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CONSERVATION ADVISORY BOARD MEETING

DATE: SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 28, 2026

LOCATION: DEPARTMENT OF AG & INDUSTRIES
RICHARD BEARD AUDITORIUM
1445 FEDERAL DRIVE
MONTGOMERY, ALABAMA 36107

<p style="text-align: right;">Page 2</p> <p>1 BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT: 2 Mr. Joseph (Joey) Dobbs, Chairman 3 Mr. Christopher Blankenship, Secretary 4 (Commissioner of Alabama DCNR) 5 Mr. Charlie Gray 6 Mr. Brock Jones 7 Mr. Raymond Jones, Junior 8 Mr. Rick Pate 9 Dr. Eve Brantley 10 Mr. Kevin Savoy 11 Mr. Ben Stimpson 12 Mr. Tim Wood 13 Mr. Greg Barksdale 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23</p>	<p style="text-align: right;">Page 4</p> <p>1 (WHEREUPON, the February 28, 2026, 2 Conservation Advisory Board meeting 3 commenced at approximately 10:00 4 a.m.) 5 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Welcome, everybody, 6 to our first Conservation Advisory Board 7 2026 this year. Today is February 28th, 8 if you're not aware; I am. Let's have a 9 good meeting today and get our business 10 done quickly. 11 I want to thank Commissioner Rick 12 Pate and his wonderful staff for the use 13 of this building, it suits us and fits 14 us very well. Thank you, Commissioner 15 Pate. 16 Today I'm going to ask Mr. Raymond 17 Jones if he will, please, lead us in the 18 invocation. 19 (Prayer.) 20 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Thank you, Mr. Jones, 21 very much. 22 Today we are honored to have the 23 Conservation Enforcement Officers</p>
<p style="text-align: right;">Page 3</p> <p>1 INDEX 2 Cover Page.....1 3 Appearances.....2 4 Index.....3 5 Call to Order.....4 6 Invocation - Prayer.....4 7 Color Guard.....5 8 Pledge of Allegiance.....5 9 Recognition of Rep. Chris Sells.....5 10 Call for a Quorum.....5 11 Approval of Minutes of 5/10 and 5/29.....6 12 Introduction of Board Members/Reports....7 13 Commissioner's Report.....14 14 Special Orders (No Special Orders).....36 15 Public Comments.....36 16 Unfinished Business (NONE).....90 17 Report by Director Lewis.....90 18 New Business.....93 19 Motion.....96 20 Announcements.....98 21 Location and Time of Next Meeting.....98 22 Meeting adjourned.....98 23 Court Reporter's Certificate.....99</p>	<p style="text-align: right;">Page 5</p> <p>1 Color/Honor Guard to begin our meeting. 2 If you will please give your attention 3 to them. And when they are complete, I 4 will lead us in the pledge. Thank you. 5 (Posting the Colors.) 6 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: If you would, please 7 join me in the pledge of allegiance. 8 (Pledge of Allegiance.) 9 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Thank you very much. 10 I'd like to recognize, if I can, 11 Representative Chris Sells. 12 Representative, if you're here. Thank 13 you very much for joining us, appreciate 14 you being here, very much. 15 I want to take a minute, as I do, 16 and thank Ms. Wanda McCullers. Betsy is 17 not with us today, she is not feeling 18 well. We miss her, but thank you, Wanda 19 and her group of folks, for putting this 20 on and attending. Thank you. 21 And, Mr. Secretary, do we have a 22 quorum today? 23 COMMISSIONER BLANKENSHIP: Yes, sir,</p>

<p style="text-align: right;">Page 6</p> <p>1 we have a quorum. 2 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: All right. We have 3 two sets of minutes, two sets of meeting 4 minutes, May the 10th of 2025 and May 5 the 29th of 2025. Are there any 6 corrections to those meeting minutes? 7 (No response.) 8 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: If there are no 9 corrections, then let's vote -- let's 10 vote to accept the minutes. All of 11 those in favor of accepting the minutes, 12 please raise your right hand. 13 (Board members comply.) 14 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: The minutes are 15 accepted. Thank you. Move on with 16 those. 17 As part of our first meeting, I'd 18 like to ask -- and every year we do this 19 -- I'd like to ask each of the Board 20 members to stand, explain their district 21 and give us a brief report from their 22 district and from the folks in their 23 district. If we will, let's start at</p>	<p style="text-align: right;">Page 8</p> <p>1 Seven. 2 Now I need to sit down, correct? 3 COMMISSIONER BLANKENSHIP: So that she 4 can capture all of your words of wisdom, 5 yes, sir. 6 MR. WOOD: And y'all can see that I do 7 follow instructions. But this year was 8 great. The Black Belt deer hunting was 9 extremely good. We were up in a lot of 10 the counties, as far as the deer 11 numbers. Everybody's pretty excited 12 about turkey season, trying to see 13 what's right around the corner. 14 I had a few calls but they really 15 weren't in our district, more of them 16 were -- were deer concerns in the 17 Escambia and the Conecuh County area 18 with some dog hunting encroachments and 19 people, kind of, poaching off their 20 property. 21 I also had people that wanted to 22 reclassify airbows into the bow -- into 23 the archery season. And, of course,</p>
<p style="text-align: right;">Page 7</p> <p>1 the far end. 2 Mr. Barksdale. 3 MR. BARKSDALE: My name's Greg 4 Barksdale, I'm District Four out of 5 Cullman, Alabama. Did not have any big, 6 major issues in the district that I'm 7 aware of. Did have a lot of 8 conversations around the CWD zones in 9 Northeast Alabama with debating what -- 10 where they could bait, where they 11 couldn't bait and that kind of stuff. 12 But, other than that, no really big 13 issues in our district. Thank you, sir. 14 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Thank you. 15 COMMISSIONER BLANKENSHIP: For the 16 Court Reporter's benefit, after you say 17 your name, you might want to sit down so 18 we can talk into that microphone so she 19 can capture it all. 20 MR. WOOD: I think you said stand up 21 and then sit down. I've been told to do 22 that a lot. 23 I'm Tim Wood from Selma, District</p>	<p style="text-align: right;">Page 9</p> <p>1 everybody's trying to find a little 2 extra time to hunt, it looks like. But, 3 overall, it was a pretty good fall in 4 Dallas County and in the Black Belt. No 5 real issues. 6 MR. STIMPSON: I'm Ben Stimpson, 7 Mobile, District One. This year was 8 actually -- on the dog hunt front, was 9 fairly quiet. The only real calls I got 10 were, actually, from dog hunters just 11 wanting to check in and see if I'd heard 12 anything, so everything was really 13 pretty quiet. 14 The only thing that I've really 15 gotten my ear bent on, from a lot of 16 people, was on the turkey season dates. 17 But, other than that, things were quiet. 18 MR. SAVOY: Good morning. Kevin 19 Savoy, Dothan, Alabama, representing 20 District One. In the Wiregrass, we had 21 a pretty quiet deer season. Like some 22 of the other guys, I did see -- receive 23 some calls from some issues with dog</p>

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1 hunters in Butler County. We did have
 2 some successful fall tournaments on Lake
 3 Eufaula.
 4 And checking with landowners, it
 5 looks like everyone's anticipating a
 6 good turkey season: numbers are up
 7 there, gobblers are already gobbling,
 8 and some breeding going on, so
 9 encouraged about this turkey season.
 10 We'll see how it turns out.
 11 DR. BRANTLEY: Good morning, my name
 12 is Eve Brantley. I'm here representing
 13 the Alabama Cooperative Extension
 14 System. I'm their lead Director.
 15 And I do not have a report for
 16 today.
 17 MR. PATE: Good morning. I'm Rick
 18 Pate, Commissioner of the Alabama
 19 Department of Ag and Industries. Cattle
 20 prices are good. Okra is okay.
 21 Forestry is not so good. Road property
 22 is terrible. Thank you.
 23 MR. R. JONES: I'm Raymond Jones from

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1 Huntsville, District Five. You know,
 2 our seasons were okay this year. The
 3 duck season was poor, at best. And
 4 we're just not seeing the migrations we
 5 used to see; I think there's a lot of
 6 reasons for that.
 7 Deer season was off in North
 8 Alabama. We had a massive acorn crop
 9 this year and it just made the -- the
 10 deer just didn't move as much as they --
 11 they just typically don't when you have
 12 that big of a crop.
 13 You know, unfortunately, in my area
 14 we have CWD. And I know we'll hear more
 15 about that here in a little bit but we
 16 had a few more cases of that. I do know
 17 the Department is actively -- I mean,
 18 this is an ongoing active effort to try
 19 to -- to contain the CWD. And one myth
 20 that's out there in the public is the
 21 State's getting rich off CWD. It's
 22 costing our State money every time; we
 23 don't get a dime out of CWD. So I

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1 wanted to say that publicly here 'cause
 2 I know many people think this is a --
 3 that this is something that we're making
 4 money. We're not. We're losing money
 5 every single time we test anything.
 6 So, anyway, but that's what I have,
 7 Commissioner.
 8 MR. B. JONES: Good morning. I'm
 9 Brock Jones, District Six; I'm in
 10 Tuscaloosa. We represent -- District
 11 Six is Bibb, Jefferson, Shelby, and
 12 Tuscaloosa Counties.
 13 Deer season, in talking across the
 14 District, ranged from average, to above
 15 average. Obviously no CWD issues in my
 16 district.
 17 A few calls about dog hunting
 18 encroachments, like Tim said, from other
 19 areas of the State, and some questions
 20 about the dove hunting dates.
 21 So, that's all I've got.
 22 MR. GRAY: I'm Charlie Gray, District
 23 One, from Dauphin Island. We had a very

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1 good fall fishery in the Delta. We're
 2 looking at another good year coming,
 3 inshore and offshore, good snapper
 4 fishery.
 5 Everything other than that, pretty
 6 quiet.
 7 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Super. Thank you.
 8 Thank you all very much. Great
 9 reports.
 10 For all of you, these are your
 11 representatives in the seven
 12 Congressional Districts. Please contact
 13 them when you have issues or thoughts or
 14 good comments. We're proud to hear it
 15 and they will carry those on to the
 16 folks in the Department of Conservation
 17 and Natural Resources that can answer
 18 those questions for you.
 19 So, thank you. Thank you, both,
 20 very much for that.
 21 I'd like to ask Commissioner
 22 Blankenship to come up here now -- thank
 23 you -- and give his report.

<p style="text-align: right;">Page 14</p> <p>1 COMMISSIONER BLANKENSHIP: Good morning. I am glad to be here today. Thank you, Chairman Dobbs.</p> <p>2 I appreciate the great attendance here. I appreciate all of our officers and staff being here on this Saturday and as we work through the issues that pertain to hunting and fishing and all the other things that we do in the Department of Conservation. I appreciate all of your interest.</p> <p>3 Just a brief report, I'll try and keep it fairly brief. We have a lot that's happened since our last meeting in May that I want to inform the Board about and the public.</p> <p>4 The first of those are some personnel changes that we've had. I'd like to introduce Chris Lewis as our new Wildlife and Freshwater Fisheries Director.</p> <p>5 If you don't mind standing up so people can know who to fuss at on the</p>	<p style="text-align: right;">Page 16</p> <p>1 I would also like to welcome Ms. Eve Brantley to our Conservation Advisory Board.</p> <p>2 And thank Dr. Phillips for his service when he was the Ag Extension Chairman or Ag Agent or Chairman for the last several years, appreciate his service. I have a plaque for you to take back to Dr. Phillips. He could not be here with us today but I appreciate his service and so glad to have you on our Board.</p> <p>3 DR. BRANTLEY: Thank you.</p> <p>4 COMMISSIONER BLANKENSHIP: I've known Eve for a long time. Eve's husband actually used to work for us and the Department of Conservation many years ago; now he's at the Forestry Commission. So she has some good knowledge coming into this position on the Board. So thank you for your willingness to serve.</p> <p>5 The only sad note, I'd like to</p>
<p style="text-align: right;">Page 15</p> <p>1 Wildlife side, Mr. Chris.</p> <p>2 Chris is taking Chuck Sykes' place as the Director of Wildlife and Freshwater Fisheries, glad to have him.</p> <p>3 Mr. Kevin Anson is here. He is our new Director of the Marine Resources Division, after the retirement of Scott Bannon after many years of service.</p> <p>4 And then Charlanna Skaggs is our new Deputy Commissioner, glad to have her in a new role with our Department. She was our General Counsel and still is our General Counsel and Deputy Commissioner.</p> <p>5 And Ed Poolos, who was our Deputy Commissioner, has been appointed as the head of the Alabama Department of Environmental Management.</p> <p>6 So we've had quite a few upper level staff changes since the last time we were all together so I wanted to make sure you know who all the players are without a program and seeing who all is with us.</p>	<p style="text-align: right;">Page 17</p> <p>1 mention that our former Chief of Fisheries, Chris Greene, who retired just last year, passed away last week. He did a great job for us. He's a great, great man, good friend and so sorry to hear of his passing. But I wanted to make sure y'all knew about that.</p> <p>2 Talking about a few of the things we have going on in the Department of Conservation, I'll just hit some of the high points of things. And we've got about \$66 million in boating access projects that continue that are near complete or underway, including:</p> <p>3 seven small ramps on Lake Guntersville; Waterfront Ramp in Scottsboro is just about to get started; Fosters Ferry and Riverview in Tuscaloosa; the Weeks Bay Viewpoint Ramp down in Baldwin County is soon to -- we're working on a permit, soon to bid that this year; Billy Goat Hole on</p>

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1 Dauphin Island, which is the busiest --
 2 one of the busiest ramps, if not the
 3 busiest ramp that we have in Coastal
 4 Alabama, that was recently completed and
 5 we will have a ribbon cutting there next
 6 month.
 7 We have a big project going on in
 8 Kowaliga on Lake Martin adding parking
 9 and new lanes there, doubling the
 10 capacity of that ramp; some new
 11 tournament piers on Lake Jordan; and a
 12 new tournament-size boat ramp on the
 13 east side of Lake Martin off of Highway
 14 49 that we're doing in conjunction with
 15 Tallapoosa County and Alabama Power, we
 16 will bid very soon; and then a project
 17 in Moundville, adding capacity up there,
 18 are some of the high points of those
 19 projects.
 20 Over the last few years we've done
 21 about \$228 million in State park
 22 projects, those continue, many of those
 23 are completed that I mentioned; and last

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1 year we were in heavy construction
 2 throughout the year, most of those
 3 projects are completed and include a new
 4 pool house at Desoto; Gulf State Park
 5 Pavilion; Meaher Campground and adding
 6 cabins there, about a \$7 million
 7 project.
 8 Also, entrance upgrades at Meaher
 9 State Park; the Monte Sano CCC cabins
 10 were renovated, we had a ribbon cutting
 11 up there last Friday to open those.
 12 Wind Creek State Park we have new,
 13 three-bedroom, three-bath cottages on
 14 the lake that recently opened in about a
 15 \$12 million renovation between that
 16 project and the campground at Wind
 17 Creek.
 18 Joe Wheeler State Park, we did a
 19 lodge update, reroofed all the buildings
 20 there at Joe Wheeler and built the new
 21 playground. And then we -- I think the
 22 day after we finished roofing all the
 23 facilities up there -- it really was

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1 probably just a couple of weeks after
 2 that, we had a hail storm with softball
 3 size hail that came through and tore up
 4 all the shingles that we had just put on
 5 the building. They scraped those off
 6 and put new shingles on there, so
 7 they've been reroofed twice this past
 8 year.
 9 We have a new entrance road going
 10 into Rickwood; lodge room modernization
 11 at Lakepoint State Park has been
 12 completed; a new Event Center at
 13 Chewacla is almost finished and we'll be
 14 repaving all the roads in Chewacla.
 15 Fort Morgan Trail extension, which
 16 is a very large project down in Coastal
 17 Alabama, is nearing completion. And
 18 we're partners with Dekalb County and
 19 DOT to repave the entrance road into
 20 Bucks Pocket State Park.
 21 We've got about 30 water and sewer
 22 projects that continue in our parks in
 23 partnership with ADEM and our three

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1 largest projects are almost done. We
 2 have a total renovation of our Lake
 3 Lurleen State Park that will be
 4 completed later in March, first of
 5 April; the Gulf State Park Campground is
 6 finished, which is a large \$24 million
 7 project down in Coastal Alabama, will be
 8 done in April as well. And the new
 9 hotel at Cheaha State Park is a \$28
 10 million project, and that will be
 11 finished in June, July, and hope to have
 12 everything open to the public by late
 13 summer on that project. That will be a
 14 fantastic place there at Cheaha; I hope
 15 that you'll enjoy that.
 16 We've done mountain bike upgrades in
 17 skills parks through Innovate Alabama,
 18 spent about a million dollars each at
 19 Oak Mountain State Park and at Coldwater
 20 Mountain. We had a nice event on a very
 21 cold day at Oak Mountain State Park
 22 earlier this winter to dedicate the new
 23 skills park and over ten miles of trails

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1 at Oak Mountain.
 2 We funded more than \$45 million in
 3 GoMESA projects in Mobile and Baldwin
 4 Counties in 2025 through our State Lands
 5 Division. And we expect to award about
 6 \$40 million in additional projects from
 7 GoMESA in 2026 throughout the summer.
 8 We opened the Event Center at the
 9 Forever Wild Field Trial area in
 10 Demopolis and have completed about \$4
 11 million in renovations throughout that
 12 whole 4,000-acre facility in Perry
 13 County, Alabama.
 14 Alabama Wildlife Federation has
 15 leased our Five Rivers Facility in
 16 Baldwin County and is making
 17 improvements and will reopen that to the
 18 public very soon. This has been a good
 19 partnership between our agency and the
 20 Alabama Wildlife Federation to provide
 21 good opportunities for the public at
 22 that facility and I think that's going
 23 to be a great partnership moving

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1 forward.
 2 We implemented a pilot program last
 3 year, issued permits to landowners for
 4 night hunting of hogs and coyotes during
 5 gun deer season, when it was, otherwise,
 6 prohibited. Overall, I think it went
 7 well. That was two years ago. So this
 8 year we continued the program with
 9 substantial changes to make it easier on
 10 participants and the dispatch staff,
 11 both at our dispatchers and at the
 12 Sheriff's Offices. And we plan to
 13 continue that into next season as well.
 14 On the CWD front, we did have nine
 15 new cases in 2025/2026; eight of those
 16 are in Lauderdale County and one in
 17 Colbert County. That brings the total
 18 to 21 CWD positives here in Alabama
 19 since our first detection: 19 in
 20 Lauderdale County and 2 in Colbert
 21 County.
 22 On our State fishing lakes we're
 23 having major upgrades at Marion County

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1 Lake; at Walker County Lake, as well,
 2 we're building a new Event Center making
 3 improvements there. And then Dekalb,
 4 Escambia, and Crenshaw County lakes are
 5 under construction or improvements.
 6 On the Deepwater Horizon projects
 7 that we manage for the State of Alabama
 8 in our Coastal communities, there are
 9 212 projects so, obviously, I won't go
 10 over all of them. But some of the
 11 larger ones that are under construction
 12 now that will be completed in 2026
 13 include: the Dauphin Island Causeway
 14 project, which is a \$26 million project;
 15 moving the Bayou La Batre Sewer Outfall
 16 further offshore to open up some areas
 17 for oyster aquaculture and to have water
 18 quality improvements around Bayou La
 19 Batre and Coden, that's a \$19 million
 20 project.
 21 The Fairhope Working Waterfronts is
 22 a \$9 million project and we have a
 23 ribbon cutting for that on March 26th

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1 with the City of Fairhope.
 2 The Deer River Marsh Stabilization
 3 Project, \$18 million at Theodore
 4 Industrial Canal and Deer River.
 5 The Fowl River Spits Enhancement,
 6 \$19 million project.
 7 The Bayfront Park in Mobile County
 8 is an \$11 million project, and they've
 9 completed the water side of that project
 10 and now are completing the boardwalk
 11 through the marsh and the other
 12 amenities at that park, and that should
 13 be done later this month.
 14 The Aloe Bay Harbor Town on Dauphin
 15 Island, totally refreshing the center
 16 part of Dauphin Island to add to
 17 economic development opportunities
 18 there; that is another \$25 to 30 million
 19 project. And a sewer plant is being
 20 built on Dauphin Island; it is a \$30
 21 million project. And the Bayou La Batre
 22 City Docks project is a \$20 million
 23 project.

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1 So when you add all of those up,
 2 that is a substantial amount of
 3 construction that's underway in Coastal
 4 Alabama that we manage through our
 5 Deepwater Horizon section.
 6 Our shooting ranges, upgrading those
 7 has been an emphasis for us over the
 8 last few years. Chief Matt Weathers
 9 with our Wildlife and Freshwater
 10 Fisheries Division and his team are
 11 overseeing a lot of those upgrades.
 12 We've closed the range at Etowah County
 13 to totally renovate that; that should be
 14 open later this year. And a new range
 15 going on in Columbiana and Shelby County
 16 that will be first class when it's
 17 finished.
 18 Our red snapper season was the
 19 longest that we've had in over two
 20 decades. We opened Memorial Day weekend
 21 and then fished daily through June, and
 22 then we did weekends in July and August.
 23 And then after -- in September, we

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1 decided to go ahead and open it seven
 2 days a week until we reached our quota,
 3 and it was open from September, through
 4 the end of the year, a very successful
 5 red snapper season.
 6 You've received a copy of our Marine
 7 Resources Strategic Plan, it has been
 8 submitted for the CAB review. This is a
 9 sustainability certification for our
 10 shrimp fishery. It is -- a requirement
 11 to have that sustainability
 12 certification is to have the strategic
 13 plan and then a shrimp management plan;
 14 so I appreciate any feedback that you
 15 have from that Marine Resources
 16 Strategic Plan.
 17 In our 2025 legislation that led to
 18 regulations, there was legislation
 19 passed last year that required us to
 20 implement a Shark Alert System on the
 21 coast; that has been done. We
 22 coordinated with Baldwin County and
 23 Mobile County EMA, the local police

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1 departments there, and our staff, and we
 2 are -- we have that Shark Alert System
 3 in place. And hope we never have to use
 4 it on the coast but, if we do, we are
 5 prepared to do that.
 6 And then there was legislation that
 7 passed last year that required us to do
 8 some regulations to allow movement of
 9 deer by deer breeders outside of the CWD
 10 zone that we have in Northwest Alabama.
 11 We have completed that regulation and it
 12 has been filed. We got a lot of public
 13 comment back from the deer breeders and
 14 others and we worked with them to end up
 15 with a regulation that I think is very
 16 fair to all but also protects our
 17 interests in keeping CWD from spreading
 18 around the State. And that will be
 19 effective very shortly.
 20 There are a bunch of bills in the
 21 legislature we're tracking this year,
 22 89, I think, that we are tracking, out
 23 of 869 bills that have been introduced

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1 so far this year. One bill would set a
 2 Lifetime Disabled Hunting and Fishing
 3 License. And that bill has one vote in
 4 the Senate from passing. We made some
 5 amended suggestions to that and so we're
 6 okay with creating that Lifetime
 7 Disabled Hunting and Fishing License.
 8 There are multiple bills that deal
 9 with seafood or coastal issues that have
 10 passed or that are close to passing.
 11 Multiple bills could impact our
 12 officers' ability to do their jobs and
 13 protect wildlife and we're actively
 14 working on those bills with the
 15 legislators and have a lot of support
 16 from many members of the legislature for
 17 our Conservation Officers and the job
 18 that they do. We want to make sure that
 19 they can continue to protect the
 20 wildlife of our State.
 21 Our budget, as introduced in the
 22 legislation, is the same as what the
 23 Governor recommended. And it will be

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1 our largest budget ever for the
2 Department of Conservation.
3 Spreading a little bit of good news
4 about our staff and the work that
5 they've done: We've received several
6 awards this past year. This is in no
7 way where I have captured all of the
8 awards that our staff has earned. If I
9 didn't include an award in here, I
10 apologize, I just couldn't remember it.
11 So I put down the ones that were most
12 recent that I had at hand.
13 We received the Governor's Tourism
14 Award last year for the work that we've
15 been doing on State parks and outdoor
16 recreation throughout the State. That's
17 kind of a big deal, they only give away
18 -- give out one of those a year and the
19 Department of Conservation received that
20 last year.
21 We received an award just last week
22 from the Tennessee Riverline, "The
23 Partners Award," for the work that we've

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1 done through Innovate Alabama to help
2 grow outdoor recreation, particularly
3 canoe and kayak, on the Tennessee River
4 in the tributaries all through our
5 State.
6 On all the boating access work that
7 we've done, we received a States
8 Organization for Boating Access, Boating
9 Access National Award last year. And I
10 had the opportunity to go and collect
11 that award for our Department. And in
12 talking to the other states, the work
13 that we're doing in boating access is
14 head and shoulders above what anybody
15 else is doing nationwide. And I thought
16 we were doing good but, after talking to
17 all the other states, we're doing great
18 on boating access. And I think that is
19 a testament to the hard work of both our
20 Wildlife and Freshwater Fisheries and
21 Marine Resources Division on providing
22 access for our fishermen to the State.
23 And, just recently, this past week,

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1 our Deputy Commissioner, Charlanna
2 Skaggs, was recognized as one of the
3 women who shaped the State. And
4 appreciate her work with us, that's kind
5 of a big deal.
6 And I see Commissioner Pate here,
7 one of his employees, also, was
8 recognized for that designation as well.
9 So we're very, very blessed with the
10 staff and the people that we have in the
11 Department of Conservation.
12 And last but not least, Chris Lewis
13 will give an update on seasons and bag
14 limits later in the meeting. But one of
15 the proposed changes I wanted to
16 highlight is an addition to our Hunter
17 Safety Requirements in the State of
18 Alabama. We have always used hunter
19 orange or blaze orange as the only
20 approved color for hunting and fishing
21 -- or hunting safety in the State.
22 I got a letter from a young lady a
23 few months ago asking about why, in

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1 Alabama, we didn't allow fluorescent
2 pink as a -- as a -- something that the
3 women -- more women getting into hunting
4 and more people in the outdoors, that,
5 that would be something that maybe we
6 should look at in Alabama to help
7 participation from more female and youth
8 hunters.
9 And I did not know that was a thing.
10 So I looked it up and there were -- at
11 the time, 11 states, now there are 14
12 states that allow fluorescent pink as an
13 addition to hunter orange. And as we're
14 trying to grow the amount of people that
15 hunt in our State and enjoy the
16 outdoors, we proposed that we add
17 fluorescent pink to the hunter orange as
18 an approved high visibility color that
19 can be used in the field. We did -- It
20 is not visible to deer, the pink is not
21 visible, so that's not going to cause
22 you any new -- any problems. But I am
23 excited about that. I think that's

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1 something that's going to be pretty cool
 2 for our State. And as we're trying to
 3 get more and more people in the
 4 outdoors, it just gives us another
 5 opportunity to do that.

6 There was a cute little six-year-old
 7 young lady that shot a deer this year,
 8 for her first deer, first buck, and we
 9 posted her on our Facebook page. And
 10 talking to her mother about it and then
 11 we're thinking about doing this, and the
 12 little girl got super excited. She
 13 said, I want to do that; I want to wear
 14 that. So, if that gets us more youth
 15 and more people into hunting, I think it
 16 will be a good thing.

17 So, with that, Mr. Chairman, that is
 18 my report. But before I sit down I want
 19 to give you all a --
 20 (Commissioner Blankenship handed out
 21 pink ball caps to the Board
 22 members.)
 23 COMMISSIONER BLANKENSHIP: Now you've

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1 got to put them on. You've got to put
 2 them on.

3 All right. Everybody, take a look;
 4 everybody get your hats on and let's
 5 take a good picture.

6 Thank you, Mr. Chairman. That
 7 concluded my report.

8 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Thank you. Thank you
 9 very much. Thank you for the hat. So,
 10 thank you, thank you, thank you,
 11 Commissioner, very much.

12 Today we're -- after his -- the
 13 Commissioner's report, we have public
 14 comments today -- Special Orders and
 15 public comments. There are no Special
 16 Orders, so we'll move right into the
 17 public commentary.

18 Those of you that were here and
 19 signed up to speak, what I'll ask today,
 20 we have a podium, we have our court
 21 reporter, be mindful. I'm going to ask
 22 you today, as you come to the podium,
 23 speak up so that she can hear you and

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1 that everybody else can hear you. She's
 2 got to be able to hear you.

3 The crowd and everybody, be
 4 respectful of the person speaking;
 5 reserve your comments for outside in the
 6 hall. And no applause and no outbursts.

7 Also, each speaker, when you come
 8 up, refer to the Chair. I am the Chair,
 9 refer to me for questions or comments.
 10 Do not engage directly with Board. I
 11 will direct you there; that is so she
 12 knows who is talking to whom and not
 13 someone over-talking the other. It's
 14 pretty easy, so let's be courteous.

15 The first speaker today --
 16 Is our microphone up and rolling?
 17 Are we rolling? It sounds like it is.

18 The first speaker today is Mary
 19 Carole Jackson.

20 MS. JACKSON: I appreciate you guys so
 21 much. This is our -- I'm with Riverside
 22 Fly Shop on the Sipsey Fork of the
 23 Warrior River there between Cullman and

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1 Walker County. This is my -- I think
 2 Joe and I were talking about it -- it's
 3 my either 18th or 19th year speaking to
 4 you guys. And we really appreciate all
 5 the work you've done over the years.

6 One of the things I wanna talk about
 7 is, when we first started coming here --
 8 we were talking about this yesterday --
 9 the Sipsey Fork was referred to as a
 10 ditch with water. You had to be a
 11 mountain goat to get down to the river.
 12 And the re-licensing of the dam
 13 happened. And Alabama Power spent
 14 almost \$10 million retrofitting the dam
 15 for better trout fishing. They got in
 16 there with the heavy equipment and
 17 recreated several -- they recreated
 18 several fishing experiences to have a
 19 smokey mountain type stream. It is
 20 phenomenal; the most beautiful -- to me
 21 -- of course I'm a little biased -- it's
 22 the most beautiful part of Alabama. If
 23 you haven't been there, you really

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1 should.

2 Our water stays between 42 and 55

3 degrees year-round because it's being

4 pulled from below Smith Lake.

5 The thing I want to talk to you guys

6 about today is, like, COVID happened and

7 then everybody got outside. I'm talking

8 about, y'all, it is fantastic. We see

9 families every weekend. But where

10 Alabama Power had done research and we

11 were averaging 60 anglers a day from

12 March to October, we are exponentially

13 higher right now.

14 The other part of this was -- and

15 the best part for us -- is when Gorgas

16 steam plant shut down, like, y'all, the

17 trout feeding buffet of the striper has

18 all but ended because they're not coming

19 up looking for cold water 'cause there's

20 no warm water discharge downstream. So

21 they're not making their way all the way

22 back up, so that has helped

23 tremendously.

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1 In the past we've referenced, like,

2 other Southeastern tailraces. And, put

3 in text, one of them has been, like, the

4 -- one of them has been the Little Red

5 River in Arkansas. The "Little Red"

6 brings in \$129 million for the County,

7 not for the State, the County. And what

8 we're asking -- They get 200,000 trout a

9 year. They're this -- They're more

10 remote than we are, smaller. They --

11 We've got -- We've got less stream miles

12 but not by just -- I mean, by about --

13 by about half. We only get 30,000

14 trout, tops, a year. We're asking,

15 after the -- the -- after the collapse

16 of the Norfolk Fish Hatchery, Arkansas

17 set in -- 'cause they cannot replace --

18 TIME KEEPER: Time.

19 MS. JACKSON: -- the trout -- Okay.

20 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: You have 25 seconds.

21 MS. JACKSON: Okay. So, Arkansas --

22 Arkansas can't replace those fish, so

23 they're stretching them. So the way

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1 that they're doing that is, either catch

2 and release or lowering the -- the

3 limit, the limit goes down to two. And

4 then they're making it where it's single

5 -- single-hook artificial only and then

6 catch and release for much of it. We're

7 asking, if we can't get more fish, can

8 we just stretch the number of fish we

9 have. That's it.

10 Last thing -- Can I say one more

11 thing?

12 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: One more thing, yes,

13 go.

14 MS. JACKSON: Hey, we would -- we

15 would really love -- y'all have done so

16 very great for us in the past, all of

17 the new folks, Raymond and I would like

18 to meet in the coming months and really,

19 you know, plan for the future 'cause,

20 apparently, we're not leaving, so.

21 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Well, you're welcome

22 to do that and I know they would enjoy

23 it. Thank you, Mary Carole, very much.

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1 Any questions from the Board for

2 Mary Carole?

3 (No response.)

4 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: You've written this

5 up and sent it?

6 MS. JACKSON: I have not sent it.

7 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Okay.

8 MS. JACKSON: I can. I can send it to

9 you, if you'd like me to. I know it --

10 I know that -- well, some of our

11 advocates, like, our State Senators and

12 Representatives, all are in favor of

13 this. The County -- Like, our -- our

14 Mayors in both of them -- Cullman and

15 Walker, and that -- I mean, it's just --

16 it is -- for the State for funding, for

17 generation of income, you 'bout can't

18 beat trout fishing. It's insane.

19 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: All right. Thank

20 you. Thank you very much.

21 MS. JACKSON: Thank, y'all, so much.

22 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Thank you.

23 Our next speaker -- and let me

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1 remind -- and I didn't before, that's on
2 me -- but you have three minutes. We
3 have 16 speakers, 15 now, so you have
4 three minutes to speak.
5 The next speaker is Mr. Jimmy
6 Stiles.
7 MR. STILES: Thank you, Mr. Chairman,
8 and to the Board. I'm here today, kind
9 of this broken record; y'all've heard
10 this pitch before, but to talk about the
11 incongruity between the public land and
12 the private land opening of turkey
13 season here in Alabama. This happened a
14 few years ago. And it doesn't really
15 benefit the turkeys in any way, because
16 what, you know, perceived benefits might
17 occur from starting later on the public
18 land, due to increased breeding, is
19 offset by the fact that people on
20 private land next to those, can just
21 either poach or call those birds onto
22 their private property. And, really, it
23 just sets to penalize public land

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1 hunters here in our state.
2 Turkey hunting is a big activity
3 here in the state. And I can tell you
4 that my avid turkey survey data will
5 show I probably spend more time in the
6 turkey woods than the vast majority of
7 our public and most of that is on public
8 land. And it does -- you know, being
9 out on the public land, I -- I notice
10 things. And I'm out there every single
11 day from February, to the end of May
12 listening. And there are many private
13 landowners that take advantage of this.
14 So I would like for those two opening
15 dates to be the same for public land and
16 for private land.
17 Now, I don't particularly care if it
18 opens on March 25th or April 1st but I
19 would like for the Board to come
20 together with the Department of
21 Conservation and solve this problem.
22 And I'll take the last one minute of
23 my time to also encourage ADCNR to

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1 enforce our nongame laws here in the
2 state. The Opp Rattlesnake Rodeo is
3 coming up. And I know that every year,
4 people break our nongame laws down
5 there, so a little enforcement action
6 might help to ameliorate that problem
7 with the -- some of the individuals down
8 there, not necessarily the rodeo,
9 itself, but some of the individuals that
10 attend that rodeo. But, with that, you
11 know, I hope that y'all take my words,
12 you know, here. And I would love next
13 year to see turkey open on the exact
14 same date, regardless of whether it's
15 public or private land.
16 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Thank you very much,
17 Mr. Stiles.
18 Any questions for Mr. Stiles from
19 the Board?
20 (No response.)
21 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Thank you. It's
22 always good to have you here, appreciate
23 you coming.

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1 Our next speaker is Mr. Larry
2 Spalding.
3 MR. SPALDING: Thank you. I'll keep
4 it short and sweet. I'm here for the
5 issue of dog hunting deer. I live about
6 an hour away from where I hunt at. And
7 I make the trip to go hunting and dogs
8 come through the private land where I
9 hunt. I'm not against dog hunting. I
10 mean, if there's a way to do it and not
11 intrude, you know, on -- on my property
12 or whatever, I mean, I -- I'm more --
13 more than happy for them to hunt.
14 But I also want to be able to have
15 my way of hunting, too, which is stalk
16 hunting, without all the interruptions.
17 And that's all.
18 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Thank you.
19 Any questions for --
20 Yes, sir, Commissioner.
21 COMMISSIONER BLANKENSHIP: My only
22 question is, what county do you hunt in?
23 I see you live in --

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1 MR. SPALDING: I live in Saint Clair
2 but I hunt in Talladega.
3 COMMISSIONER BLANKENSHIP: Thank you.
4 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Any other questions?
5 MR. BARKSDALE: I had the same
6 question.
7 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Thank you.
8 Thank you very much for being here.
9 Our next speaker is Mr. Jimmy
10 McDonald.
11 MR. MCDONALD: Good morning. I don't
12 have much time so I'll be brief. I gave
13 y'all a copy of a recommendation from my
14 paper company, Westervelt, about my
15 club. On the second page, it's just a
16 brief summary of what our expenses for
17 the ones in our club that have dogs and
18 track them. Each year the dog hunters,
19 we spend about -- the tracking
20 equipment, about \$50,000 a year as -- to
21 purchase all this -- the devices we have
22 to keep up with our dogs. And we also
23 spend about \$30,000 a year in dog feed.

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1 We put on -- Our club puts on youth
2 hunts that we give away lifetime license
3 each year. And then we do a Veterans
4 deer hunt -- dog deer hunt. And then we
5 also do a Veterans rabbit hunt every
6 year.
7 But, like, I'm here to see if -- We
8 -- We spend about \$50,000 a year on
9 leasing the property. And if we only
10 hunt dog -- we don't hunt with dogs
11 weekends, Saturdays and Sundays, and
12 holidays; so it's only, like, ever how
13 many days a year, 20 days. If you
14 divide out all this -- the money we
15 spend to be able to hunt with dogs --
16 We're just asking if we could give --
17 have some more time, maybe some more
18 weekends, that we could dog hunt on, on
19 the property that we lease from
20 Westervelt.
21 I know we do a -- been -- We haven't
22 had any complaints, that I know of, in
23 30 years -- 20-something years. But,

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1 you know, the letter from Westervelt, it
2 shows that, you know, they are the --
3 our paper company, they haven't had any
4 complaints, either, of anybody calling
5 in. And people are real quick to call
6 the landowners if you do have a problem.
7 But I also want to -- would like to
8 say just a minute, last year or a year
9 -- two years ago when we were at the
10 Board, I asked Chief Weathers about --
11 I've changed the subject for a second.
12 The boat ramps in Shelby County,
13 they put in new boat ramps. And it
14 didn't have access -- they didn't have
15 ladders or anything for the elderly to
16 be able to get up and down on the boat
17 ramps. So, anyway, since I -- Chief
18 Weathers and he -- he told me he would
19 get with Montgomery and he did on the
20 Monday after that. I'm not sure about
21 the name but I think it was Chief
22 Hatcher or something with -- anyway, he
23 called me back. We had two Veterans

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1 that's in my club and they also fish in
2 the river.
3 But he also -- He called me back and
4 with a week -- within a week -- I just
5 want to commend him -- but within a week
6 after that --
7 TIME KEEPER: Time.
8 MR. MCDONALD: -- he -- they -- they
9 had ramp -- had handrails and stuff on
10 the -- on those piers. And, since then,
11 one of the guys has passed on. But I
12 just want to thank Chief Weathers and
13 the Fisheries because they gave that guy
14 two years that he was able to get in and
15 out of his boat at the boat ramp, you
16 know. A lot of times when you -- you
17 talk to somebody, they say they'll call
18 you back but, in reality, you never get
19 a phone call back. But this day, they
20 followed through and done this.
21 This guy -- The -- One of them was a
22 World War II Veteran, the one that's
23 passed on. And it's just -- they were

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1 -- When they would pull up at the ramp,
 2 they would have to get out on the ramp
 3 where the boats had been coming in and
 4 out, and slipping and sliding, so they
 5 was just -- he was at the point he was
 6 gonna quit fishing. So I wanted to
 7 thank the -- Chief Weathers.

8 And, also, every time we have an
 9 event, Veterans or youth, he always has
 10 us some officers there to go over the
 11 stuff with the kids and the Veterans to
 12 -- to show them the appreciation on that
 13 but -- of everybody, you know. We also
 14 have Veterans from out of state and
 15 stuff that come here also, but --

16 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Thank you, Mr.
 17 McDonald. Thank you for the
 18 commendation. Hold on for just a
 19 moment.

20 Any questions from the Board for Mr.
 21 McDonald?

22 (No response.)

23 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Again, thank you very

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1 much for the commendation to the Chief.
 2 Our next speaker is Mr. Rickey
 3 Catrett.

4 MR. CATRETT: My name's Rickey
 5 Catrett --

6 THE COURT REPORTER: I can't hear you.
 7 I'm sorry.

8 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Speak up.

9 MR. CATRETT: My name's Rickey
 10 Catrett, President of Red Oak Hunting
 11 Club in Coffee County, Alabama.

12 I'd like to stand up here today to
 13 promote dog hunting. At the beginning,
 14 Mr. Blankenship said that he wanted to
 15 get kids into hunting. This year our
 16 youth hunt that we have every year at
 17 our club, we had 41 kids involved in our
 18 youth hunt. That goes a long ways to
 19 getting more people into hunting.

20 I have a lot of my fellow members
 21 here today. I also heard a lot of y'all
 22 that said that y'all have had some calls
 23 from dog hunting incidents in your

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1 county. We're working hard in Coffee
 2 County to keep from having those
 3 incidents. We're building a
 4 relationship with our private landowners
 5 around our hunting club so that, if
 6 there is a problem, we will go to them,
 7 talk with them and handle it so it does
 8 not get brought to y'all, y'all -- so
 9 y'all don't have to deal with it. So,
 10 as far as I know, in Coffee County this
 11 year, we have not had any formal
 12 complaint. And I'd like to keep it that
 13 way.

14 And I would like to recommend that
 15 Coffee County stay as is this year for
 16 the dog hunting season. Thank you.

17 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Hold on just -- Hold
 18 on, Mr. Catrett.

19 Any questions from the Board?
 20 (No response.)

21 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Thank you very much.
 22 Our next speaker is Mr. Phil
 23 Blackburn.

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1 MR. BLACKBURN: Good morning. Thank
 2 you. I'm just gonna read my -- my
 3 report real quick. I think some of
 4 y'all, we've already talked to you about
 5 it. But I'm here to represent my family
 6 property and a neighboring landowner
 7 property in South Butler County.

8 We have 450 acres of private land on
 9 the north side of County Road 38, South
 10 Butler County. There's a dog hunting
 11 club that has the paper company land
 12 leased on the west, north, and east side
 13 of our property. The club positions
 14 stands around our property and then send
 15 their dogs onto our land and wait for
 16 the dogs to jump -- jump and run a deer
 17 back to them. This practice has ended
 18 our hunting for the day, along with
 19 being a form of poaching.

20 This issue started the opening
 21 weekend of deer season and they're
 22 carrying on until January 3rd. From
 23 December 19th, until January the 3rd,

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1 they jumped -- they hunted our property
 2 every day except Christmas Day.
 3 We started trying to contact our
 4 local Game Warden, Isaac Ward, and were
 5 not -- were not able to get in -- make
 6 contact with him until December 6th.
 7 His response was that the hunters were
 8 not physically on our property, he
 9 couldn't do anything about the dogs
 10 being on our property 'cause Butler
 11 County was not on a dog permit system.
 12 December 23rd I talked -- I called
 13 the Game Watch Number and talked to
 14 Officer Jim Daugherty. I explained the
 15 situation to him. He repeated what
 16 Isaac said: Since Butler County is not
 17 on a permit system, that Game and Fish
 18 could not do anything about hunters
 19 sending dogs on private land. His
 20 recommendation was to continue calling
 21 the Game Watch and having the event stop
 22 a minute.
 23 On December 27th, I talked to

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1 Officer Shane Jerkins while they were,
 2 again, hunting our property. Officer
 3 Jerkins repeated the same information
 4 about Butler County not being on a
 5 permit system and Game and Fish couldn't
 6 help with dog -- dogs being cast on
 7 private property under the curtain of
 8 law.
 9 January 3rd I talked to Sergeant
 10 Mickey Tait, Game and Fish, that --
 11 while they were, again, hunting our
 12 property and explained the situation.
 13 His response was the same as the other
 14 officers, Game and Fish couldn't do
 15 anything to help us since Butler County
 16 was not on a dog permit system. He said
 17 -- and then he said we need to push to
 18 have Butler County put on the permit
 19 system in order for Game and Fish to be
 20 able to help with this problem.
 21 I've lived and dog hunted in
 22 Chambers County since 1988, which was
 23 under the permit system at that time and

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1 continues to be. From my understanding,
 2 Chambers County was put on the permit
 3 system for, basically, the same issues
 4 we're experiencing now in Butler County.
 5 We're asking the Game and Fish
 6 Department to please give the landowners
 7 and residents of South Butler County
 8 help with this issue. By placing Butler
 9 County on a permit system, it will allow
 10 the Game and Fish officers an
 11 opportunity to help with our problem.
 12 I'm not against dog hunting but I'm
 13 against poaching and harassing other
 14 hunters. Thank you very much.
 15 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Thank you. Just a
 16 moment.
 17 Any questions from the Board for Mr.
 18 Blackburn?
 19 (No response.)
 20 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Thank you, Mr.
 21 Blackburn, very much.
 22 MR. BLACKBURN: Thank y'all.
 23 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Our next speaker is

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1 Mr. Don Knight.
 2 MR. KNIGHT: Snuck up on me. I'm Don
 3 Knight. I live in Anniston, Alabama,
 4 been dog hunting, basically, all my
 5 life.
 6 Before I start on anything, I want
 7 to bring to your attention that we lost
 8 a very good man just about a month ago,
 9 Mr. "Buddy" Willis. Buddy's been coming
 10 to these meetings for years and years
 11 and years. Not only has he been coming
 12 to these meetings, he sat on this Board.
 13 And he -- District Five is who he
 14 represented when he was on this Board.
 15 Buddy was the kind of guy that you'd
 16 want to talk to because he was nice. He
 17 might get upset with you, but you'd
 18 never know it.
 19 He was one of these guys that could
 20 talk to you and get you to understand
 21 what's going on. And we appreciated
 22 him. And, as far as I know, he's the
 23 only real, absolute dog hunter that's

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1 ever been on this Board. But Buddy was
2 a good man and we lost him, so just
3 wanted to bring that to your attention.
4 I hunted this year a little
5 different from what I'd ever hunted
6 before. I hunted in the national forest
7 all year long. There's one day that I
8 went back to the old club that I was in
9 and hunted with them. The rest of the
10 time, I hunted in the national forest
11 where we could see what was going on
12 with any complaints in the Talladega
13 National Forest.
14 And I found that most of the guys up
15 there -- not most, just about all of
16 them, hunted because that's where they
17 wanted to hunt. It's around their home.
18 They can't afford these big ole clubs to
19 get in and they need that right to hunt
20 those national forests.
21 Now, I went in up there thinking
22 there was two or three groups that was
23 hunting this national forest part. And

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1 when I got in there, I found out there
2 was about six or eight groups hunting in
3 this national forest. And that makes a
4 big difference when you're turning dogs
5 loose. And what we wanna try to do --
6 and I've already mentioned it to the
7 Commissioner -- I'm gonna have a thing,
8 I'm gonna send it to all of you next
9 week. I'd like for y'all to consider
10 opening up the dog hunting privileges in
11 the county of Cleburne County where we
12 shut down the dog hunting in that
13 national forest part; I'd like to have
14 that back open.
15 What I think it would do is expand
16 these dogs further apart and they won't
17 be going on these people's property near
18 as much. I think that would be a big
19 help, if we had a little more property,
20 plenty up there in Cleburne County. I
21 know because I grew up hunting that land
22 in Cleburne County and the Talladega
23 National Forest, the land's up there.

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1 And I'm looking to --
2 TIME KEEPER: Time.
3 MR. KNIGHT: -- try to get some help
4 on that. And, like I said, you'll be
5 getting information on it, just as quick
6 as I can get it back out. I hadn't been
7 doing real good; I've been loafing. So
8 we'll try to get back into it and get
9 this stuff done.
10 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Thank you.
11 Any questions from the Board for Mr.
12 Knight?
13 (No response.)
14 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Thank you, Mr.
15 Knight.
16 Our next speaker is Mr. Donald
17 Nelson.
18 MR. NELSON: Is this gonna be loud
19 enough? Okay. All right. On behalf of
20 the City of Creola, I would like to
21 thank the Chairman and the Conservation
22 Department for allowing the City to be
23 part of the GoMESA -- the Gulf of Mexico

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1 Energy Security Act Grant Program. It's
2 making big changes in my town of Creola.
3 And we're very, very appreciative.
4 I'm particularly excited about
5 wetland preservation that we have. We
6 have some hundred-and-fifty-year-old
7 trees that we're going to save. So I
8 want to thank the Conservation
9 Department on that. But good things are
10 happening in Creola but it wouldn't be
11 without the GoMESA Program. Okay.
12 One thing, it's been at least five
13 years since we've had a complaint on Big
14 Rack Hunting Club. It's been -- And
15 I've been proud of that. Regretfully,
16 this is not the case this year.
17 I received a call from Mr. Lonnie
18 Miller, and Lonnie communicated with Mr.
19 Grady that he'd received a call from him
20 that said, "Hey, we've got a problem,"
21 which I wasn't aware of. Okay. Once I
22 received the call, I removed the problem
23 child from the club. Sometimes you get

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1 bad apples, good apples, whatever, but
 2 sometimes you have those problems that
 3 exist right yonder. And we did remove
 4 that -- that problem from the club.
 5 Additionally, we cut back two days
 6 of dog hunting out of the -- every week,
 7 we cut two days out to help me put --
 8 keep that problem down again. My
 9 commitment to the Board is, that I won't
 10 let it -- allow it to happen again. I
 11 dropped the ball, good people, but then,
 12 again, I had some problems I didn't --
 13 didn't -- wasn't aware of.
 14 I did hear -- I haven't heard of any
 15 other problem since I took the action
 16 that I took. And it seemed like the
 17 problem is -- And, once again, I've been
 18 talking to Lonnie as much as I can. One
 19 thing that we did discover -- and I give
 20 Lonnie some pictures -- we have pictures
 21 of dogs -- well, two dogs on two --
 22 about three different instances on our
 23 land and other people's land, yard dogs,

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1 black Cur, a black and tan dog, and also
 2 a second -- another batch of -- group of
 3 dogs to come through that didn't have no
 4 collars on. So we got some problems
 5 with some dogs.
 6 And, just recently, a few weeks ago,
 7 some of our members was telling me we
 8 was having rabbit hunting and they run
 9 across two more of these dogs doing the
 10 same thing, snicker doodles or some kind
 11 of dog, labs or whatever, running
 12 around. They'll chase the deer, you'll
 13 notice that over the years.
 14 But, no, we've -- we didn't -- I
 15 dropped the ball this year as a
 16 president and I apologize to this Board.
 17 And if y'all wanna fire me, y'all can
 18 say, go back and put -- I run Beagles so
 19 I don't have to worry about them getting
 20 too far. They're about that big and I
 21 can run them down and catch them if I
 22 need to.
 23 But the dogs that -- there have been

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1 some dogs without collars up there on
 2 our land and there's some other issues
 3 going on with that.
 4 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Thank you, Mayor.
 5 Any questions for --
 6 Go ahead, Brock -- Mr. Jones.
 7 MR. BROCK JONES: Are we talking about
 8 the same area --
 9 MR. NELSON: Yes, sir.
 10 MR. BROCK JONES: -- that same area as
 11 Mr. Blackburn?
 12 MR. NELSON: Yes, sir.
 13 MR. BROCK JONES: Have y'all talked
 14 much, you and Mr. Blackburn?
 15 MR. NELSON: No, sir.
 16 MR. BROCK JONES: Okay. Don't you
 17 think that'd be a good idea?
 18 MR. NELSON: I welcome the opportunity
 19 to talk with Mr. Blackburn to try to
 20 remedy the problem.
 21 MR. BROCK JONES: Okay.
 22 MR. NELSON: Yeah, actually -- I don't
 23 know if he remembers this -- Mr. Tommy

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1 Phillips, Senior, owned the land. They
 2 used to take me back there and let me
 3 turn loose some dog on Mr. Tommy, but
 4 that was about 30 years ago. Yes, I was
 5 listening -- I mean, I have no problem
 6 at all to try to make the problem right.
 7 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Any other questions
 8 for Mr. Nelson?
 9 Thank you very much.
 10 Our next speaker is Mr. Lane
 11 Stephens.
 12 MR. STEPHENS: Thank you, Chairman,
 13 Commissioner and members. I'm Lane
 14 Stephens. I'm here representing the
 15 Alabama Dog Hunter's Association.
 16 Since 2019, the Alabama Dog Hunter's
 17 Association has supported the Agency's
 18 efforts to implement the Deer Dog
 19 Encroachment Rule. We strive to do it
 20 by law by having some bills filed or
 21 anticipated in the statute. We have
 22 supported that.
 23 Last year when we met with you in

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1 the spring, we supported that, with the
2 understanding that the season will be
3 extended. When the season dates came
4 out, that extension was not there.
5 Other organizations, other individuals
6 were opposed to the rule and still
7 oppose that rule, whether you extend the
8 season or not, but not the Alabama Dog
9 Hunter's Association.
10 Commissioner has the authority to
11 adopt an extended season contingent upon
12 the adoption of the rule. He can do
13 that, or she, whoever's in that seat,
14 can do that. Try not to make this
15 personal, it's that position. And we're
16 here to say that if that season is
17 extended -- and we'd like to see it
18 extended through the Sunday after Martin
19 Luther King Day -- we're here to support
20 that rule, we always have been. We want
21 to do what's right and provide your
22 officers with a mechanism to take care
23 of those people who are doing things

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1 wrong.
2 We would also suggest that you
3 consider looking at doing a pilot
4 program in Franklin County. Franklin's
5 been closed for many years. And they
6 have individuals up there who would love
7 to hunt on property that they have. But
8 because things have happened 30 or 40
9 years ago, they can't do that. These
10 individuals are 35 years old. They
11 didn't have a problem -- they weren't
12 the ones who caused that problem.
13 Implement a ten-day season, December
14 23rd through January 3rd. Allow these
15 folks to get out there in the woods with
16 their kids and enjoy running their dogs.
17 That would keep them from having to
18 drive over to Mississippi, which is
19 where they have to go today. Put it
20 under the rule -- under the permit
21 program. Put the Deer Dog Trespass in
22 there. Do it for one season and see
23 what happens, see what happens. Give a

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1 young man a chance with these things to
2 hunt on his land the way he'd like to
3 hunt.
4 Your Constitution provides him with
5 that right to hunt and fish using
6 traditional means, subject to reasonable
7 regulation. But it's not reasonable to
8 treat people differently or to treat
9 people any way, when they didn't do
10 anything wrong.
11 I appreciate your time and I'm here
12 to answer any questions.
13 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Any questions for Mr.
14 Stephens from the Board?
15 (No response.)
16 MR. STEPHENS: Thank you, sir.
17 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Thank you, Lane, very
18 much.
19 The next speaker is Mr. Chris
20 Turner.
21 MR. TURNER: I live in the Talladega
22 County area. And we're still having the
23 same problems with the national forest

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1 with dogs that we've had over the past
2 years. I've lived in this area for 30
3 years and it's been continuous. And
4 I've been coming to the last four
5 meetings trying to get something -- you
6 know, some help, relief with it.
7 Back in October the legislators
8 voted for, you know, the one mile buffer
9 around the Talladega National Forest and
10 private landowners. And I think that
11 needs to be extended out even further,
12 you know, because we still had problems
13 this year of people not obeying, you
14 know, not -- that buffer didn't --
15 didn't work. You know, it's gonna have
16 to be a further distance to keep them
17 off our property.
18 We still had the same issues, you
19 know, people -- it got pretty bad this
20 time. I mean, there's people
21 threatening us, you know, social media
22 threats. It's a shame that we can't
23 have our own right to hunt on our own

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1 private property and not be infringed by
 2 other people that thinks it's okay, you
 3 know, just -- just to run all over us.
 4 We've been dealing with this same
 5 problem, you know, like I said, for
 6 years. I'll suggest, you know, just a
 7 bigger buffer, you know, in between us,
 8 other than the one mile buffer; you
 9 know, go a further distance away to keep
 10 them off of us; boundary lines; cutoffs,
 11 something, I mean.
 12 I mean, I'm not against dog hunting;
 13 I just do not want them on my property.
 14 And, I mean, we deal with this, like I
 15 said, it's every year, after year; some
 16 of the same local ones and then we have
 17 others from other counties coming in and
 18 running on us. And it's our right to be
 19 able to hunt on our own property, you
 20 know, being taken away from us without
 21 that pressure, you know. But it's in
 22 the Talladega National Forest, we've had
 23 a lot of -- there's a lot of complaints

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1 in this area here. We really need some
 2 help from everybody on this.
 3 That's all I've got to say.
 4 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Thank you, Mr.
 5 Turner.
 6 Any questions for Mr. Turner from
 7 the Board?
 8 (No response.)
 9 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Thank you for coming.
 10 The next speaker is Mr. Michael
 11 Champion.
 12 MR. CHAMPION: Thank you, Mr. Chairman
 13 and the rest of you. It's pretty hard
 14 to get up here and speak when everybody
 15 else has been ahead of you.
 16 I live in Talladega County. We're
 17 dealing with the same stuff over and
 18 over and over. I buy a piece of land in
 19 the middle of hundreds of acres, for my
 20 grand-kids, my wife and all, to hunt on,
 21 my own little space. When you buy a
 22 place like that, you're supposed to have
 23 your own little space. But you don't.

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1 And we go over this year and year and
 2 year.
 3 I know I've seen several of you with
 4 the packets, smiled when you opened it.
 5 Pretty sick, ain't it. That's what
 6 we're dealing with. Like several of
 7 them said, we're not against dog
 8 hunters, we just don't want it on our
 9 property and that's our right. Why
 10 should have -- we have to keep fighting
 11 it over and over and over.
 12 But I do have a question. And I was
 13 told to ask this: Whose hands is it
 14 gonna fall in when somebody dies over
 15 this mess, because, believe me, it's
 16 coming. That's the way it's gotten.
 17 All we ask is for these dogs to be kept
 18 off of our property. Hunting dogs, I
 19 have nothing wrong with it, been around
 20 it all my life, but when you start
 21 pressuring me, what I own, then I have a
 22 right, I'm supposed to anyway.
 23 All we ask is to be kept off the

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1 private property. We're not asking to
 2 shut 'em down. You've got Mr. Miller
 3 and them that's coming, he's worked with
 4 the guys in our area. They pushed him
 5 away because they don't want somebody in
 6 there doing right. And that's all we
 7 ask, is protect us on our property. Let
 8 my grand-kids go up there and sit on my
 9 property and hunt the way I want 'em to
 10 hunt, without going up there two or
 11 three times getting busted out by dogs;
 12 then they don't wanna go no more.
 13 That's all we ask for is some help. I
 14 thank you. That's all. That's all I've
 15 got.
 16 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Hold on Mr. Champion.
 17 Any questions for Mr. Champion?
 18 Thank you. Well spoken. Thank you.
 19 Next speaker is Mr. Cal Crowder.
 20 MR. CROWDER: Calvin Crowder from
 21 Talladega, Alabama. It's good to see
 22 all of y'all again. Thank you.
 23 Believe it or not, I'm going to

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1 start off with some positive news. This
 2 is the first time in ten years, as far
 3 as I know, I did not have dogs on my
 4 property. And I'm so thankful for that.
 5 You do not know how much that means to
 6 me. So I want to give a heartfelt
 7 thanks to whoever helped facilitate
 8 that; if it's the dog hunters,
 9 themselves, then so be it, I thank them.
 10 But like my friend Chris Turner,
 11 though, was not as fortunate. And what
 12 he showed me is heartbreaking. The dogs
 13 -- They put out dogs next to his
 14 property. They run a trophy buck off of
 15 his property, take a picture of it, put
 16 it on social media and all the bad
 17 comments that go with it. So, we still
 18 have bad actors. We still have dog
 19 hunters who will not do the right thing.
 20 So we still --
 21 If y'all are still willing to
 22 listen, we're still -- listen to us,
 23 we're still willing to talk and take up

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1 for ourselves and our fellow landowners.
 2 Please listen and give all the help that
 3 you can. Thank you so much.
 4 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Hold on, Mr. Crowder,
 5 please.
 6 Any questions for Mr. Crowder?
 7 (No response.)
 8 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Thank you, sir.
 9 Thank you for coming.
 10 The next speaker is Mr. Clay West.
 11 MR. WEST: Good morning. I'm Clay
 12 West from Talladega County, or, more
 13 specifically, Talladega National Forest
 14 is where my property borders and where
 15 my lease borders.
 16 I'm here to talk about the dog deer
 17 hunting situation in the Talladega
 18 National Forest. I know the forest
 19 belongs to everybody. I'm not -- I
 20 understood their right to hunt in the
 21 forest. I understood in their dog's
 22 right to cross the forest and on --
 23 enter onto my land and hunt on my land.

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1 This year I only had two incidents where
 2 the dogs actually came onto the
 3 property.
 4 Now, my little residence is not very
 5 big, it's only about 30 acres. But they
 6 run right by the front of the house, so
 7 they're, obviously, encroaching on my
 8 family's rights to actually live
 9 comfortably out there.
 10 And, on the lease, they're out there
 11 regularly running past the cameras
 12 without any real way to enforce it, that
 13 I can see. If you call a Fish and
 14 Wildlife, they're so woefully
 15 understaffed, I -- I can't restrain the
 16 dog while I wait for them to show up.
 17 And, now, it's -- number one, it's not
 18 healthy to me, and, number two, it would
 19 take a long time for those folks to
 20 respond.
 21 The citations and the warnings, I
 22 think, currently are -- they're not
 23 sufficient: multiple warnings, followed

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1 by a few citations, really won't
 2 encourage anybody to move their dog away
 3 from the location.
 4 Lastly, I want to speak on the
 5 season extension. Without some kind of
 6 enforcement, you know, to add another
 7 ten days to the season, it's just gonna
 8 exacerbate the problem by another ten
 9 days. So I am not in favor of a season
 10 extension on the dog hunting in the
 11 Talladega National Forest, my personal
 12 opinion.
 13 That's all I've got. I'll take any
 14 questions you might have.
 15 Oh, by the way, I'm sorry that Mr.
 16 Martin's not here today since I think
 17 this is his area. And, hopefully,
 18 you'll get this information to him.
 19 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Any questions?
 20 MR. WEST: Thank you.
 21 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Thank you very much,
 22 Mr. Clay.
 23 Mr. Courtney Yates is our next

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1 speaker. Thank you. Ms. Courtney
2 Yates.
3 MS. YATES: Thank y'all for having us.
4 I appreciate the opportunity to speak to
5 y'all. I, also, am from Talladega
6 County. And I am here to ask that y'all
7 get rid of the dog hunting out of the
8 Talladega National Forest. In
9 preparation for this, you know, I've
10 seen all the ways to argue of, well, why
11 should it be gotten rid of. But then I
12 figured I'd start with past meetings and
13 read all the transcripts from those.
14 And I realize y'all've heard it all.
15 There's nothing new that I can tell you
16 that you haven't already heard.
17 Unfortunately, having over a hundred
18 acres, we are bordering Talladega
19 National Forest and Timber Company,
20 isn't enough to be able to hunt without
21 being disturbed by the dog hunters. We
22 live in an area where, apparently, it's
23 convenient for dog hunters to be able to

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1 drop dogs off and pick them up and run
2 circles. I also, like my husband,
3 couldn't tell you how frustrating that
4 is, to not be able to hunt without being
5 disturbed, because the deer constantly
6 being moved back and forth and they're
7 gone on the days -- you know, you can't
8 see any the days that the deer hunters
9 are there.
10 But my perspective's a little
11 different. As a wife and mom, I'm
12 concerned. I'm concerned about what I'm
13 seeing. We've been dealing with this
14 for the past few years. And my
15 husband's had confrontations with these
16 people for years. And it's always made
17 me feel a little uneasy because their
18 sense of arrogance and entitlement and
19 aggressiveness that comes with these
20 confrontations.
21 You can imagine my surprise when I
22 saw the -- here in October, where an
23 elected official admitted that he had

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1 been threatened.
2 I also saw the story from Mr. Ensley
3 where he had, had a confrontation, in an
4 area very close to us, with his
5 ten-year-old daughter.
6 I have two small children in this
7 area; this is very concerning to me.
8 The existing statute and our, basically,
9 only avenue to be able to do anything
10 about this, is it doesn't have much --
11 many teeth to it. It -- There's not
12 much for us to do. And the people that
13 we are dealing with are doing things,
14 such as: cutting Forest Service gates;
15 camping on areas that aren't designated
16 as hunting -- as hunting sites. They're
17 bringing unregistered vehicles out
18 there, driving them around. They are
19 littering, throwing trash. They're
20 leaving deer carcasses on the side of
21 the road; gutting deer and then leaving
22 them in the creek. They are shooting
23 from the roads. They're driving at

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1 excessive speeds. They're drinking and
2 driving. They're releasing dogs on
3 private property, picking them up on
4 private property. They're trespassing
5 with themselves and then allowing their
6 dogs to do so. And they're running dogs
7 outside the designated timeframes.
8 So this statute, as it stands, is
9 really not doing much to people who are
10 already willing to break existing laws.
11 So it really leaves us with not many
12 options and things to do. And I'm
13 concerned, as a wife and mom, of how --
14 you know, how can we protect our
15 children; how can we protect our people
16 because the statute, basically, requires
17 confrontation. We have to subject
18 ourselves to holding these dogs; to get
19 the information; to -- you know,
20 confronting these people, which is not
21 -- it's not good.
22 TIME KEEPER: Time.
23 MS. YATES: So, we're, basically,

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1 begging, at this point, that something
2 be done.
3 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Thank you.
4 Any questions?
5 Thank you very much, well stated.
6 The next speaker is Dale Woodruff.
7 MR. WOODRUFF: Hey. A little bit of
8 change of pace here. My name's Dale
9 Woodruff, I'm President of the Alabama
10 Charter Fishing Association located in
11 Orange Beach, Alabama. And I'm here to
12 talk about the ACFA, or Alabama Charter
13 -- Charter Fishing Association.
14 And we have come to a vote and,
15 unanimously, are against State
16 management of federal for-hire boats.
17 And I know that -- well, for my district
18 one down there.
19 Why are we against State management?
20 I know it's at a early state, that's
21 what I get told all the time but, as of
22 right now, what would it look like? Why
23 don't we put something together before

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1 you sit there and try to take something
2 from us. And, right now, the federal
3 for-hire system, charter boats out of
4 Alabama, federal boats, we are -- we're
5 -- we're covered under the MSA right
6 now, which is the Magnuson-Stevens --
7 Stevenson (sic) Act. We have the
8 historical access and -- and -- and --
9 and what we're seeing through State
10 management right now, along with the
11 five Gulf States is, over the last
12 several years, the average size of red
13 snapper has declined. That's why your
14 state seasons are getting longer.
15 So, we've gone from less -- from a
16 7-pound fish, down to just over 5-pound
17 fish. So you're pulling more fish out
18 of the water, with longer seasons, and
19 you're creating a higher discard rate,
20 along with the longer season. So, there
21 needs to be some sort of State
22 management.
23 I understand that they say the

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1 biomass out there is very healthy. But
2 if you're pulling a lot of small fish
3 out of the water, that's why you have
4 longer seasons. You're -- The age class
5 is -- is not there. I spend a lot of
6 time on the Gulf, over 160 day-trips a
7 year, and I see what's going on.
8 If you have vessels coming in with
9 big fish, I guarantee you, they're
10 high-grading; they're throwing --
11 throwing small fish back and trying to
12 catch bigger fish. And that's -- that's
13 why, right now, we -- we -- we would --
14 we do not want the State of Alabama to
15 manage our for-hire fishery boats off
16 the coast.
17 The Alabama Charter Fishing
18 Association also represents as many as
19 60 vessels, federal vessels, along with
20 the state guide vessels, so -- and we're
21 a couple of hundred members strong along
22 -- along the Gulf Coast -- or especially
23 out of Orange Beach area and -- and Fort

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1 Morgan. I'm sorry.
2 And then, as far as the state guide
3 boats down there, a lot of the guide
4 captains would like to see the
5 sheepshead limit go from eight, to five,
6 okay, because the effort has increased.
7 There's no limitations on who can be a
8 state guide boat. All you have to have
9 -- have to have is a captain's license.
10 And they're, like, easy to get, almost,
11 these days, it's like buying it out of a
12 Cracker Jack box now. So the effort is
13 everly increasing on the sheepsheads.
14 And then, I know the State --
15 sometimes the Department of Conservation
16 talks about funding and needing some
17 money, this is one I did, state guide
18 boat --
19 TIME KEEPER: Time.
20 MR. WOODRUFF: -- recreation also,
21 along with this.
22 I know we took away the oversized
23 redfish, you -- that you can't keep an

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1 oversized red -- oversized redfish
 2 anymore. But what about going to a tag
 3 system to where, if you have a state
 4 guide, you get one -- if you have a --
 5 have a license, state license, and you
 6 catch a oversized redfish and you want
 7 to keep that trophy redfish, that you
 8 can take it -- right there on your
 9 phone, you can purchase a \$45 license to
 10 take that redfish; you measure that
 11 fish; you put it on your app, the
 12 Outdoor Alabama app; you buy that permit
 13 so, when you get to the dock, you can
 14 keep that fish and bring it to the dock
 15 and you get one -- one -- one fish per
 16 license. Not everybody has to do that.
 17 It will also help create some more
 18 revenue for the State of Alabama and
 19 Department of Conservation.
 20 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Thank you, Mr.
 21 Woodruff.
 22 Any questions for Mr. Woodruff?
 23 (No response.)

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1 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Thank you very much.
 2 Our next speaker is Mr. Thad
 3 Stewart.
 4 MR. STEWART: I'm Thad Stewart, Orange
 5 Beach, Baldwin County. Let's see here.
 6 This is about the statement wanting to
 7 take over the fishery from -- in federal
 8 waters. One of the concerns I've got is
 9 a lack of representative from Baldwin
 10 County where, with the federal side of
 11 things, we've got people that are part
 12 of our association that are actually on
 13 the Gulf Council, so we've got really
 14 good representation there. So that's
 15 one thing.
 16 Let's see here. Some proposals I've
 17 seen from the State, like, four fish per
 18 person to try to get to that quota, is
 19 kind of concerning to me, as far as the
 20 direction of the fishery and what I've
 21 seen over the last 20 years. The
 22 direction's gone from where it's been,
 23 to where it is now, and they are getting

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1 smaller.
 2 A lot of the charter boats with,
 3 like, ten days left in the season,
 4 twenty days left, are switching over to
 5 target vermilion snapper, instead of red
 6 snapper because they can't catch them.
 7 And I'm friends with a lot of
 8 recreational fishermen. And y'all ask
 9 most people:
 10 Man, how was your season?
 11 Oh, mine was busy.
 12 No, no, no. I mean, were you able
 13 to catch fish 'cause we were really
 14 struggling.
 15 So I know certain studies say one
 16 thing but just kind of keep that in
 17 mind, this is what we're actually
 18 looking at.
 19 And another concern I have with the
 20 State is influence. The boat owning
 21 public probably has more influence with
 22 influential groups like the CCA and all
 23 that with ties to Alabama, than the non

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1 boat owning public and that's who we
 2 serve. We serve the people that can't
 3 afford a boat; don't wanna operate a
 4 boat; they physically can't operate a
 5 boat; whatever it may be, that's who
 6 comes to us.
 7 And, to kind of end it on a positive
 8 note, one thing that I've seen go away,
 9 or at least dwindle over the last few
 10 years, is the relationship between
 11 charter boats and recreational
 12 fishermen. You know, I mean, we'll pull
 13 up on a public spot that are -- private
 14 boats are on and just be, like, Hey,
 15 man. Cool?
 16 Yeah. Yeah. Sure. It's a little
 17 -- it's a little slow.
 18 Pull a few fish, go to the next spot
 19 and more conversations at the docks. So
 20 that relationship has drastically
 21 improved, so that's a good thing.
 22 I'm done. You guys got any
 23 questions?

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1 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Any questions for Mr.
 2 Stewart, Commissioner?
 3 COMMISSIONER BLANKENSHIP: What's your
 4 boat?
 5 MR. STEWART: So, this is the first
 6 year my boat's in service. I've been a
 7 hired captain on Predator for the last
 8 five years, and I was a mate for 10 to
 9 15 years before that. But my boat's
 10 gonna be Raven Blue.
 11 Anything else?
 12 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Thank you very much.
 13 Okay. That concludes the public
 14 comments portion of our meeting today.
 15 There are several other parts: One,
 16 is our unfinished business. I believe
 17 that all of the previous requests have
 18 been complied with; I don't think
 19 there's anything unfinished.
 20 So the next item, before we go
 21 forward, will be our new Director of
 22 Wildlife and Freshwater Fisheries, Mr.
 23 Chris Lewis, to give us his report.

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1 DIRECTOR LEWIS: Thank you, Chairman.
 2 Just real brief. So, should've
 3 provided packets to everybody. So,
 4 going forward, our recommendations for
 5 this coming -- this new season, we're
 6 not looking at any changes --
 7 recommending any change, other than date
 8 changes for our seasons. When we get
 9 into turkey season, our staff has
 10 recommended to remove the restriction on
 11 using turkey decoys, just to allow use
 12 for the whole season; that'll make it
 13 easier for the hunters, less confusion,
 14 and also easier for -- for explaining it
 15 to -- for our officers that -- in the
 16 field.
 17 We are recommending a change in
 18 saltwater striped bass for the coastal
 19 rivers, Baldwin and Mobile Counties, and
 20 that will put us in line with Marine
 21 Resources for it to be a minimum length
 22 of 16 inches and a two-fish creel; that
 23 is in those coastal rivers in both

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1 Mobile and Baldwin Counties.
 2 We're looking to increase fishing
 3 opportunities on Duck River reservoir in
 4 Cullman County. Currently the black
 5 bass limit is zero; we want to make that
 6 a creel limit of ten black bass. And
 7 then, also, in conjunction with that,
 8 put a slot limit in there, so no fish
 9 between 14 and 22 inches; and, of those
 10 ten, only one over 22 inches, to
 11 continue to let that fishery improve.
 12 Also, on the Fishery side, we'd like
 13 to propose to expand our existing rule
 14 prohibiting the sale of skipjack herring
 15 for the Tennessee River and tributaries,
 16 to all public water statewide; that
 17 would aid our Enforcement Section in
 18 enforcing that prohibition. It's --
 19 Once it's listed for sale, it's
 20 difficult to tell where it came from.
 21 And then another change that we're
 22 asking for is Tuskegee National Forest
 23 only, is to close fox squirrel season;

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1 and that is at the request of the
 2 National Forest, who controls that
 3 hunting, and we set the seasons. So
 4 they came to us, that request, to close
 5 fox squirrel season on that.
 6 Other than that, we've had some -- a
 7 few technical changes relating to laser
 8 sights for equipment and then the
 9 fluorescent pink as well.
 10 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Thank you. Thank
 11 you, Chris -- Director Lewis.
 12 Any questions for Director Lewis
 13 with regard to changes?
 14 (No response.)
 15 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Thank you so much.
 16 DIRECTOR LEWIS: Thank you.
 17 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Next item on the
 18 agenda is new business, the Board takes
 19 up at this time. I would ask that if
 20 there is any new business, would you
 21 please state it. Any Board members?
 22 Any motions?
 23 MR. STIMPSON: Mr. Chairman.

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1 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Yes, sir.
 2 MR. STIMPSON: I'd like to make a
 3 motion that the ADCNR consider amending
 4 the turkey season in zone one, on
 5 private land, for 2027, to begin on
 6 March 20th and continue through May the
 7 3rd, instead of March 25th, through May
 8 8th.
 9 And in zone two, open March 27th,
 10 through May 3rd and adjust for disabled
 11 hunting days and youth days in both
 12 zones as well.
 13 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: I don't have a copy
 14 of that motion. Were those distributed
 15 to everybody?
 16 So, at this time, what I'd like to
 17 do -- and thank you for that -- since
 18 not everybody on the Board has had that
 19 motion, it's not been distributed, if we
 20 can, let's set this aside until the next
 21 meeting.
 22 COMMISSIONER BLANKENSHIP: Let me make
 23 sure I understand from Mr. Stimpson. So

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1 you're asking for us, on the turkey
 2 season, to consider, essentially, moving
 3 that back to March 20th -- or moving it
 4 five days up, both zone one and zone
 5 two?
 6 MR. STIMPSON: Correct.
 7 COMMISSIONER BLANKENSHIP: Okay. All
 8 right. I got it. We'll discuss that
 9 internally before the next meeting.
 10 Any thoughts on that?
 11 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: I can open the floor
 12 to discussion but we will --
 13 MR. STIMPSON: I'm good with that.
 14 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Open to discussion?
 15 MR. STIMPSON: No. We can move on.
 16 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: All right. Let's
 17 move on. So, that motion is set aside.
 18 Any other motions?
 19 MR. SAVOY: Mr. Chairman, given the
 20 continued issues that we have with dog
 21 hunting in certain areas of our State, I
 22 would ask the Board to consider a permit
 23 system in those areas, or possibly a

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1 statewide permit system, excluding those
 2 areas that are already restricted for
 3 dog hunting.
 4 In addition, related to the
 5 Talladega National Forest, if it's
 6 possible, that the Department could work
 7 with the Forest Service to, maybe,
 8 dedicate an area of that National Forest
 9 strictly for dog hunting, possibly
 10 alleviate some of these issues that we
 11 have in that area.
 12 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: All right.
 13 COMMISSIONER BLANKENSHIP: I think I
 14 would just consider that a resolution
 15 and we will work on that between now and
 16 the next meeting.
 17 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Okay. Thank you for
 18 the resolution. We'll get you a copy of
 19 that to go in the meeting minutes.
 20 Mr. Savoy.
 21 MR. SAVOY: No, that concludes.
 22 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Thank you.
 23 No other motions?

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1 Yes.
 2 MR. GRAY: Mr. Chairman, I have a
 3 motion.
 4 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Yes, please.
 5 MR. GRAY: This motion, pursuant to
 6 Section 9-11-68 and 9-11-69 in the Code
 7 of Alabama, will allow an adjustment of
 8 the cost for all licenses and fees
 9 associated with the Department of
 10 Conservation and Natural Resources for
 11 the year 2026-2027, based on the
 12 incremental rise of the Consumer Price
 13 Index, or the CPI.
 14 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Thank you very much.
 15 There's a motion on the floor. I'm
 16 going to re-read it, Motion 2-28-26:
 17 This motion, pursuant to Section 9-11-68
 18 and 9-11-69, Code of Alabama, will allow
 19 adjustment of the cost for all license
 20 and fees associated with the Department
 21 of Conservation and Natural Resources
 22 for 26 -- 2026 and 2027, based on the
 23 incremental rise in the Consumer Price


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1 Index, or CPI.
 2 Is there any discussion or a second
 3 to that motion?
 4 MR. RAYMOND JONES: Second.
 5 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: Thank you.
 6 We have a second. Is there any
 7 discussion with regard to the motion?
 8 (No response.)
 9 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: I say that we hold a
 10 vote. All of those in favor, please
 11 raise your hands.
 12 (Board members comply.)
 13 (Commissioner Pate abstained from
 14 the vote on that motion.)
 15 CHAIRMAN DOBBS: The motion carries,
 16 the motion passes.
 17 Any other motions?
 18 Any other business, new business?
 19 No new business. All right.
 20 Thank you all. The next meeting,
 21 our next meeting, will be April 30th.
 22 It's going to be at the Capitol Building
 23 so I look forward to seeing all of you

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1 there. I think it's a beautiful day
 2 outside, enjoy it. Safe travels going
 3 home. Download the Outdoor Alabama app.
 4 (WHEREUPON, The Conservation
 5 Advisory Board meeting was concluded
 6 at approximately 11:35 a.m.)
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1 CERTIFICATE
 2
 3 STATE OF ALABAMA
 4 COUNTY OF MONTGOMERY
 5
 6 I hereby certify that the above and foregoing
 7 proceedings were taken down by me and transcribed
 8 by me using computer-aided transcription and that
 9 the above is a true and correct transcript of said
 10 proceedings, to the best of my abilities.
 11 I further certify that I am neither of kin nor
 12 of counsel to any of the parties nor in any way
 13 financially interested in the outcome of this
 14 proceeding.
 15 I further certify that I am duly licensed by
 16 the Alabama Board of Court Reporting as a
 17 Certified Court Reporter, as evidenced by the CCR
 18 number following my name found below.
 19 So certified this 30th day of March, 2026.
 20
 21 
 22
 23 Jamie McCracken, CCR#451
 Certified Court Reporter

24

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