



ADVISORY BOARD MEETING

ALABAMA DEPARTMENT OF
CONSERVATION ADVISORY BOARD

Date: March 8, 2025

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**IN RE THE MATTER OF:
CONSERVATION ADVISORY BOARD**

3/8/2025

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| <p style="text-align: right;">Page 1</p> <p>MINUTES OF THE CONSERVATION ADVISORY BOARD MEETING GORDON PERSONS BUILDING 50 RIPLEY STREET MONTGOMERY, ALABAMA SATURDAY, MARCH 8, 2025, 9:00 a.m.</p> <p>***** COPY *****</p> <p>TRANSCRIPT OF PROCEEDINGS</p> <p>PROCEEDINGS TAKEN BEFORE: JEANA S. BOGGS Certified Court Reporter State of Alabama ACCR #7</p> | <p style="text-align: right;">Page 2</p> <p>1 APPEARANCES 2 3 MEMBERS OF THE BOARD: 4 MR. JOSEPH DOBBS, JR., CHAIRMAN 5 MR. CHRIS BLANKENSHIP, COMMISSIONER 6 MR. RICK PATE, AGRICULTURE COMMISSIONER 7 MR. BROCK JONES 8 MR. RAYMOND JONES, JR. 9 MR. BEN STIMPSON 10 DR. J. MIKE PHILLIPS, ACES DIRECTOR 11 MR. GRADY HARTZOG, JR. 12 MR. TIM WOOD 13 MR. GREG BARKSDALE 14 MR. JEFF MARTIN 15 MR. KEVIN SAVOY 16 FOR THE ALABAMA DEPARTMENT OF CONSERVATION 17 AND NATURAL RESOURCES: 18 ALABAMA DEPARTMENT OF CONSERVATION 19 ADVISORY BOARD 20 64 N. Union Street, Room 474 21 Montgomery, Alabama 36130 22 CHARLANNA W. SKAGGS 23 Charlanna.skaggs@dcnr.alabama.gov</p> |
| <p style="text-align: right;">Page 3</p> <p>1 (WHEREUPON, the meeting of 2 the Alabama Conservation 3 Advisory Board was called to 4 order and proceedings 5 commenced at 9:00 a.m.) 6 7 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: All right. It's 8 9:00. Let's get started. Welcome. 9 Welcome to everyone to this, our first 10 Board meeting for 2025 here, March 8th. 11 Let's be diligent, responsible and 12 considerate to everyone in this hall. 13 I'm going to ask Mr. Tim Wood 14 today if he will please lead us in our 15 invocation. Let us pray. 16 (Prayer). 17 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Thank you, Tim, 18 very much. Today we're honored, very 19 honored to have the Conservation 20 Enforcement officers Color Honor Guard. 21 This is a great looking group. Please 22 give them your attention. 23 (DCNR Honor Guard detail</p> | <p style="text-align: right;">Page 4</p> <p>1 presentation). 2 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: And if you will 3 remain standing, I'll ask Raymond Jones 4 to lead us in the Pledge of Allegiance. 5 (Pledge of Allegiance). 6 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Thank you very 7 much. 8 I would like to take two seconds 9 to thank Wanda McCullers and her staff: 10 Her, Tina, and everybody in the back. 11 And thank Betsy Jones. Both of them 12 are part of this. They put this 13 together. 14 Betsy is going to be managing our 15 clock today during public comment time. 16 Thanks to both of you and your 17 wonderful staff being here with us. 18 It's great. 19 Mr. Secretary, do we have a quorum 20 today? 21 COMMISSIONER BLANKENSHIP: Yes, 22 sir, we have a quorum. 23 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Very good.</p> |

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| <p>1 Everybody, I think may and has read the 2 minutes of the meeting of May the 18th 3 of 2024. Are there any corrections? 4 (No response). 5 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: As there are no 6 corrections, the minutes are approved. 7 Thank you very much. 8 Our next piece of business would 9 be for each Board member to introduce 10 themselves, note their Congressional 11 District, stand and give us a district 12 report if you will. We'll start at the 13 far end with Mr. Jeff Martin. 14 MR. MARTIN: Jeff Martin, District 15 3. I would say overall this year the 16 hunting has been pretty good. Fishing 17 with the weather has been kind of 18 sporadic. Got everybody shaking their 19 head a little bit, but, other than that 20 but a good season. 21 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Thank you, Jeff. 22 MR. BARKSDALE: Greg Barksdale, 23 District 4. As far as I know, we had a</p> | <p>1 pretty decent hunting season with no 2 big issues with the exception we did 3 have an additional CWD case in Colbert 4 County, which made -- where we had to 5 adjust the zones. I was able to go to 6 that meeting there and just watch and 7 tell the conservation guys that they 8 did a really good job putting that 9 meeting on. It was very informational. 10 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Thank you, Mr. 11 Barksdale. 12 MR. WOOD: I'm Tim Wood from 13 Selma, Congressional District 7. Deer 14 season was pretty well average for us. 15 We still see a lot of deer in the west 16 part of the -- of the prairies. 17 Duck season was terrible. Fishing 18 season started off with a boom with 19 Miller's Ferry and the Selma Basin, as 20 well as the Tenn-Tom in Demopolis. 21 And there's an awful lot of 22 excitement about turkey season. People 23 called me all winter long. It was like</p> |
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| <p>1 Christmas when they saw a flock of 2 turkeys in places they haven't seen in 3 years. 4 So, there's some optimism out 5 there for the spring turkey season. 6 So, we'll see how it goes. 7 Thank you. 8 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Thank you, Mr. 9 Wood. 10 MR. HARTZOG, JR.: Grady Hartzog, 11 District 2. Of course, down in our 12 part of the woods, deer hunting is 13 always good. As Tim said, a lot of 14 people seeing a lot more turkeys. 15 Everything went good. The Barbour 16 County Youth Hunt had its 25th year 17 this year. The game wardens do a 18 tremendous job in helping put that on. 19 And we've got three wardens from our 20 district -- from Kevin's and my 21 district that have been recently 22 recognized. We've got Bill Freeman for 23 the R-3. We got Chauncey Wood as a</p> | <p>1 shooting instructor -- State recognized 2 shooting instructor. 3 And the biggest thing is Johnny 4 Johnson, game warden for Barbour 5 County, was recognized as the Officer 6 Of The Year and is going to -- what is 7 it -- ACEOA, the -- yeah, for possibly 8 being recognized as the Warden Of The 9 Year for the Southeast. 10 So, anyway, everything went good. 11 Turkeys are looking good. Bass fishing 12 on Eufaula is good. So, keep it up. 13 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Thank you, Mr. 14 Hartzog. 15 MR. SAVOY: Good morning. Kevin 16 Savoy from Dothan, Alabama, District 1. 17 I would say we had a good turkey 18 season. Like Grady -- excuse me, I'm 19 sorry, I'm jumping ahead. 20 Deer season, no real issues came 21 up. And we are also getting good 22 reports of turkey season -- turkey 23 numbers, that people are seeing a lot</p> |

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| <p>1 of excitement for turkey season this 2 year. 3 Dove season I'd say was fair. I 4 did receive a lot of calls of 5 appreciation for us making the changes 6 to the dove season in our -- in the 7 Wiregrass area. And I think that's 8 about it for -- for me. Thank you. 9 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Thank you, Mr. 10 Savoy. 11 MR. PATE: Hi, I'm Rick Pate, 12 Commissioner of the Department of 13 Agriculture and Industries. And I'm 14 sorry about the price of eggs. If 15 Chris would let y'all shoot all those 16 wild ducks and geese, then I could 17 control that a lot better. But every 18 fall and spring we have an issue with 19 it being endemic in the wild bird 20 population. But glad to be here. 21 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Thank you. 22 Commissioner. 23 MR. PHILLIPS: Good morning,</p> | <p>1 everybody. My name is Mike Phillips. 2 I'm the director of the Alabama 3 Cooperative Extension System. The 4 relationship that we have with this 5 agency is we work a lot with them in 6 terms of recommendations, especially as 7 it relates to conservation and natural 8 resources management. It's a pleasure 9 for me to be here and certainly an 10 honor to serve. 11 Thank you. 12 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Thank you, Dr. 13 Phillips. 14 MR. STIMPSON: I'm Ben Stimpson, 15 District 1. I'm from Mobile. It was 16 an active off year. The fisheries 17 department did a great job of having 18 several meetings with a lot of 19 discussion about limits and all the 20 fishing down there. And it was, I 21 think, well received. I think they 22 were well attended. They did a great 23 job with it.</p> |
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| <p>1 We also have -- we're getting 2 reports -- at least I'm hearing from a 3 lot of people about another great year 4 of turkey raised, a lot of poultry, 5 saying a lot of turkeys. Everybody is 6 happy with it. 7 There has been a lot of questions 8 to me about turkey season dates in 9 South Alabama, but it's just a lot of 10 questions at this point. 11 I have had multiple requests for 12 the dog deer permit system for Mobile 13 County, and I've been taking those 14 under advisement. 15 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Thank you, Mr. 16 Stimpson. 17 MR. RAYMOND JONES: Raymond Jones, 18 Congressional District 5, which is in 19 North Alabama. We had probably the 20 worst duck season that we've ever had 21 in my lifetime anyway. Just the 22 numbers simply weren't there. Lots of 23 questions of why that is. But it was</p> | <p>1 not very good from that standpoint. 2 Deer season was excellent. We did 3 not have a very big mast crop, which is 4 probably bad for the deer, but good for 5 deer hunters. 6 Our turkey populations remain 7 strong and thriving in that -- in that 8 region of the world. 9 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Thank you, Mr. 10 Jones. 11 MR. BROCK JONES: Good morning. 12 Brock Jones, I'm District 6 from 13 Tuscaloosa, represent Tuscaloosa, 14 Jefferson, Shelby and Bibb Counties. 15 We had an average deer season, and 16 turkey season is looking very positive. 17 Thank you. 18 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Thank you. 19 Thanks to all of you. Those were 20 excellent reports. 21 For everyone, these are your guys. 22 Whatever district you're in, contact 23 them with the issues or accolades,</p> |

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| <p style="text-align: right;">Page 13</p> <p>1 either one. And there we will carry 2 the message back to the directors in 3 the departments, Conservation and 4 Natural Resources and its divisions. 5 Great folks and good to work with. 6 Let me remind everybody one more 7 time, and I'll try to do it. Download 8 the Outdoor Alabama app. It's very 9 important there. All kinds of stuff 10 there from licenses, seasons, backups 11 and everything. It's just -- it keeps 12 you up to date on the work. 13 I'm going to ask Commissioner 14 Blankenship to step up and give us his 15 Commissioner's report. 16 COMMISSIONER BLANKENSHIP: Thank 17 you, Mr. Chairman. 18 First, I want to thank the 19 Finance -- the Department of Finance 20 staff for allowing us to use this 21 facility. In 31 years working for the 22 State, this is the third time I've ever 23 been in this building. But this is a</p> | <p style="text-align: right;">Page 14</p> <p>1 very nice auditorium. This is where 2 they have the State Board of Education 3 meetings. They have less Board of 4 Education commissioners than we have. 5 It is built for them, not for us. But 6 we are all tight and put together up 7 here. But I appreciate their allowing 8 us to meet in this facility. 9 I have a fairly lengthy report, 10 since this is the first meeting of the 11 year, to kind of update the Board and 12 the public on things that have taken 13 place since our last meeting in May. 14 As we've discussed before, one of 15 the initiatives that we currently have 16 underway in the Department is to 17 increase boating access. We have about 18 \$30 million in boating access projects 19 that are near complete or underway. We 20 have had ribbon cuttings and opened up 21 some of those facilities. Others are 22 coming in the next few weeks. We'll 23 continue to work on those through the</p> |
| <p style="text-align: right;">Page 15</p> <p>1 rest of 2025. 2 But we built a new ramp at Mount 3 Vernon; made improvements at McIntosh, 4 McCarter's Ferry in Choctaw County, at 5 Selma, the Chocolatta ramp on the 6 Mobile Causeway, seven ramps on Lake 7 Guntersville that will be under 8 construction this fall when the water 9 drops again on the lake. 10 The waterfront ramp in Scottsboro 11 will be totally reworked. Foster's 12 Ferry and Riverview in Tuscaloosa. 13 Brown's Creek in Guntersville had a 14 ribbon cutting on February 3rd. 15 Highway 77 ramp in Rainbow City. 16 McFarland Park in Lauderdale County, we 17 have a ribbon cutting there this 18 upcoming Friday, March 14th on the new 19 launching slab and pier at that 20 facility. 21 Opened up the ramp in Claiborne in 22 Monroe County on February 28th. We 23 have a project completed at Cotaco</p> | <p style="text-align: right;">Page 16</p> <p>1 Creek in Morgan County. Triana, Weeks 2 Bay on the Viewpoint ramp in Mobile 3 County, and the Weeks Bay Fish River 4 ramp, as well. 5 County Road 6 ramp in Baldwin 6 County, which is a huge project that 7 Baldwin County is implementing, that is 8 almost complete. Billy Goat Hole ramp 9 on Dauphin Island, which is probably 10 our busiest ramp on the coast of 11 Alabama, is closed right now for 12 renovations. That's going to be a 13 fantastic project when it's completed. 14 We're doing work with Kowaliga on 15 Lake Martin, a new tournament pier on 16 Lake Jordan, and then a new ramp that 17 we're building in cooperation with the 18 Alabama Power Company on some property 19 that they have allowed us to use on the 20 East side of Lake Martin off of County 21 Road 49, so -- and more. Those are 22 just the highlights. 23 These projects, including the ones</p> |

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| <p>1 that we're doing at Forks in the 2 River -- Forks In The River in Walker 3 County and the new Canoe Kayak launch 4 at Garden City, are funded with a bunch 5 of different funding sources, including 6 Innovate Alabama, some funding from the 7 EDA of the U.S. Department of Commerce, 8 some Gulf of Mexico Energy Security Act 9 funding from the fishing licenses that 10 people buy from the matching federal 11 funds, and then the Tyson settlement 12 funds that Deputy Commissioner Poolos 13 is the chairman of that subcommittee 14 putting those projects in place in that 15 part of the world, and then other -- 16 just ADCNR funds. 17 So, quite -- quite a bit of 18 boating access. I hope that you'll see 19 that this year and into next year and 20 wherever you live that you have better 21 opportunities to get on the water and 22 take advantage of those. 23 We have about \$218 million in</p> | <p>1 State Park projects that are completed 2 in 2024 or that are underway. There 3 are projects at Guntersville, DeSoto 4 State Park Pool House, Gulf State Park 5 Pavilion, a new campground addition at 6 Meaher State Park along with some new 7 cabins. 8 Monte Sano, the CCC cabins have 9 all been updated and renovated. At 10 Wind Creek State Park, we're building 11 new three-bedroom, three-bath cabins 12 and renovating a good portion of the 13 campground. 14 And at Lakepoint, half of the 15 lodge rooms are being refurbished and 16 totally modernized at that park. 17 Projects that were completed in 18 2024 include the reopening of the Gulf 19 State Park Pier, which is a \$14 million 20 dollar project that was funded by FEMA 21 and some Deepwater Horizon oil spill 22 funds, the Monte Sano campground 23 upgrades.</p> |
| Page 19 | Page 20 |
| <p>1 Twenty new cabins at Gulf State 2 Park were built on Lake Shelby. Those 3 were destroyed in Hurricane Sally and 4 were rebuilt using some insurance 5 proceeds and then some other money from 6 the Department. 7 All the Lakepoint cabins and 8 cottages have been refreshed. And the 9 Oak Mountain State Park Campground 10 reopened after our May meeting. I 11 appreciate many of y'all that were able 12 to attend the ribbon cutting on that -- 13 right after our May CAB meeting last 14 year. 15 We have 30 water and sewer 16 projects that are underway in 17 partnership with ADEM at our State 18 Parks, about \$46 million worth of work 19 on water and sewer upgrades. And I'm 20 very appreciative of our partnership 21 with ADEM. 22 The three largest projects we have 23 are now under construction. At Lake</p> | <p>1 Lurlene, totally redoing that park near 2 Tuscaloosa. That's a \$14 million 3 project. 4 The Gulf State Park Campground 5 expansion, it's a new campground that 6 we're building on the site of the golf 7 course that was closed several years 8 ago. That's a \$24 million project. 9 And then a new hotel at Cheaha 10 State Park. It's the highest point in 11 our state. That's a \$28 million 12 project that is being built with mass 13 timber construction to highlight the 14 forest products industry in our state. 15 You know, we'll be using cross- 16 laminated timbers and mass timber 17 construction there that will not only 18 be aesthetically pleasing and beautiful 19 and really a showpiece for our State 20 Parks, but then also using wood from 21 Alabama grown here, harvested here, 22 processed here and then used to build 23 the lodge. And so, I think that's --</p> |

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| <p style="text-align: right;">Page 21</p> <p>1 that's really a good story to tell how 2 we're partnering with the forest 3 products industry in our state, which 4 is one of the -- if not the largest. I 5 think it's the second largest employer 6 after agriculture -- right, Mr. Pate? 7 MR. PATE: Yeah. 8 COMMISSIONER BLANKENSHIP: -- in 9 our state. 10 2025 and 2026 are the Years of the 11 Alabama Trails. That's a promotion 12 from the Department of Tourism in 13 cooperation with the Department of 14 Conservation. We have more than 400 15 miles of trails in our State Parks and 16 our Forever Wild properties for hiking, 17 biking, horseback riding, canoeing and 18 kayaking and multi-use. And that will 19 be a big emphasis of our marketing for 20 the next two years is highlighting the 21 trails that we have and trying to get 22 more people to visit our parks and use 23 those trails in our Forever Wild</p> | <p style="text-align: right;">Page 22</p> <p>1 properties. 2 We're doing mountain bike trail 3 upgrades through Innovate Alabama, a 4 million dollars each that we're 5 spending at Oak Mountain State Park and 6 at Coldwater Mountain Forever Wild 7 property near Anniston. 8 Through our State Lands Division, 9 we funded more than \$97 million in 10 GOMESA projects in Mobile and Baldwin 11 counties in 2023 and 2024. And we 12 expect to award more than \$35 million 13 from our 2025 allocation. 14 As you know, the money from the 15 GOMESA Security Act comes from 16 royalties from offshore oil and gas 17 production, as well as a percentage of 18 the income from lease sales that are 19 done by the federal government in the 20 Gulf of Mexico. 21 With new administration, we see 22 additional lease sales on the horizon. 23 So, we anticipate that those funds in</p> |
| <p style="text-align: right;">Page 23</p> <p>1 GOMESA will be -- they will have more 2 funds available in GOMESA over the next 3 few years if we do have increased lease 4 sales in the Gulf. And I'll keep you 5 updated on that. 6 We have changed our marketing 7 strategy of Billy Pope with our 8 Communications and Marketing section 9 this year. He's done a great job 10 working with our team to put some 11 different types of marketing in place 12 to get more people in the outdoors, 13 more people to hunt and fish and 14 consequently to buy more hunting and 15 fishing licenses. And we've seen very 16 good results on that so far from new 17 license sales from new participants. 18 We're working a lot with the colleges 19 and universities and some of the other 20 communities around the state to have -- 21 to get new people into the outdoors. 22 We implemented a pilot project 23 this fall to issue permits to</p> | <p style="text-align: right;">Page 24</p> <p>1 landowners for night hunting hogs and 2 coyotes during gun season. Overall, it 3 went well. I think that we'll have 4 some -- we will sit down after all of 5 those reports that are due on March 6 31st when we receive those and have an 7 internal meeting with our staff about 8 how to make that system better or what 9 to do on that moving forward after the 10 pilot program. 11 As mentioned earlier, a CWD was 12 found in a new county this season in 13 Colbert County. We now have three 14 counties in the CWD management zone: 15 Lauderdale, Colbert and Franklin. We 16 had five cases before this year. We 17 had seven new cases this year. Eleven 18 of those cases are in Lauderdale County 19 and one in Colbert County. 20 Another emphasis this year is our 21 State fishing lakes upgrades. We 22 received \$6 million from the 23 Legislature and the general fund</p> |

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| <p>1 specifically to work on our State lakes 2 to bring some of those dam structures 3 up to the standard of what they need 4 and then to make other improvements so 5 that we can get more use out of those 6 lakes. 7 We're doing work in Marion County 8 Lake, Walker County, Bibb County, 9 DeKalb County, Escambia County, 10 Crenshaw County, Coffee County, Geneva 11 County and maybe more, depending on how 12 the bids come in on the projects we're 13 doing there if we have money left over 14 to do additional -- additional work. 15 We recently reopened the Chambers 16 County Lake after it was closed for 17 renovations and restocking. And that 18 has been very well received by the 19 community in Chambers County. As a 20 matter of fact, the representative for 21 Chambers County saw me at the State 22 House a couple weeks ago and gave me a 23 great big hug and told me how much she</p> | <p>1 appreciated that, and her constituents 2 were very pleased with it. 3 UNIDENTIFIED: Amen. 4 COMMISSIONER BLANKENSHIP: We 5 had -- thank you. Thank you for the -- 6 for the shout out. 7 We had another representative that 8 was concerned about the lake and his 9 county being shut down for renovations. 10 And so, I was able to put the two of 11 them together, and she was able to tell 12 him through this, be patient, you will 13 be giving him a hug, too, after -- how 14 well it worked. 15 We're doing a lot of work through 16 the Deepwater Horizon oil spill. As we 17 mentioned before, in coastal Alabama, 18 there's a lot of projects underway. We 19 have over \$300 million in Deepwater 20 Horizon oil spill projects that we're 21 managing on the coast. Many of those 22 are under construction now. They've 23 been through permitting and design and</p> |
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| <p>1 now construction is underway. The 2 largest of those projects are the 3 Dauphin Island Causeway Protection 4 Projects, about \$26 million under 5 construction. The Dauphin Island East 6 End Beach Renourishment was a \$23 7 million dollar project that has been 8 completed. 9 Gulf Shores-Orange Beach was 10 another sand replenishment along the 11 coast from Gulf Shores to Orange Beach 12 and at Gulf State Park. The Gulf 13 Coast -- Gulf Shores Ecotourism Center 14 is under construction, about \$12 15 million, and that is ready to cut a 16 ribbon, I think, April 28th and ready 17 to open to the public. 18 Moving the sewer outfall in Bayou 19 La Batre is a \$19 million project 20 that's been in the works for more than 21 a decade that is now under 22 construction. Glad to see -- see that 23 happen. When that outfall is moved,</p> | <p>1 that will open up additional areas off 2 of Bayou La Batre and Coden that can be 3 used for oyster and oyster aquaculture 4 once that sewer outfall has moved 5 further offshore. 6 There's a Working Waterfront 7 Project in Fairhope at the Fairhope 8 Pier that is about a \$9 million 9 project. And then in Bayfront Park in 10 South Mobile County, is an \$11 million 11 project that was in cooperation with 12 Mobile County that was funded through 13 the Natural Resource Damage Assessment 14 Trustees; and I am the lead trustee for 15 Alabama on that group. And the ribbon 16 cutting for that is at 2:00 tomorrow. 17 That will finally be open to the public 18 after a very long renovation project. 19 I'm very, very excited about that. 20 ADCNR is acquiring more than 21 13,000 acres of public land in 2024 22 both through Forever Wild and just 23 through our own ADCNR funding.</p> |

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| <p>1 So, I'm excited to have that 2 additional public land available for 3 hunting and public access. 4 We're upgrading shooting ranges as 5 another emphasis in 2025 and 2026. 6 There will be a new range built in 7 Columbiana that's going to be first 8 class and really rival anything that we 9 have in the state. 10 Upgrades at Etowah Range, Cahaba, 11 Swan Creek and others will be coming 12 over the next -- next two years. 13 Our new reservation system for our 14 State Park System came online last 15 year, and it has gone extremely well. 16 When I got here, we were doing about 17 10% of our reservations for our State 18 Parks were done online. Ninety percent 19 (90%) of them had to call a park or go 20 to the park and make those reservations 21 in person, which takes a lot of time 22 from our staff and is very inconvenient 23 for the public. With this new system,</p> | <p>1 from the report last week, 95% of all 2 reservations are being made online. 3 So, we've gone from 10% to 95% 4 with this system, and it has a yield 5 management option so that when we have 6 places of very high demand, whether 7 it's during summer at the Gulf or fall 8 leaf season in the -- in the northern 9 parks, when there's a high demand, we 10 can get more money for those campsites 11 and rooms and be able to put that money 12 right back into the parks. 13 And with that, I would like to 14 recognize our new State Parks Director, 15 Matthew Capps. Matthew, will you stand 16 so that the -- 17 (Mr. Capps standing and 18 applause). 19 COMMISSIONER BLANKENSHIP: Greg 20 Lein, our State Parks Director for 12 21 years, retired in September, and we're 22 glad to have Matthew taking that role. 23 Matthew comes to us with a good</p> |
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| <p>1 business mind and an opportunity to 2 really help us to grow our State Park 3 System and really make it what we all 4 want it to be in our state, and we're 5 well underway. 6 Thank you, Matthew, for -- for 7 your work and your staff's work. 8 The Lodge at Gulf State Park had 9 its best year so far. We opened that, 10 if you'll recall, November the 1st, 11 2018. 2019 was our first full year in 12 operation. 13 So, we -- this has been open for 14 six years. And we are -- As required 15 under the Hilton brand standards, we 16 are renovating those hotel rooms, 17 updating those every -- every six 18 years. 19 So, we've had some of those floors 20 closed at a time as they renovated 21 those. They will all be done in about 22 three weeks. All of them will have 23 been renovated and back like a new</p> | <p>1 place again. 2 So, I'm excited about what all 3 happens down there. We host dozens of 4 meetings a year, conferences down 5 there, people from the State. Instead 6 of going to out-of-state conferences, 7 now they're coming back -- back into 8 state. And we've had a great response 9 to that. And our staff members does a 10 wonderful job, and it's been very, very 11 profitable. We're putting that money 12 right back into our parks. 13 We have a legal compliance audit. 14 We have that every five years. That 15 was just completed, and we had the exit 16 conference a few weeks ago. That's 17 where it looks at every aspect of the 18 Department of Conservation and Natural 19 Resources, all of the things that we do 20 to make sure that we are abiding by 21 State laws and the procedures that are 22 set in place under government. 23 In that, we had a very glowing</p> |

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| <p style="text-align: right;">Page 33</p> <p>1 audit with one issue that we needed to 2 make the policy change dealing with 3 insufficient funds, checks. When 4 somebody writes a bad check, there's a 5 fee that's associated with that. There 6 is a limit on that set in code. And we 7 now have that policy in place that, if 8 somebody gives us a bad check, that we 9 are charging them what's allowed under 10 the -- under the Code of Alabama. 11 Our Forever Wild Field Trial area, 12 we have a new event center that we're 13 building there. Several of the Board 14 members met me -- a couple of Board 15 members met me out there a few weeks 16 ago to look at that property. It is 17 really a jewel of a piece of property 18 for a dog trial. Really -- really one 19 of the best -- is the best in the 20 Southeast, if not the best in the 21 country. 22 And our Lands staff, Patti 23 McCurdy, our State Lands Director, is</p> | <p style="text-align: right;">Page 34</p> <p>1 here. Patti and her staff do a 2 fantastic job managing that. We're 3 investing about \$3 million out there in 4 a new event center and pavilion. We're 5 putting restrooms out in the field 6 trial areas, doubled the size of the 7 paddocks in the barn. So, we have 8 those horse/dog trial events that they 9 have ample property. 10 We're implementing some new 11 campsites out there. So, the ones that 12 want to camp there with their RVs and 13 bring horse trailers, it is beautiful. 14 There's a first-class dog trial area. 15 Now we will have facilities that are 16 commensurate with the trial area out 17 there as soon as this is completed. 18 And we hope to have our May 2026 19 CAB meeting there at the Forever Wild 20 Field Trial area. That would be -- 21 that's our plan at this point, so 22 everybody will get a chance to see it. 23 I did fail to recognize that</p> |
| <p style="text-align: right;">Page 35</p> <p>1 Representative Chris Sells is here. I 2 saw the Representative earlier. Thank 3 you for joining us today, 4 Representative. We appreciate your 5 support for the Department and the 6 things that we have going on in your 7 district down in the Greenville area. 8 With that, Mr. Chairman, that 9 concludes my report. If it suits you, 10 I would like to give Chuck Sykes, our 11 Wildlife and Freshwater Fisheries 12 Director, have him come up and just 13 explain some of the changes that they 14 have recommended on the seasons and bag 15 limits for next year. 16 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Please do. 17 MR. SYKES: Thank you. We'll be 18 kind of flying blind or at least blurry 19 because Board Member Wood has my 20 glasses as he left his in the truck. 21 Really and truly, most of the 22 things that we suggested this year are 23 simply date changes based on the</p> | <p style="text-align: right;">Page 36</p> <p>1 calendar. The one thing that the Board 2 and the public, I think, will find they 3 will be in approval of is we are going 4 to recommend two does per day for all 5 zones except Zone C. So, all zones 6 except C, you will be allowed two 7 antler-less deer per day for the entire 8 season. 9 Tim, that's still just three 10 bucks. But two does a day for the 11 season. That's the biggest change that 12 we recommended this year. There are 13 some minor date adjustments, but that's 14 about it. That's the one that I think 15 the public will be most interested in. 16 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Thank you, sir. 17 And now I'd ask Scott Bannon, our 18 Marine Resources Director, to give an 19 update on the items that they are 20 suggesting changes in their season, the 21 bag limits in places this year. 22 MR. BANNON: Good morning, members 23 of the Board. You have a copy of the</p> |

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| <p style="text-align: right;">Page 37</p> <p>1 recommended changes. I will go ahead, 2 and I'm going to start with one that I 3 failed to put on there is we are making 4 a recommendation to give something 5 back, which is unusual, I think, other 6 than like the two -- you're increasing 7 the two-doe limit is that we -- for our 8 commercial gillnet fishermen in South 9 Alabama, that we increase the flounder 10 bag limit, daily limit, from 40 to 80. 11 We've seen a good positive increase in 12 our -- our flounder landings, and they 13 went from not ever having a limit to 40 14 six years ago. And we think we're in a 15 position -- we can provide them more 16 opportunity to continue to make a 17 living. And that fishery is only 18 prosecuted by about seven anglers with 19 any regularity. 20 In addition, we have proposed to 21 remove the bag limit for captain and 22 crew on Alabama State licensed 23 commercial party boats that are charter</p> | <p style="text-align: right;">Page 38</p> <p>1 boats that only fish in State waters. 2 That they would retain the limits for 3 their customers but not one for 4 themselves. And that was asked for 5 from the community. 6 We're recommending a reduction in 7 sheepshead bag limit from 10 fish per 8 person to 8 fish per person. And 9 that's basically just based on the 10 increased number of anglers and the 11 increased pressure. The stock in 12 general is fine. They're just 13 experiencing a little bit of extra 14 pressure. 15 We're also recommending the 16 removal of the oversized red drum. 17 You're allowed to catch three red drum 18 per day with a 16-to-26-inch bag limit. 19 We currently have the allowance for one 20 of those to be oversized. We would 21 like to remove that to allow an 22 increase in brood stock. 23 We have a recommendation to allow</p> |
| <p style="text-align: right;">Page 39</p> <p>1 an increased shark fishing opportunity 2 for some of our commercial shark 3 fishermen to allow 2,400 feet of what 4 we call "longline." 5 So, it would be a 2,400 foot 6 monofilament line with up to 50 hooks, 7 and they would have to be a 15-ought 8 hook, which is a large hook to prevent 9 bycatch. It would generally only 10 target sharks. 11 They would not be allowed to use 12 squid as bait because squid would 13 attract sea turtles. And we don't want 14 to have a negative interaction with sea 15 turtles. And they would be allowed to 16 fish for a one-hour period. And that 17 way, if they do have unintended catch, 18 that they would be able to potentially 19 release those live. 20 And, finally, we have -- or we 21 have two more. Snook is a new species 22 that is showing up in coastal Alabama, 23 and it's a very highly sought after</p> | <p style="text-align: right;">Page 40</p> <p>1 species. And so, we are recommending 2 that we begin some management measures 3 for those. And we're going to 4 recommend one fish per person at a 5 28-inch minimum total length. And that 6 is what Florida uses, Pensacola area. 7 That's the rule that they have in place 8 that we would -- we would just model 9 that for now. And there's a couple of 10 projects doing some research on that 11 particular species. 12 And lastly is the -- making a 13 recommendation for anyone that takes 14 stingrays or skates by bow and arrow, 15 gig or spear that they must retain 16 those. They get a three-fish limit and 17 cannot cut tails and release them. 18 What we see now is that these bow 19 anglers are shooting a lot of stingrays 20 and stuff on different occasions. And 21 they're shooting them, cutting their 22 tails, and releasing them. 23 And so, we have concerns of the</p> |

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| <p style="text-align: right;">Page 41</p> <p>1 mortality rate for that. So, that 2 we'll make it a mandatory retention of 3 three per person. And you cannot cut 4 the tails and release them. 5 And that -- that is it, 6 Commissioner. 7 COMMISSIONER BLANKENSHIP: All 8 right. Thank you. 9 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: I saw you looked 10 up. I don't know if you had a 11 question. 12 MR. BANNON: It's Scott Bannon. 13 Scott Bannon, Marine Resources 14 Director. 15 COMMISSIONER BLANKENSHIP: The 16 last thing I'll say, Mr. Chairman, 17 before I finish up my report is, I see 18 all of our Conservation enforcement 19 officers in the back of the room. And 20 then outside are our Marine Resources 21 Conservation officers, our Wildlife and 22 Freshwater Fisheries officers, our 23 State Lands officers. And I don't</p> | <p style="text-align: right;">Page 42</p> <p>1 think we have any of our park rangers 2 here this morning. But especially for 3 our CEOs, those, those guys do a 4 fantastic job in a very difficult 5 environment. And I just want to tell 6 y'all how much I appreciate the work 7 that you do. 8 For most of the public, that is 9 who they know from the Department of 10 Conservation are our officers, because 11 that's who they see is whoever is in 12 their county unless they happen to come 13 to an Advisory Board meeting like this. 14 You are the ones that represent ADCNR 15 in your communities. 16 And that's a weighty 17 responsibility, but I appreciate the 18 job that y'all do. Thank you very 19 much. 20 (Applause). 21 COMMISSIONER BLANKENSHIP: Mr. 22 Chairman, I've talked long enough, and 23 I turn it back over to you.</p> |
| <p style="text-align: right;">Page 43</p> <p>1 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Thank you. We 2 enjoyed that. Appreciate the 3 information and the updates. 4 I'd like to take a piggyback just 5 for one moment. Thank Chief Weathers 6 for allowing us the opportunity to have 7 the Honor Guard here today. What a 8 great looking group of gentlemen. And 9 it's -- it's truly an honor to have 10 them. Thank you very much. 11 Our next order of business today 12 is public commentary. That's very 13 important to this Board. I will ask 14 you -- we have 20 -- I think 24 15 speakers today. Be succinct, but I'll 16 ask the speakers to come to the podium, 17 and I'll ask everyone in the 18 auditorium, as I do, to please be 19 respectful, reserve your comments to 20 outside the hall, and no applause or 21 outbursts during the question-and- 22 answer period. 23 For clarity's sake, because I get</p> | <p style="text-align: right;">Page 44</p> <p>1 buzzed by our Court Reporter, Ms. 2 Boggs, I'll ask each Board member to 3 refer to the Chair for questions or 4 comments, and I will admonish each 5 speaker, who will be here to my left, 6 your right, to refer to the Chair for 7 questions, and I will then direct them 8 to the Board members. 9 No inner commentary, no direct 10 asking of questions of the Board 11 members so that Ms. Boggs and I don't 12 get any more sideways than we usually 13 do. 14 Our first speaker today is going 15 to be Mr. Douglas Darr. And as he 16 comes to the podium, you have three 17 minutes. I reserve the opportunity to 18 give you a little more time if 19 necessary to finish a point. And Ms. 20 Betsy Jones is going to be keeping time 21 over there. 22 Well, okay. Let's do this: Hold 23 just one moment. I'm going to call the</p> |

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| <p style="text-align: right;">Page 45</p> <p>1 next speaker. And if he will come down 2 to and sit in the anti-row here and 3 prepare his comments so that we can 4 move as quickly as we can to get -- to 5 get to everybody. 6 So, the next speaker is Mr. Hunter 7 Baker. Mr. Hunter Baker. 8 All right. Go ahead, Mr. Darr. 9 MR. DARR: Thank you. I would 10 like to speak to -- on the proposal to 11 change the bass limits on the Coosa 12 chain. The health of the fishery and 13 the quality of the catching should be a 14 top priority and would result in more 15 visitation. 16 Though introducing a size limit 17 may have a near-term effect on the 18 number of tournaments in the area, I 19 think the improvement in the fisheries 20 would result in a long-term boost to 21 the tourism and the quality of life for 22 local citizens. 23 I may have a somewhat unique</p> | <p style="text-align: right;">Page 46</p> <p>1 viewpoint on this issue. I am a 2 retired biologist for the Alabama 3 Wildlife and Freshwater Fisheries 4 Division. When I was hired back in 5 1990 to help manage the fishery of 6 North Alabama, we were given an 7 opportunity, based upon the data we 8 collected on Largemouth Bass 9 populations in both Guntersville and 10 Wilson, to put a 15-inch minimum length 11 limit on Largemouth Bass. This was due 12 to the extraordinary growth in both of 13 these lakes. Keeping the bass in the 14 lakes would result in better fishing 15 and more pounds being able to be 16 harvested because of the high growth 17 rates. 18 Fishing improved in Guntersville. 19 And since then, Guntersville has been 20 providing excellent fishing relative to 21 most of Alabama and around the country. 22 On the other hand, Wilson's bass 23 population had the best growth in the</p> |
| <p style="text-align: right;">Page 47</p> <p>1 state at the time of the collection, 2 but the less fertile Wilson could not 3 retain great numbers of Threadfin Shad 4 in the lake during the time of 5 sampling. The good news on Wilson is 6 that the State's biologists followed up 7 on the original study and determined 8 the 15-inch size limit was not helping 9 Wilson's Largemouth Bass and the size 10 limit was eliminated for Largemouth 11 Bass. 12 I have great confidence that the 13 State's biologists for Auburn 14 University will follow up any change in 15 regulations and will modify them. This 16 will result in the best fishing that 17 can be obtained, which will result in 18 the most visitation on these reservoirs 19 over time. 20 I would also like to add something 21 that I have not heard, a compromise. I 22 believe that the studies showed that 23 the mortality of tournament fish,</p> | <p style="text-align: right;">Page 48</p> <p>1 especially for Alabama Bass, was much 2 higher during the warmer weather. An 3 innovative compromise would be to allow 4 more sizes of bass to be kept in the 5 live well during the cooler weather and 6 fewer during the warmer periods. 7 For National Bass Trail Tournament 8 trails, I believe that they would like 9 to start in the south early in the year 10 and then they move north as fishing in 11 the northern lakes gets better. The 12 tournaments early in the year should 13 not have much catch and release 14 mortality during the early season, and 15 perhaps those tournaments would be more 16 likely to stop along the Coosa chain. 17 I think it's a shame that we have 18 a forum for people to express their 19 opinion, but the politics got in the 20 way before the people had a chance to 21 express themselves. I thank you for 22 your time. 23 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Hold. Any</p> |

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| <p style="text-align: right;">Page 49</p> <p>1 questions for the speaker? 2 (No response). 3 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Thank you. Thank 4 you, Mr. Darr. 5 Mr. Hunter -- or Hunter. The next 6 speaker is Gann Bryan. 7 Go ahead, please. 8 MR. BAKER: All right. Thank you. 9 I have concerns regarding the 10 rules and regulations that have been 11 placed on the Swan Creek Wildlife 12 Management Area in Limestone County. 13 The -- To start, I've sent multiple 14 emails to the ADCNR and the Lieutenant 15 Governor's Office to which I received 16 one response, a generic -- a generic 17 response that did not address my issues 18 and wasn't even addressed to me. I 19 received an email and a letter 20 addressed to somebody else. 21 I asked questions about the 22 policies and procedures that were 23 taking place to change the regulations</p> | <p style="text-align: right;">Page 50</p> <p>1 and how the -- how the management area 2 was managed and being able to be 3 hunted, including the roles of certain 4 people. Everything is included in the 5 packet I presented. 6 The number that was presented to 7 whoever -- whoever that may have been, 8 Mr. Blankenship quoted in an email that 9 only 30 people were allowed to be drawn 10 in the old system with permanent blinds 11 and hunt the management area for the 12 whole season. I did the -- I did the 13 math. 14 Under the current system in place 15 now, including certain assumptions, 16 over 5,000 people are able to hunt in 17 the management area. In the old 18 system, the number was over 9,000, not 19 including hunters that were hunting 20 outside of the permanent drawn blinds, 21 which was allowed and practiced within 22 certain rules. 23 I also spoke at last year's May</p> |
| <p style="text-align: right;">Page 51</p> <p>1 CAB meeting, and all of the issues I 2 noted came to fruition. Poor water 3 management, habitat management, you 4 know, if there's no -- if there's no 5 food, there's no ducks, which TVA also 6 plays a part in this, killing the grass 7 on the river. 8 The -- the management area 9 currently is allowed to accommodate for 10 28% of the waterfowl season, which is 11 60 days; 28% of that on a management 12 area that is primarily managed for 13 waterfowl hunting. 14 The spots that are allowed now, 15 many of those spots go unfilled. I've 16 seen it myself and the few times that I 17 was allowed to go up there this year. 18 And they -- One of the issues that led 19 us to this was lack of enforcement, 20 presence in action with, according to 21 the Alabama Fishing, Hunting and 22 fishing digest, 66% of our tax dollars, 23 including management area licenses that</p> | <p style="text-align: right;">Page 52</p> <p>1 we pay for in hopes of drawing some 2 people, in hopes of drawing a duck 3 blind or a SLA draw. You know, we just 4 like to see, you know, a return in 5 that. 6 MS. JONES: Time. 7 MR. BAKER: Now I just urge you to 8 look at some of the things that I 9 presented in the packet and take these 10 things into consideration. 11 Thank you. 12 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Thank you. Hold. 13 Any questions? 14 (No response). 15 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Thank you very 16 much. 17 Mr. Bryan. The next speaker after 18 Mr. Bryan is Brent Armstrong. 19 Please go ahead. 20 MR. BRYAN: Oh, okay. All right. 21 I'm Gann Bryan. Thanks for having me, 22 and thanks for getting my name right. 23 That doesn't happen very often. Okay.</p> |

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| <p style="text-align: right;">Page 53</p> <p>1 Three minutes goes fast. So, here it 2 is. 3 I'm here on the behalf of over 4 1,500 hunters that hunt Swan Creek 5 Management Area in North Alabama. And 6 I've got some polling data that's in 7 the packet. It's just the first three 8 pages. The rest of it is just takes 9 about six or seven minutes to read it. 10 I appreciate it if you would. 11 First off, the State has reduced 12 our duck season to 30% of the allowed 13 hunting season per federal guidelines. 14 The maximum opportunity for a hunter at 15 Swan Creek is 18 half days out of 60 16 full days. Okay? 17 Basically, we get one weekend a 18 year if we're lucky enough to draw it. 19 And there's two Tuesdays and Thursday 20 draws at 4:00 a.m. that's tough for us 21 old guys. And if we drew a spot at 22 every draw, we only get 13% of the 23 federally allowed waterfowl season to</p> | <p style="text-align: right;">Page 54</p> <p>1 hunt. 2 So, I'm asking you guys if you're 3 golfers or fishermen, if the State said 4 you can only play golf 18 half days and 5 it had to be in a 60-day window of 6 time, you would probably sell your 7 clubs and quit playing. 8 And so, that's going to happen in 9 our state. I know. I've been there 10 for 60 years -- I've been hunting there 11 for 40 years. I'm 60 years old, and I 12 know all the guys there. And they're 13 just not buying the permits anymore. 14 They're not buying the State stamps. 15 It's not worth it to be on -- I got to 16 hunt one day out there last year. I've 17 been hunting there since I was a kid. 18 That hurts my soul to only be able to 19 go hunt that place one time. 20 So, I have supporting data. 94% 21 of 1,500 people polled want it changed 22 away from this. We want more days. 23 Give us our Monday, Wednesday, and</p> |
| <p style="text-align: right;">Page 55</p> <p>1 Thursday back. Keep the SOA draw on 2 the weekends, because I know the State 3 loves that, and that's great. But on 4 the weekdays, give us all five days 5 back. Shut it off at noon still. That 6 gives the ducks a chance to rest, but 7 it'll spread us hunters out and give us 8 more opportunity to hunt. Okay? 9 The second thing is, please find a 10 way to let us pick the location that we 11 hunt. Right now, we have to go 12 wherever we draw. And if 15 groups 13 show up for 40 spots, five of the best 14 spots might not even get drawn. So, 15 you're sitting there hunting, and 16 there's a spot not even getting hunted, 17 and the ducks are pouring into it, but 18 you can't go over there. So, please 19 find a way to let us pick our spot. 20 The first three pages, if you guys 21 would read them, you'll all have this. 22 It'll take you a minute. It'll talk 23 about the polls that I did. We would</p> | <p style="text-align: right;">Page 56</p> <p>1 like to go to 60 spots instead of 40. 2 Ninety-something percent of the people 3 say they want to do that. Ninety-nine 4 percent want us to be able to pick our 5 own spot, and 94% just want it changed 6 from this -- from this current system. 7 Thank you. 8 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Hold, please. 9 Any questions? Mr. Jones? 10 MR. RAYMOND JONES: Yes. You 11 know, I've talked again on numerous 12 occasions about this situation, and I 13 think the Department has done some -- 14 some really good things in this regard. 15 But I would like to ask Chuck and Seth 16 if y'all will look into -- is there a 17 way to incorporate more time to -- to 18 allow more people to have an 19 opportunity to hunt. 20 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Noted. Any other 21 questions? 22 (No response). 23 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Thank you.</p> |

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| <p style="text-align: right;">Page 57</p> <p>1 MR. BRYAN: Thank you.</p> <p>2 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: The next speaker</p> <p>3 after Mr. Armstrong is Rush Meriwether.</p> <p>4 MR. ARMSTRONG: On the</p> <p>5 legalization of pets of native species,</p> <p>6 I provided all the information you've</p> <p>7 asked for. Now, I'm asking for your</p> <p>8 participation. This issue, it isn't</p> <p>9 about owning unusual pets. It's about</p> <p>10 the State bringing violence to our</p> <p>11 doorsteps and doing harm to our</p> <p>12 families under the guise that these</p> <p>13 animals are somehow dangerous with no</p> <p>14 proof, precedence, or even evidence of</p> <p>15 their claims.</p> <p>16 As I said before, I don't blame</p> <p>17 the DNR for this. Their information</p> <p>18 and directives are handed down to them</p> <p>19 by politicians who have no more</p> <p>20 experience with these animals than you</p> <p>21 and all too often less than stellar</p> <p>22 moral integrity.</p> <p>23 With the suggested bill I sent to</p> | <p style="text-align: right;">Page 58</p> <p>1 all of you, we can put an end to this</p> <p>2 ridiculous practice, further reduce</p> <p>3 rabies risk, educate the public on the</p> <p>4 proper handling of these animals and,</p> <p>5 by my estimation, generate between \$5</p> <p>6 million and \$10 million in the first</p> <p>7 two years. With this money, we can</p> <p>8 fund educational programs, officer</p> <p>9 training, and potentially even our own</p> <p>10 oral rabies vaccine program, the</p> <p>11 federal version of which is primarily</p> <p>12 responsible for the low numbers we see</p> <p>13 today but has seen reduced funding in</p> <p>14 recent years.</p> <p>15 Please stand with me and our</p> <p>16 fellow Alabamians as we build a freer,</p> <p>17 safer and responsible relationship with</p> <p>18 our native species. I ask that you</p> <p>19 motion to bring these measures to the</p> <p>20 Agricultural and Natural Resources</p> <p>21 Committee in a bill that will finally</p> <p>22 bring an end to this nightmare for</p> <p>23 Alabama.</p> |
| <p style="text-align: right;">Page 59</p> <p>1 Thank you.</p> <p>2 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Hold on. Just</p> <p>3 any questions? Any comments?</p> <p>4 (No response).</p> <p>5 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Well-spoken.</p> <p>6 Thank you very much.</p> <p>7 The next speaker, Mr. Meriwether.</p> <p>8 And the next speaker after Mr.</p> <p>9 Meriwether is Mr. Ashurst, William</p> <p>10 Ashurst.</p> <p>11 MR. MERIWETHER: Good morning,</p> <p>12 gentlemen.</p> <p>13 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Good morning.</p> <p>14 MR. MERIWETHER: I'm here to talk</p> <p>15 about -- My name is Rush Meriwether. I</p> <p>16 live in Montgomery County in Matthews,</p> <p>17 Alabama. I'm here today to talk about</p> <p>18 dove season, which is my passion, and</p> <p>19 I've done it for 60 years.</p> <p>20 And what specifically, I've got a</p> <p>21 handout, but my biggest concern is</p> <p>22 opening dove season as early in</p> <p>23 September as it's opened.</p> | <p style="text-align: right;">Page 60</p> <p>1 It's very hot, as you know. And</p> <p>2 if you've ever hunted doves, you can</p> <p>3 see as they fly and they act in the</p> <p>4 early summers and in September, they're</p> <p>5 nesting. I've had instances where</p> <p>6 we've killed birds with eggs in them,</p> <p>7 and surely they're birds that have yet</p> <p>8 young in the nest.</p> <p>9 And opening the season early kills</p> <p>10 those birds and prohibits them from</p> <p>11 raising birds, which would increase</p> <p>12 to -- can increase the numbers that we</p> <p>13 would might be able to harvest during</p> <p>14 the season hours if it was open later</p> <p>15 in the year.</p> <p>16 And that's pretty well what I'm</p> <p>17 here for. I've come before about the</p> <p>18 season. The next year I spoke. Y'all</p> <p>19 moved it forward one week to, like,</p> <p>20 September the 15th, but then it moved</p> <p>21 right back to the first -- the first</p> <p>22 Saturday in September before Labor Day.</p> <p>23 And I think that's just too early.</p> |

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| <p style="text-align: right;">Page 61</p> <p>1 Nobody I've spoke with has -- 2 understands why it opens that early. 3 And then I'm here to get you to 4 consider perhaps moving that forward to 5 maybe the third week of September or 6 later. 7 If you're old like me, you 8 remember when dove season used to open 9 October the 1st, and that's when your 10 license ran, October the 1st to 11 September the 30th. So, in the old 12 days, that's when it opened, October 13 the 1st. Now it's moved back almost a 14 month. And I think that has a 15 detrimental toll on the birds that -- 16 that we're able to harvest because of 17 it. 18 Thank you for giving me an 19 opportunity. 20 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Just hold up. 21 Any questions? 22 (No response). 23 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Thank you very</p> | <p style="text-align: right;">Page 62</p> <p>1 much. 2 MR. MERIWETHER: Thank you-all for 3 giving me an opportunity to speak. 4 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: The next speaker 5 after Mr. Ashurst is Gene Myers. 6 Please go ahead. 7 MR. ASHURST: Thank you. My name 8 is William Ashurst, and I've been an 9 avid duck hunter for over 65 years. I 10 want to thank the Board for allowing me 11 to voice my opinions on this special 12 youth day duck hunt that takes place 13 after the regular season. I'm against 14 it for several reasons. 15 Our predominant duck is a wood 16 duck, which starts nesting early 17 February, and this hunt could disrupt 18 their nesting. It is probable that 19 some of the birds being shot have eggs 20 in them ready to lay. It's also 21 probable that some of the birds being 22 shot have already laid a clutch of 23 eggs. And it may be the case that some</p> |
| <p style="text-align: right;">Page 63</p> <p>1 birds have hatched their clutch out and 2 leave the young to die. And I don't 3 understand why the youth get an extra 4 day to hunt when they have a chance to 5 hunt every day of the season. 6 And I also don't understand why we 7 bring the season in the Friday after 8 Thanksgiving for two days and then out 9 for a week. 10 Thank you for allowing me to voice 11 my opinions. 12 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: All right. Any 13 questions? 14 (No response). 15 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Thank you very 16 much. 17 The next speaker is Irene 18 Langford. Go ahead, Mr. Myers. 19 MR. MYERS: I want my glasses on 20 before you hit the clock. 21 My name is Gene Myers, and I'm 22 from Gulf Shores. I appreciate the 23 opportunity to speak to you today in</p> | <p style="text-align: right;">Page 64</p> <p>1 regards to nighttime hunting season for 2 coyotes and hogs. I'm here to ask that 3 you consider changes to the current 4 nighttime hunting regulations regarding 5 the season length. 6 Nighttime hunting is a rapidly 7 growing sector of the hunting 8 landscape. The sport is quickly 9 evolving and growing in popularity, 10 especially as the price of thermal 11 equipment comes down and becomes 12 available to more and more hunters who 13 enjoy hunting both coyotes and hogs. 14 Typically, a night hunter has 15 spent money on a thermal scope, a 16 tripod and an electric collar filled 17 with sounds used to interact with 18 coyotes. In some respect, the sport is 19 a lot like turkey hunting because it is 20 quite interactive. For many, this is 21 the reason for the addiction. The 22 ability to call in a coyote is much 23 like trying to call in a gobbler. And</p> |

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| <p style="text-align: right;">Page 65</p> <p>1 like a wise old turkey, you can educate 2 coyotes when you make a bad setup. 3 I was once told by someone a lot 4 smarter than me that you come to a 5 meeting about an issue, just don't come 6 to bitch, but instead offer some 7 suggestions to start a constructive 8 dialogue. In this case, my request is 9 you allow the harvesting of coyotes and 10 hogs year-round on private property if 11 the landowner or controlling interest 12 allowed permission. I also think that 13 foxes and bobcats should have a special 14 season for nighttime harvesting. 15 Last year, Commissioner 16 Blankenship announced a pilot program 17 called the Nighttime Nuisance Wildlife 18 Control Permit, which was a start, but 19 was actually quite cumbersome and one 20 had to jump through a multitude of 21 hoops to participate and fulfill the 22 requirements. 23 In many respects, I see this as a</p> | <p style="text-align: right;">Page 66</p> <p>1 flashback to the deer hunting issue a 2 few years back. In my opinion, at that 3 time, the Department had to be dragged 4 reluctantly into this issue. It took 5 several attempts and piecemeal 6 gyrations over a few year period to 7 finally get where we are today. 8 Initially you could bait, but you 9 couldn't hunt within 100 yards of the 10 bait, and it couldn't be within line of 11 sight. I think there are a couple 12 other stipulations as well as the 13 regulations evolved. 14 Finally common sense prevailed, 15 and we have the current sensible 16 regulations and the ability to buy an 17 additional license for those of us who 18 wish to hunt over bait. 19 I ask that you do not allow this 20 issue to suffer the same fate and 21 become a sprig of bureaucratic kudzu in 22 which procrastination only delays the 23 inevitable. For those commissioners</p> |
| <p style="text-align: right;">Page 67</p> <p>1 who have never been on a nighttime 2 thermal hunt, I'm offering you an 3 invitation to participate with someone 4 in your area. It may give you some 5 perspective when understanding the 6 sport and its growing popularity and 7 the need for regulation changes -- 8 MS. JONES: Time. 9 MR. MYERS: -- to adapt to the 10 sport's booming popularity in Alabama. 11 And I want to thank all the CEOs 12 who have to do all the dirty work. And 13 I appreciate the ladies in the back who 14 manned that table this morning. 15 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Thank you. Hold 16 just one moment. Any questions? Any 17 comments? Anything? 18 (No response). 19 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Thank you very 20 much. 21 Ms. Langford. And then the next 22 speaker is Meredith Caddell. 23 MS. LANGFORD: Hello. My name is</p> | <p style="text-align: right;">Page 68</p> <p>1 Irene Langford. We run an outfitter 2 guide business west of Autaugaville in 3 Autauga County. Deer, 32 years. We 4 quit the turkey a while ago, did it 5 forever. We do nighttime thermal hog 6 hunts now for 12 years. 7 We have a lot of different hunters 8 come from a lot of different areas all 9 over the United States. I think that 10 y'all's fee for non-residents is way 11 too high. You're looking at almost 12 \$200 added on to their hunt. These 13 things are feral animals. They're 14 tearing up our world. They're causing 15 all kinds of issues. We need to have 16 people come in here and not be 17 dissuaded by the amount that it costs 18 over and above what the Outfitter 19 charges. 20 Another thing that I am a little 21 upset about is the baiting of deer. 22 Y'all talk about the disease coming 23 into more and more counties now.</p> |

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| <p style="text-align: right;">Page 69</p> <p>1 You've got deer eating on the ground. 2 You've got most folks using bait as 3 corn. Corn has no nutritional value. 4 We do not bait on our place, and we see 5 plenty of deer. I do not even allow 6 hunters to bring a bag of corn and put 7 it out while they're hunting. 8 I think it's going to be the 9 detriment of our deer allowing baiting. 10 They're all eating in one place and 11 supposedly they get it from saliva and 12 mixture and everybody is throwing it 13 out of feeders. They're all eating in 14 the same area. I would like to see the 15 baiting law abolished. It has no 16 nutritional value. Corn does. 17 And, two, the hunters are going to 18 get lazy, and our deer are going to 19 suffer. They're going to not bring 20 their little tractors. They're not 21 going to plow up their acre or half an 22 acre green spot. And to me, that's 23 baiting. But, heck, it's there when</p> | <p style="text-align: right;">Page 70</p> <p>1 the deer are gone. I mean, when the 2 hunters are gone, the green stuff is 3 there. I think the baiting that y'all 4 decided to do is going to be the 5 detriment of our deer in our state. As 6 you can see, it's moving in. 7 The other issue that I have is the 8 license expiring August 31st. Y'all 9 are double dipping folks that have to 10 buy or want to come hog hunting on -- 11 you know, before August 31st, they have 12 to buy an additional license after 13 August 31st. 14 My next point is, I think the game 15 wardens -- and we appreciate all our 16 game wardens so much. I like to see 17 their trucks go by. Y'all really need 18 to find some money to buy them 19 thermals. They need to be able to 20 count heads. We're asking them to go 21 into the dark to get somebody that is 22 doing an illegal activity, that they 23 think they could literally -- they</p> |
| <p style="text-align: right;">Page 71</p> <p>1 could literally tape it. They could 2 count heads. If they had a thermal 3 monocular that recorded, they could 4 record the crimes. They could count 5 heads, and they would know who is in 6 the woods -- 7 MS. JONES: Time. 8 MS. LANGFORD: -- that they're 9 going after. We've been using Pulsar. 10 We really like the Pulsar brand. 11 There's a lot of them out there. But 12 just like their badge and their gun, 13 they need to have a thermal unit to 14 count heads. 15 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Thank you. Any 16 questions? 17 COMMISSIONER BLANKENSHIP: I would 18 like to make one comment. One, thank 19 you both for your comments. Mr. Myers, 20 I didn't know you hunted, too. I 21 thought you just worked on boats down 22 there in Gulf Shores. 23 MR. MYERS: When I retire. My</p> | <p style="text-align: right;">Page 72</p> <p>1 retirement is all over the country. 2 COMMISSIONER BLANKENSHIP: Good to 3 see you. 4 Several of the things that both of 5 y'all mentioned are things that were 6 bills that were passed or legislative 7 items, not things that this Board has 8 purview over. The baiting was a 9 legislative act. The cost of the 10 nighttime season for non-residents is a 11 fee that was set by the legislature. 12 The license date range when those 13 licenses expire was a piece of 14 legislation. 15 Anyway, just thank you for your 16 comments and we'll take -- I understand 17 those. But just -- just know that 18 those are legislative. 19 MS. LANGFORD: But can I comment 20 on that, on what you just said? Y'all 21 are appointed. You have a lot of 22 clout. You can talk to people better 23 than we can, and they would listen to</p> |

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| <p style="text-align: right;">Page 73</p> <p>1 y'all better than us. 2 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: I wouldn't 3 necessarily disagree with you, but I 4 couldn't agree with that 5 wholeheartedly. Thank you very much. 6 The next speaker. The next 7 speaker after Ms. Caddell is Michelle 8 Dinkins. Please go ahead. 9 MS. CADDELL: Good morning. My 10 name is Meredith Caddell, and I'm a 11 lifetime resident of Bullock County. 12 I'm a wife, a mother, a daughter, and a 13 steward for the land. 14 Today, I am here to propose a 15 reduced bag limit for turkey hunting. 16 By reducing the bag limit to two birds 17 per hunter, we can help ensure turkey 18 hunting will be around for the next 19 generation. 20 Many, many hunters should be able 21 to tell you the multitude of challenges 22 that turkeys in the wild face, whether 23 it's their natural predators, their</p> | <p style="text-align: right;">Page 74</p> <p>1 habitat reduction, and now also the new 2 effects of corn baiting by deer 3 aflatoxins. We don't want to add 4 hunters to that list. We want to be 5 able to hunt. 6 And I would like to make it known 7 I am an avid hunter, and I believe in 8 harvesting. But why does Alabama have 9 the second highest bag limit in the 10 state second to only -- I mean, not the 11 state, the country, second to only 12 Texas. When you compare the land mass 13 of Texas to Alabama, those numbers are 14 unbalanced. 15 And if you look at the other 16 states near us -- Mississippi, Florida, 17 Georgia, Tennessee -- all of their 18 limits are lower than ours. 19 We are faced with variables we 20 cannot control, but that does not mean 21 our hands are tied. We have choices 22 and actions that we can make, and it is 23 our responsibility to do so. We can</p> |
| <p style="text-align: right;">Page 75</p> <p>1 educate on the effects of aflatoxins 2 and corn baiting and land management, 3 but that's only placing a bandaid over 4 the real issue. And the real issue is 5 that the turkey population is currently 6 at a hold steady, but it's really been 7 declining over the past decade. 8 So, I obviously was not alive in 9 the 1950s, but my dad and his friends 10 have told me stories of growing up. 11 There were no wild deer. There were no 12 wild turkeys. I can't imagine that. 13 And I'm so thankful for the efforts of 14 the conservationists and landowners 15 like Jeff Sorrell who took action and 16 allowed me to grow up being able to 17 hunt as a kid and see wild deer and 18 wild turkey. We need to learn from the 19 past to protect our future. 20 I don't want what happened to the 21 quail to happen to our turkeys. Union 22 Springs in Bullock County, my hometown, 23 is the field trial capital of the</p> | <p style="text-align: right;">Page 76</p> <p>1 world. But yet plantation owners have 2 to buy farm raised quail and release 3 them to run their trials. I don't want 4 that to happen to our turkeys. And 5 1950s show us that farmed turkeys 6 released in the wild, that doesn't 7 work. 8 I am here for the turkeys and for 9 the hunters. If we do not make 10 adjustments, then we will see the end 11 of wild turkey hunting. Future hunters 12 will either condemn us or thank us for 13 the choices that we make today. 14 So, let's make the right choices. 15 Thank you. 16 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Thank you, 17 Meredith. Any questions? Comments? 18 (No response). 19 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Thank you, 20 Meredith. 21 The next speaker is Michelle 22 Dinkins. The speaker after Michelle is 23 Phil Slay.</p> |

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| <p style="text-align: right;">Page 77</p> <p>1 MS. DINKINS: Good morning. My 2 name is Michelle Dinkins. 3 I have 100 acres right on the 4 Barbour County and Henry County line on 5 County Road 67. I was raised on the 6 outskirts of the natural forest, and I 7 am an avid deer and hog hunter. I'm 8 representing 24 other hunters in my 9 area, including four owners of the 10 hunting lodges and lease property. And 11 we are presenting our request here this 12 morning. 13 Due to the late rut schedule in 14 our area, we are requesting to start 15 our season two weeks later and end two 16 weeks later in our zone. Most of our 17 babies are born mid to late September, 18 which means that they aren't even 19 conceived until March. 20 In our corridor of the county, 21 there has been a huge decline in the 22 number of deer that we are seeing on 23 properties to the point where hunters</p> | <p style="text-align: right;">Page 78</p> <p>1 are telling the lease and the lodge 2 owners that they're not going to be 3 back because they were unable to 4 harvest a deer, particularly an antler 5 deer, this season. 6 Starting and extending the hunting 7 season, two weeks later in our zone 8 would help thin out the population of 9 the antler deer, especially since 10 Barbour County is limited to having 11 three points on one side for a legal 12 harvest, which I don't have a problem 13 with that. 14 I do understand that the numbers 15 reported on record are higher this past 16 season compared to the previous season 17 for the two counties. But something is 18 going on in our corridor there, and we 19 would like to know how many of the deer 20 harvested were antler deer versus doe 21 because it was a rare sighting for us 22 to see this season an antler deer 23 during daylight hours, and how many of</p> |
| <p style="text-align: right;">Page 79</p> <p>1 the reported harvests were recorded 2 from the WMAs versus private or leased 3 properties. That may be skewing the 4 numbers since the WMAs are generally a 5 more controlled environment. 6 It's particularly concerning when 7 I personally spent 232 hours hunting 8 during the months of January and early 9 February, including hunting in eight 10 inches of snow for the first time in my 11 life in various places and never heard 12 any rifle shots around me. For the 13 first time in decades, I did not 14 harvest an antler deer and neither did 15 any of the adjacent landowners hunting 16 a combined 868 acres. 17 We are seeing an alarming amount 18 of predators like coyotes, bobcats, 19 hogs, which all eat our turkey, quail 20 eggs, and our little fawns. Therefore, 21 we are also requesting to lower the doe 22 limit to three or five per season in 23 our zone instead of the one per day</p> | <p style="text-align: right;">Page 80</p> <p>1 just for a couple years, to allow the 2 population to replenish itself in that 3 area. 4 I appreciate your time and 5 consideration. 6 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Hold just one 7 moment. Any questions? 8 (No response). 9 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: All right. Thank 10 you very much. Well-spoken. 11 The next speaker, is this you? 12 MR. SLAY: It is. 13 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Mr. Slay. The 14 speaker after Mr. Slay is Mr. Jeff 15 Weller. 16 MR. SLAY: Well, everybody has 17 been asking me what was in that box. 18 It is a meal, and it is also a turkey 19 meal that is bad. And it's whole corn. 20 We've been in here, I guess, at -- Phil 21 Slay, Chambers County. And thank you, 22 Mr. Blankenship. Last week I went 23 rabbit hunting. When I went by the</p> |

20 (Pages 77 to 80)

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| <p style="text-align: right;">Page 81</p> <p>1 county lake, there was already boats 2 lined out all the way to County Road 3 83. 4 Corn is our problem, and how do we 5 deal with it? Like the young man said 6 a while ago, the State Legislature told 7 us we're going to start feeding corn. 8 And we got to play those cards that we 9 are dealt. 10 And I don't want to disagree with 11 anybody, but I use corn on my farm. If 12 I want to synchronize and get my cattle 13 to recycle and breed, I'll increase 14 their TDN, which is with corn, because 15 it is 90% total decibel nutrients. And 16 if -- and then I can have, if I got my 17 sheep, I can have twins. And that's 18 what I want to have. 19 Now, when we -- our breeding 20 season on our deer is we start -- 21 everybody when they start hunting, 22 starts putting this corn out and in 23 piles and in tons and tons and all your</p> | <p style="text-align: right;">Page 82</p> <p>1 neighbors putting out corn, and those 2 does go and eat. And then, hey, their 3 nutritional level has increased. And 4 then when they ovulate and when they 5 get bred, they have twins. And then 6 when deer season is over with, all the 7 corn is gone away, and here she is 8 coming to my pastures and eating all my 9 grass. And, you know, and it's not 10 doing our deer population any good. 11 It's increasing our deer population. 12 And I would also recommend that 13 with everything with our reporting 14 system, if you go back and you can look 15 at the season of '23-'24, how many deer 16 was killed in harvest in Alabama or 17 estimated killed, and it's about a 18 one-to-one ratio of does to bucks. 19 If you buy a corn permit on your 20 hunting license, I recommend that you 21 have to kill six does before you can 22 kill a buck, because it we're -- I 23 mean, it is -- We're making more, more,</p> |
| <p style="text-align: right;">Page 83</p> <p>1 more deer. And then when we have limit 2 to what bucks we kill, all these deer 3 with bad horns, no horns, breeding our 4 does because we want to do trophy 5 hunts, and we kill all those deer. 6 And I will say this: In Chambers 7 County on the last Sunday of January, a 8 man lost his life over a deer. And, 9 you know, we need to do something with 10 our population. 11 MS. JONES: Time. 12 MR. SLAY: In Chambers County, 13 there's more deer killed with cars than 14 they are in -- that they are in with 15 guns. And I got more information, and 16 I didn't get a chance to do it. 17 But also the turkeys, you know, 18 with all the diseases, we need to 19 utilize the Commissioner's Office with 20 the State veterinarians and also Dr. 21 Phillips', the extension veterinarians 22 of Auburn University, consult them and 23 ask them what we need to do about all</p> | <p style="text-align: right;">Page 84</p> <p>1 this -- these problems. 2 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Thank you, Mr. 3 Slay. 4 MR. SLAY: Yes, sir. 5 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Appreciate you 6 coming here. Well -- well-spoken. 7 Mr. Jeff Weller is the next 8 speaker. After Jeff is Tim Horton. 9 MR. SLAY: I don't get any 10 questions from them? 11 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: I don't think so, 12 no. I don't think there are any 13 questions about the corn issues. Thank 14 you. I was fearful there was something 15 alive in that thing. 16 MR. SLAY: Well, it was like this: 17 You wouldn't want to feed this meal 18 right here to an infant, would you? 19 And would you want to feed this right 20 here to an infant? All these people 21 that put this corn out and got mold all 22 over it, give it to our baby turkeys. 23 We're killing our turkeys.</p> |

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| <p>1 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Thank you. Thank 2 you. 3 MR. SLAY: They're not hunters. 4 They're killers. 5 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Thank you very 6 much. 7 Mr. Horton, did you hear me? 8 You're there now. No, that's fine. 9 The next speaker is Jeff Weller. 10 MR. WELLER: Yeah, good morning. 11 Good morning. Jeff Weller here. I'm 12 from the great metropolis of Pintlala, 13 Alabama. And the lady before me stole 14 my thunder. 15 Of course, I'm a bit -- I love 16 deer hunting. I started back to bow 17 hunting when crossbow season came in. 18 I thank you for that. 19 And, you know, as you know, 20 crossbow season starts around October 21 15th. And I remember every year going 22 out there, you know, it's 70, 80 23 degrees. And when gun season comes in,</p> | <p>1 I put my crossbow in the closet, take 2 my gun, and hunt through December -- or 3 February the 10th, which is normally 4 our coldest month of the year. 5 And what I'm here for is just to 6 recommend -- and I'm sure I'm not the 7 only one and this lady here is not the 8 only one -- that has recommended that 9 we move the season up starting -- bow 10 season starting, you know, November 11 1st, and then gun season starting -- or 12 finishing through the end of February. 13 Another reason, not just because 14 of the weather, but me and other 15 hunters have mentioned that we see 16 fawns, young, young fawns when we're 17 bow hunting. You really shouldn't see 18 them right then. 19 And I know, you know, they -- some 20 of these does, they drop late, and the 21 worst thing you want to do is, you 22 know, pop a doe bow hunting, not 23 noticing the spotted fawn there right</p> |
| Page 87 | Page 88 |
| <p>1 behind her. 2 And so, you know, I really 3 recommend moving the -- the bow season 4 starting around the 1st of November and 5 ending the gun season at the end of 6 February. 7 And one thing that one person was 8 mentioning about two does a day for the 9 northern section. I'll tell you, where 10 I hunt, Montgomery County, I mean, it's 11 nothing for me to see one buck for 12 every 15 or 20 does. I mean, it's 13 ridiculous the number of does I've 14 seen. 15 So, I -- even if it's not the 16 whole southern part of the state of 17 Alabama, but even Montgomery and 18 Lowndes County. I've hunted Lowndes 19 County, and it's just, you know, herds 20 of does before you see the first buck. 21 So, that is what I wanted to 22 mention. 23 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Thank you, Mr.</p> | <p>1 Weller. 2 Any questions for Mr. Weller? 3 (No response). 4 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: It seems that two 5 does per day in regular season is going 6 to help solve your problem. 7 MR. WELLER: It certainly would. 8 And one thing I wanted to mention about 9 hunting over corn. 10 Hunting over corn is not 11 guaranteed. I've hunted over corn 12 many, many times and not seen a deer 13 within, you know, 100 yards. However, 14 what's the difference between hunting 15 over a pile of corn than me in a stand 16 hunting over a cornfield. I mean, I 17 see -- you know, I see just as many 18 deer over a hunting -- over a cornfield 19 than I do over a pile of corn. 20 But -- and I'm -- I'm selective. 21 I think most deer hunters, ethical deer 22 hunters are selective. I killed four 23 does this past year with one buck. I</p> |

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| <p style="text-align: right;">Page 89</p> <p>1 must have seen 15 to 100 does that I 2 could have killed. 3 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Thank you. Thank 4 you, Mr. Weller. 5 Mr. Horton. The next speaker is 6 Mr. Cal Crowder. 7 MR. HORTON: Hello, I'm Tim Horton 8 from Franklin County, Alabama. And I'm 9 here to talk about the chronic wasting 10 disease regulations proposed by the 11 State and here really to represent the 12 deer breeders and also the free-range 13 hunters and the preserve hunters in the 14 state. 15 As you guys can see there in my 16 packet it is pretty big. I was floored 17 that I only had three minutes. I 18 really -- I know Jeff and a lot of you 19 guys. I'd like to have time with a lot 20 of you, as well. 21 But, you know, guys, we, you're 22 not going to have room in this building 23 in about five years to -- to discuss</p> | <p style="text-align: right;">Page 90</p> <p>1 what's coming with chronic wasting 2 disease and the protocols put on in the 3 states. One of my favorite things that 4 we had in the meeting was Mr. 5 Blankenship telling us that we're 6 looking at -- we're looking at what 7 worked in other states and what didn't 8 in other states. 9 As you guys know, we are fortunate 10 to have probably the leading orthopedic 11 surgeon in our state with Dr. Andrews. 12 Us not looking at what Dr. Chris 13 Seabury says about chronic wasting 14 disease would be the single most 15 irresponsible thing to do as our state 16 looks at how to manage protocols with 17 chronic wasting disease. If you guys 18 are taking notes, I'm going to give you 19 some information here. 20 Dr. Chris Seabury is the foremost 21 respected person that has ever studied 22 prion disease. If you go and look on 23 the Facebook page called "Deer and Deer</p> |
| <p style="text-align: right;">Page 91</p> <p>1 Hunter," about seven or eight days ago 2 was probably the best thing that I've 3 ever watched explaining chronic wasting 4 disease. 5 So, a couple of things you're 6 going to see in the packet there -- and 7 this is not to knock Mr. Sykes at 8 all -- but you're going to see that 9 Chuck Sykes is on the Board of 10 Directors with the National Deer 11 Association. Like 40 other states in 12 the US, we legally license can have 13 breeder pens, that we do in Franklin 14 County, Alabama. Mr. Sykes is on the 15 Board of Directors for the National 16 Deer Association who is completely 17 against it. If it was their choice, 18 they would eradicate every deer pen and 19 high fence in the country. 20 Again, I philosophically don't 21 know Mr. Sykes' views. But if you read 22 the Board rules from the National Deer 23 Association, you'll see that that's</p> | <p style="text-align: right;">Page 92</p> <p>1 their wishes. And when Mr. Sykes is 2 making those decisions, that makes it 3 tough. 4 You're soon going to read that a 5 lot of people are going to talk about 6 this, coming out of pens, coming out of 7 herds. There's two counties that we 8 have chronic wasting disease, as Mr. 9 Barksdale talked about, Lauderdale and 10 Colbert. There's not a breeder pen in 11 Lauderdale and Colbert. 12 And, guys, for us to not look at 13 what Dr. Seabury says, the protocols of 14 making chronic wasting disease zones is 15 a mistake. Limiting baiting is a 16 mistake. And basically every form of 17 protocol that we have, you're going to 18 see in your packets: Tennessee testing 19 in the lawsuits. ELISA testing is not 20 reliable. You're going to see Texas. 21 They killed an entire herd of a hundred 22 deer over a false positive, their own 23 state did.</p> |

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| <p style="text-align: right;">Page 93</p> <p>1 MS. JONES: Time.</p> <p>2 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Thank you, Mr.</p> <p>3 Horton.</p> <p>4 MR. HORTON: Thank you.</p> <p>5 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Any questions for</p> <p>6 Mr. Horton?</p> <p>7 (No response).</p> <p>8 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: None from here.</p> <p>9 Thank you.</p> <p>10 The next speaker is Mr. Cal</p> <p>11 Crowder. And the speaker after Mr.</p> <p>12 Crowder is Chris Turner.</p> <p>13 MR. CROWDER: Good afternoon. Cal</p> <p>14 Crowder, Talladega, Alabama. I'm here</p> <p>15 to speak against the problem I'm having</p> <p>16 with dog deer hunting. To preface my</p> <p>17 comments, you have to go back 8 to 10</p> <p>18 years when we started having problems</p> <p>19 with deer running on private -- dogs</p> <p>20 running on private property. And this</p> <p>21 is all because the dog hunters in the</p> <p>22 Talladega National Forest, their last</p> <p>23 bash, would run their dogs because they</p> | <p style="text-align: right;">Page 94</p> <p>1 have gotten run off from everywhere</p> <p>2 else.</p> <p>3 So, for 8 to 10 years, I've had</p> <p>4 dogs running on my property that I</p> <p>5 don't want. Everybody knows me.</p> <p>6 Everybody knows my stand on this.</p> <p>7 Go back six, seven years, I came</p> <p>8 here twice. I came to Guntersville</p> <p>9 once. I went to Pelham. I said the</p> <p>10 same thing every time. I have a</p> <p>11 problem with dogs running on my private</p> <p>12 property. They're ruining my hunting</p> <p>13 on my private property. Nothing has</p> <p>14 been done for 8 to 10 years. And I</p> <p>15 don't understand why.</p> <p>16 Just recently, this past year, I</p> <p>17 walk out my front door on my front</p> <p>18 porch, my wife's sitting there. What</p> <p>19 do I hear? Dogs. I get in my</p> <p>20 side-by-side running around like a</p> <p>21 chicken with the head cut off trying to</p> <p>22 catch them. I can't do it. I see two</p> <p>23 dogs. I can't catch them. I said,</p> |
| <p style="text-align: right;">Page 95</p> <p>1 well, let me try this Game Watch thing.</p> <p>2 So, I called Game Watch. I got a</p> <p>3 live person. I was impressed. And I</p> <p>4 get a call from Officer Dixon, which I</p> <p>5 was impressed. Within a few minutes, I</p> <p>6 tell Officer Dixon where to meet me.</p> <p>7 He was close by, luckily. He told me</p> <p>8 to meet him on 612D. I want you to</p> <p>9 talk about that map you've got for</p> <p>10 me -- okay? -- and show you where this</p> <p>11 is and understand the problem.</p> <p>12 I meet Officer Dixon. Well, I</p> <p>13 tried to chase the dogs a bit more just</p> <p>14 for the heck of it, give him time to</p> <p>15 drive around. I go out to 612D on the</p> <p>16 map. You can look at it. It's a</p> <p>17 forest gate that we have a right-of-way</p> <p>18 through that we can open and access our</p> <p>19 property, but we have to maintain the</p> <p>20 road. It's a dead-end forest road.</p> <p>21 And right beyond that is my private</p> <p>22 property.</p> <p>23 So, Dixon shows up. I go out to</p> | <p style="text-align: right;">Page 96</p> <p>1 the gate. There's two dog trucks</p> <p>2 there. Hunters looking at their GPS.</p> <p>3 I don't say anything, and they don't</p> <p>4 say anything to me. Dixon shows up,</p> <p>5 asks me what's going on. He goes over</p> <p>6 to the dog deer hunters, starts talking</p> <p>7 to them, saying, we've got a lot of</p> <p>8 complaints. Y'all have got to quit</p> <p>9 this.</p> <p>10 Do you know what the dog hunters</p> <p>11 say? "The dogs don't listen to the</p> <p>12 call. The dogs don't respond to the</p> <p>13 shock."</p> <p>14 And my favorite all-time excuse</p> <p>15 from the dog hunters, the greatest hit</p> <p>16 of all time is the dogs can't read "No</p> <p>17 Trespassing" signs.</p> <p>18 MS. JONES: Time.</p> <p>19 MR. CROWDER: So, whoopy freaking</p> <p>20 do. Does that make it okay? Just come</p> <p>21 on in.</p> <p>22 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Thank you, Mr.</p> <p>23 Crowder. We hear you. We hear you</p> |

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| <p style="text-align: right;">Page 97</p> <p>1 loud and clear. 2 MR. CROWDER: Do something about 3 it. Put them on the permit system and 4 cut this crap out. 5 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: We understand. 6 MR. CROWDER: Eight to ten years. 7 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: That's what the 8 microphone is for. It amplifies your 9 voice. Thank you very much. It's 10 noted. And we appreciate you being 11 here. Thank you. 12 The next speaker is Mr. Chris 13 Turner. The speaker following Chris is 14 Dwayne Wright. 15 MR. TURNER: My name is Chris 16 Turner. I'd like to thank all the game 17 wardens for what they do, and 18 especially Jerry Fincher and Sean Dixon 19 for coming around and taking care of 20 the same issues the last gentleman just 21 talked about. 22 You know, I live in Munford, 23 Alabama, and we adjoin the Talladega</p> | <p style="text-align: right;">Page 98</p> <p>1 National Forest. 2 And I would like to see -- you 3 know, two years ago, I had come and 4 spoken at this, and we had, you know, 5 the same issues then. And it's still 6 continuing. It's not ending. And one 7 of the statements was made by one of 8 the Board members that if we continue 9 having this problem in this area, that 10 we would shut these areas down. 11 And like this guy said, it's time 12 to do something. I mean, we -- we're 13 dealing with it year after year. We 14 spend a lot of money on our property to 15 try to have and maintain, you know, 16 peace to hunt on our own property 17 without the nuisance of other people, 18 you know, thinking that they can come 19 and just let their dogs run all over 20 you. It's got to end. 21 I mean, it's to the point where, 22 you know, something bad is going to 23 happen out of this. You know, it's</p> |
| <p style="text-align: right;">Page 99</p> <p>1 every year. I was threatened this past 2 year by several of the dog hunters, and 3 it's got to stop. I mean, we -- we put 4 a lot of time and effort in what we do. 5 And, you know, you can't take your 6 kids hunting, your grandkids hunting, 7 or anything, to hunt on your own 8 property, and people's dogs coming 9 through busting up your hunt. You 10 know, you just spent all day, you know, 11 sitting there for nothing, you know. 12 And it's -- I'd like to see 13 them -- if anything, you know, we say 14 we're going to do something. We need 15 to put a buffer in between the 16 Talladega National Forest and all the 17 private landowners that run this -- 18 this path from Cemetery Mountain Road. 19 And then if you go 637, anything west 20 of that, no -- no dog hunting. 21 Anything south of the road that goes to 22 Cheaha, no dog hunting. And that would 23 put a -- I'm not against dog hunters.</p> | <p style="text-align: right;">Page 100</p> <p>1 They can have their place, but we do 2 not want them on our property, you 3 know. 4 They can put that barrier buffer 5 in between where when their dogs go to 6 the right side of 637, east side of it, 7 they stay away from us, stay off of our 8 property. I mean, I don't know what 9 we've got to do, but, I mean, something 10 has got to be done before it gets out 11 of hand. 12 Like I said, thank you-all for 13 listening to me. 14 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Thank you. Any 15 questions? Mr. Martin? Anyone? 16 (No response). 17 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Thank you. Thank 18 you for your comments. Noted. 19 The next speaker is Mr. Chris 20 Turner (sic). 21 MR. WRIGHT: Hey, I'm Duane 22 Wright, Fire Chief of the local fire 23 department. Landowner about three</p> |

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| <p style="text-align: right;">Page 101</p> <p>1 property lines over from the National 2 Forest. And my concern is dog hunting. 3 I can't successfully hunt on my 4 property after about the second week of 5 dog hunting because dogs have run 6 everything off. There's always dogs 7 hanging around my house, hunting dogs. 8 And I don't like it. Not much I can do 9 about it. 10 My dad -- I lost him back in April 11 from a turkey hunting accident. But he 12 had quit hunting the National Forest in 13 the fall because the dog hunters just 14 take it over. You cannot successfully 15 hunt -- still hunt in the National 16 Forest because of dog hunters. 17 This fall, I went -- tried to do a 18 little turkey hunting in the National 19 Forest. And when I turned in on the 20 637 road, I passed 25 trucks with dog 21 boxes on the back, getting ready to 22 turn loose somewhere in the National 23 Forest.</p> | <p style="text-align: right;">Page 102</p> <p>1 So, I just drove on. I didn't 2 even hunt. And that's my concern is 3 dog hunting. I appreciate it. 4 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Thank you. 5 That's noted, as well. 6 Any questions from the Board? 7 (No response). 8 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: None. Thank you 9 very much. Noted. And I failed in my 10 duties. 11 Bill Bensinger is the next 12 speaker. The speaker after him is Mr. 13 Dustin King. 14 MR. BENSINGER: Thank you, Mr. 15 Chair. May it please the Board. 16 Bill Bensinger. I'm a resident of 17 Homewood, Alabama, but I hunt primarily 18 in Talladega County. And like the 19 three gentlemen before me, arise to 20 address the issue of dog hunting. 21 I've got to drive an hour to be 22 able to hunt, and I enjoy hunting. And 23 this past season, unlike the first</p> |
| <p style="text-align: right;">Page 103</p> <p>1 gentleman that spoke on this issue, he 2 said he wasn't able to catch any dogs. 3 I was able to catch one, and then he 4 turned around and caught me, which 5 meant that my day hunting was over 6 because I had to call a vet. I had to 7 call my doctor, figure out, you know, 8 what do I need to be doing, because 9 this dog that's trespassing on our land 10 just bit me. It's a problem. 11 I enjoy the hunting. I enjoy 12 being out there, but something has got 13 to be done. And that seems to be the 14 common refrain from everyone. I'm sure 15 that y'all are kind of getting tired of 16 hearing it. But I think that, you 17 know, some sort of permit system that 18 would allow people to report when dogs 19 are on their property, and whoever's 20 dog that is, that person loses their 21 permit. 22 I don't think that -- I'd like to 23 see a statewide ban, but I don't think</p> | <p style="text-align: right;">Page 104</p> <p>1 that's probably going to happen. But I 2 think a permit system similar to what's 3 in other parts of the state would be a 4 very good way to address this problem. 5 I'd be glad to take any questions from 6 the Board. 7 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Thank you, Mr. 8 Bensinger. Any questions? Any 9 thoughts? 10 (No response). 11 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Thank you. Thank 12 you again. That's noted. 13 The next speaker is Mr. Dustin 14 King. The speaker after Dustin is 15 Donald Nelson. 16 MR. KING: All right. So, I'm 17 actually coming here to speak about a 18 different dog issue. Just going to 19 read verbatim. 20 My name is Dustin King. I'm a 21 certified American Blood Tracker 22 Association dog handler and have helped 23 train wounded game recovery dogs for</p> |

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| <p>1 owners all across the country, and have 2 helped recover wounded game across the 3 country, as well. I've spent over 4 \$5,000 for my tracking dog and myself 5 as a handler, I would consider us very 6 professional for the task at hand and 7 have been tracking for almost 12 years. 8 This year, my dog and I did almost 9 a hundred tracks for the public and 10 recovered around 30 deer for hunters 11 that would not have been located 12 without the use of a dog. I would 13 consider that a conservation-minded 14 service as those deer would not have 15 been counted in the overall state 16 numbers for deer hunters without our 17 assistance and would have died 18 unaccounted for in the woods. 19 My reason for being here is that 20 I've reached out to wildlife officers 21 and the Department of Game and Fish on 22 several occasions because I wanted 23 someone to provide me with some general</p> | <p>1 guidelines on using a tracking dog on 2 private land. Nobody was able to do 3 so, because those guidelines do not 4 exist. 5 I specifically have documented 6 written proof where I reached out to 7 Game and Fish Officer Deborah Dixon on 8 November the 4th at 12:15 p.m. and 9 requested those guidelines to which she 10 told me I needed to attend this meeting 11 on March the 8th, which didn't help 12 much for deer season. 13 Oddly enough, I was contacted by 14 Officer Matt Moran from Jackson County 15 last week. Officer Matt Moran decided 16 he needed to investigate a deer that I 17 recovered for a Hunter on November the 18 30th, almost three months after the 19 incident. We have a deer in question. 20 My meeting with Officer Moran was 21 pretty negative. He seems to think 22 that, by using a dog to recover a deer, 23 I was deer dog hunting in his county.</p> |
| Page 107 | Page 108 |
| <p>1 I asked Officer Moran to show me the 2 laws and rules regarding tracking dogs. 3 He looked for 10 minutes and was unable 4 to come up with anything other than 5 using dogs on public land. 6 Officer Moran still hasn't 7 contacted me, and I assume he's looking 8 for those guidelines still. 9 Officer Moran, upon his departure, 10 actually informed me that he was going 11 to get a warrant, and I would have to 12 go to court, and I would hear from him 13 on Tuesday or Wednesday. I still 14 haven't heard from him. 15 Today, I'm supplying the Advisory 16 Council with tracking guidelines from 17 the states of Arkansas, Louisiana, 18 Mississippi, Kentucky, Tennessee and 19 Florida. All these surrounding states 20 have found it important to help their 21 trackers and provide conservation- 22 minded guidelines to follow so there's 23 no gray area while our state continues</p> | <p>1 to kick the can down the road on this. 2 I also recommend to the Advisory 3 Council and anyone here able that you 4 have a meeting with the game wardens 5 and advise them that until there's 6 guidelines for us to follow, you need 7 to stop hassling us. 8 MS. JONES: Time. 9 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Are you through? 10 That was it? 11 MR. KING: Can I continue? 12 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: How much do you 13 have? 14 MR. KING: Just a little bit. 15 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Finish quickly 16 but not too quickly for Ms. Boggs. 17 MR. KING: Sure. Absolutely. 18 I would advise them that there are 19 no written guidelines to follow. It 20 would be very in their very best 21 interest to stop hassling, badgering 22 and bullying deer trackers in Alabama 23 who are trying to help the state by</p> |

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| <p>1 providing a conservation-minded 2 service. 3 Until that stops, be guaranteed 4 Matt Moran and other officers will end 5 up embarrassed in court and trackers 6 will be getting monetary compensation 7 for harassment. You can't enforce 8 guidelines that aren't there. 9 In closing, I would like to 10 address any deer trackers in the crowd 11 today. Do not let wildlife officials 12 use bullying tactics and harassment to 13 try to enforce unwritten laws. 14 In the future, if you are, please 15 contact me. I would be more than happy 16 to help pay legal fees and make sure my 17 legal counsel and professionals assist 18 you in getting monetary compensation 19 for this continued harassment and fake 20 enforcement of laws that aren't there. 21 I look forward to the Advisory 22 Council's swift and prompt handling of 23 this issue and would be available for</p> | <p>1 any meeting you-all wish to have 2 regarding common sense guidelines to 3 follow. 4 But until that time, I look 5 forward to and fully expect that the 6 harassment of trackers by game and fish 7 officers be stopped immediately. 8 I appreciate your consideration 9 today and look forward to working with 10 you-all in the future. Any questions? 11 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Thank you. Any 12 questions? 13 (No response). 14 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: I ask for the 15 questions. 16 MR. KING: Sure. 17 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Good to see you. 18 The next speaker. Mr. Nelson, 19 good to see you. 20 Lonnie Miller is the speaker after 21 Mr. Nelson. 22 MAYOR NELSON: That's a hard act 23 to follow.</p> |
| Page 111 | Page 112 |
| <p>1 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Yes, sir. 2 MAYOR NELSON: Good morning, Chris 3 and Board. 4 Thank you for the opportunity to 5 speak to y'all this morning. Two 6 things: One from the City of Creola, 7 and we want to let the Conservation 8 Department know that we deeply, deeply 9 appreciate the awarding of a GOMESA 10 grant to our city this year for the 11 first time. And just to let you know, 12 shout out to the young man, Jeremiah 13 Kolb (phonetic). He has been very 14 supportive from the Conservation 15 Department on steering this old mayor 16 through all the weakest legal challenge 17 you got to go through. It's not easy, 18 but it's worth the grant. 19 And just to let the Commissioner 20 know that last week I signed the 21 agreement between the Conservation 22 Department, and we got it to your 23 office or somewhere. I'm sure the</p> | <p>1 legal people are looking at it and 2 waiting for your signature. 3 So, we're moving on that as fast 4 as we can, and we're deeply 5 appreciative of that. 6 I appreciate all the folks talking 7 about dog hunting this morning. I've 8 had a chance. I hunt in Butler County. 9 I stalk in dog hunting. I've talked to 10 Mr. Grady this morning. I think he had 11 zero issues this past year and talked 12 to Mister -- one or zero? 13 But Lonnie Miller, Lonnie said he 14 didn't have any issues. We're not 15 perfect, but we try super hard to try 16 and get along with our people that we 17 hunt alongside there. 18 We understand and we want to 19 continue to do that. We stress all 20 this with our people. We're 100% with 21 the tracking systems. They do work. 22 They will stop a dog from going if you 23 don't want him to go somewhere. And I</p> |

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| <p style="text-align: right;">Page 113</p> <p>1 appreciate Lonnie's efforts on trying 2 to help us along those ways there this 3 morning. 4 But once again, Butler County, Big 5 Rack Hunting Club, last three or four 6 years. I don't think y'all have had 7 that much going on with us, and we're 8 glad. Appreciate the conservation 9 officers. They've been very forthright 10 with us, and we appreciate them coming 11 out and giving feedback. And anything 12 I can do, I welcome the opportunity to 13 correct a problem before it has to come 14 to the Board. 15 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Thank you as 16 always, Mayor Nelson. 17 Anybody got any questions? 18 (No response). 19 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Thanks. 20 MAYOR NELSON: All right. Thank 21 y'all. 22 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Thank you. 23 Lonnie. And after Lonnie, Mr.</p> | <p style="text-align: right;">Page 114</p> <p>1 Jason Boothe. 2 MR. MILLER: Good morning. I just 3 wanted to reply to the -- We do realize 4 there's an issue in Talladega at the 5 National Forest. There has been. This 6 is the first I've heard about it, by 7 the way. I got a call from a lady that 8 was the last day of the dog deer 9 season. She talked to me, and, of 10 course, I spoke to her, and I told her 11 I'd work -- you know, do my best to 12 help resolve the issue like -- like I 13 always do. 14 I spoke to Jeff Martin several 15 times throughout the year, and I don't 16 know if anyone had -- according to him, 17 no one had called him or contacted him. 18 So, Grady had given me a packet 19 today, and it was 10 pages long with 20 different, you know, alleged 21 complaints. And, you know, I'll call 22 them alleged because, you know, like we 23 said when I -- when I became the</p> |
| <p style="text-align: right;">Page 115</p> <p>1 president eight years ago, there was 2 hundreds of complaints. 3 But a phone call is not a 4 complaint. If you catch the dog, yes. 5 If you -- if you -- you take a picture 6 of the dog, yes, if you chase it on 7 your side-by-side. I do realize 8 there's complaints, but, you know, 9 shutting this -- shutting to begin 10 with, you know, I don't condone a dog 11 encroaching on private property. I'm 12 completely against this. 13 But shutting the Talladega 14 National Forest or a county down 15 because somebody can't control their 16 dog is not the way to go. What we need 17 to do is punish the individual that is 18 allowing his dog to get on your 19 property. And for several years, the 20 Dog Owners Association tried to pass a 21 bill in the State Legislature, that 22 Commissioner Blankenship mentioned a 23 little while ago, for lack of -- it was</p> | <p style="text-align: right;">Page 116</p> <p>1 a dog trespass bill, for lack of better 2 words. And that dog trespass bill 3 would allow these law enforcement 4 people to write me a ticket if my dog 5 gets on your land. 6 Of course, you know, in the 7 beginning, we got some -- actually, I 8 think we were asked to support the bill 9 at one time to the Commission and then 10 it changed. And then last year the 11 Commissioner spoke against the bill. 12 I'm not sure why. I don't know why it 13 don't pass. 14 But we are still of that mindset 15 that I want a ticket. If my dog gets 16 on your land, write me a ticket. Don't 17 punish everybody else. And that's 18 what's happened over the years. 19 And the right thing to do is me to 20 keep my dog on my property, which I do. 21 We do the Geneva State Forest dog hunt 22 every year. We turn out 100 walker 23 dogs on 16,000 acres. Not one dog gets</p> |

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| <p style="text-align: right;">Page 117</p> <p>1 off the property. 20 packs of dogs, 2 not one dog gets off the property. 3 So, it is possible. So, like the 4 gentleman says, sometimes the Garmin 5 quits. Sometimes the collar may 6 malfunction. There are exceptions. If 7 there's an exception, write me a 8 ticket. 9 But that's what we need to do. 10 And it's not these guys that do the 11 legislative stuff, but we can get 12 the -- 13 MS. JONES: Time. 14 MR. MILLER: We can get the 15 support from these guys to make some 16 changes, and that's what needs to 17 happen. 18 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Thank you, 19 Lonnie. I always appreciate you being 20 here, your level-headed view. 21 Any questions? 22 (No response). 23 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: All right. Thank</p> | <p style="text-align: right;">Page 118</p> <p>1 you. 2 The next speaker after Mr. Boothe 3 is Mr. Avery Bates. 4 MR. BOOTHE: My name is Jason 5 Boothe. I live in Coffee County in the 6 Zion Chapel Community. 7 First, I want to say I'm not 8 opposed to dog hunting in any way. 9 I've been on many dog hunts, had great 10 times doing it. I don't -- Dog hunting 11 now is just a personal choice. But I 12 think everybody should in the state of 13 Alabama deserves the right to make 14 their own choice if they want to, dog 15 hunting or stalk hunting. 16 Now, I've provided maps to 17 everybody and stuff that y'all already 18 know where the areas are that you can 19 and can't dog hunt. And more -- I'm 20 more concerned about Coffee County 21 because that's where I live. 22 And in Coffee County, the bottom 23 half of the county, you can't dog hunt.</p> |
| <p style="text-align: right;">Page 119</p> <p>1 I, of course, live just north of 2 this line. And banning it in certain 3 areas does not solve problems. It just 4 shifts them. It changes them to 5 others. It gives them to somebody else 6 to have to deal with. 7 And respectable dog hunters, I 8 don't have any problem with them. I've 9 hunted near them. They would call me, 10 say, hey, I got a dog out. And I 11 would -- but they called me before I 12 ever knew about it. And that showed me 13 they respected my land, and I respect 14 their land. And I'd go help them catch 15 their dog, do whatever they needed, 16 because it was not an intentional. 17 But it's gotten to the point now 18 where some of the hunting clubs that 19 are near me -- and they are not part of 20 the Alabama Dog Hunters Association -- 21 they don't care. They'll just turn 22 them out and let them go. 23 And so, that's where a couple of</p> | <p style="text-align: right;">Page 120</p> <p>1 weeks ago, I had a -- it was a very 2 heated discussion. I was livid that 3 the dogs were just running through my 4 land. And the response I got from them 5 was: "Call the game warden. He can't 6 do anything anyway." And they didn't 7 care. 8 So, I told them, I said, "You sit 9 right here. I'll go catch every one of 10 your dogs." And I went in there, 11 caught every one of them, took pictures 12 of the tags, put them in my truck, took 13 pictures of them safe and sound in my 14 truck, took them back to the dirt road 15 where they had doubled the number of 16 hunters out there. I guess they 17 thought I was fixing to do something. 18 So, I returned their dogs to them. 19 They didn't say a word. They got in 20 their trucks and left. 21 Now, you can go to south -- If I 22 had been six miles farther south, you 23 can't dog hunt. If I've been 17 miles</p> |

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| <p style="text-align: right;">Page 121</p> <p>1 further south, you can dog hunt under a 2 special permit. 3 In Coffee County there is a place 4 where you can take three steps and have 5 three different sets of rules. And 6 that's -- I mean, all we want is at 7 least have a -- have an avenue that, if 8 there is a problem, it can be 9 addressed. If there's no problem, then 10 there's no -- I mean, if I don't have a 11 problem with them running on me, then 12 I'm not -- there's no need. 13 But if there's no rule in place to 14 keep them accountable and responsible, 15 then why would they have to be? Good 16 people don't have to be told what to 17 do. They do the right thing, and they 18 are great dog hunters. Some of my best 19 friends are dog hunters, and I love 20 them to death, and I respect their 21 rights to dog hunts. I just want to be 22 respected in my right to not dog hunt 23 and have an avenue. So --</p> | <p style="text-align: right;">Page 122</p> <p>1 MS. JONES: Time. 2 MR. BOOTHE: And just one point? 3 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: One point. 4 MR. BOOTHE: My point is, please 5 consider implementing the permit system 6 for all of Coffee County so that we 7 have at least an avenue. So, when I 8 call the game enforcement officer, he 9 says, yes, there's something I can do. 10 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Thank you, Mr. 11 Boothe. We have your information. I 12 appreciate that. And noted to the 13 Board. 14 MR. BOOTHE: Any questions? 15 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: I don't think so. 16 (No response). 17 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: No questions. 18 MR. BOOTHE: Thank you. 19 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Avery, you can 20 keep sitting there if you like. You 21 don't have to get up. 22 MR. BATES: Oh, that's all right. 23 I've been sitting all morning.</p> |
| <p style="text-align: right;">Page 123</p> <p>1 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Okay. 2 MR. BATES: Good evening. I'm 3 vice president of Organized Seafood 4 Association. Before that, I was vice 5 president of the South Alabama Seafood 6 Association. Ernie Anderson is 7 president. 8 But the reason I'm here today is 9 because we have a massive problem with 10 mud dumping. I give y'all a law and 11 petition. The first few hours there 12 was 5,000 on that petition against the 13 mud dumping out of Mobile Ship Channel, 14 what they call open water disbursement. 15 I have witnessed with my own eyes 16 over many years destroying live 17 oystereries by tons and tons and 18 mountains of mud that's coming out of 19 that channel. And there's really 20 beneficial uses for that -- I just call 21 it -- dirt coming out of there if it's 22 put in the right places. 23 It's not been put in the right</p> | <p style="text-align: right;">Page 124</p> <p>1 places. We have places on the Dauphin 2 Island Beach that you've seen 3 deteriorating for years and years. It 4 should be in closer so it would 5 re-nourish that beach. It could be 6 re-nourished. 7 But we have laws, and I give y'all 8 one of the laws that the people signed 9 that petition. Guess what? Glenn 10 Coffey, who used to be a biologist for 11 the Corps, he said -- after two months, 12 he said there was 18,000 that called in 13 to our representatives, Ms. Katie Britt 14 and Mr. Tuberville. And we need 15 something done ahead of time. If you 16 see there, we've got to put back and 17 build back that beach that's eroding so 18 bad. 19 First of all, they armored that 20 beach, which speeded the water out, 21 which furthered the erosion. But in 22 the process, it eroded what we call a 23 number of reefs. And this here</p> |

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| <p style="text-align: right;">Page 125</p> <p>1 re-nourishing has covered up what Mr. 2 Grady Hartzog saw fit with his group to 3 put about 80 acres -- oh, let's see. 4 He's pointing at you. Thank you for 5 building back an area. 6 But if you build an area back and 7 then you pour dirt on top of it, guess 8 what's going to happen? You're going 9 to see some bad things. 10 First of all, the silt will not 11 let spat, if you have spat coming down 12 from the oysters, and each oyster can 13 produce up to 70 to 170 million spat, 14 but it will not set on silt. It will 15 set on clean shells or any other 16 culture. 17 But that being, we need to do 18 something ahead of time. When we see a 19 problem coming two years down the road, 20 three years down the road, immediately 21 start planting areas that will not be 22 silted up ahead of time, and these 23 fishermen --</p> | <p style="text-align: right;">Page 126</p> <p>1 MS. JONES: Time. 2 MR. BATES: -- will not be put out 3 of work like it's been doing in the 4 past. 5 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Thank you, Avery. 6 Thank you always for being here. We 7 appreciate you. 8 MR. BATES: We want y'all to come 9 to a wonderful dinner on the 19th where 10 you'll get plenty of seafood at the RSA 11 building. We invite all of y'all to 12 enjoy good, healthy seafood. And keep 13 buying seafood. It keeps our people 14 alive and working, and we want to feed 15 the rest of the state of Alabama from 16 good, healthy seafood. 17 So, keep us alive and working in 18 our families. 19 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Thank you, Avery, 20 very much. Thank you. Thank you so 21 much. 22 MR. BATES: Okay. March the 19th, 23 come on down.</p> |
| <p style="text-align: right;">Page 127</p> <p>1 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: RSA tower. 2 Blakeley Ellis. And the speaker 3 after Blakeley is Dustin Mizell. Did 4 Blakeley leave already? We're going to 5 deduct your time from your credit card. 6 MR. ELLIS: Thank you for the 7 opportunity to speak today. My name's 8 Blakeley Ellis, and I'm the Executive 9 Director for the Coastal Conservation 10 Association for Alabama. 11 And Scott didn't -- didn't leave a 12 short list of items today, so I'll 13 hurry through them. And if I don't 14 mention something, that doesn't mean I 15 don't have thoughts about it. But 16 we've got a -- I have my time limit, as 17 well. 18 So, you know, the State did a 19 really good job and has done a good job 20 managing the species proactively 21 getting flounder seasons changed and 22 working with, you know, the restocking 23 with the hatchery, the season closure.</p> | <p style="text-align: right;">Page 128</p> <p>1 All that's been a really positive 2 thing. 3 You know, we are opposed to the 4 additional commercial harvest of the 5 flounder going up to 80 -- 80 fish from 6 the 40. But I do understand the 7 reasons why Scott is doing that, but I 8 do hope that's not something that we 9 see year after years coming back to 10 that and continuing to raise that up. 11 Really, really glad to see the red 12 drum oversized fish go away and keep 13 that maximum fish at 26 inches and 14 keeping that slot in place. That's 15 really positive to see. 16 You know, some of the acoustic 17 tagging work that we've done with South 18 Alabama has shown some really, really 19 interesting results with a lot of our 20 fish. Very few of them making their 21 way towards Florida and most of them 22 going out to the Chandeleur Islands and 23 spending time around Louisiana.</p> |

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| <p style="text-align: right;">Page 129</p> <p>1 And then with Snook, I do 2 appreciate that, and I believe it makes 3 sense to do the 28-inch minimum that 4 they're suggesting in the one-fish bag. 5 And we've got a really great asset. 6 And Dr. Charlie Martin with South 7 Alabama, who he came on a couple of 8 years ago. He attended school at South 9 before he moved on to other things. 10 But he's back now. And one of his 11 focuses and specialties is studying 12 snook and their migration up coastlines 13 as they expand their territories. 14 Hoping to get some more 15 hydrophones in the water so that maybe 16 some acoustic tags can be deployed so 17 we can help track -- track some of 18 those snook movements because we don't 19 know a lot about it. Nobody claims to. 20 And we are adding snook to our fish 21 tagging program that we do with South 22 Alabama. 23 One thing that might be worth</p> | <p style="text-align: right;">Page 130</p> <p>1 considering, Scott, maybe -- maybe 2 looking at -- go ahead and putting 3 snook as a game fish to -- to protect 4 them from being vulnerable if that's a 5 species that puts themselves in a bad 6 spot. And if we don't see this ever 7 being a commercial species, that might 8 be something to consider. 9 And with the ding at the 10 microphone, I'm going to quickly say 11 good job to Max and the team at the 12 hatchery down in Gulf Shores; Officer 13 John Caraway for putting on a youth 14 fishing event and Mobile County a few 15 months ago. And then we've got another 16 one coming up in -- 17 MS. JONES: Time. 18 MR. ELLIS: -- in Baldwin County. 19 And I appreciate the State's continued 20 efforts to get State management of more 21 species from the Federal Government. 22 Adding trigger fish, amberjack, that 23 would be really good.</p> |
| <p style="text-align: right;">Page 131</p> <p>1 And I'll close at that. Thank 2 you. 3 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Any questions for 4 Blakeley Ellis? 5 (No response). 6 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Thank you, 7 Blakeley, for always coming -- 8 MR. ELLIS: Yes, sir. Thank you. 9 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: -- and helping 10 manage the coast. 11 Mr. Dustin Mizell. 12 MR. MIZELL: Dustin Mizell, 13 Baldwin County. 14 I'm speaking on behalf of a couple 15 other people here, too, but also the 16 Boat Fishing Association of America, 17 which consists of thousands of people. 18 I have a degree in wildlife 19 conservation management. I've been 20 doing research on stingrays for over 15 21 years. 22 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Slow down, just a 23 hair, please.</p> | <p style="text-align: right;">Page 132</p> <p>1 MR. MIZELL: Sorry. I had to wait 2 a while. 3 But, yes, the dog buzzed about the 4 stingrays. I run a charter service and 5 so do many other people for this type 6 of thing, bow fishing. We can always 7 shoot rough fish. If you take away 8 rough fish from us, we don't have a 9 business anymore. That is not really 10 my main concern. 11 My main concern is the species 12 itself. If you force us to harvest 13 this fish, then it will not save the 14 fish. It will kill the fish. The main 15 thing that I want to do is save 16 stingrays, and that's not what this is 17 going to do. If you force us to keep 18 the stingrays, they're not going to be 19 there anymore. It doesn't make any 20 sense at all to force us to do this. 21 Plus all the research that I have, 22 they don't seem to be able to produce, 23 you know, a reason for this. They're</p> |

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| <p style="text-align: right;">Page 133</p> <p>1 throwing all the different species of 2 stingrays all into one basket and 3 saying, hey, you can only keep two of 4 them regardless of, you know, how 5 different each species is and 6 everything. And it just doesn't make 7 any sense to me at all. 8 Plus, you know, at one point in my 9 life, I've been stung by tons and tons 10 of stingrays, 129 actually. But one of 11 them stung me through my forearm, and I 12 got vibrio and it gave me a 50% chance 13 to live, which I did live, obviously. 14 But I want to be able to cut that tail 15 off so it doesn't happen to me or 16 someone else in the future. Like, they 17 can kill you, but they can grow that 18 stinger right back. 19 I want to release these stingrays 20 back into the wild so we can shoot them 21 again in the future, which we have tons 22 and tons of research over many years 23 proving that all these stingrays, you</p> | <p style="text-align: right;">Page 134</p> <p>1 know, are living that we're throwing 2 back. 3 This is all, you know, in the 4 packet that I gave you. Something that 5 may not be clear is the picture of the 6 stingray itself. When you shoot a 7 stingray with a bow and arrow, you 8 know, from the top, it has to hit 9 somewhere in the red line that's on the 10 picture here in order for that stingray 11 to be -- you know, to die. And it's 12 very obvious they die instantly when 13 you hit them in that area. Anywhere 14 else, the abdomen, all that stuff, they 15 do not die. You can throw them back 16 and shoot them again later. You can 17 shoot them throughout, you know, a long 18 period of time. 19 And also, you know, they're saying 20 stuff like they're slow breeders and 21 that kind of thing. Well, you know, 22 like -- like 99 -- this is in the bag, 23 too. The 99% more likely to live is a</p> |
| <p style="text-align: right;">Page 135</p> <p>1 live birth than like an egg birth of a 2 normal fish. 3 So, like, they are surviving, you 4 know. They're not as slow -- like, 5 they're living a lot, you know, longer 6 than they're kind of making out to be. 7 So, they're -- they're producing, 8 like, commercial harvest as, like, 9 populations of stingrays. Like, there 10 is no commercial value. That's why 11 commercial harvest is zero, you know. 12 MS. JONES: Time. 13 MR. MIZELL: So, it doesn't mean 14 that there's less stingrays. It just 15 means nobody is selling them 16 commercially. 17 So, yes, I want to save the 18 species. I also want to save my 19 business, as well. But forcing someone 20 to keep a stingray is just, like, not 21 the way to save the species. 22 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Noted. Thank 23 you.</p> | <p style="text-align: right;">Page 136</p> <p>1 Any questions? 2 (No response). 3 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Thank you very 4 much. 5 Mr. Mizell was our last speaker. 6 Any comments? 7 (No response). 8 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Mr. Commissioner? 9 That concludes our public commentary 10 today, and thank you to all the 11 speakers and thank you for everybody. 12 This was well done. Thank you. 13 Our next agenda item is unfinished 14 business. I believe that most of the 15 requests for information from our last 16 meeting for the Department have been 17 complied with during our public comment 18 section and through individual efforts 19 by the Department. 20 Is there any unfinished business 21 before the Board today? 22 MR. PHILLIPS: Did we approve the 23 minutes?</p> |

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| <p style="text-align: right;">Page 137</p> <p>1 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Yes, we did. We 2 approved the minutes at the beginning. 3 The minutes have been approved. 4 As there's no unfinished business, 5 we move on to new business. Any new 6 business before this Board today in the 7 form of motions? 8 MR. SAVOY: Yes, Mr. Chairman. I 9 have a motion. 10 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Yes, Mr. Savoy? 11 MR. SAVOY: This motion, pursuant 12 to Section 9-11-68 and 9-11-69, Code of 13 Alabama, will allow an adjustment of 14 the costs for all licenses and fees 15 associated with the Department of 16 Conservation and Natural Resources for 17 the years 2025 and 2026 based on the 18 incremental rise in the Consumer Price 19 Index. 20 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Thank you for 21 that motion. I'm going to reread it 22 for you, this motion on March the 8th. 23 This motion, pursuant to Section</p> | <p style="text-align: right;">Page 138</p> <p>1 9-11-68 and 9-11-69 in the Code of 2 Alabama, will allow an adjustment of 3 the costs for all licenses and fees 4 associated with the Department of 5 Conservation and Natural Resources for 6 2025 -- for the seasons 2025 and 2026 7 based on the incremental rise in the 8 Consumer Price Index for CPI. 9 Is there a second to that motion? 10 MR. HARTZOG, JR.: Second. 11 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Mr. Hartzog, 12 thank you for your second. 13 Is there any discussion with 14 regard to this motion? 15 (No response). 16 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Being as there's 17 no discussion, let's vote. All of 18 those in favor, please raise your right 19 hand. 20 (Board members raising 21 hands). 22 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: The "ayes" have 23 it. The motion passes.</p> |
| <p style="text-align: right;">Page 139</p> <p>1 Any additional motions or new 2 business before the Board today? Well, 3 as there is -- 4 COMMISSIONER BLANKENSHIP: Mr. 5 Chairman, I do have one piece of new 6 business. 7 Dealing with the red snapper 8 season this year, as mentioned, the 9 Marine Resources Division conducted 10 several public meetings and did a 11 survey online allowing people to vote, 12 I guess, or to weigh in on the red 13 snapper season for this year, 2025. 14 The recommendation from our Marine 15 Resources Division would be to set the 16 red snapper season where it opens on 17 the Friday before Memorial Day and be 18 open seven days a week through July 19 4th. And then it would just be open on 20 weekends as it is now from July 4th 21 until the quota is met. 22 And so, that is a separate 23 recommendation from their season and</p> | <p style="text-align: right;">Page 140</p> <p>1 bag limits. Since that season will 2 start pretty close to our May meeting, 3 I wanted to go and get approval from 4 the Board on that under new business 5 today so that we can set that season to 6 get the information out to the public. 7 So, the red snapper season would 8 start the Friday before Memorial day, 9 be open seven days a week through July 10 4th. And then after July 4th, be open 11 on weekends until the quota of 664,000 12 pounds is met. And that was the 13 majority of the people that responded 14 to the survey or came to the public. 15 That was the majority of people wanted 16 that season instead of just the weekend 17 season. 18 So, any questions on that? 19 MR. BROCK JONES: Second if that's 20 a motion. 21 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Yes. The Chair 22 accepts that as a motion. We won't 23 reread it. The Court Reporter got it.</p> |

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| <p style="text-align: right;">Page 141</p> <p>1 We'll get you a copy. We have a 2 second. 3 Is there any discussion with 4 regard to that? 5 (No response). 6 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Let's put this to 7 a vote again. All those in favor of 8 the motion as proposed by the 9 Commissioner, raise your right hand. 10 (Board members raising 11 hands). 12 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: The "ayes" have 13 it. The motion carries. 14 COMMISSIONER BLANKENSHIP: Thank 15 you. 16 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Any other 17 business before this Board today? 18 (No response). 19 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: I do not have the 20 date and location of the next meeting, 21 or do I? 22 COMMISSIONER BLANKENSHIP: The 23 next meeting will be May the 10th down</p> | <p style="text-align: right;">Page 142</p> <p>1 at Troy University. We will have a 2 location published. Where on campus 3 that meeting will take place, long 4 before May -- May 10th at Troy 5 University. 6 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: May the 10th at 7 Troy. There we go. 8 All right. Thank you, everyone, 9 for being here. This was a good and 10 productive meeting. Please enjoy the 11 day. I don't think it's going to start 12 raining. Safe travels home. This 13 Department touches your lives every 14 day. 15 Thank you. 16 17 18 (The Advisory Board Meeting 19 ended at 11:24 a.m. on March 20 8, 2025.) 21 22 23</p> |
| <p style="text-align: right;">Page 143</p> <p>1 REPORTER'S CERTIFICATE 2 STATE OF ALABAMA 3 TALLAPOOSA COUNTY 4 5 I, Jeana S. Boggs, Certified Court 6 Reporter and Notary Public in and for the 7 State of Alabama at Large, certify on 8 Saturday, March 8, 2025, that I reported the 9 proceedings in the matter of: 10 ALABAMA DEPARTMENT OF 11 CONSERVATION AND NATURAL RESOURCES 12 13 IN RE THE MATTER OF: 14 CONSERVATION ADVISORY BOARD MEETING 15 on Saturday, March 8th, 2025, that the 16 foregoing 142 computer-printed pages contain 17 a true and correct transcript of the meeting 18 set out herein. 19 I further certify that I am neither a 20 relative, employee, attorney or counsel of 21 any of the parties, nor am I a relative or 22 employee of such attorney or counsel, nor am 23 I financially interested in the results</p> | <p style="text-align: right;">Page 144</p> <p>1 thereof. All rates charged are usual and 2 customary. 3 I further certify that I am duly licensed by 4 the Alabama Board of Court Reporting as a 5 Certified Court Reporter as evidenced by the 6 ACCR number following my name found below. 7 This 25th day of March in the year of our 8 Lord, 2025. 9 10 11 12  13 Jeana S. Boggs, CCR 14 ACCR NO. 7 Exp. 9/30/25 15 Certified Court Reporter and 16 Notary Public 17 Commission expires 8/9/27 18 19 (C) Copyright 2025, Boggs Reporting & Video. 20 All rights reserved. No portion of this 21 document may be reproduced without written 22 consent of Boggs Reporting & Video. 23</p> |

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