

MINUTES OF THE
FOREVER WILD BOARD MEETING
Auburn University
School of Forestry & Wildlife
602 Duncan Drive
Auburn, Alabama 36832
November 2, 2023
10:00 a.m.

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TRANSCRIPT OF PROCEEDINGS

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PROCEEDINGS, taken before Elaine
Scott, Certified Court Reporter and
Commissioner for the State of Alabama at
Auburn University, School of Forestry &
Wildlife, 602 Duncan Drive, Auburn, Alabama
36832, on the 2nd day of November, 2023,
commencing at 10:00 a.m.

1 BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT:

2 Commissioner Chris Blankenship

3 Mr. Jimmy Parnell

4 Dr. Salem Saloom

5 Mr. Reginald Holloway

6 Dr. John Valentine

7 Mr. Jake Harper

8 Dr. Sean Powers

9 Mr. Rick Oates

10 Mr. James "Mickey" Childers

11 Mr. Raymond B. Jones, Jr.

12 Dr. James McClintock

13 Dr. Heather Howell

14 Dr. A.M. "Jay" Neumann

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1 CHAIRMAN BLANKENSHIP: Good
2 morning and welcome to the November 2nd
3 meeting of the Forever Wild Board. I
4 will call the roll to make sure we have
5 a quorum. Please indicate your
6 presence.

7 Chris Blankenship is here.
8 Mr. Childers.

9 MR. CHILDERS: Here.

10 CHAIRMAN BLANKENSHIP:
11 Mr. Harper?

12 MR. HARPER: Here.

13 CHAIRMAN BLANKENSHIP:
14 Mr. Holloway?

15 (No response.)

16 CHAIRMAN BLANKENSHIP:
17 Dr. Howell?

18 DR. HOWELL: Here.

19 CHAIRMAN BLANKENSHIP:
20 Mr. Jones?

21 MR. JONES: Here.

22 CHAIRMAN BLANKENSHIP:
23 Dr. McClintock?

1 DR. MCCLINTOCK: Here.

2 CHAIRMAN BLANKENSHIP:

3 Mr. Oates?

4 MR. OATES: Here.

5 CHAIRMAN BLANKENSHIP:

6 Dr. Powers?

7 DR. POWERS: Here.

8 CHAIRMAN BLANKENSHIP:

9 Dr. Saloom?

10 DR. SALOOM: Here.

11 CHAIRMAN BLANKENSHIP:

12 Dr. Valentine?

13 DR. VALENTINE: Here.

14 CHAIRMAN BLANKENSHIP:

15 Dr. Neumann?

16 DR. NEUMANN: Here.

17 CHAIRMAN BLANKENSHIP:

18 Mr. Parnell?

19 MR. PARNELL: Here.

20 CHAIRMAN BLANKENSHIP: Jack

21 Darnall?

22 (No response.)

23 CHAIRMAN BLANKENSHIP:

1 Ms. Stanley?

2 (No response.)

3 CHAIRMAN BLANKENSHIP: All
4 right. We have a quorum.

5 Thank y'all for coming
6 today. I do very much appreciate Dean
7 Janake Alavalapati and the College of
8 Forestry Wildlife and Environment for
9 assistance in allowing us to meet on
10 the facility here at Auburn University
11 and for Mr. Jones suggesting that we
12 meet in Auburn.

13 This is definitely a nice
14 facility. We do a lot of research work
15 and great partnerships with the college
16 here and Dr. Alavalapati and appreciate
17 them letting us meet here and for the
18 Board to be able to see their nice
19 facility and the work that they do.
20 And appreciate Heather. She's the
21 development director for the college.
22 She's done a great job of partnering
23 with us as well.

1 I don't see any other
2 special guests or anybody from the
3 university here to speak, so we'll just
4 move to the public comment period.

5 Just a reminder there's a
6 three-minute time limit. We only have
7 a couple speakers. If there's anybody
8 that would like to speak and has not
9 had the opportunity to fill out one of
10 these green slips, please raise your
11 hand and we'll make sure we get you on
12 the list to talk about whatever it is
13 you want to talk about.

14 The first one is Steve
15 Northcutt on the Heron Bay Wetlands
16 Addition that is -- hang on a second,
17 Steve. That is in tab 3.

18 MS. MCCURDY: It's page four
19 tab 3(b). You also see it in tab 4(b),
20 but just go to 3(b) page 4. You also
21 have a tab 5, memo 5(d) that relates to
22 this tract.

23 CHAIRMAN BLANKENSHIP: Go

1 ahead, Steve.

2 MR. NORTHCUTT: I'm Steve
3 Northcutt with the Nature Conservancy
4 and I'm here today to speak about this
5 property.

6 If you'll look at the map,
7 I want to just kind of point out a
8 couple of things. If you see the green
9 hatched properties to the west, far
10 west of that is the actual boundary
11 with Mississippi, those properties all
12 the way over to the long linear piece
13 in green by the battery, those require
14 kind of the same spirit of the way this
15 was --

16 The Nature Conservancy got
17 a grant through the National Fish and
18 Wildlife Foundation. We bought those
19 properties hoping they would be part of
20 the Grand Bay Savanna. And so when we
21 acquired the properties, we contacted
22 Forever Wild and said: We could donate
23 these properties to you. We think

1 they're good properties.

2 Of course, any property
3 the Nature Conservancy either
4 acquires -- well, it's true of Nature
5 Conservancy as well -- any property
6 that the Forever Wild Board acquires
7 through purchase or donation is
8 required to pay the 15 percent
9 stewardship.

10 Now, the stewardship money
11 funds all of the Forever Wild tracts
12 all over the state and really benefits
13 the State Lands Division. So that's
14 something, I think, is a benefit for
15 this particular nomination.

16 So the property is in red.
17 It's called the Heron Bay Wetlands
18 Addition.

19 I can say that going back
20 to 2012, I tried to buy this property
21 and I was not successful. The
22 Department of Conservation, they were
23 successful. And the source of dollars

1 they used to buy this is what they call
2 GOMESA.

3 You may all know what that
4 is, but that acronym stands for the
5 Gulf of Mexico Energy Security Act. It
6 basically replaced an older act of
7 funds that are received by the federal
8 government through the royalties of oil
9 and gas from the outer continental
10 shelf on the Gulf of Mexico.

11 That is split up between
12 both coastal counties. So it's Baldwin
13 County and Mobile County. They get
14 some funding; the state gets funding.

15 So any improvements that
16 are done that benefit water quality,
17 environment -- there's a multiple list.

18 If you Google GOMESA
19 Alabama you'll see -- I guess it was
20 July that the governor approved
21 projects and the governor approved this
22 project.

23 So this kind of

1 transitional wetland property is
2 extremely important. This is basically
3 the nurseries for finfish, shellfish
4 and stopping storm surge.

5 So these types of
6 property, obviously they're not going
7 to be developed. They are extremely
8 important to protect. You can see the
9 connectivity to other Forever Wild
10 lands.

11 So this would be a
12 straight-out donation of the Forever
13 Wild Board to add to its portfolio of
14 protected sites. The only funds you
15 would have to come up with would be the
16 stewardship.

17 Any questions I can answer
18 or Patti?

19 CHAIRMAN BLANKENSHIP:
20 Dr. Powers?

21 DR. POWERS: So I'm a little
22 bit confused. What is the GOMESA
23 property?

1 MR. NORTHCUTT: Subject -- go
2 ahead.

3 MS. MCCURDY: No, sir. Go
4 ahead.

5 MR. NORTHCUTT: The GOMESA
6 property is that part that's -- all of
7 that in -- it's inside the red box. If
8 you're on page 3-7 or if you're on tab
9 3, page 4, it's all within that red
10 outline.

11 DR. POWERS: What is the
12 proposed land acquisition for us?

13 CHAIRMAN BLANKENSHIP: So what
14 it is, the Department has acquired the
15 property and would like to donate it
16 for the Forever Wild program to become
17 part of the program at no cost for the
18 acquisition to the Forever Wild
19 program, but it could be stewardship
20 dollars.

21 MS. MCCURDY: For the Board
22 members who have not been part of the
23 donation before -- again, as

1 Commissioner said, any acreage that's
2 acquired must carry its own weight so
3 to speak. So you would have to
4 transfer the usual 15 percent of
5 appraised value. This property -- one
6 reason, it's proceeded with their
7 GOMESA funding.

8 Mr. Northcutt mentioned,
9 it was a very difficult acquisition and
10 the time spent on it and the GOMESA
11 funding was flexible and available to
12 acquire it. But due to its adjacency
13 to other properties of Forever Wild,
14 it's been offered by the Department to
15 the program at no cost other than the
16 Amendment 543's requirement of the
17 transfer to the stewardship fund.

18 CHAIRMAN BLANKENSHIP:

19 Dr. Powers?

20 DR. POWERS: So we have the
21 appraisal and everything at hand? So
22 we don't --

23 MS. MCCURDY: Yes. That's why

1 you actually see this both in tab 3 and
2 tab 4. The GOMESA funding did -- was
3 used to acquire the appraisal as well
4 as doing the standard environmental
5 site assessment work, title review.

6 All of those due diligence
7 items were paid for by the GOMESA
8 funding, and so that is already in
9 hand. The Board can -- that's what --
10 that appraisal is what was used to get
11 the 15 percent of appraised value that
12 would be used to transfer stewardship
13 money.

14 MR. HARPER: What tab is that
15 appraisal?

16 MS. MCCURDY: That is in tab
17 3. You'll see it in 3-A, and then
18 there are maps, then 3(b).

19 MR. HARPER: My question was:
20 Is all of this marshland -- I mean, up
21 farther on the map, it looks like it
22 was marshland. In that area it looks
23 like it's higher ground, but it's all

1 marshland.

2 MS. MCCURDY: Both. There's
3 some upland but it is a lot of wetland
4 marsh area, yes, as reflected -- and
5 the appraisal reflected that valuation.

6 DR. SALOOM: I have a
7 question.

8 MS. MCCURDY: Yes, sir.

9 DR. SALOOM: So tell me what
10 the benefit is for Forever Wild to
11 transfer this over versus leaving it
12 where it is from an ecological
13 standpoint.

14 MS. MCCURDY: There are a
15 couple things. I think primarily it
16 gives -- although the Department does
17 own the property, the transfer into
18 Forever Wild does allow for both a
19 little more realistic management, but
20 also having the stewardship funding
21 available going forward as are our
22 needs to manage the land, it's an asset
23 of the program and it's -- you know,

1 there's funding available to continue
2 that management, that frankly the
3 Department doesn't receive funding for
4 that. We don't receive that type of
5 funding.

6 So we were able to have
7 acquisition funding to GOMESA. There's
8 not the established -- similar
9 establishment stewardship program. So
10 it provides the land management dollars
11 to manage it in conjunction with the
12 other acreage.

13 DR. SALOOM: Thank you.

14 MS. MCCURDY: You're welcome.
15 Any other questions? And again, in tab
16 5(d) has some of that information.

17 CHAIRMAN BLANKENSHIP: Thank
18 you.

19 DR. SALOOM: I have one other
20 question. I'm sorry.

21 CHAIRMAN BLANKENSHIP: Yes,
22 sir, Dr. Saloom.

23 DR. SALOOM: So, say, 5, 10,

1 15, 20 years from now, what does the
2 management look like on the ground on
3 this -- on the water on this particular
4 property? Would you kind of elicit the
5 type of management?

6 CHAIRMAN BLANKENSHIP: So it
7 would be managed as a unit with the --
8 you see the property on the east side,
9 Forever Wild acreage in Heron Bay and
10 then on the west side, right there on
11 Portersville Bay, all of this will be
12 managed as a unit.

13 The uplands are also
14 adjacent to some properties that the
15 Marine Source Division of the
16 Department owns, and we would be able
17 to -- some of that --

18 It's a very diverse tract.
19 It's got a lot of wetlands. But the
20 uplands has some pines. We could do
21 some prescribed burning there,
22 management on that side, on the water
23 side, adjacent to some of the oyster

1 reefs for the State, both in
2 Portersville Bay and along the southern
3 shore of that -- in Heron Bay and
4 Mississippi Sound.

5 DR. SALOOM: I don't want to
6 belabor the question but I'm trying to
7 get the stewardship importance of this
8 property.

9 So how many acres in the
10 uplands would benefit by prescribed
11 fire? Is that what we're speaking
12 about in terms of the main management?

13 CHAIRMAN BLANKENSHIP: Some of
14 that, some access improvements on the
15 -- if you're looking at the map, it
16 will be kind of the northeast portions
17 of the property to be able to access
18 into that long bayou that goes down to
19 Heron Bay.

20 MS. MCCURDY: You're going to
21 have -- probably going to have your
22 basic treatments. You're going to have
23 your standard practices to enhance both

1 the acreage and the recreational
2 opportunities on the tract with both
3 access and usage. And also, that --

4 That's the main
5 management. It will be like any other
6 tract as far as recreation of land
7 management needs are varied on this
8 tract but it encompasses most of our
9 usual practices.

10 DR. SALOOM: Thank you very
11 much

12 MR. CHILDERS: Question,
13 Mr. Chair?

14 CHAIRMAN BLANKENSHIP: Yes.

15 MR. CHILDERS: What are the
16 recreational possibilities on this
17 tract?

18 CHAIRMAN BLANKENSHIP: So this
19 is public access and there's boating
20 access there. There is -- on the
21 uplands part you've got trails and --

22 MR. CHILDERS: Okay. So
23 there's already some there that's

1 already part of the program -- that's
2 part of the program?

3 CHAIRMAN BLANKENSHIP: No,
4 there's no trail there to speak of now.

5 MS. MCCURDY: It's just --
6 it's just acquired.

7 MR. CHILDERS: Okay.

8 MS. MCCURDY: So again, the
9 GOMESA funding really only gave us
10 enough money for the due diligence and
11 then the recreation.

12 This is Jeremy Doss, my chief
13 of enforcement who is actually one of
14 my on-the-ground folks in South Alabama
15 before I pulled him up and made him my
16 chief of enforcement up in
17 Montgomery -- he loves me.

18 If you would like some
19 additional information, he can give you
20 some on-the-ground feedback.

21 MR. DOSS: You were asking
22 what kind of biological -- you were
23 asking what kind of biological

1 restorations --

2 THE COURT REPORTER: I can't
3 hear you.

4 MR. DOSS: You were asking
5 what kind of biological restorations
6 processes we do there. We do a lot of
7 prescribed fire. And as far as the
8 Pine Savanna landscape, in that area
9 down there, it's a big, giant aspect of
10 protection from sedimentation, things
11 like that, oyster farming, the
12 shrimping -- things that happened in
13 Mississippi Sound, which is basically
14 where this tract is.

15 It's contingent with other
16 properties that we also manage there.
17 Basic fish-use control is part of that
18 but most of it has to do with
19 restoration of the Pine Savanna
20 uplands.

21 Now, that doesn't
22 incorporate the marsh. The marsh is a
23 very critical component there because

1 it's protecting that estuary for the
2 oysters and shrimp and fisheries.

3 When I say fisheries, I'm
4 talking about the commercial aspects
5 and economic impacts that are there and
6 available at Grand Bay, if that helps
7 you.

8 DR. POWERS: I just wanted to
9 add, I'm very familiar with that
10 property. It's an amazing recreational
11 fishing spot. I won't tell you where I
12 catch all the speckled trout there, but
13 in fact, it encapsulates Long's Bayou
14 and all of that.

15 I mean, it's also a very
16 important habitat for the pelicans in
17 the state. And because it's so fragile
18 on the coast, it will probably need a
19 lot of management over the next few
20 years or decades.

21 DR. MCCLINTOCK: I will add
22 that the terrapin project -- sea turtle
23 project down there has been ongoing

1 down there through UAB research
2 scientists for decades now in that
3 area. So there's a lot of interest in
4 using this area for continued long-term
5 space of the terrapin.

6 MS. MCCURDY: I guess I failed
7 to add, there are hunting opportunities
8 associated with the tract. That's
9 understood, but I guess I didn't say
10 that.

11 MR. HARPER: One last
12 question: On the map, is that island
13 to the west of that island, is that
14 privately owned?

15 MS. MCCURDY: Right now it's
16 state owned. the one in red is known
17 as Cat Island.

18 MR. HARPER: The one to the
19 west is not in red.

20 MS. MCCURDY: I'm sorry, not
21 in red.

22 CHAIRMAN BLANKENSHIP: The
23 State already owns that, yes, sir. We

1 actually -- we actually own that island
2 and did a very large restoration
3 project around that island with some
4 Deep Water Horizon funds. That was one
5 of the first projects that was done in
6 2011-2012 time frame down there.

7 DR. POWERS: Is that Marsh,
8 Marsh Island?

9 CHAIRMAN BLANKENSHIP: Marsh
10 Island.

11 A lot of good discussion
12 on that piece.

13 The next tract -- the next
14 speaker is Chandler Graham on the
15 Davidson Creek Tract. That's on tab 4
16 page 7. -- tab 4 page 7.

17 MR. GRAHAM: Good morning.
18 Thank you for having me here.

19 I'm Chandler Graham of
20 Larson & McGowin Properties. I'm here
21 on behalf of the landowner of the
22 Davidson Creek Tract which is in Coosa
23 County.

1 I know you're probably
2 fresh to this tract and you're just
3 being made aware of it. So I just
4 wanted to come today to provide you
5 with a few details and then invite you
6 to call me with questions or even more
7 importantly, if you want to come visit
8 this tract, I would love to show it to
9 you. It truly is a pretty spectacular
10 piece of property.

11 It's called the Davidson
12 Creek Tract. It's a little misleading
13 in that there's a mile-and-a-half
14 Hatchet Creek frontage on this tract.
15 Some of that is double frontage,
16 meaning both sides of the creek.

17 It does have a little over
18 two point -- two and a half of Davidson
19 Creek, which flows into -- all of this
20 flows into the Coosa River eventually,
21 and it's got a half a mile of
22 Socapatory Creek.

23 The tract actually is very

1 close to the confluence of Socapatory
2 and Hatchet Creek. There's amazing
3 shoals there. We have lilies.

4 It's just a really special
5 place being as close as it is to
6 Birmingham. It's got frontage on 231,
7 provides some access. It has
8 additional access points as well, and
9 the landowners are excited about the
10 opportunity to put this into some
11 conservation ownership and are willing
12 to work and be flexible in making this
13 happen.

14 So I just want to invite
15 y'all if you have questions to reach
16 out, or more importantly or actually be
17 more fun to go down there and actually
18 look at it.

19 So thank you.

20 MR. HARPER: One question. Is
21 all this one ownership?

22 MR. GRAHAM: Yes, sir, it's
23 all one owner.

1 CHAIRMAN BLANKENSHIP: Thank
2 you, Chandler.

3 That was the last -- that
4 was the last slip I had for public
5 comments.

6 Is there anybody else that
7 wanted to make comments? All right.
8 Thank you.

9 Seeing none, now we will
10 recess for executive session. By
11 regulation, appraisal values are
12 confidential with your peers in
13 negotiation. Accordingly, in order to
14 discuss tract appraisal values, the
15 Board will need to go into recess for
16 an executive session.

17 Is there a motion for the
18 Board to now recess to attend an
19 executive session?

20 MR. OATES: I move.

21 CHAIRMAN BLANKENSHIP:
22 Mr. Oates moves. Is there a second?

23 DR. MCCLINTOCK: Second.

1 CHAIRMAN BLANKENSHIP: A
2 second by Dr. McClintock.

3 As I call your name,
4 please state your position on the
5 motion to recess. Those in favor,
6 please indicate by saying "aye" and
7 those opposed "nay."

8 Chris Blankenship, aye.

9 Mr. Childers?

10 MR. CHILDERS: Aye.

11 CHAIRMAN BLANKENSHIP: Mr.
12 Harper?

13 MR. HARPER: Aye.

14 CHAIRMAN BLANKENSHIP:
15 Dr. Howell?

16 DR. HOWELL: Aye.

17 CHAIRMAN BLANKENSHIP:
18 Mr. Jones?

19 MR. JONES: Aye.

20 CHAIRMAN BLANKENSHIP:
21 Dr. McClintock?

22 DR. MCCLINTOCK: Aye.

23 CHAIRMAN BLANKENSHIP:

1 Mr. Oates?

2 MR. OATES: Aye.

3 CHAIRMAN BLANKENSHIP:

4 Dr. Powers?

5 DR. POWERS: Aye.

6 CHAIRMAN BLANKENSHIP:

7 Dr. Saloom?

8 DR. SALOOM: Aye.

9 CHAIRMAN BLANKENSHIP:

10 Mr. Valentine?

11 DR. VALENTINE: Aye.

12 CHAIRMAN BLANKENSHIP:

13 Dr. Neumann?

14 DR. NEUMANN: Aye.

15 CHAIRMAN BLANKENSHIP:

16 Mr. Parnell.

17 MR. PARNELL: Yes.

18 CHAIRMAN BLANKENSHIP: All

19 right. That is unanimous. We will

20 now -- it is now 10:20. We will take

21 approximately a 20-minute recess and

22 then return.

23 MS. MCCURDY: Board members,

1 if you will, be sure and take your
2 packet. Also, there's a little bit --
3 we have a little bit of a path to get
4 there. I maybe ask everybody to stay
5 seated to get all the Board members out
6 and on our way and staff will direct
7 you where to go.

8 (Recess for executive session.)

9 CHAIRMAN BLANKENSHIP: Good
10 morning. All right. I'm going to
11 announce for the record we are back.
12 It is 11:04. We are back to resume the
13 meeting.

14 Next is item number five.
15 Ms. McCurdy.

16 MS. MCCURDY: I do want to
17 note -- I'm not sure we did -- that
18 Mr. Holloway joined us, I think, after
19 the roll call. I will note that for
20 the record.

21 All right. Board members
22 if you would, turn to your tab 2 A. As
23 always, there's a green folder Tab 2 A

1 update. You have an end-of-the-month
2 that's able to provide a little more
3 updated information. So you'll see in
4 your green folder a yellowish tab 2(a.)

5 I'm going to run you
6 through the properties that are in some
7 stage of the negotiation or closing
8 process. These are properties that the
9 Board has directed staff to proceed
10 with trying to acquire. So I want to
11 update you on the status of those.

12 We have Bon Secour River
13 Wetlands Addition in Baldwin County
14 that we're working on.

15 We just talked about
16 having a COVID moment -- Lake
17 Guntersville State Park, John Doss
18 Mountain Addition, Marshall County; Oak
19 Mountain State Park, Belcher Addition,
20 phase two, Shelby; Sipsey River Swamp,
21 Brownsvill Addition, Tuscaloosa,
22 County.

23 And we are also -- all of

1 those properties are literally in the
2 due diligence, closing process, moving
3 very closely towards close. We are
4 still in discussion with the landowner
5 on the Skyler WMA-Fowler Cove Addition.
6 We are still working to get that one
7 finalized in the due diligence and
8 closing progress.

9 All of those properties
10 taken together and then basically
11 subtracted -- as I always say, like
12 your checkbook, your checks and I have
13 got to -- I've gotten -- I want to
14 write, the money is reserved, you're
15 left with just over 22 million dollars
16 that would be available to you for
17 acquisitions if you so chose, and
18 that's within the current budget
19 authority. So that amount is available
20 to the Board.

21 That's the status on the
22 properties that are actively in
23 negotiation and are in the closing

1 process.

2 Any questions from the
3 Board on those?

4 All right. We have not
5 closed -- our fiscal year started
6 October 1. I usually get an update on
7 our fiscal year closing. We haven't
8 quite got anything closed yet but we
9 have several that are getting very
10 close and we'll have reports on that in
11 the February meeting.

12 So again, look at tab
13 2(b.) This is where we discuss the
14 status of the stewardship fund.

15 What I do at this meeting
16 is give you sort of two reports.
17 That's why you see two pages. One
18 gives you kind of a current status
19 looking back at last year's stewardship
20 fund, and then we'll start talking
21 about the upcoming year stewardship
22 fund.

23 For the stewardship fund

1 for the fiscal year that just closed,
2 September 30th, we were actually still
3 in the closing process in the fiscal
4 year, what we call our 13th accounting
5 period.

6 But as it turns out, right
7 now, it looks like there was a
8 remaining balance of \$176,000
9 basically. And that might go down some
10 more in the 13th accounting period but
11 we -- we almost spent all of it. We're
12 close there.

13 Looking forward to the
14 current fiscal year, you'll see that we
15 have budgeted authority at 2.5 million.
16 That may be adjusted upwards somewhat,
17 but right now, let's use that number,
18 the 2.5 million.

19 And we're just, again, one
20 month and there's about \$20,000 --
21 almost \$21,000 worth of expenditures.
22 We are still well within the available
23 amount for this fiscal year. So again,

1 we'll continue to update and report on
2 that.

3 Any question on the
4 stewardship fund?

5 DR. MCCLINTOCK: I am curious
6 on the '22-'23 stewardship fund, the
7 repair and maintenance category,
8 \$769,000; is that -- what is that
9 basically going to, repair and
10 maintenance of the equipment, vehicles?

11 MS. MCCURDY: Yes. A lot of
12 it -- a lot of it is equipment
13 primarily. Some of it would be some
14 recreational, amenities, maintenance
15 and improvements. That could be the
16 different structures associated with
17 those.

18 CHAIRMAN BLANKENSHIP: A lot
19 of that is the funds for the public
20 access signage and the parking lot
21 expansions that y'all approved for
22 those expenditures -- y'all approved in
23 May of last year to expend this past

1 fiscal year. So that's what a lot of
2 that is.

3 DR. MCCLINTOCK: All right.
4 Thank you.

5 MS. MCCURDY: Any additional
6 questions?

7 All right. Tab 2(c) is
8 our Treasurer's report. Again, the
9 State Treasurer's Office helps us
10 before each meeting and gives us some
11 detailed information on the net assets.

12 The net assets as of
13 September 30, 2023 is almost 42
14 million, 41.7 million. Again, we thank
15 the Treasurer's office for helping us
16 with that information before each
17 meeting.

18 Any questions? That's
19 kind -- that's really all of tab 2.
20 Any additional tab 2 questions?

21 CHAIRMAN BLANKENSHIP: I will
22 say: Our State Treasurer, Young
23 Boozer, is very interested in this

1 program and he -- every time I see him
2 in close proximity to our meetings, he
3 always talks about the investments and
4 the work for the stewardship fund.

5 He wanted to be here today
6 but couldn't because of some other
7 things. He would like to join us, I
8 think, for our meeting in February for
9 him to just update the Board on what he
10 does and hopefully you'll look forward
11 to hearing from him.

12 MS. MCCURDY: So now, if
13 you'll turn to tab 3(a), I would like
14 to run through update for the Board but
15 also the public as to the properties
16 that you previously have motioned for
17 first appraisal or other appraisal
18 work.

19 So we'll run through what
20 we have in hand, and then I'll also
21 provide you information as to the
22 reports that we do not have in hand
23 yet.

1 We have in hand completed
2 appraisals on Cathedral Caverns State
3 Park Gurley Drive Addition, Marshall
4 County; Historic Blakely State Park Pye
5 Addition, Baldwin County; Lillian Swamp
6 Blackwater Addition, Baldwin County.

7 We will have by the next
8 meeting, but do not have in hand, the
9 Blackwater River SOA Clapper Addition
10 appraisal. No issues with that
11 appraisal, but we are having to do the
12 appraisal to federal yellow book
13 standards, and that requires a little
14 additional time for the appraiser to
15 complete that work, but we'll have it
16 by the next meeting.

17 We are about to initiate
18 but have not the West Fowl River Tract.
19 That acreage, we're working directly
20 with the landowner's attorneys. They
21 have been very helpful. We've been
22 trying to nail down the exact parcel
23 acreage information so that when we go

1 to the appraiser, it will be accurate
2 we won't have to go back and do
3 corrective work on the appraiser. But
4 after a lot of work, I think we're
5 right on the edge of getting that one
6 under way.

7 One appraisal that we have
8 in hand and was not motioned by the
9 Board relates back to the Heron Bay
10 Wetlands Tract. As mentioned
11 previously, because of the GOMESA
12 funding that was available to pay for
13 due diligence, we have appraisal work
14 and site assessment work. So that is
15 available to the Board and given just
16 for use for the 15 percent stewardship
17 valuation. That's something that we
18 have in hand and staff has reviewed.

19 So that's the status on
20 the appraisals that you have motion
21 for. Any questions on those items?

22 All right. Commissioner,
23 if you're -- if you don't have anything

1 additional, we'll move into our grant
2 status update.

3 If the Board will move to
4 tab 5 you have your usual tab 5(a)
5 memo. This is the portion of the
6 meeting where we run through just an
7 update of the properties that have some
8 grant funding either that we're using
9 or that might be available either for
10 acquisition or for various activities
11 on the Forever Wild properties. So
12 I'll run through those.

13 The nominations that are
14 currently in the acquisitions category
15 are -- that have benefited from some
16 supporting federal dollars is the
17 Bonsecour River Wetlands Tract. We
18 were able to establish federal funding
19 for approximately 68 percent of the
20 value of that tract.

21 Skyline WMA-Fowler Cove
22 Addition that I mentioned, we are still
23 working on. Our Wildlife Freshwater

1 Fisheries Division, Chuck Sykes
2 Division, proposed a partnership with
3 its Pittman-Robertson Funding on that
4 tract. So Forever Wild will be serving
5 as a 25 percent state-based match
6 that's necessary for that grant
7 program.

8 Tracts that are in the
9 appraisal process that are benefiting
10 or could benefit as you move toward
11 acquisition from some federal funding
12 include the Blackwater River
13 SOA-Clapper Addition. Again, this is a
14 PR opportunity in partnership with the
15 Wildlife Division at a 75/25 split
16 under that program.

17 Also the West Fowl River
18 Tract. I wanted to alert the Board,
19 again, that's a tract we have been
20 working with the landowner's attorneys
21 to confirm boundary lines.

22 My division has been
23 invited to present a proposal for an

1 opportunity for some federal dollars
2 that would provide 100 percent funding
3 if our proposal is accepted for the
4 West Fowl River Tract. So at that
5 point, similarly the Board would have
6 acquisition funding if they chose to
7 proceed but would have the 15 percent
8 transfer, which we've discussed on that
9 property.

10 I hope that we will know
11 something by the February meeting, but
12 I think the word we have now is that
13 the announcement may come literally the
14 day that we're meeting. So it will be
15 hot off the press or delayed but we
16 hope to have an update by the next
17 meeting as well as the appraisal
18 completed.

19 Shortlist nominations and
20 opportunities: Dugdown Mountain
21 Corridor. I think the Forestry
22 Commission is still awaiting final word
23 on whether that will be awarded. We

1 are still on hold, frustrated, but not
2 that unusual.

3 I know Mr. Oates is ready
4 to have that one wrapped up. But
5 anyway, the good news: We're
6 encouraged on that, I think would be
7 the word, but don't have a formal
8 announcement.

9 Just a couple other
10 updates. Again, the properties that
11 are benefiting from some other funding,
12 Little River Canyon-Hancock/TNC
13 Addition. That's the one -- the
14 property we had some National Fish and
15 Wildlife Foundation funding to support
16 the establishment of the shortleaf pine
17 forest.

18 And then the Mobile-Tensaw
19 Delta, the Bartram and Perdido River
20 Canoe Trails Improvement Project. We
21 will be using that funding -- will
22 benefit not just for the wild tracts.
23 Some of the improvements, the shelters

1 and the landing that individuals can
2 reserve and use along those trails will
3 be one enhancement that we'll see and
4 includes some of the wild acreage.

5 So those are the
6 opportunities and work we're doing that
7 relate to some form of leveraging
8 money.

9 Any questions on those?

10 CHAIRMAN BLANKENSHIP: I just
11 want to point out to the Board another
12 -- two other properties that are on the
13 short list but did not make the memo.
14 I've just gotten word from our staff
15 that we've been invited for notice of
16 funding opportunity on the Red Hills
17 Section 23 and Red Hills Swift Tract
18 Addition to apply for an RLE. That
19 grant would provide 75 percent of the
20 acquisition costs of those properties.
21 That will be submitted this month and
22 hopefully have word on that by
23 February.

1 MR. JONES: Mr. Chairman,
2 which -- Red Hills, correct?

3 CHAIRMAN BLANKENSHIP: It's
4 the section 23.

5 MR. JONES: Okay.

6 CHAIRMAN BLANKENSHIP: And
7 then the Swift Tract Addition -- the
8 Addition to the Swift Tract Addition
9 that y'all have already --

10 MR. JONES: Not the Blanton
11 Addition.

12 CHAIRMAN BLANKENSHIP: The
13 Blanton Addition is not included.

14 MR. JONES: Thank you.

15 DR. POWERS: Did you need a
16 commitment from the Board for the 25
17 percent before you submit the
18 application or do you just need to have
19 it if you get the award?

20 CHAIRMAN BLANKENSHIP: I don't
21 think we have to have --

22 MS. MCCURDY: I think due to
23 the history of the program and the

1 knowledge of how the program works, we
2 are able to point to past partnerships
3 and acquisition to demonstrate the
4 Board's support.

5 Every now and then we're
6 asked for some type of letter, but
7 normally they understood that there are
8 legal requirements that the Board would
9 have to get to ensure acquisition and
10 that you can't make those promises on
11 the front end.

12 So the funding sources are
13 aware of that, but the history gives
14 them confidence of what the Board can
15 do. But we don't commit without the
16 usual procedure of this Board.

17 Any other questions?

18 Okay. Well, that's a good
19 lead in. If everybody is ready, we'll
20 go to tab 4 and talk about our short
21 list of nominations.

22 For benefit of the public,
23 maybe for those who don't know or may

1 not have been to a meeting before, once
2 we receive a nomination from the public
3 nominating a tract, our next step is to
4 secure a willing to sell letter. It
5 doesn't obligate the seller but just to
6 confirm that that seller is aware that
7 the program -- that their property is
8 being discussed in these meetings and
9 are okay with it being evaluated in our
10 process.

11 Every nomination is scored
12 separately in the four categories
13 established by the constitutional
14 amendment of the types of properties
15 that this Board is to pursue, and those
16 include the acreage for recreation,
17 acreage for nature preserves, state
18 parks -- either new state parks or
19 additions, and similarly for public
20 hunting programs such as WMA, either
21 new opportunities or additions to
22 existing opportunities, so every
23 nomination scored in those four

1 categories.

2 They then compete amongst
3 themselves in the northern, central,
4 and southern districts, and the top
5 three scores in each category within
6 each district makes the short list.

7 Now, we often will have a
8 property, due to characteristics score
9 in more than one of those four
10 categories, but that process is used to
11 develop the short list or priority list
12 as described in the constitutional
13 amendment.

14 So for this meeting, as
15 usual, I'm going to run through those.
16 And as I always say, if you have a
17 question or need me to stop, please
18 speak up. I may not see -- I may not
19 see your hand as I go through.

20 So we're going to utilize
21 in 4(b) -- I'm going to run through the
22 current short list nominations that
23 would be available to the Board for

1 motions for first appraisal or other
2 types of motions.

3 Bon Secour River-Cook Road
4 Addition. That's in Baldwin County;
5 Coldwater Mountain-Oxanna Addition,
6 Calhoun County; Davidson Creek Tract,
7 Coosa County; D'Olive Bay North
8 Addition, Baldwin County; Dugdown
9 Mountain Corridor, Cleburne County;
10 Freedom Hills WMA-Sutton Hill Addition.
11 Colbert County; Heron Bay Wetlands
12 Addition, Mobile County; Red Hills
13 Blanton Addition, Monroe County.

14 I would note to the Board,
15 this is -- I think we previously
16 discussed that the Wildlife Division
17 was pursuing acquisition themselves
18 while we're evaluating the Forever
19 Wild, but I think the landowners
20 expectation on that would exceed what
21 we would receive as an appraised value
22 on that Tract, but it is still
23 available.

1 Red Hills Section 23
2 Addition, Monroe County, one of the
3 tracts the Commissioner just
4 referenced.

5 Then the last tract on the
6 short list, the Red Hills Swift
7 Addition, also Monroe County that
8 Commissioner also was speaking of.

9 So those are the tracts
10 that are currently on the short list.
11 And I will also say again: With the
12 competition with the districts, it's a
13 living list. So, for example, you may
14 have seen a tract on the short list
15 last meeting that's not on this
16 meeting, and that means another
17 nomination that came in and scored out
18 that one. So it is a living list of
19 nominations.

20 Any questions on short
21 list nominations before we move into
22 the general discussion portion?

23 I didn't see any hands,

1 but again, it's hard sometimes.

2 Okay. Commissioner, I
3 think I will turn it back over to you.

4 CHAIRMAN BLANKENSHIP: All
5 right. Tab number 6 on the agenda is
6 the general discussion of the Board
7 members. This is generally the part
8 where if there's any requests made for
9 appraisals on any properties, that that
10 happens. So I will be glad to
11 entertain any discussion or motions
12 from the Board.

13 DR. NEUMANN: I would like to
14 move for the Heron Bay.

15 DR. MCCLINTOCK: I'll second
16 that.

17 DR. NEUMANN: I motion for the
18 Board to approve acceptance of the
19 Heron Bay Wetlands Addition Tract, and
20 proceed with closing the acquisition
21 with the understanding that that
22 requires 15 percent of the appraised
23 value be transferred to the stewardship

1 fund.

2 MS. MCCURDY: If you could,
3 speak up for me.

4 CHAIRMAN BLANKENSHIP: Who is
5 the second?

6 DR. MCCLINTOCK: Second.

7 CHAIRMAN BLANKENSHIP: Second
8 by Dr. McClintock.

9 So the motion by
10 Dr. Neumann was that we move forward
11 with and receive the Heron Bay Wetlands
12 Addition donation into the Forever Wild
13 program with the 15 percent of the
14 appraised value going into the
15 stewardship fund. Is that correct,
16 Dr. Neumann?

17 DR. NEUMANN: That's correct.

18 CHAIRMAN BLANKENSHIP: Any
19 discussion on that?

20 All in favor, please raise
21 your hand.

22 MS. MCCURDY: That looks like
23 that's unanimous, Commissioner.

1 CHAIRMAN BLANKENSHIP: Thank
2 you. Motion carries.

3 DR. SALOOM: Mr. Chairman?

4 CHAIRMAN BLANKENSHIP: Yes,
5 sir, Dr. Saloom.

6 DR. SALOOM: I move that we
7 get a second appraisal on the Lillian
8 Swamp Blackwater Addition and proceed
9 to purchase that property.

10 MS. MCCURDY: I'm sorry. I
11 just want to speak up and tell you -- a
12 second and a proceed to purchase?

13 CHAIRMAN BLANKENSHIP: I'll
14 repeat that in the motion as we go.

15 MS. MCCURDY: Sorry.

16 CHAIRMAN BLANKENSHIP: That's
17 okay.

18 Is there a second?

19 DR. POWERS: Second.

20 CHAIRMAN BLANKENSHIP: Second
21 by Dr. Powers.

22 So the motion is for a
23 second appraisal and move to purchase

1 on the Black -- Lillian Swamp
2 Blackwater Addition; is that correct,
3 Dr. Saloom?

4 DR. SALOOM: Yes, sir.

5 CHAIRMAN BLANKENSHIP: Is
6 there any discussion?

7 All those in favor, please
8 raise your hand?

9 MS. MCCURDY: We have -- all
10 affirmative, one no. Keep your hands
11 up. Let me double-check I've got
12 everybody. So yes. That carries.

13 CHAIRMAN BLANKENSHIP: Any
14 opposed?

15 MS. MCCURDY: There was one;
16 one opposed, Mr. Parnell.

17 CHAIRMAN BLANKENSHIP: Motion
18 carries.

19 DR. POWERS: I would like to
20 move for a second appraisal and not
21 proceed to purchase for Cathedral
22 Caverns State Park Gurley Drive
23 Addition.

1 CHAIRMAN BLANKENSHIP: Is
2 there a second?

3 DR. HOLLOWAY: Second.

4 CHAIRMAN BLANKENSHIP: Second
5 by Mr. Holloway.

6 So the motion is for a
7 second appraisal only, not move to
8 purchase but a second appraisal, and
9 then that information would come back
10 to the Board before any action would be
11 taken on the property; is that clear?
12 Does anybody have any questions on
13 that?

14 All those in favor of the
15 second appraisal only, please raise
16 your hand.

17 MS. MCCURDY: We have one,
18 two, three, four, five, six. Is that
19 what y'all are getting?

20 CHAIRMAN BLANKENSHIP: All
21 opposed?

22 MS. MCCURDY: One, two, three
23 four, five.

1 CHAIRMAN BLANKENSHIP: Motion
2 fails.

3 MS. MCCURDY: I'm sorry, six.
4 I can't count. Math is not my
5 strength.

6 CHAIRMAN BLANKENSHIP: Six yes
7 and six no for the court reporter.

8 All right.

9 DR. MCCLINTOCK: Mr. Chairman?

10 CHAIRMAN BLANKENSHIP:
11 Mr. McClintock.

12 DR. MCCLINTOCK: I'd like -- I
13 think it's the first appraisal on the
14 Davidson Tract in Coosa County. I
15 propose we get a first appraisal.

16 CHAIRMAN BLANKENSHIP: Is
17 there a second?

18 MR. OATES: I second.

19 CHAIRMAN BLANKENSHIP: The
20 motion is for a first appraisal on the
21 Davidson Creek track. That was a
22 motion by Dr. McClintock and seconded
23 by Mr. Oates. That is --

1 MR. HARPER: Repeat that.

2 CHAIRMAN BLANKENSHIP: Sure.

3 The motion is for a first appraisal on
4 the Davidson Creek Tract in Coosa
5 County. The motion is by
6 Dr. McClintock and seconded by
7 Mr. Oates.

8 Any questions about that?
9 Mr. Jones?

10 MR. JONES: I'm just curious
11 how we would use this tract. It's 2130
12 acres, which is a fair amount of
13 acreage, but it is kind of off away
14 from -- it's not continuous. It seems
15 to be a little ways off. I'm just
16 wondering how to staff?

17 Is this going to be an
18 SOA? Have we given any thought on
19 that?

20 MR. CHILDERS: What page is
21 that on?

22 CHAIRMAN BLANKENSHIP: I think
23 it's page seven, tab 4 page seven.

1 MS. MCCURDY: This would be
2 perceived as a multi-use recreational
3 tract with trails. Hunting, would also
4 be offered, your usual what I would
5 call general rec right now.

6 Wildlife has not really
7 discussed making it an SOA, but we do
8 have tracts that offer public hunting
9 similar to Old Cahaba that are not SOAs
10 to delegate hunting. But mostly this
11 is very particular multi-use.

12 MR. JONES: Thank you.

13 CHAIRMAN BLANKENSHIP: Any
14 other questions?

15 So all of those in favor
16 of a first appraisal on the Davidson
17 Creek Tract, please raise your hand.

18 MS. MCCURDY: I'm sorry. One,
19 two, three, four, five, six -- nine
20 affirmative.

21 CHAIRMAN BLANKENSHIP: Any
22 opposed?

23 MS. MCCURDY: Four opposed.

1 CHAIRMAN BLANKENSHIP: Motion
2 carries. Thank you.

3 MR. HOLLOWAY: Mr. Chairman?

4 CHAIRMAN BLANKENSHIP:
5 Mr. Holloway.

6 MR. HOLLOWAY: I would like to
7 move to -- to make a motion to request
8 a second appraisal for the Historic
9 Blakely SP Pye Addition, not move to
10 purchase but just a second appraisal.

11 CHAIRMAN BLANKENSHIP: Is
12 there a second?

13 DR. POWERS: Second.

14 CHAIRMAN BLANKENSHIP: Second
15 by Dr. Powers.

16 So the motion is for a
17 second appraisal only on the Historic
18 Blakely State Park Pye Addition. So
19 not a move to purchase it but the
20 motion currently is just to have a
21 second appraisal to bring that back to
22 the Board before any other action is
23 taken on the property.

1 Any questions or comments
2 on that? All those in favor, please
3 raise your hand.

4 MS. MCCURDY: We only have
5 seven affirmative, Your Honor.

6 CHAIRMAN BLANKENSHIP: Motion
7 fails.

8 MR. OATES: I would like to
9 move for a first appraisal on Red Hills
10 Section 23 Addition.

11 CHAIRMAN BLANKENSHIP: Is
12 there a second?

13 MR. JONES: Clarification --

14 CHAIRMAN BLANKENSHIP: Can I
15 get a second then we can --

16 DR. POWERS: Second.

17 CHAIRMAN BLANKENSHIP: Second
18 by Dr. Powers.

19 Mr. Jones?

20 MR. JONES: Can you clarify
21 because I thought you said there was
22 some grant money out there and that we
23 need to do that at this point in time.

1 CHAIRMAN BLANKENSHIP: We hope
2 that there will be grant money
3 available but it didn't happen. I
4 think there would still be time for a
5 first appraisal on these properties to
6 assist with that --

7 MR. JONES: Thank you.

8 CHAIRMAN BLANKENSHIP: The
9 grant application or grant award.

10 MR. JONES: All right. Thank
11 you.

12 CHAIRMAN BLANKENSHIP: All
13 right. So the motion is for a first
14 appraisal on the Red Hills Section 23
15 property. All those in favor, please
16 raise your hand.

17 MS. MCCURDY: Twelve,
18 Commissioner.

19 CHAIRMAN BLANKENSHIP: Motion
20 carries.

21 Mr. Oates?

22 MR. OATES: I would also like
23 to move for first appraisal on the Red

1 Hills Swift Addition.

2 MR. JONES: Second.

3 CHAIRMAN BLANKENSHIP:

4 Seconded by Mr. Jones, motioned by
5 Mr. Oates for a first appraisal on the
6 Red Hills Swift Addition -- Addition.

7 Any comments on that?

8 All those in favor, please
9 raise your hand.

10 MS. MCCURDY: Twelve,
11 Commissioner.

12 CHAIRMAN BLANKENSHIP: Motion
13 carries.

14 Give me just a second to
15 catch up my notes, please. We have a
16 court reporter but I like to have my
17 own stuff.

18 Mr. Jones.

19 MR. JONES: Yes. I'd like to
20 move for a first appraisal on the
21 Coldwater Mountain Oxanna Addition in
22 Calhoun County.

23 DR. MCCLINTOCK: I second

1 that.

2 CHAIRMAN BLANKENSHIP:

3 Seconded by Dr. McClintock; is that
4 correct?

5 DR. MCCLINTOCK: That's
6 correct.

7 CHAIRMAN BLANKENSHIP: So the
8 motion is for a first appraisal on the
9 Coldwater Mountain Oxanna Addition,
10 motioned by Mr. Jones, seconded by
11 Dr. McClintock.

12 Any questions on that
13 comment -- or discussions?

14 All those in favor, please
15 raise your hand.

16 MS. MCCURDY: Twelve,
17 Commissioner.

18 CHAIRMAN BLANKENSHIP: Motion
19 carries.

20 Anything else? All right.

21 Thank you, Board Members,
22 for that.

23 I still -- I do have one

1 thing that I would like to mention
2 while we're in general discussion
3 before we move on to miscellaneous
4 reports.

5 We are not at the point at
6 this meeting to bring anything to the
7 Board, but I just wanted to -- can I
8 just mention something we'll probably
9 be bringing back in February so you
10 will have time to think about it, any
11 questions that you might have?

12 We have the opportunity
13 with some of our federal funding,
14 especially on properties that are
15 adjacent to other Forever Wild
16 properties, to use Forever Wild
17 properties that have been purchased
18 with 100 percent Forever Wild that was
19 not ones that we've already used to
20 leverage other federal dollars but to
21 use the value of those properties to
22 make acquisitions with federal dollars.

23 We'll probably bring in

1 something on that maybe in February or
2 at the May meeting but I wanted to
3 float that out there. It wouldn't be
4 any -- it wouldn't be a cost to Forever
5 Wild on the acquisition. It would just
6 be placing some additional deed
7 restriction language on the property
8 that we already have, very similar to
9 what we do now on the 75/25 splits that
10 we do.

11 So our staff has been
12 trying to work on a lot of different
13 ways to make the most of opportunities
14 for us in Alabama, and this is
15 something that I think might be really
16 a good way for us to utilize some of
17 the federal funds that are available
18 through the Infrastructure Act and some
19 of the other things that have gone on
20 in Congress for Alabama to be able to
21 get a good share of those funds instead
22 of them going other places.

23 So that's a very broad

1 concept, but I just wanted to share it
2 with you. So any questions that y'all
3 have on that? We can expand on that a
4 little bit more at the next meeting.

5 Thank you. Thank y'all
6 for opportunities to share.

7 DR. MCCLINTOCK: Have you
8 touched basis with the feds to see if
9 this would be permissible?

10 CHAIRMAN BLANKENSHIP: We
11 have. It would be allowed and
12 encouraged actually.

13 DR. MCCLINTOCK: All right.

14 CHAIRMAN BLANKENSHIP: All
15 right.

16 MS. MCCURDY: Okay. We're
17 going to move -- we're going to move
18 now into our miscellaneous reports. So
19 if you'll turn to tab 5, most of what
20 we'll be covering will be tab 5. You
21 also had a few items in your green
22 folder, but I'll direct you there along
23 the way.

1 First item of business, as
2 we always do when we start
3 miscellaneous section, is bring to the
4 Board's attention the properties that,
5 absent additional Board action, will
6 roll off your -- either your short list
7 or appraisal information list after the
8 meeting due to the number of Board
9 meetings that have passed with no
10 interest from the Board. So we always
11 alert you to those. If you want us to
12 keep something on the list, we will
13 need you to speak up at this time.

14 We have one short list
15 nomination. That's the D'Olive
16 Bay-North Addition in Baldwin County.
17 And that one will roll off in our next
18 meeting. We had a motion on the other
19 nomination that's listed on your tab
20 5(b.) So any discussion or question?

21 CHAIRMAN BLANKENSHIP: I'd
22 just like to make a motion that we
23 remove the Red Hills Blanton Addition

1 after this meeting.

2 MS. MCCURDY: And to remind
3 the Board, that's the property that I
4 mentioned that Wildlife had pursued and
5 been in direct discussion with the
6 landowner and we do not think that the
7 appraised value would support landowner
8 expectations, which is fine. But we
9 don't think it will progress. That's
10 tab 4(b) --

11 CHAIRMAN BLANKENSHIP: So the
12 motion is to remove Red Hills Blanton
13 Addition, a motion made by Blankenship?

14 MR. JONES: Second.

15 CHAIRMAN BLANKENSHIP:
16 Seconded by Mr. Jones and thirded but
17 Dr. Neumann.

18 Any questions about that?
19 All those in favor say aye.

20 (Chorus of ayes.)

21 CHAIRMAN BLANKENSHIP: Any
22 opposed?

23 (No response.)

1 CHAIRMAN BLANKENSHIP: None
2 opposed. Thank you.

3 MS. MCCURDY: All right. I
4 think the next item as far as what we
5 haven't discussed already during the
6 meeting, if you will go to tab 5(e).
7 One of our routine matters -- it is
8 time at this meeting to approve
9 management plans for a few of our
10 tracts. We are required to prepare a
11 management plan within 12 months after
12 initial acquisition. We try to come to
13 the Board meeting in advance of that in
14 case there are questions from the
15 Board.

16 But if you'll look at tab
17 5(e), the tracts that we are proposing
18 for inclusion into existing management
19 plans -- these are all tracts that were
20 adjacent to, close to, current acreage
21 that make sense to be managed
22 specifically with the previous acreage,
23 not a separate management plan.

1 So those are Autauga WMA,
2 County Road 112 Addition; Freedom Hills
3 WMA Boddie Addition, Colbert County;
4 Red Hills WMA Flat Creek Phase 5
5 Addition in Monroe County.

6 Again, these plans were --
7 state land staff and wildlife staff
8 worked together on these proposed
9 amendments to existing management
10 plans.

11 If the Board approves the
12 action on those three tracts, there is
13 a proposed motion at the bottom of that
14 memo, but I want to pause for any
15 questions on any of the proposed
16 management plans.

17 CHAIRMAN BLANKENSHIP:

18 Dr. Powers?

19 DR. POWERS: The Board
20 approves the motion -- the Board
21 approves the state's lands division
22 proceeding with the inclusion of the
23 Autauga WMA County Road 112 Addition,

1 the Freedom Hills WMA Boddie Addition,
2 and the Red Hills WMA Flat Creek phase
3 5 Addition until existing management
4 plans is set forth in the memorandum
5 dated November 2nd, 2023.

6 CHAIRMAN BLANKENSHIP: Is
7 there a second?

8 MR. HOLLOWAY: Second.

9 CHAIRMAN BLANKENSHIP:
10 Seconded by Mr. Holloway. I won't
11 reread the motion Dr. Powers so
12 eloquently provided to the Board.

13 Are there any questions or
14 discussions?

15 All those in favor, please
16 say aye.

17 (Chorus of ayes.)

18 CHAIRMAN BLANKENSHIP: Any
19 opposed?

20 (No response.)

21 CHAIRMAN BLANKENSHIP: None
22 opposed. Motion carries. Thank you.

23 MS. MCCURDY: Then I'm going

1 to run through just a series, as we
2 say, miscellaneous items.

3 If you'll look at tab
4 5(f), we had some exciting news related
5 to the M. Barnett Lawley Field Trial
6 Area in Hale County where we discussed
7 our last meeting the dog sporting
8 events and multiple hunting program
9 events, a lot of that use is hunting
10 events on the property in addition to
11 some other restoration work that we do.

12 Mr. Chair, do you want to
13 share that news about the Field Trial
14 Area and the additional appropriation?

15 CHAIRMAN BLANKENSHIP: Sure.
16 As you know, the Field Trial Area is a
17 fantastic place for dog trials. It
18 is -- our staff does a great job there.
19 We host between 35 or 40 dog trial
20 events there a year.

21 As we've discussed at
22 previous meetings, I think Mr. Harper
23 mentioned that it was in rough shape.

1 At one point when we acquired the
2 property, it was in need of some
3 updating.

4 I'm very thankful that the
5 legislature worked with us during the
6 last session to provide a million
7 dollars for us to use on upgrades on
8 the facility, the Forever Wild Field
9 Trial Area.

10 We're using some of the
11 stewardship dollars as well as some of
12 the State Lands funds. And I just last
13 week in a meeting with Innovate
14 Alabama, in their board, they approved
15 some additional funds to come through
16 an outdoor recreation supplemental
17 appropriation that they had to go
18 towards the projects there.

19 So we're going to see
20 wholesale changes at that facility.
21 One of them is going to be a meeting
22 event-type venue so those dog trials,
23 when they're having those there, can

1 have a nice -- kind of like down at
2 Lake Martin -- the roll-up doors for
3 them to have events with a pavilion,
4 really nice facility.

5 Our staff is already
6 making improvements to the two houses
7 that are there, the old warden's
8 quarters, as well as adding barns and
9 paddocks for the horses that come out
10 for the field trials.

11 We're going to have
12 restroom facilities out in the field
13 trial areas so they don't have to use
14 the port-o-lets. That really opens
15 that up to make it much nicer and very
16 commensurate with the type of events
17 we're having. We will have facilities
18 that are much more appropriate for
19 those type of events that match the
20 quality of the grounds.

21 I'm excited about that.
22 We are very close on the design to
23 moving with the architects. Hopefully

1 we'll be able to do that after the
2 first of the year. And my goal would
3 be for us to have that completed and
4 for us to have our November meeting at
5 the Forever Wild Field Trial Area in
6 the new events wing.

7 UNKNOWN SPEAKER: Next
8 November?

9 CHAIRMAN BLANKENSHIP: One
10 year from this meeting, yes, sir.

11 So anyway, I'm excited
12 about that. I would love for us, if we
13 are to do that to spend some time out
14 there on the property really with the
15 Board showing all of the great things
16 that happened out there and how that
17 property is really being used. Alabama
18 is the economic driver with the dog
19 trials and other outdoor recreational
20 opportunities.

21 MS. MCCURDY: Thank you,
22 Commissioner. The State Lands is also
23 very excited about that opportunity as

1 well and appreciate the Commissioner's
2 continued support and advocacy for that
3 property.

4 Another update item: Tab
5 5(g) relates to Alabama Pinhoti Trail
6 System and the recent agreement related
7 to Shared Stewardship and Governance of
8 that system.

9 This was an agreement --
10 it's attached to 5(g) -- that
11 establishes a governance board. That
12 includes representatives DCNR and the
13 Forestry Commission as well as the
14 federal -- from the U.S. Forest
15 Service.

16 Commissioner, do you want
17 to talk about that a little bit more,
18 too?

19 CHAIRMAN BLANKENSHIP: I
20 probably would like to recognize the
21 Pinhoti Commission chairman, Mr. Rick
22 Oates. We had a meeting yesterday and
23 I would like to -- Rick, do you want to

1 say a few words about that?

2 Do you want to explain the
3 Forever Wild part observation --
4 Alabama Forestry Commission and U.S.
5 Forest Service, who are the three
6 largest landowners along Pinhoti Trail?

7 The Governor set this
8 commission up last summer at Flag
9 Mountain. She was up doing a meeting
10 with -- Rick, take it from there.

11 MR. OATES: Thank you,
12 Commissioner. I will be real quick.

13 As Patti said, we've been
14 working on this for a long time to
15 bring some cohesiveness, I guess is a
16 good word to use for the Pinhoti Trail,
17 and it kind of made sense that those
18 three largest landowners kind of take
19 the lead and get the ball rolling. And
20 then we are going to involve
21 stakeholders to really give us guidance
22 and make sure we're inviting feedback
23 from all the people that use and love

1 the Pinhoti Trail. But we're happy to
2 see it start somewhere in the vicinity
3 of Flag Mountain in Coosa County and
4 goes all the way up to -- actually ends
5 where the Appalachian Trail begins in
6 Georgia.

7 So it runs -- it's 170 or
8 so miles in Alabama and is really --
9 our goal is to make it a national
10 historic trail; I think that's the last
11 term. And get it to those standards,
12 and then make it a showplace where
13 people want to come hike and enjoy the
14 outdoors.

15 CHAIRMAN BLANKENSHIP: Thank
16 you, sir.

17 MS. MCCURDY: So we'll keep
18 moving. If you will look at tab 5(h),
19 this is really just a little bit of an
20 update. We mentioned at the last
21 meeting as we reached the end of the
22 fiscal year, we are going to give you a
23 little bit of a report on our

1 Collegiate Mentoring Program.

2 I was going to have
3 Dr. Sergeant Freeman come today. We
4 had so many items on the agenda, I
5 think we're going to -- decided to wait
6 until February to give you a little
7 more, but just as an overview, I did
8 want to note and compliment and thank
9 Sergeant Freeman. He's with our
10 Wildlife and Freshwater Fisheries
11 Division. He has really done a great
12 job working with other divisions,
13 starting in 2016 with the Collegiate
14 Mentoring Program.

15 It has made great strides
16 in ensuring that students -- including
17 the historically black colleges and
18 universities are included in efforts to
19 get students really out, demonstrate
20 recreational opportunities, give them
21 an idea of the various conservation
22 careers that are available, hopefully
23 pique their interest in that, and

1 really give them some hands-on habitat
2 and wildlife management experience on
3 these tracts.

4 And those efforts -- we've
5 had a lot of participation from
6 Tuskegee University. We've also had
7 participation from Alabama A&M
8 University, and Montevallo has now
9 joined in and is participating. The
10 commissioner was recently at Montevallo
11 as a matter of fact.

12 But we really are -- we've
13 had hands-on experience with the
14 habitat, firearms, hiking, hunting,
15 tracking, really all of those
16 techniques, and they have -- the
17 students have been on the Barbour WMA,
18 Wehle Nature Center property, the Uchee
19 Creek Tract in Russell County.

20 And so Forever Wild
21 acreage really is being utilized by
22 these students coming onsite and
23 having an area not only for recreation

1 and learning but also to have a one-on-
2 one hands-on sort of practicums with
3 our staff. And we're really excited
4 about those efforts.

5 We have upcoming at Wehle
6 -- Wehle Conservation Center in Bullock
7 County, which is next to the WMA, which
8 is both in Bullock and Barbour.

9 We have events coming up
10 end of January for the minority outdoor
11 alliance Quails Forever, and Pheasants
12 Forever have really come together to
13 provide exposures to upland bird
14 hunting to those students, and then
15 Alabama A&M and Tuskegee will be
16 staying at our living conservation
17 center the beginning of February, also
18 taking advantage of some off-site from
19 our side, additional hunting
20 opportunities.

21 That really is -- it gets
22 the community involved as well as park
23 and Forever Wild involvement.

1 I just want to thank my
2 State Lands staff and wildlife staff
3 for focusing on those efforts.

4 So I'll take any
5 questions. But when we have a
6 meeting with not as many things on the
7 agenda, I'll have Sergeant Freeman come
8 and talk to you a little bit more about
9 that. Any questions?

10 CHAIRMAN BLANKENSHIP:

11 Dr. Powers.

12 DR. POWERS: It sounds like a
13 great program. Thank you for the
14 update. I would encourage the program
15 to also reach out to other
16 universities. You know, many people
17 don't realize the University of South
18 Alabama has 28 percent underserved
19 minority students. We have several
20 students who would love to participate.
21 So it would be great to just reach out
22 to other universities and let them
23 know.

1 MS. MCCURDY: Sure. And
2 Sergeant Freeman has done a great job
3 but there's always, you know,
4 opportunities to include more
5 universities and more students. You're
6 correct. That's something we will to
7 try to strive at. I'm happy to sit
8 down you after and have a discussion.

9 All right. I think the
10 next item, just to keep going in order,
11 would be 5(i). I'll give you a second
12 to get there.

13 That is a request that we
14 received from the Saraland Water and
15 Sewer Service in Mobile County. They
16 had submitted a request for an easement
17 involving our Jacinto Port Tract. And
18 this would be an easement with a
19 20-foot by 125-foot footprint to allow
20 replacement of a forced main pipeline
21 that would be servicing a proposed new
22 lift station and adjacent to the city-
23 owned parcel, slated to service for

1 over 5000 residential customers and
2 about 200 commercial customers. You'll
3 see attached to 5(i) a map of where the
4 easement request lies.

5 Staff has reviewed the
6 request. There would be no negative
7 impact to the property as to
8 ecologically or recreationally, again
9 would have a community -- a positive
10 community impact.

11 We have talked with
12 Saraland Water and Sewer. We do have a
13 representative here today if there are
14 any questions, but staff did not have
15 any additional questions.

16 But they have agreed to,
17 as usual, pay the costs associated with
18 the easement, be it a survey, an
19 appraisal. We do appraise the easement
20 interests before transferring that.

21 So we bring these to the
22 Board before -- I like to come to the
23 Board because I do not want anyone to

1 incur expenses related to appraisals
2 and surveys if there is a known
3 objection on the front end from the
4 Board.

5 What the normal process
6 would be to pursue that, staff working
7 with the individual requesting the
8 easement, and if the Board approves us
9 proceeding, we will monitor the
10 appraisal, ask what the costs would be,
11 the payment to the program would be.
12 Again, a lot of due diligence being
13 paid by the entity asking for an
14 easement.

15 If the Board approves us
16 proceeding with that, there's a
17 motion -- the bottom of tab 5(i.)

18 Again, if you have any
19 questions, we do have a representative
20 here.

21 MR. HOLLOWAY: Mr. Chairman?

22 CHAIRMAN BLANKENSHIP:

23 Mr. Holloway.

1 MR. HOLLOWAY: I motion for
2 the Board to approve staff proceeding
3 with the efforts to grant the Saraland
4 Water and Sewer Service easement
5 request related to the Jacinto Port
6 Tract as described in memo dated
7 November 2, 2023, on the condition that
8 Saraland pays the survey cost,
9 appraisal cost, and value of the
10 interest to be transferred.

11 CHAIRMAN BLANKENSHIP: Is
12 there a second?

13 DR. SALOOM: Second.

14 CHAIRMAN BLANKENSHIP:
15 Seconded by Dr. Saloom.

16 All those in favor, please
17 say aye.

18 (Chorus of ayes.)

19 CHAIRMAN BLANKENSHIP: Any
20 opposed?

21 (No response.)

22 CHAIRMAN BLANKENSHIP: None
23 opposed, motion carries.

1 Just some information for
2 the Board that might be of interest to
3 you, through a lot of our Deep Water
4 Horizon funding, we're funding water
5 and sewer improvements in Mobile and
6 Baldwin Counties. I'm not sure in this
7 situation if one of those that's funded
8 with that. Mr. Dale says it is not.

9 But we've very similar
10 projects in Satsuma, Mount Vernon, and
11 Chickasaw and other areas there to help
12 improve water quality in a very growing
13 part of our state.

14 UNKNOWN SPEAKER:

15 Mr. Chairman, could you identify the
16 Saraland representative that's present?
17 Thank you.

18 MS. MCCURDY: All right.
19 We'll keep moving then.

20 If you will look at 5(j,)
21 number 5(j,) this is a land swap
22 request that staff recently received.

23 Again, any time we receive

1 a request for an easement or a swap of
2 acreage, the staff works with the
3 landowner understanding the request,
4 and then we evaluate it to see what our
5 recommendation or input would be to the
6 Board.

7 This swap involves the old
8 Cahawba Prairie Addition in Dallas
9 County. Mr. Jerry Gilbert approached
10 us and requested a land swap.

11 The swaps are a value
12 swap. So you may see different
13 acreages because they have to be
14 confirmed through the appraisal the
15 work to ensure that the value that
16 Forever Wild receives is equal to or
17 greater than what the program will be
18 transferring out.

19 We do our best to give you
20 acreages and footprint, as you will
21 see, on the attached map of this change
22 and I would come back to the Board.
23 But again, I wanted to get Board

1 feedback.

2 The staff review, we would
3 be in favor of it. It would give a
4 distinct border between these two
5 tracts.

6 It would be -- if you'll
7 look on the map, the property line
8 would be clarified by -- this is the
9 one with the creek running through that
10 would give us the ability to use that
11 land-based feature to further delineate
12 the tract.

13 And anyway, so the staff
14 is supportive, but I'll take any
15 questions that the Board has on this
16 Gilbert proposal.

17 Yes, sir, Dr. Powers?

18 DR. POWERS: Did the swapper,
19 I guess, tell us why they wanted this?

20 MS. MCCURDY: He would like to
21 have a clarifying physical boundary
22 between the acreage that's more visible
23 and obvious to the public that are

1 using the tract. So it's really a
2 neighbor -- sort of neighbor request
3 shall we say -- that actually, we
4 think, would provide no negative impact
5 and would provide a distinct
6 identifying land-based boundary.

7 CHAIRMAN BLANKENSHIP: Just to
8 be clear, if there are differences in
9 the appraised values of the two
10 properties since one is larger than the
11 other one and swapped, then they would
12 provide compensation to the Forever
13 Wild Board if there's --

14 MS. MCCURDY: Yes. There are
15 two things: The landowner promises and
16 has committed to pay all the due
17 diligence costs to get this figured
18 out, and then we would receive either
19 equal or greater value in the acreage
20 that comes into the program as opposed
21 to the acreage that goes out of the
22 program.

23 Right now, we do think

1 that it's a -- would be more Forever
2 Wild acreage, but again, if anything is
3 different -- significantly different,
4 we'll come back to the Board, but I do
5 not want the landowner to begin
6 incurring these costs unless the Board
7 believes they are supportive of this
8 and would be okay with staffing for
9 this. I don't want that expense to be
10 -- if we know on the front end, I don't
11 want that expense incurred.

12 MR. HARPER: I've got a
13 question: This says his best friend
14 was shot. Will we be covered on
15 limitation of liability, people hunting
16 on Forever Wild?

17 MS. MCCURDY: I mean, we
18 have -- I can let our legal -- do you
19 want to address that Charlanna? Come
20 to the microphone.

21 MS. SKAGGS: So the Forever
22 Wild Land Trust as part of the State
23 has sovereign immunity.

1 We also -- anybody that
2 hunts on the land also signs waivers
3 whenever they hunt the lands.

4 In this instance -- are
5 you familiar with this particular case?

6 MS. WEBER: I'm not familiar
7 with this particular case, but if we
8 open the land up for public use, you
9 also have recreational immunity in
10 addition to the sovereign immunity as
11 the State has reported.

12 So yes, we feel very
13 comfortable that there would be --

14 MS. SKAGGS: A limitation of
15 liability on the state.

16 DR. NEUMANN: On that
17 incident, is there any litigation
18 pending or anything?

19 MS. SKAGGS: We aren't aware
20 of any.

21 MS. MCCURDY: Not that we're
22 aware of. And, of course, there are
23 differing accounts of the events on the

1 property.

2 CHAIRMAN BLANKENSHIP: Is
3 there a motion on this one?

4 MR. JONES: Mr. Chairman?

5 CHAIRMAN BLANKENSHIP:

6 Mr. Jones?

7 MR. JONES: I motion for the
8 Board to approve staff proceeding with
9 the efforts to grant the Gilbert Land
10 Swap request related to the Old Cahawba
11 Prairie Addition Tract as described in
12 the memo dated November 2nd, 2023 on
13 the condition that Gilbert pays for
14 costs of surveys and appraisals as to
15 both tracts and also pays the value of
16 the interest to be transferred.

17 MR. CHILDERS: Childers
18 second.

19 CHAIRMAN BLANKENSHIP:
20 Seconded by Mr. Childers. Any other
21 discussion on that? Yes, sir,
22 Mr. Parnell.

23 MR. PARNELL: I would

1 encourage that as we do this that we
2 get a legal description of the creek
3 and not just, say, to the center of the
4 creek.

5 I deal with so many
6 parcels of land where creeks have moved
7 and it moves your property line and
8 over time it becomes a problem.

9 MS. MCCURDY: Yes, sir. We
10 will have a survey performed. Land
11 owners agree for any costs associated
12 with that.

13 CHAIRMAN BLANKENSHIP: Good
14 point.

15 All those in favor say
16 aye.

17 (Chorus of ayes.)

18 CHAIRMAN BLANKENSHIP: Any
19 opposed?

20 (No response.)

21 CHAIRMAN BLANKENSHIP: None
22 opposed. Motion carries.

23 On this next one,

1 Ms. McCurdy, we're welcome to talk
2 about it but I just -- I would like
3 some more information on this next --

4 MS. MCCURDY: It's tab 5(k).

5 CHAIRMAN BLANKENSHIP: 5(k) is
6 the Upper Wolf Bay Savanna and Marsh
7 Tract land swap proposal.

8 I'm -- I'd just like to
9 have some more information. I'm not
10 sure this is in the best -- the way
11 it's proposed, I just have questions
12 whether that's in the best interest of
13 Forever Wild program or not.

14 So before we spend a lot
15 of time on it today, maybe we can bring
16 that back at the next meeting with
17 maybe some additional information. I
18 don't want them to spend money or us to
19 spend money on something that I'm not
20 real comfortable with.

21 MR. HARPER: Do we need a
22 motion for confer?

23 CHAIRMAN BLANKENSHIP: I don't

1 think we need a motion for anything
2 unless somebody -- I don't want to
3 discourage the Board if they want to
4 move forward on it, but I would just --
5 I would rather be comfortable about it
6 as the chairman before we really bring
7 it to you.

8 MS. MCCURDY: We'll just
9 gather -- we'll continue working with
10 the landowner and get a little more
11 information and potential options on
12 that one with the landowner.

13 All right. So the next
14 item is really not an item. It's just
15 to clarify for the Board. We may get a
16 similar land swap request related to
17 the Big Canoe Creek. I know that I
18 have said in our packet that I thought
19 I would have sufficient information for
20 us to consider that, but I talked to
21 the landowner this week and he wanted
22 to postpone a little bit and have a
23 little bit more conversation before he

1 finalized his request. So we'll wait
2 until February on that one as well.

3 All right. Commissioner,
4 if you'll give me a minute, I'm going
5 to catch up on my notes. Hang on one
6 second.

7 All right. I think the
8 next item -- we'll just keep going in
9 order -- is tab 5(m).

10 If the Board members will
11 recall, at our last meeting, we
12 initiated in a discussion regarding
13 everyone's favorite --

14 Yes, I'm sorry. it's in
15 the green folder, tab 5(m.) It was in
16 the green folder.

17 So anyway, at our last
18 meeting, you may recall we had
19 initiated some discussion about, I
20 guess everybody's favorite topic being
21 feral swine, wild hogs, and the
22 struggle that I think everyone across
23 the state is having, private landowner

1 as well as our own acreage.

2 So the Board -- I
3 mentioned to the Board that I would
4 bring back some additional information
5 both on the number of hogs that have
6 been removed from the properties and
7 then talk about possibly what it would
8 take for what I would call an all-out
9 initiative across all of the Forever
10 Wild acreage to try to continue to
11 mitigate.

12 There's no full
13 eradication. That methodology for that
14 has really not been successfully
15 determined, but I first wanted to go
16 back a little bit.

17 And looking at numbers
18 2019 -- that's fiscal years -- 2019
19 through 2023, about 5800 hogs were
20 removed from DCNR and Forever Wild
21 properties.

22 Obviously they discuss in
23 these -- I'll try to make these

1 distinctions but obviously if you're in
2 a WMA or an SOA where there's not
3 adjacent acreage, you're going to have
4 hogs back and forth. So sometimes it's
5 hard to get exact numbers on those
6 tracts. We do know where we trap them,
7 but as to where they came from, it's
8 not always clear.

9 But anyway, in that time
10 frame, about 5800 hogs have been
11 removed through staff efforts.

12 In addition, we have
13 hunters that report removing the hogs
14 off the public acreage, and that was an
15 additional 467 hogs.

16 If you will look at this
17 -- the maps that are attached to your
18 memo are the districts. There's no
19 magic to this. It was just a way to
20 give you a map, a little more close-up
21 than a statewide map that otherwise
22 there's no reason you have district
23 maps.

1 But we have tried to give
2 you visually representation of tracts
3 that we have -- do have hog populations
4 that we have current active programs
5 trying to mitigate and deal with those
6 through trapping and other removal
7 procedures, but you will see they are
8 color-coded and they are divided
9 between tracts, whether they are WMA,
10 SOA, Wildlife Division managed tracts
11 that include Forever Wild acreage, and
12 then just the stand-alone, shall we
13 say, Forever Wild tracts.

14 Then we've divided into
15 where we, again, do have nuisance
16 populations and those where at least
17 historically to date hogs have not been
18 observed. Obviously that could change
19 on a daily basis.

20 But we provided that
21 information just to try to give you a
22 visual of where we're seeing in certain
23 areas of the state -- hogs are going to

1 be -- you have to think they exist
2 across all 67 counties, but there's
3 certain areas where it's worse, and the
4 impacts are worse. I'm showing you
5 visually where we are seeing greater
6 problems.

7 Moving forward, in talking
8 with Commissioner, we went to staff --
9 State Lands and wildlife staff --
10 again, they are managing WMAs and SOAs
11 that include Forever Wild acreage --
12 and said, What if you went full-out,
13 everything you needed -- not saying
14 money is not an object, but just tell
15 us everything.

16 I did that, looked at the
17 tracts and what they might want to add,
18 what the costs are. Some of these are
19 ongoing management costs. But also,
20 looking at that potential we have not
21 used to date, which are contract
22 services.

23 We did sort of a case

1 study on both the Thigpen Tract, our
2 Old Cahawba Tract, being two very
3 different tracts, but Thigpen
4 especially with the known hog issue
5 there and tried to get some feedback on
6 what might be contractual costs of
7 having a contractor provide monitoring
8 the traps, drop the traps, move the
9 hogs, handle the hogs.

10 So the figures I've given
11 you include the camera systems, thermal
12 shooting equipment, additional
13 equipment, various supplies; again,
14 hard to target with what that would be.

15 But extrapolating, from
16 talking with the contractor, using --
17 adding that additional tool creates
18 about \$900,000.

19 Whatever work we do -- I
20 have always used the analogy in my
21 mind, I think of how we continue about
22 cutting grass. You're not going to
23 eradicate it exactly. You can stay on

1 top of it; you can mitigate it, but
2 you're going to have to attack it every
3 year. That's what we've been doing on
4 the basis of it, grass or hogs. This
5 is -- we need a very intensive effort.

6 On that very broad
7 overview, Commissioner, I'll throw it
8 back to you on how you want to proceed
9 with questions or option discussions.

10 CHAIRMAN BLANKENSHIP: At our
11 last meeting, as you'll recall, we did
12 have a lot of discussion about this.
13 The question was what it would cost if
14 we were to do some intensive work on
15 the Forever Wild properties to address
16 the feral swine. I said we would do
17 that and bring that back to the Board.

18 So this is an estimate on
19 essentially the first year -- first
20 year, what it would cost to do that on
21 the properties. It would be a
22 combination of contractual work and
23 then some on our staff with the traps

1 and the equipment.

2 Yes, sir, Dr. Saloom.

3 DR. SALOOM: I have a
4 question. Has there been any
5 discussion within the ranks of feeding
6 the poor with this meat, because what's
7 being done, they're just being let out
8 into the wild and reconstitute it back
9 into the soil.

10 MS. MCCURDY: No, they are not
11 released alive, the ones that are
12 trapped.

13 DR. SALOOM: I understand
14 that.

15 MS. MCCURDY: There are some
16 considerations on transporting the
17 hogs. I don't want to speak outside of
18 wildlife. There has been some
19 utilization of the meat. There's not
20 sort of, like, a Hunters For the Hungry
21 so to speak organized effort to date,
22 unless I am missing something. Let me
23 turn to wildlife.

1 Keith, do you want to
2 address? come to the microphone.

3 MR. GAULDIN: Sure. Sure.
4 Good morning. Keith Gauldin, Chief of
5 Wildlife with division of Wildlife,
6 Freshwater and Fisheries.

7 There are some places
8 where we do trap feral pigs, where we
9 do donate the pigs to needy families
10 and church organizations but a lot of
11 times we're doing the trapping
12 operations during 90-degree weather
13 during the summertime. It's not
14 feasible to process those animals where
15 they are in an edible state later on.

16 DR. SALOOM: I would encourage
17 further discussion about that to see
18 what can be done rather than wasted
19 meat, because there are a lot of people
20 out there that needs food, and there
21 are organizations that feed the hungry
22 as well as just individual families as
23 well. So I would encourage further

1 discussion about that.

2 CHAIRMAN BLANKENSHIP: We will
3 talk about it interimly. Some of our
4 properties we have walk-in coolers in
5 some of our wildlife management areas
6 where we can -- where that's pretty
7 accessible to do; other places not so
8 much. By the time you get them -- you
9 get them somewhere, they wouldn't be --
10 there are safety concerns, but we --
11 those are the ones that we did where we
12 have cooling facilities. We will talk
13 about that.

14 Mr. Parnell?

15 MR. PARNELL: I'm all for
16 feeding the hungry. I would ask you,
17 please do not let that get in the way
18 of killing wild hogs.

19 There is not a program out
20 there that I'm aware of that's working
21 to get wild animal meat to the public
22 at a reasonable process, costs the
23 expense, the hassle. Everything you

1 can name is just -- hurts the effort to
2 a point.

3 It's more important to
4 eradicate the hogs though than it is to
5 worry about where the meat goes. So
6 please don't let this hurt this
7 discussion.

8 CHAIRMAN BLANKENSHIP:

9 Dr. Howell?

10 DR. HOWELL: So first I'd like
11 to say that you have to be careful of
12 the feral hog meat because a lot of
13 feral swine carries NOCs. So sometimes
14 meat preparation is a serious issue to
15 keep from catching those diseases.

16 And the other thing I was
17 wondering is if this control --
18 proposed control included the use of
19 drones, because some of my colleagues
20 went to the Alabama Chapter of the
21 Wildlife meeting, and there was a
22 gentleman there who presented using
23 drones to assist in the detection and

1 eradication of feral swine. He got a
2 lot more success doing that that way.
3 I was wondering if that was something
4 that y'all considered in your proposed
5 plan for addressing that issue.

6 MS. MCCURDY: I mean, I don't
7 think -- we did not factor in for staff
8 use, but with that is an aspect of
9 contractor services that could be, you
10 know, part of the package presented by
11 a contractor. But we did not include
12 money for staff usage of drones.

13 DR. HOWELL: Yes, because he
14 got significantly better results adding
15 drones into the management plan because
16 access is the problem for detection a
17 lot of times.

18 MS. MCCURDY: And that is one
19 reason we were looking at the
20 contractual for the flexibility of the
21 services that could be provided.

22 CHAIRMAN BLANKENSHIP:
23 Mr. Holloway?

1 MR. HOLLOWAY: Mr. Chairman,
2 if we take on this additional funding
3 for the feral swine eradication, one
4 year is not going to do it. You have
5 to look at this as sort of an annual
6 type of allocation -- funding
7 allocation because one year that's --
8 you know, you're wasting time.

9 CHAIRMAN BLANKENSHIP: Agreed.
10 That's -- we provided the figure we
11 feel like the first year this would be
12 the cost. It may be this; it may be
13 less in additional years, depending on
14 the success of the first year. That's
15 why I brought it to the Board.

16 I kind of wanted to get
17 your appetite as a Board on whether we
18 should spend money out of the
19 stewardship fund to do this. Does it
20 rank high enough in the hierarchy of
21 the things that you think are important
22 to do on our properties to spend
23 essentially \$940,000 this year to do

1 that? That's why I brought it to the
2 Board for that feedback for you.

3 MS. MCCURDY: It is uncertain
4 as we get going to know what that cost,
5 you know, exactly is, but that was our
6 information gathered.

7 MR. CHILDERS: That's the
8 reason we've got the stewardship fund
9 is to maintain those properties.

10 Now, those feral hogs do a
11 lot of damage. They not only run
12 around on the property. They can carry
13 diseases, not only on the federal land
14 and our land but on the farmers' land
15 and people that own land next to it.

16 So if we're going to sit
17 here and be an incubator for wild hogs,
18 it's going to affect the neighbors.

19 So I think it's a
20 profitable situation for us and our
21 duty to take care of that on our land
22 and take it out of the fund, fifteen
23 percent fund to do that. It may be

1 here for use, but that's our
2 responsibility.

3 CHAIRMAN BLANKENSHIP:

4 Mr. Parnell?

5 MR. PARNELL: I would like to
6 make a motion that the staff have up to
7 one million dollars for this year to
8 use to eradicate wild hogs in the best
9 use of the money possible. I don't
10 want them to just spend money. I want
11 them to work on this more than what
12 they've done as they developed this
13 program, but up to a million dollars
14 for eradication of wild hogs on Forever
15 Wild land.

16 MR. CHILDERS: Second that
17 motion.

18 CHAIRMAN BLANKENSHIP:

19 Seconded by Mr. Childers.

20 So the motion is for
21 taking this information that we
22 provided, to spend up to a million
23 dollars out of the stewardship fund in

1 this fiscal year to do hog eradication
2 work on the Forever Wild property.

3 Any more discussion?

4 Mr. Jones?

5 MR. JONES: Mr. Chairman, I'm
6 all for killing the wild hogs for sure,
7 but how are we going to evaluate the
8 effectiveness of this is where I --

9 MS. MCCURDY: I'm going to be
10 honest --

11 MR. JONES: Has this been a
12 good expenditure or not?

13 MS. MCCURDY: I'll be very
14 frank: We've had staff discussion on
15 what is the metric. I'm going to be
16 very honest with y'all: I don't know
17 that I have an excellent metric.
18 There's no way to know how many we
19 have. There's no way to know if we're
20 pulling from other properties. There
21 is -- but I will tell you every dead
22 hog is a good hog.

23 So we would just be

1 reporting back to the Board as to the
2 expenditures and the numbers. And we
3 don't have experience with the
4 contractor services. So I don't even
5 have a framework to say what we expect,
6 but their numbers will be numbers of
7 the ones trapped.

8 Hopefully if you're making
9 progress -- you're not going to
10 eradicate -- if you're making progress,
11 your numbers are going to go down, good
12 thing or a bad thing.

13 So I'm open to metric.
14 I'm just telling you quite honestly,
15 from a management perspective, we're
16 doing the best we can. Every dead one
17 is a good one.

18 I can't tell you that I
19 have a more sophisticated metric.
20 We're going to have to monitor costs
21 versus numbers.

22 DR. NEUMANN: Mr. Chairman?

23 CHAIRMAN BLANKENSHIP:

1 Dr. Neumann?

2 DR. NEUMANN: Are there any
3 other groups or other interests in,
4 like, where we could maybe help
5 coordinate or get information from on
6 their programs, anything like that?

7 MS. MCCURDY: AWF? I'm sorry.

8 DR. NEUMANN: Yeah.

9 MS. MCCURDY: Sure.

10 CHAIRMAN BLANKENSHIP: I will
11 say, you know, I think this is a good
12 exercise to spend some money to see how
13 that works on these properties and see
14 what success it would have.

15 Just as an informational
16 thing for the Board, as you go back to
17 the stewardship fund and the report --
18 I guess that's tab 2(b) -- the two and
19 a half million dollars which y'all have
20 approved to spend out of the
21 stewardship fund, we have that --
22 that's approved through the budget for
23 the state annually.

1 So whatever we spend, this
2 million dollars will come out of that
3 two and a half million. We can't add
4 to the two and a half million dollars.

5 Does that make sense?
6 What I would like to do -- I'm fine
7 with the motion. We will probably come
8 back in the February meeting and just
9 let you know out of the two and a half
10 million dollars how we would allocate
11 that among some other things that the
12 Board had already approved for some
13 access work and other things.

14 MS. MCCURDY: We can -- we'll
15 provide that. It's going to be a work
16 in progress. I think it's going to be
17 an evaluation in progress.

18 CHAIRMAN BLANKENSHIP:
19 Regardless, we can start moving forward
20 with some work between now and then.
21 We don't have to wait until February,
22 but I will bring that back to you on
23 the fiscal side how we can make that

1 work with the objectives we've already
2 approved, with the recommendations.

3 Any other discussion in
4 that? All those in favor, please raise
5 your hand.

6 MS. MCCURDY: It's unanimous.

7 CHAIRMAN BLANKENSHIP: Thank
8 you.

9 MS. MCCURDY: All right. Just
10 a couple more updates, I think maybe
11 one that I have.

12 If you look in your
13 packet, tap 5(n). That would have been
14 in the green folder also.

15 I wanted to update the
16 Board. We did have documentation of an
17 endangered species filed with our
18 wildlife section related to Perdido
19 River WMA Forever Wild Land Trust
20 Acreage and the Northern Long-eared
21 Bat.

22 This was, I think, the
23 first discovery that had been made in

1 this area. So I wanted to attach to
2 the press release that the Department
3 issued on that. And the work covered
4 more than Forever Wild acreage. It was
5 both in Mobile and Baldwin County that
6 was involved. That was a significant
7 discovery.

8 And, Commissioner, I
9 wanted to be sure you had that
10 information. Is there anything else
11 you wanted to discuss on that?

12 CHAIRMAN BLANKENSHIP: No. I
13 just wanted to share to you about the
14 work y'all have been very supportive of
15 in the Perdido region to show that that
16 really is a very important work and
17 does have other benefits outside the
18 things we've already discussed. So
19 that was relevant for you all. Thank
20 you.

21 MS. MCCURDY: Commissioner, I
22 think those are all of my miscellaneous
23 items unless the Board or you have

1 something else.

2 CHAIRMAN BLANKENSHIP: I do
3 not. I think we might have some moving
4 on to the minutes. I think there might
5 be some corrections.

6 MS. MCCURDY: Again, I'm going
7 to apologize to the Board, but after I
8 distributed the minutes, I did note one
9 error. If you'll turn to tab 6, I
10 believe it's on pages 75 and 76, there
11 was a notation that Mr. Parnell was
12 speaking. It was actually Mr. Harper
13 that was speaking.

14 And so both those pages,
15 simple revision would be to replace
16 Parnell with Harper. I apologize about
17 that. It got out without me catching
18 that on the front end.

19 CHAIRMAN BLANKENSHIP: So the
20 -- so the changes to the minutes are on
21 page 75 and 76 where it says
22 Mr. Parnell. Scratch that off and put
23 Mr. Harper?

1 Are there any other
2 additions or corrections to the minutes
3 from the August 3rd meeting at
4 University of South Alabama?

5 (No response.)

6 CHAIRMAN BLANKENSHIP: Seeing
7 none, do I have a motion we approve the
8 minutes as amended?

9 MR. CHILDERS: So move.

10 CHAIRMAN BLANKENSHIP: Move by
11 Mr. Childers. Any second?

12 DR. MCCLINTOCK: Second.

13 CHAIRMAN BLANKENSHIP:
14 Seconded by Dr. McClintock. All of us
15 in favor say aye.

16 (Chorus of ayes.)

17 CHAIRMAN BLANKENSHIP: Any
18 opposed?

19 (No response.)

20 CHAIRMAN BLANKENSHIP: None
21 opposed. The motion carries.

22 Our next meeting will be
23 February the 1st. It will be held in

1 the Montgomery area. It may be held at
2 the Troy University Montgomery, but
3 we'll give you some information closer
4 to time on that so -- that is a
5 surprise to the staff.

6 MS. MCCURDY: Hey, it sounds
7 good. I like it

8 CHAIRMAN BLANKENSHIP: Based
9 on a conversation I had this past week.

10 MS. MCCURDY: I like it.

11 CHAIRMAN BLANKENSHIP: Any
12 other business? Any other thing to
13 discuss?

14 Is there a motion we
15 adjourn?

16 MR. CHILDERS: So move.

17 CHAIRMAN BLANKENSHIP: All
18 those in favor say aye.

19 (Chorus of ayes.)

20 CHAIRMAN BLANKENSHIP: We are
21 adjourned. Thank you.

22
23 (The Forever Wild Board Meeting

ended at 12:23 p.m. on November 2,
2023.)

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REPORTER'S CERTIFICATE

STATE OF ALABAMA

TALLADEGA COUNTY

I, Elaine Scott, Certified Court
Reporter and Notary Public in and for the
State of Alabama at Large, certify on
Thursday, November 2, 2023, that I reported
the proceedings in the matter of:

IN THE MATTER OF:

FOREVER WILD BOARD MEETING

Auburn University

School of Forestry & Wildlife

602 Duncan Drive

Auburn, Alabama 36832

On Thursday, November 2, 2023 that
the foregoing 122 computer-printed pages
contain a true and correct transcript of the
hearing set out herein.

I further certify that I am neither
of relative, employee, attorney or counsel of
any of the parties, nor am I a relative or
employee of such attorney or counsel, nor am I

1 financially interested in the results thereof.

2 All rates charged are usual and customary.

3 I further certify that I am duly
4 licensed by the Alabama Board of Court
5 Reporting as a Certified Court Reporter as
6 evidenced by the ACCR number following my name
7 found below.

8 This 2nd day of November in the year
9 of our Lord, 2023.

10 

11
12 Elaine Scott, CCR

13 ACCR NO. 354 Exp. 9/30/24

14 Certified Court Reporter and

15 Notary Public

16 Commission expires 11/14/23
17

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