</b> 3:21  19:23 26:12</p>	<p>72:17 74:15  87:11  <b>beautifully</b> 10:1  <b>began</b> 32:2  <b>begins</b> 70:7  <b>behalf</b> 44:19  53:21  <b>believe</b> 82:23  <b>belt</b> 8:19 32:9  <b>ben</b> 2:13 11:21  <b>beneficial</b> 76:1  <b>benefit</b> 48:20  49:6 76:4  <b>best</b> 5:14 10:20  29:19 36:16  46:8 73:12  <b>betsy</b> 6:19,20  <b>better</b> 24:19  64:22  <b>bha</b> 51:5,11  <b>biased</b> 69:8  <b>bibb</b> 13:22  <b>bid</b> 26:9 27:3,13  <b>biddle</b> 32:4  <b>big</b> 32:7 34:22  36:4 49:10  <b>bigger</b> 47:13  <b>billion</b> 18:12  <b>billy</b> 30:10  <b>birding</b> 30:7  <b>bit</b> 25:22  <b>black</b> 8:19 32:9  49:20 75:3  <b>blankenship</b> 2:3  6:16 16:5 17:3</p>
	<b>b</b>		
	<p><b>b</b> 13:17 15:6  43:21 44:1  <b>baby</b> 25:8  <b>back</b> 20:8 24:3  38:1,11 46:2,20  63:6 68:14  79:13 81:16  <b>backed</b> 46:8  <b>backup</b> 58:21  <b>bag</b> 86:5,7  <b>balance</b> 24:23  54:17  <b>baldwin</b> 21:1  <b>ball</b> 17:8  <b>bannon</b> 38:18  <b>bans</b> 46:5</p>		

<p>38:13 43:15 57:13,19 66:13 71:3,21 75:14 76:15 82:6 84:18 85:23 86:3,20</p> <p><b>bleed</b> 22:4 <b>blessed</b> 3:20 17:12,18 <b>blessing</b> 4:16 <b>blessings</b> 4:17 <b>blue</b> 62:8,9 74:4 74:5,5,6,7 <b>bluff</b> 26:13 <b>board</b> 1:3 2:1 3:6,14 7:8 11:14 13:8 14:17 16:10,14 17:16 20:16 21:12 23:10 32:5 39:2 39:9,12 40:14 43:20 47:19 49:18,23 50:8 52:18 57:4 67:20 72:21 79:3,13,19 83:6 85:5,21 <b>board's</b> 74:18 <b>boat</b> 22:16 74:11 <b>boating</b> 21:23 22:1,3,13 <b>boats</b> 82:3 <b>bond</b> 26:5</p>	<p><b>bonifay</b> 78:9 <b>boost</b> 42:19 <b>border</b> 78:22 <b>bow</b> 4:4 51:4,7 51:12,14,18,19 52:1,2,3,6,11,13 <b>bp</b> 18:18 <b>bradley</b> 34:14 34:15,19 35:1 35:15 36:22 <b>brainer</b> 36:14 <b>brand</b> 26:12 <b>brandon</b> 47:21 47:23 50:9 <b>breeder</b> 44:8 <b>brent</b> 40:2,11 43:21 <b>brief</b> 7:11 <b>bring</b> 22:21 23:4 30:13 74:22 76:23 78:22 <b>bringing</b> 34:5 66:21 <b>brings</b> 46:21 <b>brock</b> 2:10 13:17 15:2,23 <b>broke</b> 85:14 <b>brother</b> 32:14 80:3 <b>brought</b> 70:19 79:23 <b>bruce</b> 46:2 <b>bryan</b> 36:19</p>	<p><b>build</b> 26:17 29:12 56:23 <b>building</b> 27:19 30:17 <b>built</b> 26:13 28:4 43:9 <b>bunch</b> 37:3,4,16 <b>business</b> 30:13 38:23 83:1,5,7,8 83:12 85:4,21 86:11 87:3 <b>butler</b> 72:23 <b>buy</b> 24:1</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>c</b></p> <p><b>c</b> 88:1,1 <b>c.b.</b> 33:17 <b>cab</b> 53:23 55:7 <b>cabin</b> 27:13 <b>cabins</b> 19:18,20 20:2 27:18 28:3 28:4,23 <b>calendar</b> 13:3 <b>call</b> 16:18,21 59:4 60:23 65:4 <b>called</b> 36:12 59:19 60:9 65:7 80:1,1 <b>calling</b> 65:9 <b>calls</b> 9:21 10:3 55:19 <b>cameras</b> 61:17 61:18 <b>camille</b> 3:16 <b>campground</b> 26:23 27:10,17</p>	<p>27:23 28:4 <b>campgrounds</b> 61:22 <b>campus</b> 17:5,7,9 17:11 72:15,17 87:12 <b>canal</b> 19:9,12 <b>canoe</b> 74:7 <b>capacity</b> 15:8 24:22 <b>capitalize</b> 29:15 30:12 <b>captain</b> 5:14 53:7 <b>care</b> 24:22 42:4 <b>career</b> 33:18 <b>careers</b> 35:10 <b>carl</b> 31:13 <b>carry</b> 41:16 <b>carrying</b> 40:22 <b>cart</b> 27:12 <b>case</b> 45:6 78:7 <b>cases</b> 42:10,14 <b>cat</b> 41:15 <b>catch</b> 49:7 56:1 61:17 65:1 <b>cats</b> 42:15 <b>cause</b> 88:16 <b>causeway</b> 19:7 80:10 <b>causing</b> 81:15 <b>caverns</b> 28:17 <b>ccc</b> 28:2 <b>celebrate</b> 5:20 6:11 43:5</p>
---	---	--	---

<b>celebration</b> 5:19 32:13 <b>centrally</b> 64:12 <b>certified</b> 1:18 <b>certify</b> 88:6,13 <b>chair</b> 39:10,11 44:17 <b>chairman</b> 2:2 3:1 4:21 5:5,9 5:10 6:17 7:7 14:8 15:23 16:6 16:7 17:4 32:1 37:18 38:14 40:8 43:17 44:9 44:12 47:18 49:3 50:7,15 52:17,20 53:2 55:8 56:17 57:3 57:5,8,14,23 58:1,4 62:10,15 65:17,22 66:4,9 66:15,18 69:14 69:23 71:6,22 72:5,10 75:11 76:16,19 79:2 82:4,18 83:9,10 83:14,23 84:10 84:15,20 85:6,7 85:16,19,22 86:2,9,13,22 87:2 <b>chairs</b> 86:6 <b>challenged</b> 54:11	<b>champion</b> 58:13 60:9 <b>chance</b> 45:6 75:16 <b>change</b> 37:10 72:8 <b>changes</b> 10:5 <b>chapter</b> 63:8 <b>charged</b> 45:20 <b>charlanna</b> 14:15 <b>charm</b> 66:20 <b>chase</b> 70:8 <b>chat</b> 59:22 <b>cheaha</b> 26:11,13 <b>check</b> 85:11 <b>cherished</b> 6:1 <b>chief</b> 36:21 37:18 69:17 70:1,2,3 71:4,13 71:18 <b>chris</b> 8:8 58:23 60:10 79:17 80:1,17 81:9,19 <b>christopher</b> 2:3 <b>chuck</b> 33:16,22 34:1 36:1 37:4,8 37:22 38:15 78:5,18 85:10 <b>citation</b> 77:21 <b>cities</b> 73:19 <b>citizen</b> 44:22 <b>citizens</b> 74:13 <b>city</b> 73:15,20	<b>claim</b> 81:5 <b>clair</b> 64:5 <b>clarification</b> 57:14 <b>clarity</b> 39:8 <b>class</b> 19:23 49:21 <b>classified</b> 20:20 <b>clay</b> 59:5 <b>clear</b> 45:17 72:6 <b>closed</b> 68:23 70:6,16 <b>closure</b> 62:19 <b>club</b> 11:4 66:23 67:14 <b>coast</b> 80:22 <b>coastal</b> 18:23 <b>code</b> 40:14 41:23 83:16 <b>coden</b> 82:12 <b>coffee</b> 76:8 <b>cold</b> 10:18 <b>collar</b> 85:14 <b>collars</b> 65:12 <b>colleague</b> 6:2 <b>colleagues</b> 6:6 6:10 <b>collecting</b> 47:1 <b>collection</b> 45:1 46:5 <b>collectively</b> 15:13 <b>college</b> 1:5,20 <b>collide</b> 54:20	<b>colonel</b> 38:17 <b>color</b> 5:1 <b>columbiana</b> 23:8 <b>combined</b> 27:15 <b>come</b> 4:6 19:16 31:13 36:1 39:5 39:18 42:5 58:5 64:4,4 66:7 69:11 72:22 76:7 79:14 81:22 <b>comes</b> 70:4 74:23 80:11 <b>coming</b> 37:1 58:10 62:23 63:19 73:17 74:16 75:4,22 75:23 80:5 81:13 <b>commencing</b> 1:23 21:22 <b>comment</b> 72:14 82:5 <b>commentary</b> 39:1,1 <b>comments</b> 14:9 39:7 75:12 82:21 <b>commerce</b> 42:20 <b>commission</b> 49:17 <b>commissioner</b> 1:19 2:3 6:14,16 15:22 16:5 17:2
---	--	--	--

<p>17:3,14 22:20 29:11 36:3 37:8 37:21 38:13 43:15 49:2,3,4 57:13,19 66:13 71:3,21 73:15 75:12,14 76:15 76:19 82:5,6 84:18 85:23 86:2,3,20 87:5</p> <p><b>commissioners</b> 76:19</p> <p><b>committed</b> 22:9</p> <p><b>committee</b> 31:5 31:12 36:12</p> <p><b>common</b> 41:9</p> <p><b>communicated</b> 53:19 61:21</p> <p><b>communication</b> 51:1 54:17</p> <p><b>communicatio...</b> 30:10</p> <p><b>communities</b> 76:4</p> <p><b>community</b> 42:21 49:15 60:12 74:22 76:2</p> <p><b>company</b> 75:19</p> <p><b>comparison</b> 46:22</p> <p><b>complainants</b> 64:18</p> <p><b>complaint</b> 63:10</p>	<p><b>complaints</b> 10:10 12:22 14:4 63:18,19 64:7,10,14 73:1</p> <p><b>completed</b> 18:13 20:5 22:2 22:17,18</p> <p><b>compliant</b> 28:19</p> <p><b>complied</b> 83:4</p> <p><b>computer</b> 88:9</p> <p><b>concentration</b> 9:2</p> <p><b>concern</b> 45:11 51:6</p> <p><b>concerned</b> 44:22 80:8</p> <p><b>concerning</b> 43:12</p> <p><b>concerns</b> 8:10 43:11 77:10</p> <p><b>concerted</b> 63:3</p> <p><b>conchs</b> 80:14</p> <p><b>concluded</b> 87:14</p> <p><b>concludes</b> 87:3</p> <p><b>conclusions</b> 46:4</p> <p><b>concourse</b> 1:7 1:21</p> <p><b>conditionally</b> 81:7,8</p> <p><b>condolences</b> 53:5</p> <p><b>confinement</b> 78:15</p>	<p><b>confirmed</b> 65:12</p> <p><b>congratulations</b> 37:19</p> <p><b>congressional</b> 7:10 8:18 16:19 31:11</p> <p><b>congressman</b> 31:12</p> <p><b>conjunction</b> 28:13</p> <p><b>consecutive</b> 66:21</p> <p><b>conservation</b> 1:2 3:5 5:1 11:19 15:3,6 17:15 21:13,20 26:16 31:16 32:4 33:19 34:21 38:9 44:21 45:11,18 46:15 47:15 73:2 83:19 84:5</p> <p><b>conservative</b> 25:14</p> <p><b>conserved</b> 32:22</p> <p><b>consider</b> 10:5 51:11 69:4</p> <p><b>considerate</b> 3:9</p> <p><b>consideration</b> 46:16 47:17</p> <p><b>consortium</b> 74:1</p> <p><b>constituents</b> 14:13</p>	<p><b>construction</b> 1:6,21 22:5 26:9 26:14 27:9</p> <p><b>consumer</b> 83:21 84:7</p> <p><b>contact</b> 41:21</p> <p><b>continental</b> 31:5</p> <p><b>continue</b> 14:2 18:17,18 23:21 55:3 69:12</p> <p><b>continued</b> 45:1 45:13</p> <p><b>continues</b> 77:14</p> <p><b>contrell</b> 44:14 44:15,16</p> <p><b>contribution</b> 35:18</p> <p><b>contributors</b> 23:12,20</p> <p><b>control</b> 80:6</p> <p><b>convention</b> 32:20 36:6</p> <p><b>conversation</b> 12:3 66:10 74:1 85:9</p> <p><b>conversations</b> 8:3,6</p> <p><b>conversing</b> 73:1</p> <p><b>convey</b> 55:7</p> <p><b>conveying</b> 55:11</p> <p><b>cooler</b> 29:17</p> <p><b>cooperated</b> 7:14</p> <p><b>cooperative</b> 2:5</p> <p><b>coordinator</b> 5:16</p>
---	---	--	--

<p><b>cornelius</b> 1:18 88:20</p> <p><b>correct</b> 69:11 70:17 74:4 88:11</p> <p><b>corrections</b> 16:11,13 53:16</p> <p><b>cost</b> 83:17 84:3</p> <p><b>cottages</b> 28:22</p> <p><b>counsel</b> 88:14</p> <p><b>counterparts</b> 41:20</p> <p><b>counties</b> 21:2 48:1 68:12 73:11</p> <p><b>countless</b> 6:6</p> <p><b>country</b> 8:20 32:10 43:8</p> <p><b>countryside</b> 54:17</p> <p><b>county</b> 6:11 8:20 10:15 13:20,21,21,22 18:13 19:13 32:8,15 40:12 44:17 47:22 55:8 59:4,5 61:3 63:8 64:5 65:3 67:1,12 68:23 69:19 70:6,16 72:23 73:23 76:13 78:9 82:13 88:4</p> <p><b>couple</b> 7:18 18:4 25:2 30:6 48:17</p>	<p>58:11 67:3 73:6 75:15 76:22</p> <p><b>course</b> 12:14 27:1,12 59:3 60:10</p> <p><b>court</b> 1:18 7:3</p> <p><b>courteous</b> 39:16</p> <p><b>covering</b> 80:15</p> <p><b>covers</b> 80:12</p> <p><b>covington</b> 59:4 61:3</p> <p><b>coyote</b> 14:4</p> <p><b>coyotes</b> 8:4</p> <p><b>cpi</b> 83:21 84:7</p> <p><b>crazy</b> 6:7</p> <p><b>create</b> 49:12</p> <p><b>created</b> 78:11</p> <p><b>creating</b> 42:4 55:9 77:15</p> <p><b>credit</b> 36:18</p> <p><b>creek</b> 28:3 76:12</p> <p><b>creola</b> 73:16,21 75:17</p> <p><b>crippled</b> 79:10</p> <p><b>critical</b> 25:10</p> <p><b>crop</b> 9:22 13:11 24:11</p> <p><b>crops</b> 8:11 9:1 24:19</p> <p><b>culling</b> 48:12</p> <p><b>cullman</b> 48:1</p> <p><b>cup</b> 76:8</p> <p><b>current</b> 41:23 67:15 68:5</p>	<p><b>currently</b> 9:10 45:15 68:11</p> <p><b>custodian</b> 15:9</p> <p><b>cwd</b> 78:7,11</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>d</b></p> <p><b>d</b> 1:17 88:20</p> <p><b>daddy</b> 32:7</p> <p><b>daily</b> 74:2</p> <p><b>dallas</b> 8:20</p> <p><b>damaged</b> 20:6</p> <p><b>dangerous</b> 41:6</p> <p><b>dark</b> 29:16</p> <p><b>darryl</b> 66:1</p> <p><b>date</b> 87:7</p> <p><b>daughter</b> 6:1</p> <p><b>dauphin</b> 19:5,7 19:14,16</p> <p><b>david</b> 81:2</p> <p><b>davis</b> 3:16</p> <p><b>day</b> 3:21 4:13 9:14 17:18 28:1 29:4,16 67:11 87:11</p> <p><b>daylight</b> 60:19</p> <p><b>days</b> 61:20 67:10</p> <p><b>dead</b> 70:11 71:10,12 81:10</p> <p><b>deal</b> 36:4 60:15 60:16 62:9</p> <p><b>dealing</b> 45:10 46:2 62:9</p> <p><b>death</b> 80:16</p> <p><b>decapitated</b> 42:6</p>	<p><b>decimate</b> 48:14</p> <p><b>decisions</b> 78:2</p> <p><b>dedication</b> 6:4 33:19</p> <p><b>deep</b> 43:3 82:9</p> <p><b>deeply</b> 56:21</p> <p><b>deepwater</b> 18:14 27:21</p> <p><b>deer</b> 8:5,10,19 8:21 10:10 13:7 13:11,12,13,23 24:10,18,19 53:11 54:10,14 54:20,23 55:14 55:15 56:22 60:2 61:7 65:12 65:12 66:22 69:19 70:5,7,11 70:13,16 71:10 71:11,14,18 72:2 77:15 78:16</p> <p><b>defined</b> 51:10</p> <p><b>definition</b> 68:16 68:20 69:1,22 71:17</p> <p><b>delta</b> 74:15 75:20 76:3</p> <p><b>denial</b> 67:16</p> <p><b>denied</b> 67:18 69:13</p> <p><b>denying</b> 68:1,3 68:4 69:6</p> <p><b>department</b> 1:1 8:6 9:23 10:1,14</p>
--	--	--	---

12:7,19 14:17 17:15 21:6,12 21:18,19,20 26:15 28:14 29:20 30:11 31:16,20,23 33:10 38:4 39:2 50:1,20 53:6,15 66:21 67:7 68:5 68:9 69:2,6 83:3 83:19 84:4 <b>department's</b> 9:6 <b>depletion</b> 41:10 <b>deposit</b> 18:18 21:6,8 <b>depredation</b> 9:1 24:11 <b>deputy</b> 14:11 22:20 29:10 49:3,4 <b>design</b> 1:6,21 20:13 26:9 <b>designations</b> 30:9 <b>desires</b> 14:4 <b>desoto</b> 27:16 <b>despite</b> 25:20 <b>destination</b> 49:21 <b>destroyed</b> 19:19 <b>destroys</b> 54:16 <b>destruction</b> 8:11	<b>detail</b> 45:8 <b>details</b> 67:2 <b>determined</b> 64:3 87:8 <b>development</b> 49:19 <b>diamondback</b> 44:23 <b>difference</b> 34:8 70:5 <b>different</b> 17:7 17:20 22:21,22 48:8 59:22 64:17 65:11 73:18,19 78:4 <b>difficult</b> 31:19 55:18 <b>digest</b> 16:23 <b>digging</b> 80:9 <b>diligent</b> 3:8 <b>dilution</b> 80:23 81:4 <b>dinging</b> 84:19 <b>direct</b> 41:21 <b>direction</b> 37:13 78:4 <b>directly</b> 35:5 39:12 <b>director</b> 3:15 11:12 14:11 33:16 49:1,15 69:16 <b>directors</b> 38:12 <b>discreet</b> 15:14	<b>discuss</b> 4:7 7:19 51:2 57:10 78:21 86:8 <b>discussion</b> 60:20 84:11,12 84:21,23 86:23 <b>disease</b> 41:14 <b>dishonest</b> 69:8 <b>disregard</b> 56:6 <b>distance</b> 51:21 <b>district</b> 7:10,11 7:12,15,22 8:18 9:16,17 10:9 11:13,22 12:1 12:11 13:18,18 13:18,19 40:21 <b>districts</b> 24:14 <b>division</b> 22:11 22:12 24:13 30:12 38:18 <b>dobbs</b> 2:2 3:1 4:21 5:5,9,10 6:17 7:7 14:8 15:23 16:7 32:1 37:18 38:14 40:8 43:17 44:9 44:12 47:18 49:3 50:7,15 52:17,20 53:2 56:17 57:5 58:1 58:4 62:10,15 65:17,22 66:4,9 66:15 69:14,23 71:6,22 72:5,10 75:11 76:16	79:2 82:4,18 83:10,14,23 84:10,15,20 85:7,16,19 86:2 86:9,13,22 87:2 <b>docile</b> 41:6 <b>docks</b> 9:9 <b>document</b> 45:3 45:23 46:21 <b>doe</b> 9:3 <b>dog</b> 10:10 29:6 30:21 31:1 41:15 53:11,13 53:14 54:2,19 54:23 55:14,15 58:20 60:2,4,5 60:13,17,21 61:5,6,11 62:20 63:2,8,12 65:6 65:14 66:22 69:19 70:5,6,10 70:16 71:20 72:23 76:21 77:15,21 85:13 <b>dogs</b> 42:15 53:12,13,13,16 54:7,14,22 55:22 56:3,4,22 60:21 61:7 62:8 65:12 68:22 69:1,19 70:23 71:9 73:8 78:1 <b>doing</b> 3:19 9:9 12:8,19 14:15 24:6 29:18 31:9
---	---	---	---

31:16 34:4 37:3 39:23 46:19 54:23 55:2 61:15 75:20 84:16 <b>dollar</b> 19:4,4,7,9 19:14,15 20:7 20:10 21:4 27:3 27:11,15,20 28:5 30:16 <b>dollars</b> 18:12,16 18:22 19:21 20:23 22:1,3 26:5,6 74:20 <b>donald</b> 72:11 <b>doors</b> 67:8 <b>dothan</b> 9:20 <b>double</b> 72:4 <b>dove</b> 10:5 12:5 <b>dr</b> 2:4 3:14 17:4 38:2 50:23 <b>dredged</b> 9:8 <b>drills</b> 25:5,16 <b>drive</b> 4:19 11:8 <b>driving</b> 29:7,13 <b>drought</b> 25:6 <b>drove</b> 75:5 <b>drum</b> 30:13 <b>duck</b> 12:14,15 13:1,4 <b>due</b> 25:5 <b>duggar</b> 1:7,21 <b>duties</b> 34:17 <b>duty</b> 15:10	<b>dwindling</b> 51:6 <b>dynamics</b> 60:7 <b>e</b> <b>e</b> 16:22 88:1,1 <b>eagle</b> 9:18 29:20 30:1 87:12 <b>earlier</b> 31:3 45:5 74:11 77:12 <b>early</b> 21:3 32:15 <b>easier</b> 44:5 <b>easily</b> 41:6 44:4 <b>east</b> 19:5 <b>eastern</b> 44:23 <b>easy</b> 37:14 61:14 <b>economic</b> 42:17 42:18 43:1 <b>ecopark</b> 73:20 <b>ecotourism</b> 19:15 <b>ed</b> 14:11 <b>edge</b> 26:12 <b>educated</b> 8:12 <b>education</b> 5:15 6:5 31:23 49:17 <b>effort</b> 55:16 63:3 <b>either</b> 26:8 33:1 54:21 <b>eleven</b> 28:5 <b>enactment</b> 15:10,17 <b>encountered</b> 65:6	<b>encourage</b> 47:9 <b>encroachments</b> 65:13 <b>endangered</b> 34:21 <b>endeavor</b> 15:11 <b>enduring</b> 33:18 <b>enforcement</b> 5:1 34:16,19 35:4,6 35:11,18 40:22 42:5 59:19 69:21 70:4 <b>enforcing</b> 41:23 <b>engage</b> 39:12 <b>engineering</b> 20:13 <b>enhance</b> 17:16 <b>enhanced</b> 32:22 33:1,2 <b>enhancement</b> 19:8 <b>enjoy</b> 20:1 42:18 56:7 74:14 87:11 <b>enjoyed</b> 56:4 <b>entire</b> 43:6 <b>entirely</b> 42:11 <b>environment</b> 41:19 <b>environmental</b> 28:14 <b>equal</b> 68:10 <b>erosion</b> 80:10 <b>essential</b> 34:20	<b>established</b> 35:2 <b>ethic</b> 31:22 <b>evenings</b> 29:9 29:15 <b>event</b> 10:18,19 10:23 11:2,3,4,6 29:1 32:13 <b>events</b> 30:21 <b>everybody</b> 3:3,9 10:1,12 11:12 16:17 59:11 60:15 <b>ex</b> 2:3,4 <b>exact</b> 53:18 <b>exactly</b> 53:17 <b>example</b> 62:3 <b>examples</b> 38:3 <b>exceeds</b> 67:14 <b>excellent</b> 37:23 41:7 <b>excess</b> 63:13 <b>excise</b> 23:16 <b>excited</b> 22:5 <b>excuse</b> 41:1 <b>executive</b> 3:15 <b>existing</b> 30:20 <b>exotic</b> 41:11 42:21 <b>expanding</b> 30:18 <b>expansion</b> 23:7 26:23 27:18 <b>experience</b> 44:6 <b>expires</b> 88:21,22
--	---	--	--



<p><b>express</b> 51:5  <b>extend</b> 12:23  15:11 53:5  <b>extension</b> 2:5  3:15 11:12  <b>extraordinary</b>  35:16  <b>extremely</b> 36:14  <b>eye</b> 23:14</p>	<p><b>farmers</b> 8:9  9:21 24:12  <b>fast</b> 81:18  <b>father</b> 4:5,11  <b>favor</b> 85:1  <b>fda</b> 81:2  <b>feather</b> 15:20  <b>february</b> 1:9,22  19:22  <b>federal</b> 12:23  13:5 35:7,21  45:16,18,19  <b>federation</b> 8:9  32:20 33:21  <b>feeble</b> 11:1  <b>feed</b> 23:17  <b>feel</b> 15:15 24:4  25:13 51:19  62:7 74:21  <b>fees</b> 83:18 84:4  <b>feet</b> 81:2  <b>fellow</b> 3:18  <b>fence</b> 63:13  <b>feral</b> 14:1  <b>festivals</b> 42:19  <b>field</b> 9:21 30:15  30:19  <b>fielded</b> 10:3  <b>fifteen</b> 22:3 48:5  68:12 80:20  81:17  <b>fifty</b> 18:22 26:6  27:2  <b>fight</b> 4:9</p>	<p><b>fighting</b> 37:6  <b>fills</b> 23:2  <b>fin</b> 15:19  <b>finally</b> 51:23  78:3,7  <b>finance</b> 21:19  <b>fincher</b> 58:6,21  62:14,16,18  <b>find</b> 37:11 47:9  59:7,23 71:11  <b>finding</b> 17:10  <b>finds</b> 70:10  <b>fine</b> 43:18  <b>finish</b> 22:5  56:17  <b>finished</b> 76:7  <b>firearm</b> 51:16  <b>firearms</b> 51:13  52:4  <b>fires</b> 33:5  <b>first</b> 3:5 10:10  19:16,23 34:16  39:17 40:2 45:3  46:1 53:4  <b>fish</b> 15:22 34:2  34:13 35:2  37:10  <b>fisher</b> 36:19  <b>fisheries</b> 22:11  24:13 33:4,16  38:16  <b>fisherman</b> 47:22  <b>fishery</b> 48:2,11  48:14</p>	<p><b>fishing</b> 9:5 11:8  12:4 23:4 32:9  49:21  <b>fist</b> 37:6  <b>five</b> 13:8 18:15  21:4 29:20  30:21 31:7  42:13 63:14  64:18  <b>flat</b> 13:23  <b>floods</b> 25:9  <b>floor</b> 39:10  <b>florida</b> 34:15  78:7,8,11,20  <b>fluctuation</b> 49:7  <b>fly</b> 47:22  <b>flying</b> 55:23  <b>focus</b> 21:22 64:6  <b>focuses</b> 35:5  <b>folks</b> 8:4 10:4  16:17 37:16  38:19,20 54:9  54:11 59:22,22  78:1,20  <b>follow</b> 50:3  <b>followed</b> 46:14  <b>following</b> 40:15  <b>food</b> 56:15,20  <b>foot</b> 29:20  <b>force</b> 6:12  <b>foregoing</b> 88:7  88:10  <b>foreign</b> 41:12  <b>forensics</b> 35:19</p>
<b>f</b>			
<p><b>f</b> 88:1  <b>facilities</b> 11:17  22:14  <b>facility</b> 20:5  26:17 28:1  29:13,15 30:17  30:22 31:2  <b>facing</b> 64:21  <b>fact</b> 45:9  <b>factor</b> 7:17 81:4  <b>faded</b> 41:17  <b>failed</b> 45:21  <b>fair</b> 3:21 67:23  69:5  <b>fairly</b> 17:22  <b>fall</b> 9:19 25:7,22  77:5  <b>familiar</b> 62:23  <b>families</b> 20:1  <b>family</b> 6:9  <b>fantastic</b> 73:7  <b>far</b> 7:8,22 9:5  13:12 29:19  38:4,5 40:20  50:6 59:16 81:4</p>			

<b>forest</b> 7:19 57:17 58:12 60:8 64:9,12,15 64:16,17 65:7 77:3 85:10,13 <b>forever</b> 30:15 33:6 <b>fork</b> 48:2 49:20 <b>former</b> 32:4 <b>formerly</b> 9:16 <b>forth</b> 77:17 <b>fortunately</b> 78:17 <b>forty</b> 21:4 42:13 <b>forward</b> 11:2 18:20 21:9 25:18 38:5 76:5 <b>forwarded</b> 8:5 <b>found</b> 78:8,17 <b>foundation</b> 10:14 34:14 35:2 49:16 <b>four</b> 19:1 20:14 27:14 81:1,3 <b>fourteen</b> 20:7 <b>fowl</b> 82:13 <b>fox</b> 40:17 <b>framework</b> 12:23 13:6 <b>franklin</b> 67:1 68:23 <b>freedoms</b> 43:8 <b>freeman</b> 63:10 <b>frequently</b> 80:3 80:4	<b>freshwater</b> 22:10 24:13 25:9 33:4,15 38:15 <b>friend</b> 6:2 <b>friends</b> 6:9 20:1 44:8 <b>front</b> 29:23 78:6 86:5 <b>full</b> 5:3 11:9 13:5,14 25:21 52:1 <b>fund</b> 24:3 <b>funded</b> 29:20 82:9 <b>funding</b> 18:14 22:17 37:11 <b>funds</b> 27:22 31:10 73:18 <b>fur</b> 15:19 42:22 <b>further</b> 57:11 86:11 88:13 <b>futral</b> 5:14 31:19 53:7 <b>future</b> 11:5 50:4 68:6 <b>fwc</b> 78:11	<b>games</b> 17:8 <b>gas</b> 21:7 31:6,15 <b>general</b> 42:19 52:2 60:4 <b>generally</b> 44:4 <b>generate</b> 64:9 <b>generated</b> 64:15 <b>generations</b> 68:6 <b>geneva</b> 77:2 <b>gentlemen</b> 66:11 <b>germany</b> 64:11 <b>getting</b> 76:5 <b>give</b> 3:11 5:2 7:10 16:21 17:19 34:10 36:18 64:19 67:10 69:13,21 <b>given</b> 18:8 44:3 61:20 <b>giving</b> 52:10 <b>glad</b> 3:4 11:13 22:19 66:12 72:2 73:4 80:17 82:19 <b>glenwood</b> 40:12 <b>go</b> 3:2 4:12 5:17 9:7 11:7 38:1,7 40:4 45:8 48:5,8 50:22 55:6 59:6 59:23 62:4,5 67:2 <b>goal</b> 50:3 73:3	<b>goals</b> 35:6 <b>godwin</b> 51:1 <b>goes</b> 13:13 24:2 59:16 70:10 71:12 <b>going</b> 3:3,23 4:1 7:1,2,7 8:1 11:3 13:3 14:2 15:2,5 17:7,19 23:1 27:8 31:19 36:5 36:8,15 39:3,5,8 39:10,17 40:1,5 52:12 54:7 61:7 62:14 65:5 69:12 71:11 72:8 73:22 75:6 75:18 76:14 77:13 78:4 81:14 84:1 86:16 <b>golf</b> 27:1,12 29:12 <b>gomesa</b> 20:23 31:10 73:16 82:9 <b>good</b> 3:10,22 7:13,16 9:15 10:8 11:10,11 11:21 12:15 18:8 24:3 25:8 25:19 26:19 33:8 34:7 40:10 41:2 43:16 50:14,15 53:1,2 53:20 73:9,19
	<b>g</b>		
	<b>gain</b> 45:14 47:15 <b>game</b> 11:5 15:22 34:15,22 37:10 58:17 59:20 68:19 69:18 70:6		

<p>73:22 75:2,22 75:23 76:18 79:12,13 81:22 82:15 <b>gotten</b> 10:23 <b>government</b> 43:7 <b>governor</b> 20:22 <b>governor's</b> 21:9 <b>gps</b> 85:14 <b>grade</b> 86:19 <b>grady</b> 2:7 10:8 73:2,5 80:1 <b>grant</b> 73:16 <b>granting</b> 67:21 <b>gratify</b> 15:20 <b>gray</b> 40:17 52:23 53:1,3,4 56:19 57:6,12 57:18 61:12 63:21 <b>gray's</b> 60:3 <b>great</b> 3:12,19 4:8 10:19,19,19 12:8,19 17:13 23:1 25:7 28:16 29:19 30:2,4 31:18 33:2,13 33:13 38:3 48:20 67:9 77:4 87:12 <b>greater</b> 81:4 <b>greatest</b> 45:11 47:15</p>	<p><b>greensboro</b> 30:16 <b>greg</b> 2:8 3:23 7:21 24:8 38:16 <b>ground</b> 24:3 39:4 <b>grounds</b> 20:18 <b>group</b> 59:23 <b>growing</b> 20:20 20:21 82:16 <b>guard</b> 5:2,4 80:23 <b>guardian</b> 15:8 <b>guess</b> 23:23 40:4 74:8 <b>guide</b> 17:1 <b>gulf</b> 19:1,2,18 20:2,5 26:22 29:18 31:8 <b>gun</b> 51:16 <b>gunnison</b> 76:12 <b>guns</b> 23:17 24:1 <b>guntersville</b> 27:12 29:21 30:2 <b>guy</b> 34:14,15 35:1,15 36:22 58:12 65:8 <b>guys</b> 16:18 37:17 58:18 59:5 61:9,16,17 61:19 65:16</p>	<p><b>h</b> <b>h</b> 15:21 <b>habitat</b> 19:8,11 32:22 33:1 81:6 <b>half</b> 27:20 42:14 63:15 81:2,3 <b>hampered</b> 56:21 <b>hand</b> 85:2 <b>handle</b> 21:16 <b>handled</b> 10:1 <b>handler</b> 53:13 <b>handout</b> 51:10 <b>hands</b> 15:18 <b>happen</b> 13:3 54:12 <b>happened</b> 17:20 68:7 70:20 <b>happening</b> 18:2 57:15 <b>happens</b> 56:7 <b>happy</b> 3:6 10:2 10:12 34:13 44:10 78:23 <b>hard</b> 14:11 55:23 56:6,12 <b>harris</b> 80:4 <b>hartzog</b> 2:7 10:8 10:9 80:1 83:9 83:11,12,15 <b>harvest</b> 8:21 25:14 26:18 <b>harvested</b> 25:13 <b>head</b> 5:15 <b>hear</b> 7:23 12:20 40:9 54:19,21</p>	<p>54:23 62:15,16 80:17 <b>heard</b> 13:4 29:11 41:3 60:5 66:19 67:3 80:22 81:16 <b>heath</b> 36:19 <b>heavenly</b> 4:5,11 <b>held</b> 30:21 84:13 <b>help</b> 4:13 8:14 9:6 11:1,14 20:17 23:18 24:21 49:8 52:12 59:20 77:18 <b>helped</b> 33:11 48:15,21 <b>helping</b> 6:19 11:17 22:20 49:12 <b>helps</b> 79:10 <b>heritage</b> 56:2,7 <b>higher</b> 42:12 49:17 <b>highly</b> 77:5 <b>hiking</b> 74:12 <b>hodes</b> 66:23 <b>hogs</b> 14:1 <b>holding</b> 40:5 <b>holmes</b> 78:9 <b>home</b> 4:19 41:18 87:10 <b>homes</b> 42:6 82:14</p>
--	---	---	---

<p><b>honey</b> 81:12  <b>honor</b> 5:1,4          6:12 35:1 57:4  <b>honored</b> 4:23  <b>hope</b> 11:20 20:8          29:1 30:23 47:7          50:5 77:18          81:21  <b>hopefully</b> 14:2          25:23 26:15          34:8 50:2  <b>hoping</b> 25:1          52:9  <b>horizon</b> 18:14          27:22 82:10  <b>hospitality</b>          75:15  <b>host</b> 23:4 30:23  <b>hosting</b> 17:5  <b>hotel</b> 26:11,12          27:17  <b>house</b> 27:16          28:18 31:4  <b>human</b> 21:19  <b>hundred</b> 10:16          10:17 18:16,22          26:4 32:23 41:9          63:14 74:20          80:14  <b>hundreds</b> 29:23  <b>hunt</b> 8:4 10:15          23:11 52:3 54:4          54:14,16 56:21          56:23 68:10          73:11</p>	<p><b>hunter</b> 5:15 6:4          31:23  <b>hunters</b> 13:4          33:13 51:4,15          51:16,19 52:1,3          52:6,13,13          54:20,21,23          55:8,9,10,14,15          55:20 58:20          60:13,18,21          61:6,7 63:2,8,12          68:6 73:9 76:21  <b>hunting</b> 12:16          13:23 14:5          24:20 32:8 51:7          51:12,15,18          52:2,4,6,11          53:11 54:2          55:20,21 56:3,4          61:9,20 62:20          66:22,23 67:14          68:17,20 69:1,9          69:18,19 70:5          70:16 71:17          72:23 85:13  <b>hunts</b> 51:17,21          55:20,22 77:2,4  <b>huntsville</b> 44:16  <b>hurricane</b> 19:19          20:6  <b>husband</b> 53:4</p>	<p><b>illegal</b> 69:9,20          72:7,7,7 77:21  <b>impacts</b> 76:3  <b>important</b> 14:21          14:22,23 20:16          38:21,21 39:2  <b>impossible</b> 42:1          54:18  <b>impressed</b> 11:16          63:12  <b>improve</b> 77:18  <b>improvements</b>          23:9 26:7 28:2  <b>improving</b> 6:4  <b>inclination</b>          15:15  <b>included</b> 45:5          46:22  <b>includes</b> 13:20  <b>including</b> 45:12          46:3 68:22  <b>income</b> 26:5          29:8  <b>increase</b> 8:21          26:1  <b>increased</b> 62:21          81:13  <b>increasing</b>          23:21 81:19  <b>incredible</b> 36:20  <b>incremental</b>          83:20 84:6  <b>index</b> 83:21          84:7</p>	<p><b>indicating</b> 58:8  <b>individuals</b>          15:14 35:3,17  <b>industrial</b> 19:9          19:11  <b>industry</b> 9:5          20:17,19  <b>infested</b> 75:3  <b>information</b>          27:4 47:4 53:9          75:23 83:3  <b>inhabit</b> 45:12  <b>initiatives</b> 35:12          37:9  <b>innovative</b>          35:11  <b>inspiration</b> 6:5  <b>instances</b> 70:18  <b>instincts</b> 15:20  <b>interest</b> 21:11          23:10  <b>interested</b> 88:16  <b>interferes</b> 54:16  <b>interior</b> 21:7  <b>international</b>          31:1  <b>introduce</b> 38:14  <b>intrusion</b> 56:13  <b>investigative</b>          35:19  <b>investment</b> 24:4          30:17  <b>invite</b> 5:20 6:9          79:17</p>
	<b>i</b>		
	<p><b>idea</b> 77:15  <b>identified</b> 64:8</p>		

<p><b>invited</b> 29:3 79:20 <b>inviting</b> 31:13 <b>invocation</b> 4:2 <b>island</b> 19:5,7,15 19:17 <b>issue</b> 13:12 56:4 60:6 61:10,10 77:19 78:21 84:13 <b>issued</b> 47:2 <b>issues</b> 7:18 9:22 9:22 12:4,18 16:20 25:5 37:10 54:1 58:11 60:3 <b>issuing</b> 40:21 <b>ivey</b> 20:22 <b>ivy</b> 62:3,4 63:20</p>	<p><b>job</b> 3:19 12:8,20 50:21 52:1 <b>joe</b> 28:7,9,12 <b>john</b> 15:21 <b>johnny</b> 11:2 80:4 <b>join</b> 6:10 <b>jonathan</b> 36:20 <b>jones</b> 2:10,12 4:2,4,22 6:19 12:10,10 13:17 13:17 15:2,6 39:19 43:21 44:1 56:16 84:9 86:12,13,15,21 <b>joseph</b> 2:2 <b>joy</b> 64:11 <b>jr</b> 2:2,7,12 15:22 <b>july</b> 20:23 <b>june</b> 78:8</p>	<p><b>kids</b> 10:16 <b>kill</b> 13:7 80:13 <b>killed</b> 34:16 42:6 70:15 <b>killing</b> 71:1 <b>kind</b> 7:1,16 8:12 9:21 13:9 18:6 18:11 23:14 37:12 58:19 64:19 74:2 <b>kindness</b> 43:6 <b>knew</b> 37:1 <b>know</b> 7:23 11:23 13:1 15:4 17:21 23:22 32:7 37:11 38:15 42:1,7,21 47:7 52:5,6,9,10 52:10,12 54:22 55:15 59:9,9,10 59:12 60:1,8 61:2,3,10 62:8 67:11,14 70:20 71:9,10,18 76:7 78:9,13,14,18 <b>known</b> 6:3 12:15 44:21 85:2 <b>kott</b> 10:22 <b>koty</b> 8:1 57:21 66:17 69:14 71:22 72:5</p>	<p><b>l</b> <b>la</b> 20:11 80:19 82:8,12 <b>labor</b> 63:14 <b>lack</b> 47:4 <b>lady</b> 10:22 <b>lake</b> 20:2 26:21 30:2 64:10 <b>lakepoint</b> 28:22 29:1 <b>land</b> 54:5 56:9 56:11 59:10,11 60:17 62:1,6 78:1 81:5 <b>landowner</b> 66:2 <b>landowners</b> 24:11,12 53:19 53:22 54:3 55:4 55:5 <b>lands</b> 22:11 33:6 38:17 62:20,21 64:16 <b>landscaping</b> 9:10 <b>lane</b> 76:17,20 79:4 <b>large</b> 1:19 <b>larger</b> 21:16 <b>largest</b> 23:12,19 26:10 76:12 <b>lasting</b> 35:11 <b>late</b> 25:6 <b>launches</b> 74:11 <b>launching</b> 74:12</p>
<p><b>j</b></p>	<p><b>k</b></p>		
<p><b>j</b> 2:4 <b>jack</b> 32:4 <b>jack's</b> 76:6,8,10 <b>jackson</b> 47:22 47:23,23 49:4 <b>january</b> 13:1 <b>jasper</b> 49:14 <b>jeff</b> 2:9 7:12,15 58:22 62:11 66:10,14 <b>jefferson</b> 13:21 88:4 <b>jerry</b> 31:13 58:6 58:7</p>	<p><b>karen</b> 36:19 <b>kayak</b> 74:8,12 <b>keep</b> 4:19 14:9 52:11,13 68:12 82:3 <b>keeping</b> 6:20,21 14:16 <b>keeps</b> 14:23 39:19 <b>kennedy</b> 49:14 <b>kennedy's</b> 50:3 <b>kept</b> 41:18 <b>kevin</b> 2:6 9:15</p>		

<p><b>law</b> 34:16,19 35:4,6,18 40:19 42:2,9 59:19 60:5 69:21</p> <p><b>lawler</b> 32:7</p> <p><b>laws</b> 15:17 46:13</p> <p><b>lay</b> 39:3</p> <p><b>lead</b> 5:6</p> <p><b>leader</b> 11:19</p> <p><b>leaders</b> 77:8,10</p> <p><b>leaning</b> 38:5</p> <p><b>lease</b> 31:8</p> <p><b>leases</b> 24:20 52:7</p> <p><b>leash</b> 60:4</p> <p><b>leasing</b> 31:6</p> <p><b>lee</b> 30:3</p> <p><b>legal</b> 40:19 41:11 42:18 44:7 71:2 85:11</p> <p><b>legalities</b> 69:17</p> <p><b>legislation</b> 15:11</p> <p><b>legislature</b> 14:12,18 18:7 77:17</p> <p><b>lein</b> 38:16</p> <p><b>length</b> 43:11</p> <p><b>letter</b> 40:18 45:4</p> <p><b>letters</b> 10:4 54:6</p> <p><b>level</b> 34:5 45:16 45:18</p> <p><b>licenses</b> 83:18 84:4</p>	<p><b>life</b> 5:20,21 6:1 32:13 66:19</p> <p><b>lifetime</b> 35:17</p> <p><b>lifted</b> 41:5</p> <p><b>lighted</b> 29:8</p> <p><b>lights</b> 29:13</p> <p><b>likely</b> 21:4 41:13,19</p> <p><b>limited</b> 43:3</p> <p><b>limits</b> 86:5,7</p> <p><b>line</b> 14:16 35:9 78:10,15</p> <p><b>lines</b> 54:22</p> <p><b>lions</b> 11:4</p> <p><b>list</b> 17:22 18:1,1 27:8 40:16</p> <p><b>listed</b> 45:17</p> <p><b>listen</b> 61:21</p> <p><b>listening</b> 49:11</p> <p><b>little</b> 23:22 25:22 27:4 29:16 56:8,10 75:5 80:16</p> <p><b>live</b> 70:7</p> <p><b>lives</b> 5:23 35:9</p> <p><b>local</b> 55:9</p> <p><b>locate</b> 71:14</p> <p><b>located</b> 64:13 67:1</p> <p><b>location</b> 59:7 87:7</p> <p><b>lodge</b> 26:11 28:7 28:21 29:18</p> <p><b>logical</b> 67:19 69:13</p>	<p><b>long</b> 17:22 18:1 31:23 35:11 41:17</p> <p><b>longleaf</b> 26:19</p> <p><b>lonnie</b> 57:9 58:5 58:13 62:11,19 66:14</p> <p><b>look</b> 49:5 51:9 60:12 61:18,21 68:2,16 75:5,17 76:5</p> <p><b>looking</b> 49:8 67:18</p> <p><b>looks</b> 17:8</p> <p><b>looney</b> 36:19</p> <p><b>loose</b> 60:18,22 61:6 70:7 71:9</p> <p><b>lord</b> 3:20 6:12</p> <p><b>loss</b> 31:18 53:8</p> <p><b>lost</b> 72:18</p> <p><b>lot</b> 5:16 7:14,23 11:9 12:3 13:4 17:6,9 21:16,17 22:21 37:6 44:4 44:5 56:14,20 62:22 73:19,22 74:10,22 78:16 80:5 82:13</p> <p><b>loud</b> 79:8 84:15</p> <p><b>love</b> 43:3 53:13 63:22</p> <p><b>loveliest</b> 3:13</p> <p><b>loving</b> 5:22 42:6</p> <p><b>lump</b> 65:15</p>	<p><b>lurleen</b> 26:21</p> <hr/> <p><b>m</b></p> <hr/> <p><b>m</b> 2:3</p> <p><b>made</b> 18:18 34:9 35:17 84:18 86:16</p> <p><b>madison</b> 44:17</p> <p><b>mail</b> 16:22</p> <p><b>mailing</b> 16:23</p> <p><b>major</b> 9:10</p> <p><b>make</b> 15:15 25:14 29:3 32:16 34:8 37:7 46:13 55:16,17 72:6 77:13 78:2 78:5 83:13,21 85:12</p> <p><b>makes</b> 37:13</p> <p><b>making</b> 20:12 24:4 30:16 63:2 85:11</p> <p><b>manage</b> 4:13 23:18 24:19</p> <p><b>management</b> 12:18 24:10 28:14 46:7 51:8 75:20 78:11</p> <p><b>manager</b> 33:18</p> <p><b>managing</b> 34:22 45:20 50:21</p> <p><b>mandatory</b> 85:12,12</p> <p><b>march</b> 6:10 79:17 81:22</p>
---	--	--	---

<b>marina</b> 9:8 <b>marine</b> 22:12 38:18 <b>marisa</b> 5:14,20 5:22 6:3,12 31:18 53:7 <b>marketing</b> 30:10,11 <b>marsh</b> 19:10,10 <b>martha</b> 63:5 <b>martin</b> 2:9 7:12 7:12,15 57:7,8 57:23 58:1,2,5 58:10 61:16 62:13 65:16 66:7 85:6,7,8,17 85:20 <b>mass</b> 26:13 <b>massive</b> 80:9 <b>mast</b> 13:10 <b>matt</b> 36:21 49:1 85:10 <b>matter</b> 45:10 47:17 <b>matthew</b> 3:18 <b>mayor</b> 75:11,15 76:16 <b>mccarley</b> 57:22 58:8 66:17,18 71:5,8,16,23 72:9 <b>mccullers</b> 6:18 <b>mccurdy</b> 38:17 74:6	<b>mcleod</b> 33:17 <b>meaher</b> 27:17 <b>mean</b> 12:4 60:6 61:4 <b>means</b> 21:15 45:18 46:2 68:18 81:14 88:9 <b>measures</b> 46:6 46:15 <b>meat</b> 42:22 <b>media</b> 24:16 29:22 <b>meet</b> 4:7,19 79:14 <b>meeting</b> 1:3 3:5 3:10,22 4:15,17 5:2 6:22 7:20 16:9 25:23 26:3 27:5 30:17 32:2 54:1 57:10 63:4 63:6,6,23 78:5 78:20 82:21 86:8,17 87:8 <b>meetings</b> 48:4 80:21 <b>meets</b> 67:14 <b>member</b> 32:5 <b>members</b> 2:1 7:8 31:11 36:11 39:9 49:16 57:3 67:20 77:3 <b>mention</b> 67:4 <b>mentioned</b> 22:16 24:8 37:5	77:11 <b>mentor</b> 6:5 <b>mentored</b> 5:17 <b>mess</b> 60:15 <b>message</b> 55:11 <b>messages</b> 55:19 59:17 <b>met</b> 8:8 17:21 75:19 <b>mexico</b> 31:8 <b>michael</b> 70:3 <b>microphone</b> 39:18 40:9 <b>middle</b> 74:9 <b>mike</b> 2:4 3:14 58:12 60:9 <b>miles</b> 20:14 28:12 78:10 81:3 <b>military</b> 53:14 <b>miller</b> 57:9 58:5 58:22 61:18 <b>million</b> 18:16,22 19:3,4,6,8,14,15 19:21 20:7,10 20:23 21:4 22:1 22:3 26:4,6 27:2 27:11,14,20 28:5 30:16 74:19 <b>mind</b> 7:9 58:10 68:13 <b>minimum</b> 76:13 <b>minutes</b> 16:9,12 16:14 39:20	<b>missed</b> 32:12 <b>missing</b> 42:17 <b>mission</b> 35:7 <b>mitigate</b> 48:21 <b>mobile</b> 11:22 18:13 19:13 21:1 73:23 76:13 82:12 <b>modern</b> 29:5 <b>modernization</b> 28:22 <b>modified</b> 28:15 <b>moment</b> 5:19 6:18 14:10 69:15 <b>monetary</b> 45:14 47:15 <b>money</b> 21:17 56:14,20 63:15 <b>monitored</b> 80:2 <b>monte</b> 27:23 <b>montgomery</b> 79:19 <b>month</b> 51:13,19 52:3 <b>months</b> 19:1 73:17 75:16 <b>morning</b> 3:2 5:13 9:15 10:8 11:7,11,21 40:11 50:14,15 53:1,2 61:8,9 72:20,22 73:15 75:4 76:18 79:12 86:6
---	---	--	---

<p><b>mortality</b> 25:15  <b>motion</b> 83:13,15  83:22 84:1,2,22  85:1  <b>mountain</b> 27:9  29:7 60:18 62:3  62:4 63:20  64:11  <b>mouth</b> 80:18  <b>move</b> 16:14  18:19 20:14  81:1 82:20 83:8  <b>moved</b> 21:13  <b>moving</b> 21:9  <b>multiple</b> 22:17  29:5  <b>mumford</b> 60:12  64:10</p>	<p><b>nationally</b> 6:3  38:2  <b>native</b> 40:13  42:16,20 43:4  <b>natural</b> 1:2 4:8  11:19 15:13  17:13 21:13  31:4 50:20,22  54:16 84:5  <b>nature's</b> 15:15  <b>navigable</b> 22:8  <b>nearly</b> 13:19  54:18  <b>neat</b> 48:8  <b>necessarily</b>  23:11  <b>need</b> 16:18 23:2  31:7 43:7 47:15  81:23  <b>needed</b> 23:5  25:13  <b>negative</b> 42:8  <b>neighbors</b> 60:14  <b>neither</b> 40:21  88:14  <b>nelson</b> 72:11,13  74:7 76:9  <b>nervous</b> 43:13  <b>nevada</b> 55:7  <b>never</b> 42:9  54:12  <b>new</b> 9:9,16 18:4  20:2 21:10,22  25:17 26:11,12  28:4,18 29:4</p>	<p>30:22 37:11  67:5 75:17 83:8  83:12 85:4 87:3  <b>news</b> 5:13  <b>night</b> 8:4 14:5  <b>nine</b> 6:21 19:20  39:4  <b>nineteen</b> 20:10  64:14  <b>nixon</b> 60:20  <b>nomination</b>  36:13,16,21  <b>non</b> 69:19  <b>north</b> 12:11,15  78:7,8 80:9  <b>notary</b> 88:22  <b>notice</b> 47:3  68:17 72:14  <b>nuisance</b> 55:10  <b>number</b> 12:22  35:13 51:7 59:2  81:19  <b>numbers</b> 9:3  16:22 42:10  <b>numerous</b> 10:3  10:4  <b>nwtf</b> 33:3,11</p>	<p><b>occupies</b> 15:8  <b>offer</b> 32:12  63:17  <b>offered</b> 63:13  <b>office</b> 21:9  <b>officer</b> 34:16  60:19 65:2  <b>officers</b> 4:12 5:1  35:9 73:2 77:7  77:20  <b>officio</b> 2:3,4  <b>offset</b> 48:22  <b>offshore</b> 20:15  21:7 31:5,15  <b>oil</b> 18:14 21:7  31:6,15  <b>okay</b> 6:17 43:17  47:20 53:11  56:19 57:5  85:16 86:21  <b>old</b> 11:22 12:3  26:23 61:14  <b>once</b> 20:21 21:8  41:17 72:20  73:17 75:10  77:1,17  <b>ones</b> 43:21  61:15  <b>ongoing</b> 17:23  <b>open</b> 19:21 20:8  20:20 67:8  76:10  <b>opening</b> 20:19  23:15</p>
<b>n</b>			
<p><b>name</b> 4:20  40:11 44:15  50:16  <b>named</b> 58:12  <b>nashville</b> 32:20  <b>nathan</b> 50:12,16  52:21  <b>nation's</b> 34:18  <b>national</b> 7:19  31:1 32:19  33:21 34:1,5,13  35:1,3 36:6  57:16 58:12  60:8 64:9,12,15  65:7 83:19 85:9  85:13</p>		<b>o</b>	
		<p><b>oak</b> 27:9 29:7  <b>observe</b> 65:5  <b>obtain</b> 44:5  <b>obtained</b> 40:20  <b>obviously</b> 36:23  <b>occasions</b> 58:14</p>	



<p><b>opp</b> 45:1,21 46:4 47:2</p> <p><b>opportunities</b> 24:7 42:18 74:10</p> <p><b>opportunity</b> 31:4 35:8 42:23 44:18 50:18 52:8 68:10 72:21 74:14 75:9</p> <p><b>orange</b> 19:2</p> <p><b>order</b> 38:23 48:6</p> <p><b>organization</b> 11:16 46:12</p> <p><b>organization's</b> 51:6</p> <p><b>organizations</b> 35:15 45:19</p> <p><b>orlando</b> 44:6</p> <p><b>ought</b> 39:22</p> <p><b>outdoors</b> 30:6</p> <p><b>outfall</b> 20:11,14 20:21</p> <p><b>outstanding</b> 8:19,22 35:17</p> <p><b>overall</b> 10:7 25:4 53:18</p> <p><b>overboard</b> 81:15</p> <p><b>overlooks</b> 69:2 69:9</p> <p><b>own</b> 24:20 35:23 43:5</p>	<p>56:11</p> <p><b>owner</b> 55:2</p> <p><b>owners</b> 40:13 42:3 54:5 56:9</p> <p><b>oyster</b> 20:17,18 25:3,5,16 82:15</p> <p><b>oystering</b> 81:6</p> <p><b>oysters</b> 12:4 25:8,17 80:3,4 80:12,13,16</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>p</b></p> <p><b>package</b> 74:22</p> <p><b>packet</b> 36:16,17 45:4,6 55:13 68:14</p> <p><b>packets</b> 86:4</p> <p><b>paddock</b> 30:18</p> <p><b>page</b> 46:1 51:9 53:10 68:14 86:5,7</p> <p><b>paid</b> 27:21</p> <p><b>paige</b> 59:21 60:23</p> <p><b>paper</b> 46:10</p> <p><b>parc</b> 44:19</p> <p><b>parents</b> 10:17 17:8</p> <p><b>park</b> 11:8 19:2 19:13,18 20:3,6 26:21,22 27:9 27:16 28:7,12 28:17,22 29:8 29:18,21 30:1</p> <p><b>parking</b> 11:9 20:4 37:6</p>	<p><b>parks</b> 22:13 26:5,6,8 29:5,6 30:12,14 33:5 38:16</p> <p><b>part</b> 5:19 8:20 23:3,5,23 32:11 55:9 64:11</p> <p><b>partial</b> 44:2</p> <p><b>participate</b> 51:20</p> <p><b>participating</b> 79:20</p> <p><b>parties</b> 88:15</p> <p><b>partners</b> 22:19 30:4 33:12 44:20</p> <p><b>partnership</b> 28:16 30:3</p> <p><b>partnerships</b> 33:2</p> <p><b>pass</b> 48:12</p> <p><b>passing</b> 32:3 53:7</p> <p><b>passion</b> 6:4</p> <p><b>passionate</b> 5:22</p> <p><b>past</b> 56:10 64:23 67:3 77:5</p> <p><b>pat</b> 10:19,22</p> <p><b>path</b> 27:13</p> <p><b>patrol</b> 61:20</p> <p><b>patti</b> 38:16 74:4</p> <p><b>paul</b> 49:14</p> <p><b>paved</b> 28:11</p> <p><b>pavilion</b> 30:18</p>	<p><b>paving</b> 28:13</p> <p><b>pay</b> 86:18</p> <p><b>people</b> 15:13 17:13 18:7 23:16 24:1,1,7 24:17 25:1 29:14,17,23 30:13 37:4,12 59:14,15,19 60:14 61:12,13 62:4,22 63:1 64:4 65:1 72:1 81:19</p> <p><b>people's</b> 15:9</p> <p><b>percent</b> 8:21 13:8 80:15</p> <p><b>perfect</b> 64:23</p> <p><b>perform</b> 42:7</p> <p><b>performing</b> 34:17</p> <p><b>permit</b> 24:12 47:1,1,4 66:23 67:15</p> <p><b>permitting</b> 20:12</p> <p><b>person</b> 31:20 60:9</p> <p><b>personal</b> 56:3</p> <p><b>personally</b> 43:23 44:1 54:2</p> <p><b>perspective</b> 15:1</p> <p><b>pertains</b> 73:14</p> <p><b>pet</b> 41:11,14 42:3,16,19,21</p>
---	---	---	--

<p><b>petition</b> 40:14</p> <p><b>pets</b> 40:13 41:7 42:5</p> <p><b>phenomenal</b> 50:21</p> <p><b>phillips</b> 2:4 3:14 11:11 17:4 38:2</p> <p><b>phone</b> 16:22 59:2</p> <p><b>photo</b> 65:14</p> <p><b>picked</b> 11:9</p> <p><b>picking</b> 9:6 48:3</p> <p><b>picture</b> 53:18</p> <p><b>pictures</b> 29:23 65:11</p> <p><b>piece</b> 5:12,12</p> <p><b>pier</b> 20:6</p> <p><b>pike</b> 40:12</p> <p><b>pipeline</b> 80:18 81:10</p> <p><b>pittman</b> 23:12 24:2</p> <p><b>place</b> 24:21 26:8 77:2</p> <p><b>placed</b> 86:5</p> <p><b>places</b> 22:22 29:6 48:4,5,9</p> <p><b>plains</b> 3:14</p> <p><b>plan</b> 23:20 31:7 32:12 49:19 75:21</p> <p><b>planning</b> 50:3</p> <p><b>plant</b> 56:15,20</p> <p><b>playgrounds</b> 29:5</p>	<p><b>plea</b> 49:18</p> <p><b>please</b> 4:1,4 5:2 7:9 14:9 15:3 34:10 36:1 39:11 40:8 44:10 56:17,18 58:4 69:11,13 71:6,7 83:13 86:6</p> <p><b>pleasure</b> 79:5</p> <p><b>pledge</b> 5:6,8 14:21</p> <p><b>plugging</b> 9:13</p> <p><b>plus</b> 74:19</p> <p><b>podium</b> 39:6</p> <p><b>point</b> 33:22 56:5 56:18 61:5 65:20 71:15</p> <p><b>points</b> 77:12</p> <p><b>police</b> 73:12</p> <p><b>policies</b> 8:13</p> <p><b>policy</b> 47:11</p> <p><b>poll</b> 16:9</p> <p><b>pollution</b> 81:1</p> <p><b>pool</b> 27:16 28:8 28:17,18</p> <p><b>poolos</b> 14:11 22:20 29:11 49:5</p> <p><b>pop</b> 78:8</p> <p><b>pope</b> 30:10</p> <p><b>populations</b> 8:11</p> <p><b>portersville</b> 81:15</p>	<p><b>portion</b> 6:22 67:12 69:19</p> <p><b>positive</b> 32:19</p> <p><b>possess</b> 40:19</p> <p><b>possession</b> 40:16</p> <p><b>possible</b> 37:7 59:10 62:2</p> <p><b>possibly</b> 41:8</p> <p><b>possum</b> 40:17</p> <p><b>post</b> 55:13</p> <p><b>practice</b> 29:17 54:14</p> <p><b>pray</b> 4:20</p> <p><b>precedent</b> 67:22 68:1,2,5,9,13 69:3,7,9</p> <p><b>prefer</b> 43:22</p> <p><b>premiere</b> 33:20</p> <p><b>prepared</b> 43:10</p> <p><b>prescribed</b> 33:4</p> <p><b>present</b> 2:1 36:1</p> <p><b>presentation</b> 5:4 36:8</p> <p><b>presented</b> 35:14 35:20 68:14</p> <p><b>president</b> 34:1</p> <p><b>pressure</b> 62:21</p> <p><b>prestigious</b> 33:17 34:12</p> <p><b>pretty</b> 7:13,16 7:22 9:19 10:6,6 13:23 47:3 54:15 63:16</p>	<p><b>prevent</b> 42:3 73:3</p> <p><b>price</b> 83:21 84:7</p> <p><b>primarily</b> 33:3</p> <p><b>prime</b> 51:23</p> <p><b>private</b> 55:14 62:20 64:16 65:9,13 66:10</p> <p><b>privilege</b> 73:10</p> <p><b>pro</b> 27:13</p> <p><b>probably</b> 10:20 11:1,3 18:15 32:15 36:16 63:4 72:16,17 73:6 74:20 79:16</p> <p><b>problem</b> 14:2 41:11 48:13,16 48:19,21 59:12 60:1 61:14 63:3 64:1,21</p> <p><b>problems</b> 16:20 24:18 48:11 49:11,12 50:1 57:15 62:22 64:1 73:3 79:22 79:23 81:16</p> <p><b>proceedings</b> 1:13,17 87:14 87:17 88:7,8,12</p> <p><b>process</b> 26:2 71:12</p> <p><b>processors</b> 14:1</p> <p><b>produce</b> 29:8</p>
---	---	--	--

<p><b>productive</b> 33:17</p> <p><b>professionalism</b> 65:18</p> <p><b>program</b> 23:13 23:18,21 24:11</p> <p><b>programs</b> 24:21 25:2</p> <p><b>prohibited</b> 40:16 81:7,8</p> <p><b>project</b> 19:4,5,6 19:8,9,16 20:11 22:19,23 26:20 27:11,15,20 28:6,16 29:10 73:20</p> <p><b>projects</b> 17:23 18:2,12,16,19 18:23 20:23 21:1,2,10,17 22:1,4 26:5,10 27:1,6,7 33:5 73:20 82:8,11</p> <p><b>promised</b> 57:1</p> <p><b>promoted</b> 32:8</p> <p><b>promoting</b> 30:1 30:1</p> <p><b>proper</b> 80:7</p> <p><b>properties</b> 22:14 24:23 26:15,16 56:21 56:22 70:14</p> <p><b>property</b> 24:20 27:1 33:7 54:8 54:10,21,22</p>	<p>55:2,15,21 56:6 62:20 65:8,10 65:13 73:8</p> <p><b>proposal</b> 76:6</p> <p><b>proposing</b> 74:9</p> <p><b>prosecute</b> 70:22</p> <p><b>protect</b> 4:9 17:17 34:17 75:7</p> <p><b>protected</b> 15:16 77:23</p> <p><b>protecting</b> 74:23</p> <p><b>protection</b> 15:12 19:7,10</p> <p><b>proud</b> 7:4 12:6 33:22</p> <p><b>provide</b> 63:14</p> <p><b>provided</b> 45:23</p> <p><b>providing</b> 22:9 24:7 74:13</p> <p><b>public</b> 6:22 19:21 20:9,18 21:12 22:10 29:12 39:1,1 43:14 58:23 59:10,11 62:1,6 62:21 65:8 82:20,21 86:16</p> <p><b>pulled</b> 36:7</p> <p><b>punish</b> 61:15</p> <p><b>punishes</b> 68:5</p> <p><b>pursuant</b> 83:15 84:2</p>	<p><b>pursue</b> 68:18,18</p> <p><b>pursuing</b> 68:19 69:18 71:11,17</p> <p><b>pursuit</b> 70:11 71:15</p> <p><b>push</b> 24:16</p> <p><b>put</b> 6:19 9:9,22 11:2 24:3 29:13 35:9 37:16 38:19 58:22 61:16,18 77:17</p> <p><b>putting</b> 3:17 36:20 37:22</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>q</b></p> <p><b>qualified</b> 36:14</p> <p><b>question</b> 47:13 82:5 86:12,14</p> <p><b>questions</b> 43:10 43:19 44:9 47:8 47:18 50:8 52:16,18 57:7 67:17 79:1,2 81:23 84:11 86:22</p> <p><b>quick</b> 17:19 46:22</p> <p><b>quickly</b> 9:6 47:3</p> <p><b>quiet</b> 7:22 9:19 10:7,9,11</p> <p><b>quite</b> 12:15,17 44:3 80:3,4</p> <p><b>quorum</b> 16:3,6</p> <p><b>quota</b> 25:20 26:1</p>	<p><b>quote</b> 49:18</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>r</b></p> <p><b>r</b> 4:4 12:10 84:9 86:12,15,21 88:1</p> <p><b>rabies</b> 41:16 42:7,9,10,14</p> <p><b>raccoon</b> 40:16</p> <p><b>raccoons</b> 44:3</p> <p><b>raceway</b> 76:10</p> <p><b>raises</b> 47:13</p> <p><b>raising</b> 85:2</p> <p><b>ramifications</b> 85:11</p> <p><b>ramp</b> 22:17</p> <p><b>ran</b> 53:16</p> <p><b>randolph</b> 55:8</p> <p><b>range</b> 6:11 21:5 23:7 27:3 29:7 29:14</p> <p><b>rascal</b> 75:6</p> <p><b>rates</b> 42:12 49:7</p> <p><b>rather</b> 81:7</p> <p><b>rattlesnake</b> 44:23 45:1,21 46:3</p> <p><b>raymond</b> 2:12 4:2 12:10</p> <p><b>reach</b> 46:17</p> <p><b>reached</b> 59:1 77:8</p> <p><b>reaches</b> 59:3</p> <p><b>read</b> 5:19 15:3,4 15:5 84:1</p>
--	---	---	--

<p><b>ready</b> 28:9</p> <p><b>real</b> 10:9,23 37:13 60:14 74:17</p> <p><b>realize</b> 65:20</p> <p><b>realizing</b> 73:10</p> <p><b>really</b> 6:13 7:14 10:18,21 11:9 12:19 17:12 18:5 23:2 26:19 32:9,10 33:3,8 48:7,15,21 51:2 59:15</p> <p><b>reasonable</b> 51:21 67:19</p> <p><b>reasons</b> 41:2,4 54:5 72:16 73:6</p> <p><b>rebuild</b> 20:8 26:22</p> <p><b>rebuilt</b> 19:20 27:10</p> <p><b>recall</b> 19:19</p> <p><b>receive</b> 32:16 36:6 65:11</p> <p><b>received</b> 21:6 31:11 32:21 33:16 46:19 65:14,15 86:4</p> <p><b>receiving</b> 36:12</p> <p><b>recent</b> 32:19</p> <p><b>recently</b> 31:6 32:3</p> <p><b>recipient</b> 35:21 35:22 36:5,13 36:22</p>	<p><b>recipients</b> 35:14</p> <p><b>recitation</b> 5:8</p> <p><b>reckless</b> 15:18</p> <p><b>recognize</b> 32:18 35:3,8,16 53:8</p> <p><b>recognized</b> 21:15 33:10,23 38:3</p> <p><b>recommended</b> 46:4</p> <p><b>record</b> 84:13</p> <p><b>recover</b> 72:2</p> <p><b>recovering</b> 34:21</p> <p><b>recovery</b> 68:22 69:1 70:10 71:1 71:9</p> <p><b>recruit</b> 52:12</p> <p><b>red</b> 25:19,22 26:2 40:17</p> <p><b>reduce</b> 9:3</p> <p><b>reduced</b> 42:9</p> <p><b>reduction</b> 25:20 42:10</p> <p><b>refer</b> 39:9,11</p> <p><b>referring</b> 40:6</p> <p><b>refreshed</b> 28:23</p> <p><b>refute</b> 46:10</p> <p><b>regard</b> 38:9 84:21</p> <p><b>regarded</b> 41:7</p> <p><b>regarding</b> 51:6 62:19 84:13</p> <p><b>regional</b> 30:23 77:9</p>	<p><b>regulation</b> 48:12,15,18 49:5 77:16</p> <p><b>regulations</b> 46:13,18</p> <p><b>regulatory</b> 46:6</p> <p><b>rehash</b> 18:3,11</p> <p><b>reiterate</b> 62:18</p> <p><b>related</b> 60:11,13</p> <p><b>relation</b> 88:14</p> <p><b>relationship</b> 53:20</p> <p><b>release</b> 71:19</p> <p><b>released</b> 31:7</p> <p><b>relocated</b> 20:21</p> <p><b>remain</b> 5:5</p> <p><b>remember</b> 39:19 63:5</p> <p><b>removal</b> 45:13</p> <p><b>renourishment</b> 19:2,6</p> <p><b>renovated</b> 28:5 28:18,23</p> <p><b>renovation</b> 19:14 28:20</p> <p><b>renovations</b> 27:14</p> <p><b>renting</b> 19:22</p> <p><b>replace</b> 31:20 86:6</p> <p><b>replant</b> 26:18</p> <p><b>reply</b> 59:18</p> <p><b>report</b> 7:11 8:16 17:19</p>	<p><b>reporter</b> 1:18 7:3,6</p> <p><b>reports</b> 38:12 83:2,3</p> <p><b>represent</b> 11:13 11:23 12:11 40:12 76:20</p> <p><b>representative</b> 32:5 48:23 51:4</p> <p><b>representatives</b> 16:19,20</p> <p><b>represents</b> 88:10</p> <p><b>reptile</b> 44:20</p> <p><b>request</b> 66:22 67:16,21 68:1,3 68:4 69:6,12</p> <p><b>requests</b> 83:2,2</p> <p><b>required</b> 63:15</p> <p><b>requirements</b> 46:23 67:15</p> <p><b>reread</b> 84:1</p> <p><b>reserve</b> 39:6</p> <p><b>residence</b> 51:22</p> <p><b>resident</b> 78:7</p> <p><b>resource</b> 14:13</p> <p><b>resources</b> 1:2 4:8,14 11:20 14:23 15:12 17:13,16,17 21:13,19 22:12 22:21 31:5 34:23 38:18 50:20,22 83:19 84:5</p>
--	---	---	---

<p><b>respect</b> 43:3,8 56:11</p> <p><b>respectful</b> 39:6</p> <p><b>respond</b> 71:5,6</p> <p><b>response</b> 46:20 67:20</p> <p><b>responsible</b> 3:9</p> <p><b>rest</b> 13:10</p> <p><b>restoration</b> 19:10</p> <p><b>restore</b> 82:10</p> <p><b>restrain</b> 15:17</p> <p><b>restricting</b> 41:3</p> <p><b>restriction</b> 41:4</p> <p><b>result</b> 63:9 88:16</p> <p><b>resurgence</b> 25:5</p> <p><b>revamp</b> 9:7</p> <p><b>revenue</b> 21:19 23:5,21 24:2</p> <p><b>revenues</b> 21:8</p> <p><b>review</b> 45:7,16 47:11</p> <p><b>revolved</b> 12:14</p> <p><b>reworked</b> 28:8</p> <p><b>rickwood</b> 28:17</p> <p><b>ride</b> 75:16</p> <p><b>right</b> 6:20 15:13 24:23 34:4 40:4 55:16,17 56:18 57:19 58:8 61:13,15 62:11 65:3,8 66:20 71:16 72:3,9,11 72:18 73:17,23</p>	<p>74:9,15 75:8 76:13 79:9,16 83:14,23 84:16 85:2 86:9</p> <p><b>rights</b> 15:16 77:23,23</p> <p><b>rings</b> 16:1</p> <p><b>rip</b> 42:5</p> <p><b>rise</b> 83:21 84:6</p> <p><b>river</b> 23:3 48:20 49:7,20 50:2 82:13</p> <p><b>road</b> 74:17 75:6 78:14</p> <p><b>roads</b> 28:11</p> <p><b>robertson</b> 23:12 24:2</p> <p><b>rod</b> 48:18</p> <p><b>rodeo</b> 45:2,9,21 47:5</p> <p><b>rodeos</b> 46:3</p> <p><b>roger</b> 78:20</p> <p><b>romar</b> 20:4</p> <p><b>room</b> 4:12,14 28:21</p> <p><b>rooms</b> 27:17</p> <p><b>round</b> 34:10</p> <p><b>rpr</b> 1:18 88:20</p> <p><b>rubber</b> 28:15</p> <p><b>ruin</b> 56:23</p> <p><b>ruined</b> 55:22</p> <p><b>rule</b> 48:15</p> <p><b>rules</b> 39:4 46:18</p> <p><b>run</b> 56:22</p>	<p><b>running</b> 54:14 70:13</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>s</b></p> <p><b>sacks</b> 25:12</p> <p><b>sad</b> 5:13</p> <p><b>safe</b> 3:7 4:19,19</p> <p><b>safer</b> 51:19</p> <p><b>safety</b> 5:15 6:5 11:17</p> <p><b>sake</b> 70:23</p> <p><b>sales</b> 31:8</p> <p><b>sally</b> 19:19 20:7</p> <p><b>sanitary</b> 82:14</p> <p><b>sano</b> 27:23</p> <p><b>saraland</b> 76:2</p> <p><b>saturday</b> 1:22</p> <p><b>savage</b> 15:20</p> <p><b>savoy</b> 2:6 9:15 9:16 86:23 87:1</p> <p><b>saw</b> 75:3</p> <p><b>saying</b> 48:3</p> <p><b>scattered</b> 13:11 13:13</p> <p><b>scenario</b> 42:4</p> <p><b>scheduled</b> 51:16</p> <p><b>science</b> 46:8,9</p> <p><b>scientific</b> 46:1 47:1</p> <p><b>scope</b> 64:20 70:20</p> <p><b>scott</b> 38:17</p> <p><b>screenshot</b> 55:12,13</p> <p><b>se</b> 11:13</p>	<p><b>seafood</b> 79:19 81:23</p> <p><b>season</b> 8:5,19 9:3,19 10:5 11:10 12:5,14 13:1 25:3,11,19 25:19,21 26:2 28:10 51:13 52:4 55:10 77:9 83:20 86:4,7</p> <p><b>seasons</b> 12:5,13</p> <p><b>seats</b> 5:11</p> <p><b>second</b> 38:1 48:10 51:9 53:10 58:11 73:9,14 84:8,9 84:10</p> <p><b>secondly</b> 53:9 53:12</p> <p><b>secretary</b> 2:3 16:3</p> <p><b>section</b> 22:11 30:11 82:21 83:16 84:2</p> <p><b>see</b> 33:8 37:12 46:17 51:10 81:21</p> <p><b>seeing</b> 25:17 80:8 86:16</p> <p><b>seeking</b> 42:3</p> <p><b>seeks</b> 35:16</p> <p><b>seem</b> 13:11,19</p> <p><b>seems</b> 56:5 80:19</p>
--	--	--	--

<p><b>seen</b> 6:15 29:22 36:17 46:10 50:2 54:10 58:6 <b>seized</b> 42:16 <b>seizure</b> 40:22 <b>self</b> 23:23 <b>selma</b> 9:8 22:16 23:2 <b>seminars</b> 24:14 <b>senator</b> 32:6 <b>sent</b> 45:4 <b>sentell</b> 30:3 <b>separate</b> 82:11 <b>separc</b> 44:21 <b>september</b> 8:9 <b>septic</b> 81:12 82:14 <b>service</b> 34:3 <b>services</b> 42:19 <b>servng</b> 23:23 <b>set</b> 25:7,8 63:4,6 67:21 68:3 <b>sets</b> 68:1,5 <b>setting</b> 68:9 69:7 <b>seven</b> 20:22 27:20 28:12 <b>several</b> 22:2 53:21 58:13 59:1 60:10 <b>sewage</b> 81:14 <b>sewer</b> 20:11 26:7 82:11,14 <b>shaking</b> 41:1</p>	<p><b>share</b> 31:9 34:7 34:13 <b>shared</b> 59:2 <b>she'll</b> 79:18 <b>sheila</b> 52:22 57:9 <b>shelby</b> 6:11 13:21 20:2 <b>shelf</b> 31:6 <b>shoot</b> 6:7 23:16 24:1 <b>shooters</b> 23:11 24:5 <b>shooting</b> 6:11 23:7,9 24:7 31:22 <b>shops</b> 27:13 82:2 <b>shore</b> 81:6 <b>shores</b> 19:1 <b>shortly</b> 28:20 <b>shows</b> 23:15 <b>shrimp</b> 82:1,3 <b>shut</b> 61:14 62:3 62:5 <b>side</b> 47:5 <b>signature</b> 88:19 <b>silt</b> 80:5 <b>siltation</b> 80:2,15 <b>simple</b> 40:1 <b>single</b> 48:13,19 <b>sipsey</b> 48:2 49:20 <b>sir</b> 16:5 40:10 57:12,18 87:1</p>	<p><b>sister</b> 6:2 <b>situation</b> 49:9 58:20 <b>six</b> 18:16 19:6 19:13 21:1 <b>sixty</b> 20:22 32:23 <b>size</b> 64:20 <b>skirt</b> 80:11 <b>skirting</b> 80:7 <b>skunk</b> 40:17 <b>slip</b> 75:9 <b>sliver</b> 13:21 <b>small</b> 36:8 41:6 67:12 <b>smart</b> 44:3 <b>smith</b> 65:19 66:1,1,4,12 <b>smother</b> 80:15 <b>snakes</b> 45:13 <b>snapper</b> 25:19 25:23 26:2 <b>social</b> 29:22 41:16 <b>sold</b> 59:15 <b>solution</b> 14:3 80:23 <b>solutions</b> 49:13 <b>solve</b> 61:10 <b>somebody</b> 60:5 69:11 <b>somewhat</b> 41:10 60:11 <b>soon</b> 9:8,9 27:8 74:17 82:16</p>	<p>86:16 <b>sorry</b> 43:13 53:10 65:22 66:5 83:10 84:16 <b>sort</b> 64:12 70:14 70:21 <b>soul</b> 5:23 <b>source</b> 62:22 <b>sources</b> 18:14 22:18 <b>south</b> 10:6 19:11 64:13 78:10 80:8 81:20 82:12 <b>southeast</b> 44:19 <b>sovereign</b> 15:7 <b>spat</b> 25:7,8 <b>speak</b> 7:23 8:1 20:8 28:1 40:8 43:11 44:18 50:18 54:5 69:23 79:8 <b>speaker</b> 39:18 40:2 43:14 44:13 47:21 50:12 52:22 57:21 58:23 66:17 72:12 76:17 79:6 <b>speakers</b> 6:21 39:4,5,11 <b>speaking</b> 6:22 48:1 53:21 60:2 82:21</p>
---	--	--	---

<p><b>spear</b> 54:20 55:10</p> <p><b>special</b> 3:11 47:4</p> <p><b>specialty</b> 77:2</p> <p><b>species</b> 34:22 40:13,15 41:3 41:12 43:4 45:10,15 47:14</p> <p><b>specifically</b> 44:22 46:3 51:11 77:11</p> <p><b>spending</b> 56:14 56:19</p> <p><b>spill</b> 18:14</p> <p><b>spoke</b> 9:22 54:1 54:13 58:16 78:4,18</p> <p><b>sponsoring</b> 11:4 11:6</p> <p><b>sports</b> 23:9 31:22</p> <p><b>sportsmen</b> 6:6</p> <p><b>sportsmen's</b> 14:21</p> <p><b>spot</b> 58:23</p> <p><b>spread</b> 41:13,21</p> <p><b>spring</b> 21:3 25:9 28:9 29:2</p> <p><b>springs</b> 62:8,9</p> <p><b>st</b> 64:5</p> <p><b>staff</b> 6:18 14:16 14:18 17:16 18:6 37:8 38:20</p>	<p><b>stand</b> 7:9 27:5 69:15</p> <p><b>standard</b> 72:4</p> <p><b>standing</b> 5:6 63:16</p> <p><b>start</b> 7:8 27:8 48:2</p> <p><b>started</b> 3:2 10:22 18:23 79:15 81:10</p> <p><b>starting</b> 9:11</p> <p><b>state</b> 1:1,19 4:8 7:9 11:8,18,18 13:10 15:7,10 15:22 17:17 19:2,18 20:2,6 21:16,21 22:8 22:11,12,14,22 23:6,19 24:6,15 26:21,22 27:9 27:16 28:7,12 28:17,22 29:7 29:18,21 30:4 30:12,14 32:6 32:10,11 33:5,6 33:12 35:7,20 35:22 38:4,16 38:17 40:20 45:11,12,19 46:15,17 48:6 50:21 53:6 68:22 74:14,23 76:21 77:2 78:10,14,15,22 88:3</p>	<p><b>state's</b> 21:14 47:11</p> <p><b>stated</b> 50:3 67:21</p> <p><b>statement</b> 15:4 15:7</p> <p><b>states</b> 34:6,9 38:6 42:18</p> <p><b>statute</b> 29:21 30:1,5</p> <p><b>staunch</b> 31:17</p> <p><b>stay</b> 55:14 79:9</p> <p><b>staying</b> 50:10</p> <p><b>steele</b> 64:5</p> <p><b>stenotype</b> 88:8</p> <p><b>stephens</b> 76:17 76:18,20 79:3</p> <p><b>stepped</b> 11:2</p> <p><b>steps</b> 49:18</p> <p><b>stigma</b> 41:16</p> <p><b>stimpson</b> 2:13 11:21,22</p> <p><b>stipulations</b> 46:23</p> <p><b>stockings</b> 49:8</p> <p><b>stone</b> 36:20</p> <p><b>stood</b> 37:9</p> <p><b>stop</b> 63:3 70:8,9 71:15 73:8 80:10 84:19</p> <p><b>stopped</b> 40:21</p> <p><b>store</b> 27:19</p> <p><b>storehouse</b> 15:16</p>	<p><b>stories</b> 26:19</p> <p><b>strange</b> 63:5,5 63:10</p> <p><b>stray</b> 42:15</p> <p><b>striking</b> 40:15</p> <p><b>strings</b> 36:7</p> <p><b>striped</b> 40:17</p> <p><b>strong</b> 15:17 74:22</p> <p><b>structures</b> 30:20</p> <p><b>stuff</b> 8:13 52:7 80:2</p> <p><b>subjected</b> 41:10</p> <p><b>submitting</b> 73:16</p> <p><b>substantial</b> 54:9</p> <p><b>success</b> 25:3</p> <p><b>successes</b> 34:5</p> <p><b>successful</b> 77:6</p> <p><b>suddenly</b> 84:14</p> <p><b>sum</b> 65:15</p> <p><b>summer</b> 20:9 21:3 25:6,21 27:3 63:7</p> <p><b>support</b> 9:14 23:20 30:20 31:14 59:15 74:18 77:14</p> <p><b>supported</b> 42:20</p> <p><b>supporter</b> 31:17</p> <p><b>sure</b> 12:20 16:2 25:15 29:3 32:16 46:13 78:6 86:20</p>
--	--	--	--

<p><b>surprising</b> 13:9</p> <p><b>surrounding</b> 41:17</p> <p><b>survey</b> 23:15</p> <p><b>sustainably</b> 26:17</p> <p><b>swing</b> 67:8</p> <p><b>sycamore</b> 64:13</p> <p><b>sykes</b> 33:16 36:3 69:16,21 86:18</p> <p><b>symposiums</b> 38:7</p> <p><b>symptomatic</b> 41:22</p> <p><b>system</b> 2:5 66:23 67:15 68:11 73:7 84:13</p> <p><b>systematic</b> 62:19</p>	<p><b>t</b></p> <p><b>t</b> 88:1,1</p> <p><b>take</b> 5:10,18 6:17 13:5 14:10 24:21 25:1 30:9 38:1 46:15 72:18 76:9 77:2 87:11</p> <p><b>taken</b> 1:17 11:3 49:18 88:7</p> <p><b>talk</b> 25:22 39:14 44:22 53:11 66:7 72:22 84:15</p>	<p><b>talked</b> 36:11 63:21 74:11</p> <p><b>talking</b> 9:1 14:1 32:14 57:15</p> <p>60:3 66:2 69:3</p> <p><b>tall</b> 29:20 63:16</p> <p><b>talladega</b> 57:16 59:4,5,9 60:8 62:4,6 63:7 64:8 64:15 65:3 77:12</p> <p><b>tampa</b> 75:21</p> <p><b>tank</b> 81:12</p> <p><b>tanya</b> 1:17 7:2 39:9,13 88:20</p> <p><b>taught</b> 6:7 46:7</p> <p><b>tax</b> 23:16</p> <p><b>tdy</b> 55:6</p> <p><b>team</b> 30:11</p> <p><b>techniques</b> 35:19</p> <p><b>technology</b> 42:12</p> <p><b>tell</b> 39:23 55:1 58:19 59:16 61:11 81:11</p> <p><b>ten</b> 20:12 64:17 78:10</p> <p><b>tenacity</b> 50:10</p> <p><b>terms</b> 11:17</p> <p><b>test</b> 42:7</p> <p><b>testament</b> 18:6</p> <p><b>tested</b> 78:16</p> <p><b>testify</b> 31:4</p>	<p><b>text</b> 55:19</p> <p><b>texted</b> 58:13</p> <p><b>texts</b> 59:17</p> <p><b>thank</b> 3:16 4:5 4:11,21 5:10 6:18,23 7:5,6 9:14,17 10:13 10:21 11:10 13:16 14:8,10 14:14,19 15:23 16:7,21 17:1,3,4 36:3 37:17,18 37:20,21 43:13 44:12,15,17 47:16,20 48:3,3 48:10 49:10,11 50:7,9,10,17,19 50:23 52:19,20 57:5,20 62:10 65:16,17,18 66:13,14,15,18 69:14 71:21,22 72:5,10,21 73:13 75:10,11 75:14 76:14,15 76:16,23 77:1,7 79:4,20 81:21 82:4,7,17,18 85:19 86:9,21 87:2,12</p> <p><b>thankful</b> 17:14 49:22 50:5</p> <p><b>thanks</b> 3:12 37:21 71:3</p>	<p><b>theodore</b> 19:9 19:11</p> <p><b>thing</b> 8:12 11:15 14:15 15:19 18:10 23:1 37:15 42:2 49:10 53:17,19 54:15,19 55:17 55:18 62:13 70:14,21 72:3,6 73:9,14 75:2 76:11 84:17 86:1</p> <p><b>things</b> 5:16 14:23 17:7,20 18:2,3,4,9 31:15 36:7 50:11 68:6 68:7 72:20 73:22 75:17 76:14,22</p> <p><b>think</b> 3:3 8:1,5 9:2 11:20 12:7 12:19 13:12,13 14:22 16:1 17:6 19:23 21:11 38:11 39:21,23 47:3,10,13 60:11,19 67:9 67:23 69:5 72:3 75:12,23 77:22 78:19 83:1 87:4</p> <p><b>third</b> 46:21 66:19,20</p> <p><b>thirty</b> 19:3 21:4 21:23 25:12</p>
---	---	--	---	--



<p>30:21 74:19  <b>thought</b> 13:9          63:15 81:9          84:16  <b>thousand</b> 25:12          32:23  <b>threatened</b>          54:12  <b>three</b> 13:2 14:4          19:1,3 26:10          27:1,5 39:20          64:8 66:20  <b>thriving</b> 42:20  <b>tier</b> 21:14,21  <b>tim</b> 2:11 8:8,17          9:22 22:16 24:8  <b>timber</b> 26:14  <b>time</b> 3:1 4:6          6:21 10:11          25:10 32:1          39:15,19 43:3,6          45:9 47:16 52:1          52:15 54:6          56:16 59:3 65:4          66:19,20 71:7          79:21  <b>timed</b> 79:16  <b>times</b> 7:17 37:9          51:23 59:1          60:10  <b>title</b> 49:2  <b>today</b> 3:8,12 4:3          4:23 5:14 6:21          7:3 8:1 9:17          14:20 16:1,4</p>	<p>17:6 18:1 38:12          38:23 39:4 40:1          50:18 52:22          53:23 55:6 59:6          66:22 72:14          76:23 77:20          79:6 83:6  <b>together</b> 3:17          4:7 6:19 22:21          36:20 37:22          38:19 49:23          63:2 74:2 75:22          75:22  <b>told</b> 41:2  <b>tool</b> 29:22 73:7  <b>top</b> 29:12  <b>topic</b> 43:12          47:11 51:2  <b>total</b> 25:15          26:22 42:13          56:5 64:14,17  <b>touch</b> 9:23  <b>touched</b> 5:23  <b>tough</b> 65:1  <b>tourism</b> 29:19          30:2,3 49:21  <b>tournaments</b>          9:11 23:4  <b>tow</b> 37:12  <b>toward</b> 74:13  <b>track</b> 6:20 68:21          68:23  <b>tracking</b> 70:4,5          70:23 71:9 72:1          73:7 85:14</p>	<p><b>trade</b> 41:11  <b>tradition</b> 56:3  <b>trail</b> 74:8  <b>trails</b> 30:8 74:12  <b>trainable</b> 41:7          44:4  <b>transcribed</b>          88:9  <b>transcript</b> 1:13          88:11  <b>transcription</b>          88:10  <b>treat</b> 43:5  <b>treated</b> 41:14  <b>tremendous</b>          10:17 13:10          52:8 53:8 82:2  <b>tremendously</b>          81:14  <b>trend</b> 43:1  <b>trespass</b> 77:15          77:22  <b>trial</b> 30:15,19  <b>trials</b> 30:21 31:1  <b>tried</b> 58:20          59:21  <b>trip</b> 87:10  <b>trout</b> 48:2  <b>trucks</b> 81:12,12  <b>true</b> 88:11  <b>truly</b> 11:19 47:7  <b>try</b> 4:13 8:4,13          24:16 47:9          55:16 59:7,20          60:15 77:10,17</p>	<p>80:10,11  <b>trying</b> 9:2 61:17          73:12 75:6  <b>turkey</b> 32:20          33:1,21 54:10  <b>turkeys</b> 33:13  <b>turn</b> 42:23 61:6          68:13 71:8  <b>turned</b> 60:18          70:7  <b>turner</b> 59:1          60:10 64:19  <b>turning</b> 60:22  <b>tuscaloosa</b>          13:20  <b>twelve</b> 27:11  <b>twenty</b> 8:21          13:8 19:4,6,8,20          21:1 26:4 29:20          68:7  <b>twines</b> 74:2  <b>two</b> 9:21 10:16          14:3 19:4,15          23:10 30:16          38:3 48:18          58:18 65:11          67:17 72:16,20          82:7</p>
<b>u</b>			
<p><b>uncomfortable</b>          51:15  <b>under</b> 28:20          45:15  <b>undergoing</b>          20:7 27:23</p>			

<p><b>understand</b> 12:1 55:17 56:2 60:7,17 <b>understanding</b> 64:20 74:19 <b>underway</b> 17:23 18:13,21 19:3 19:14 23:8 27:8 <b>unfair</b> 69:8 <b>unfinished</b> 83:1 83:5,7 <b>unfortunately</b> 12:12 36:4 <b>university</b> 1:4 1:20 17:6 <b>unjust</b> 69:7 <b>unveil</b> 29:2 <b>update</b> 18:19 28:1 <b>updated</b> 27:17 28:3,8 <b>upgraded</b> 81:6 <b>use</b> 26:16 28:1 29:4 47:4 67:7 80:7 <b>used</b> 13:18 29:22 <b>users</b> 14:13 <b>using</b> 26:14 28:14 <b>usually</b> 63:6,11 65:5</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>v</b></p> <p><b>vaccinated</b> 41:15,18 <b>vaccination</b> 42:12 <b>vaccine</b> 42:11 <b>valuable</b> 43:1 <b>vandalism</b> 15:18 <b>variety</b> 35:14 54:4 <b>various</b> 14:1 <b>venue</b> 3:13,17 17:10 <b>versus</b> 47:1 <b>veterinary</b> 42:4 <b>vetting</b> 26:2 <b>viewed</b> 38:9 <b>village</b> 3:13 <b>virginia</b> 40:16 <b>virtually</b> 34:20 <b>virus</b> 41:20 <b>visible</b> 15:19 <b>vision</b> 37:12 <b>vittor</b> 81:16 <b>vote</b> 85:1 86:8</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>w</b></p> <p><b>wait</b> 58:14 <b>walk</b> 87:11 <b>walker</b> 47:22 48:1 49:15 <b>wallace</b> 15:21 <b>walls</b> 36:19 <b>wanda</b> 6:18</p>	<p><b>wandering</b> 72:15 <b>want</b> 4:16,17,18 8:4 9:12 10:13 10:21 11:15 16:21 17:4 24:19 36:10,18 38:1 39:14 43:4 43:5 45:16 46:13 47:16 58:17 61:12,13 62:15,16 64:2,7 67:4,11,13 68:2 68:12,16,17 71:23 75:9 77:1 78:1 79:16 81:11 82:7 <b>wanted</b> 48:2 72:6 77:7 78:22 <b>wanting</b> 10:4 13:5 74:3,21 <b>wanton</b> 15:18 <b>war</b> 9:18 87:12 <b>warden</b> 11:5 34:15 53:15 59:20 <b>wardens</b> 10:21 58:17 <b>warning</b> 55:13 <b>warranted</b> 47:12 <b>warrants</b> 40:22 40:23 <b>warren</b> 3:18</p>	<p><b>warrior</b> 49:20 <b>watch</b> 71:7 <b>water</b> 21:23 26:7 74:5 82:10 <b>waterfowl</b> 34:22 <b>waters</b> 20:20,21 82:16 <b>watershed</b> 61:1 61:1,2 73:23 75:20 76:3,11 76:12,12 <b>watersheds</b> 61:3 <b>waterways</b> 22:7 22:8 <b>wave</b> 74:6,7 <b>way</b> 11:14,20 13:2 43:5,8 53:10 59:10,12 60:19,20 61:6 62:2 65:8 73:11 <b>ways</b> 37:11 80:6 <b>we've</b> 24:16 29:14,22 33:5 34:6 37:3,10 50:1 54:1 56:11 61:18,19,21,22 64:8 74:21 75:7 80:20 81:18 <b>weather</b> 3:21 7:13,16 <b>weathers</b> 36:21 36:23 37:19 69:18 70:1,2,3 71:13,18</p>
--	--	--	--

<b>week</b> 45:5 75:21 78:21 85:18 <b>weekend</b> 17:8 51:12,18 52:2 52:11 <b>weekends</b> 25:21 51:7,23 52:4 <b>welcome</b> 3:4 56:12 <b>welfare</b> 15:9 <b>went</b> 23:15 58:19 61:21 <b>western</b> 75:20 <b>wheeler</b> 28:7,9 28:12 <b>whistle</b> 85:14 <b>wide</b> 67:8 <b>wife</b> 6:1,7 79:17 <b>wiggins</b> 81:2 <b>wilcox</b> 32:8,15 <b>wild</b> 30:15 32:20 33:6,21 41:20 45:14 <b>wildlife</b> 12:18 22:10 23:18 24:6,12,18 33:3 33:15,18 34:2 34:14,16,18,21 35:2,4,7,10,18 35:19 38:15 45:20 51:8 75:1 <b>win</b> 36:15 <b>wind</b> 28:3 <b>wins</b> 45:22	<b>wiregrass</b> 9:20 <b>wise</b> 15:14 <b>witness</b> 54:7 <b>wmas</b> 51:13,17 52:7 <b>women</b> 5:17 6:7 <b>wonderful</b> 37:20 87:10 <b>wood</b> 2:11 8:17 8:17 22:16 26:14 <b>woods</b> 49:1 <b>word</b> 24:10,17 32:9,16 68:17 68:18 <b>work</b> 11:7 14:11 17:15 18:6 24:3 24:6 30:19 31:14,21 33:9 33:10,11,22 34:7 38:20 53:23 64:7 <b>worked</b> 49:23 56:6,12 77:9 80:19 <b>working</b> 14:12 24:9 52:1 63:2 73:4 74:13 77:16 81:9 87:8 <b>works</b> 13:3 14:18 <b>world</b> 49:21 <b>worry</b> 62:7 <b>worth</b> 42:22	<b>worthington</b> 50:13,14,16,17 52:19 <b>worthy</b> 35:14 <b>write</b> 54:6 77:20 <b>writing</b> 37:5 <b>written</b> 15:21 <b>wrong</b> 47:7 61:13 69:10	59:2 63:11,18 63:22 64:4,17 65:15 70:21 73:1 82:1 <b>year's</b> 36:22 <b>years</b> 13:2 14:4 18:4 20:12 22:2 23:10 25:2,18 30:6 41:9 46:19 48:5,11,17 53:15 54:11 55:1,3 56:10 64:23 66:21 67:4,17 68:8 80:20 81:17 <b>yonder</b> 73:17 74:15 <b>young</b> 78:20 <b>yous</b> 76:23 <b>youth</b> 10:15 77:4
		<b>y</b>	
		<b>y'all</b> 3:16 9:14 9:17 14:8,19 29:3 32:16 45:4 45:5 58:18 63:4 63:23 66:15 72:14,18 73:10 75:10,17 76:3,6 76:14 79:12,14 79:17,19,20 81:11,21,21,23 <b>y'all's</b> 52:15 <b>yard</b> 60:4 65:14 <b>yeah</b> 44:1 47:23 <b>year</b> 10:9 11:1 12:2 17:21,21 17:22 18:5,11 18:21 25:4,11 25:17,20 26:3 29:7,19 30:5,7,7 30:8,8,22 31:3,7 34:3 35:13,21 35:22 48:23 53:23 54:8,8 55:19 56:15,20 57:1,2 58:12	
			<b>z</b>
			<b>zero</b> 46:19 72:23 <b>zone</b> 10:6