

1 ALABAMA FOREVER WILD LAND TRUST

2 BOARD MEETING

4 November 6, 2025

5 10:01 a.m.

7 M. BARNETT LAWLEY FOREVER WILD FIELD TRIAL AREA

8 EVENT CENTER

9 1132 COUNTY ROAD 73

10 GREENSBORO, ALABAMA 36744

12 BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT:

13 MR. CHRISTOPHER M. BLANKENSHIP, Commissioner,  
14 Department of Conservation & Natural Resources

15 MR. ZACH CONLON

16 MR. JAKE HARPER

17 MR. THOMAS HARRIS

18 DR. HEATHER HOWELL

19 DR. BRIAN KEENER

20 DR. CHARLIE MARTIN

21 MR. A. M. "JAY" NEUMANN, JR.

22 MR. RICK OATES

23 MR. JIMMY PARNELL

24 MR. MARK M. TUGGLE

25 DR. JOHN VALENTINE

1       BOARD MEMBERS ABSENT:

2       MR. MICKEY CHILDERS

3       DR. JAMES McCLINTOCK

4       MS. KAREN STANLEY

5

6       PUBLIC SPEAKERS:

7       DR. KAYLA BOYD, Mobile Baykeeper

8       MR. JEREMY DOSS, State Lands Division

9       MR. ELLIOTT GLASS, Westervelt Company

10      MR. BILL FREEMAN, Wildlife and Freshwater  
11      Fisheries Division, Alabama Department of  
12      Conservation & Natural Resources

13      MR. JONATHAN GOODE, Farm and Forest Brokers

14      MR. JERRY INGRAM

15      MR. BROOKS KNAPP, Ebsco Industries

16      MS. PATTI McCURDY, Director, State Lands  
17      Division, Alabama Department of Conservation &  
18      Natural Resources

19      MR. CHAD SCROGGINS, Manager, Shelby County

20      MS. ELIZABETH SIMS, Freshwater and Land Trust

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## PROCEDINGS

THE COMMISSIONER: Good morning.

Welcome to the November 6 meeting of the Forever Wild Board. I'm going to call the roll right quick and make sure we have a -- a quorum.

Please indicate you're present.

Chris Blankenship is here.

Zach Conlon?

MR. CONLON: Present.

THE COMMISSIONER: Mr. Harper?

MR. HARPER: Here.

THE COMMISSIONER: Mr. Harris?

MR. HARRIS: Here.

THE COMMISSIONER: Dr. Howell?

DR. HOWELL: Here.

THE COMMISSIONER: Dr. Keener?

DR. KEENER: Here.

THE COMMISSIONER: Dr. Martin?

DR. MARTIN: Here.

THE COMMISSIONER: Dr. Neumann?

DR. NEUMANN: Here.

THE COMMISSIONER: Mr. Oates?

MR. OATES: Here.

## THE COMMISSIONER:

MR. PARNELL: Here.

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10 of 10 pages

1                   THE COMMISSIONER: Mr. Tuggle?

2                   MR. TUGGLE: Here.

3                   THE COMMISSIONER: Dr. Valentine?

4                   DR. VALENTINE: Here.

5                   THE COMMISSIONER: Mr. Childers,

6 Dr. McClintock, and Ms. Stanley.

7                   All right. We do have a quorum.

8                   I would like to welcome our new member  
9 to the Board. Dr. Sean Powers served his  
10 six-year term on the Board, and we really  
11 appreciate his service.

12                  And replacing him is Dr. Charlie  
13 Martin, from the University of South Alabama, an  
14 assistant professor of estuarine ecology; so,  
15 Dr. Martin, very -- very good to have you on the  
16 Board. We look forward to serving with you for  
17 -- for six years, hopefully --

18                  DR. MARTIN: Thank you.

19                  THE COMMISSIONER: -- on the Board.

20                  This is our brand-new facility at the  
21 Forever Wild Field Trial Area. This is the  
22 first event that we've had here. We're doing  
23 the ribbon cutting this afternoon at 1 o'clock.  
24 Hopefully, we finish with the Board meeting by  
25 then, and hopefully that you'll hang -- hope you

1 will hang around to participate in -- in the  
2 ribbon cutting.

3 And I am super excited about this  
4 facility. It has been a long time coming. You  
5 can't fully appreciate how nice this is unless  
6 you saw what was here before.

7 You know, this was the old cattle ranch  
8 and belonged to the Department of Corrections.  
9 And this was the old barracks for the -- for the  
10 cattle ranch. It was a concrete building with  
11 all the paint falling off of it. It was just  
12 about as nasty of a place as you could imagine  
13 that we inherited when we purchased the property  
14 several years ago.

15 So to be able to bulldoze that down and  
16 build this really nice event center here is --  
17 is so exciting. And I'm so glad to have all of  
18 you here for it, and I hope that you'll hang  
19 around at 1 o'clock for the ribbon cutting.

20 I don't think we have any special  
21 guests and elected officials here yet. They're  
22 all going to be here for the ribbon cutting,  
23 and -- so I don't have any special guests to  
24 recognize, except that my wife is here.

25 This is her first Forever Wild Board

1 meeting, and she is a very special guest. So  
2 after eight and a half years of -- after eight  
3 and a half years of being on the -- on the  
4 Forever Wild Board, I finally talked her into  
5 coming to a meeting. So hopefully, she'll enjoy  
6 herself.

7 Now, I would like to now recognize  
8 Jeremy Doss, with the State Lands Division just  
9 to talk a little bit about this place and to  
10 welcome us to the facility here.

11 MR. DOSS: Kind of to echo what the  
12 Commissioner said, it has been a long time  
13 coming. It has been a lot of work. It is a  
14 dramatically different place than it was.

15 And we've been waiting for about two  
16 years to really let the public in and show what  
17 the place is all about. This building is going  
18 to be a really special addition to what is the  
19 rest of the property.

20 We're thankful you're here from a  
21 departmental standpoint, and State Lands is  
22 really happy to be able to finally cut the  
23 ribbon on this thing; so thank you-all for being  
24 here today, and there will be more this  
25 afternoon. Thank you.

1 THE COMMISSIONER: Thank you, Jeremy.  
2 Towards the end of the meeting, I think Patti  
3 will give a much better overview of what all  
4 happens here at the Forever Wild Field Trial  
5 Area.

6                   But before we start the public comment,  
7 I did have one piece of business that I want to  
8 make sure I mention: We have something that is  
9 called a legal compliance audit that is done  
10 every five years for the -- for many of our --  
11 our programs around the state, the department.  
12 But we have a legal compliance audit for the  
13 Forever Wild Board recently completed.

20 So I wanted to let you know that the  
21 staff does a fantastic job and -- and that we  
22 had a -- a very clean audit on the legal  
23 compliance audit for this year. So we have  
24 another one in five years.

25 So, with that, we'll start with the

1       public comment period. And when I call your  
2       name, just come to the microphone and say your  
3       name for the court reporter. And just make sure  
4       you speak into the microphone because -- so the  
5       court reporter can get all of the information.

6                   So our first speaker is going to be  
7       Jonathan Goode, on the Little River - East Fork  
8       Addition. That is -- in your book, that is  
9       Tab 4b, page 19.

10                  MS. McCURDY: And, just a reminder to  
11       the Board, I'm not positive all your mics are --  
12       are on; so just be sure you see a green light if  
13       you have a question. And I apologize: We just  
14       forgot to double-check that. Thanks.

15                  THE COMMISSIONER: 4b, page 19.

16                  All right. Go ahead.

17                  MR. GOODE: Good morning. I am  
18       Jonathan Goode with Farm and Forest Brokers.  
19       Our company is representing this property that  
20       is before you, the Little River - East Fork  
21       Addition. It has been submitted for nomination.  
22       We're asking today for our first -- our first  
23       appraisal on it.

24                  It is a very special property. It has  
25       about two miles of river frontage on the East

1 Fork of the Little River, and it joins the  
2 existing preserve there; so I think this would  
3 be a great fit.

4 I've looked at, literally, thousands of  
5 properties. This would be a very special fit  
6 for Forever Wild; so asking for you to consider  
7 a -- a first appraisal on this property today.

8 THE COMMISSIONER: Thank you. Our next  
9 speaker is Chad Scroggins, on the Cooper Branch  
10 Tract, Tab 3b, page 3. 3b, page 3. And there  
11 is also a memo, 5c. Tab 5c is the memo about  
12 the property, with an update from the last  
13 meeting.

14 If you give everybody just a second, my  
15 friend, to find that. Good to see you this  
16 morning.

17 MR. SCROGGINS: Good to see you. Thank  
18 you.

19 THE COMMISSIONER: All right.

20 MR. SCROGGINS: All right. The Cooper  
21 Branch Tract is one that Shelby County is  
22 interested in. It is in the center part of our  
23 county along County Road 36, positioned just  
24 south of Oak Mountain State Park and a -- and a  
25 tract that you all own that is the -- the

1 Belcher property.

2                   The Cooper Branch Tract kind of is  
3 situated between the cities of Pelham and -- and  
4 the city of Chelsea.

5                   Something that the Commission is  
6 interested in to the point that we would be able  
7 to -- if purchased, and if agreed upon by the  
8 Forever Wild Board, if you-all purchase the  
9 property, we would buy the adjacent property  
10 that had a housing unit on it that was not of  
11 interest to the Forever Wild Board. But the  
12 County would purchase that and put in a  
13 trailhead like we have done at other tracts.

14                   It is positioned in an area of growth.  
15 There is a lot of subdivisions and things still  
16 going on in Shelby County. And I'll talk a  
17 little bit more on that with a different tract.

18                   But this one is -- is one of interest.  
19 It is one that we have learned more about and  
20 done a lot of interest in the last six months.  
21 We certainly would welcome any investment that  
22 you make into Shelby County. We've -- we've  
23 proven over the years to be partners, as we have  
24 partnered together with you-all on the Cahaba  
25 River Tract, which is an 1,800-acre tract.

1                   Like I said, it is in growing area. We  
2 would welcome the investment of Forever Wild  
3 into the Cooper Branch Tract, if you so  
4 consider. Thank you.

5                   THE COMMISSIONER: Any questions? All  
6 right. Thank you, sir.

7                   The next speaker is Jerry Ingram on  
8 that same property, the Cooper Branch Tract.

9                   MR. INGRAM: Appreciate the opportunity  
10 to -- to speak before this group today. I was  
11 asked to look at the economic potential for  
12 expanding the trails at the -- at the park  
13 that -- that was just mentioned by Chad.

14                  And one of the things that I wanted to  
15 do -- I wanted to look back at the -- at the  
16 goals and objectives of the long-range plan  
17 of -- of the county, of Shelby County, and make  
18 sure that their long-range plan in terms of what  
19 they want to do with -- with trails in Oak  
20 Mountain, was consistent with what the -- the  
21 state would want to do.

22                  What I found in -- in doing my research  
23 is that several cities and -- and even states  
24 have done economic impact studies for their  
25 trails. Even Oxford, Alabama, has had a -- an

1 economic impact study done, I think, 2012. It  
2 is a little old study.

3 But I looked at Chattanooga, Tennessee.  
4 I looked at a -- a place in Tennessee. Colorado  
5 has done an economic impact study, and Northwest  
6 Arkansas has -- has done one. And there were  
7 some other ones out there.

8 And all the ones I looked at -- the  
9 investment in trails, especially to get  
10 certified by the international group that --  
11 that promotes the -- that promotes trail riding  
12 in the world -- if you can get that  
13 certification -- the Silver Ride Center  
14 designation, I should say -- then you're looked  
15 at very favorably all over the world.

16 In Arkansas -- up in Northwest  
17 Arkansas, they have probably a good model to  
18 look at. They have had international events  
19 there because of their certification.

20 The Sam Walton family has supported  
21 their effort in Arkansas to expand their trails  
22 for mountain biking; so they meet the  
23 certification that is given by the International  
24 Mountain Biking Association.

25 I just want to share some -- some

1 figures with you out of Arkansas. These are  
2 economic impact data. I know we're short on  
3 time, but I'll get through these.

4 At Arkansas, when they conducted their  
5 study in 2023, the economic impact of getting  
6 their trails up to scale where they met the  
7 certification requirement for the IMBA group  
8 was -- was \$159 million; just from tourism,  
9 out-of-state dollars -- \$59 million. And this  
10 is what I saw throughout the research that I had  
11 done.

12 So if you get the certification from  
13 the international group and, importantly, market  
14 that, then you're in good shape to realize a  
15 very favorable economic impact from these  
16 mountain bike -- biking trails.

17 THE COMMISSIONER: Thank you,  
18 Mr. Ingram.

19 The next speaker is Elizabeth Sims -- I  
20 think that is right -- Elizabeth Sims on the  
21 Sipsey River Swamp - Kellytown Addition. That  
22 is Tab 3b, page 6. 3b, page 6.

23 All right. Go ahead.

24 MS. SIMS: All right. Well, thank you  
25 so much for hosting us here in this gorgeous new

1 facility.

2 My name is Elizabeth Sims; I'm with the  
3 Freshwater Land Trust. I'm here today to talk  
4 about the Kellytown Addition to the Sipsey River  
5 complex.

6 This is a great opportunity to add  
7 additional land that will help support the  
8 aquatic diversity and critical habitat in the  
9 Sipsey River, and -- and to expand upon the  
10 investment that the Forever Wild Board has  
11 already made.

12 In addition, this thousand-acre tract  
13 will provide much needed access through road --  
14 additional access to existing facilities.

15 We're really excited that the Board has  
16 voted for first appraisal. And our  
17 understanding is it is available for the next  
18 steps, and we would appreciate looking favorably  
19 on that.

20 I've got a few of the owners,  
21 Westervelt. We have Elliott Glass here as  
22 another speaker, if there are any additional  
23 questions on the property.

24 But I thank you for the consideration.

25 THE COMMISSIONER: Thank you. The next

1 speaker is Elliott Glass on that same piece of  
2 property.

3 MR. GLASS: Yes, yes. I will just add  
4 to what Liz said; we think this is a great  
5 tract. And I thank you for the consideration,  
6 and thank Liz with the Freshwater Trust for the  
7 nomination.

8 And just here, I'm a forester and  
9 biologist for the Westervelt Company in the  
10 Tombigbee region. I'm just here if you had any  
11 additional questions about the tract.

12 THE COMMISSIONER: Thank you, sir.

13 MR. GLASS: Thank you-all.

14 THE COMMISSIONER: The next speaker is  
15 Mr. Brooks Knapp, on the Double Oak Tract,  
16 Tab 4b, page 9. 4b, page 9.

17 All right, Mr. Knapp. Go ahead.

18 MR. KNAPP: You-all ready? Good  
19 morning, Commissioner Blankenship and the  
20 Forever Wild Land Trust Board. I'm Brooks  
21 Knapp; I work for Ebsco Industries, the owner of  
22 the Double Oak Tract.

23 My role with Ebsco has been overseeing  
24 the lands for the last twenty one and a half  
25 years, the lands and buildings and other

1       functions for Ebsco.

2                   As many may know, Ebsco has been a  
3 long-term holder of land, the Double Oak Tract  
4 that is in nomination. We've owned it since  
5 1988; that is 37 years, a long-term owner.

6                   The Ebsco family consistently leaned  
7 towards preservation of the natural beauty of  
8 the lands under their ownership. In that  
9 regard, Shelby County has come on board and is  
10 also interested in keeping the Double Oak Tract.

11                  The main thing that -- that I wanted to  
12 talk about is Shelby County has agreed to  
13 contribute 25 percent of the purchase price for  
14 the land, write a check to Forever Wild, so --  
15 and, also, from Day One, take care of the  
16 maintenance, construction. So I think it is a  
17 huge plus, win-win for everybody.

18                  Chad Scroggins will speak more on that,  
19 the County manager. But thank you-all for  
20 listening to us and entertaining our nomination.

21                  Any questions?

22                  THE COMMISSIONER: Thank you, sir.

23                  MR. KNAPP: Thank you.

24                  THE COMMISSIONER: The next speaker is  
25 Chad Scroggins on the -- on that tract, the

1 Double Oak Tract.

2 MR. SCROGGINS: Thank you for the  
3 opportunity to come back in.

4 THE COMMISSIONER: Welcome back.

5 MR. SCROGGINS: I'll introduce myself:  
6 I'm Chad Scroggins, the County manager -- I  
7 failed to do that in the beginning -- the County  
8 manager for Shelby County.

9 The Double Oak Tract is the Number One  
10 priority for Shelby County. It is the Number  
11 One priority that we've had since we've  
12 partnered for -- at the Cahaba River Park  
13 location, the reason being that -- that it is,  
14 as -- it adjoins a 900-acre park that we already  
15 have called Double Oak Park. It would expand it  
16 to 1800 acres.

17 The pressures from development are all  
18 around. This tract is not a good tract for  
19 agricultural use; it is not a good tract for  
20 timber use. It has got a lot of topography.

21 But it is -- it is directly between,  
22 right now, the -- the five-mile population range  
23 from around this particular site is -- 52,000  
24 people live within a five-mile radius of it  
25 already.

1                   The governor instituted the -- the  
2 Hoover Institute study from Samford University.  
3 And one of the top four things you can do in a  
4 growing community is have a place for people to  
5 go out and have outdoor recreation, and that is  
6 what this would be.

7                   From Day One, we could move the gates.  
8 If you-all decided to purchase this tract, we  
9 can move the gates back within 24 hours and have  
10 this park opened because we already have two  
11 trailheads established, both of which have  
12 restrooms on both sides of the ridge that are  
13 already serving -- serving the park that we have  
14 existing.

15                   The County Commission voted in April to  
16 put up 25 percent of the purchase price.  
17 Whatever that is, we're going to put that  
18 capital up -- up front and cut that check to the  
19 Forever Wild Land Trust and then, also, maintain  
20 it forever, so you wouldn't have to utilize  
21 maintenance funds.

22                   We value this particular project more  
23 than we have any other project that we've come  
24 up with in -- in 10 or 15 years. You know that  
25 Shelby County is a growing county -- about 3,000

1       in population every year -- and this particular  
2       site would feed the Meadowbrook office park, the  
3       Inverness Center office park, the city --  
4       growing cities of Chelsea, the growing cities  
5       that we see with Hoover and in that area.

6               I can't stress to you how much that we  
7       would really appreciate the partnership, the  
8       opportunity to come alongside the Forever Wild  
9       Land Trust Board and make this particular  
10      project one that is pristine.

11               And a lot of that that we were already  
12       talking about with -- with economic development  
13       associated with IMBA -- the state parks --  
14       they're accomplishing all that with Oak Mountain  
15       State Park. We've got a partnership with state  
16       parks that we're about to cut the ribbon on here  
17       in December.

18               So this is our Number One priority, and  
19       we would appreciate your -- your consideration  
20       and the opportunity to join you with this.  
21       Thank you.

22               THE COMMISSIONER: Thank you, Chad.

23               I would like to -- when Chad is  
24       finished speaking about that and Mr. Ingram  
25       brought up about the IMBA Silver designation --

1 and so we would like to thank Shelby County for  
2 the work that they're doing in partnership with  
3 us on the state park property and then, also, on  
4 the adjacent Forever Wild property adjacent to  
5 Oak Mountain State Park, to provide access, to  
6 build trails, to build trailheads.

7 We had about a -- a little over a  
8 million dollars from Innovate Alabama to build  
9 some trails and a skills park and the things  
10 that we needed to be able to apply for that IMBA  
11 Silver designation for Oak Mountain State Park  
12 and -- and the surrounding area.

13 And I appreciate you-all's partnership  
14 very much on the -- and the work that you-all  
15 have done with us and for us there. Thank you.

16 Our last speaker is Dr. Kayla Boyd,  
17 and -- and to talk about oyster planting on the  
18 Forever Wild property.

19 MS. McCURDY: And Kayla had a handout,  
20 and so Sandy is going to pass that out to the  
21 Board; so just give him one second.

22 THE COMMISSIONER: Thank you, sir.

23 While he is passing that out, that is  
24 the last speaker. Is there anybody that wanted  
25 to make a comment or speak that didn't have a

1 chance or got here late and didn't get to sign  
2 up? If so, if you'll raise your hand, we'll get  
3 somebody to get you a green slip. But just want  
4 to give -- give everybody a chance.

5 All right. Thank you. Go ahead.

6 DR. BOYD: Great. Thank you. Hello.  
7 My name is Dr. Kayla Boyd. I received my degree  
8 from Auburn University in the School of  
9 Fisheries, Aquaculture & Aquatic Sciences; and I  
10 spent two and a half of those years at the  
11 Auburn University Shellfish Lab on Dauphin  
12 Island, studying oyster mortality and oyster  
13 populations, mostly farmed across Coastal  
14 Alabama.

15 I am now working for Mobile Baykeeper  
16 as their oyster project manager, where my job is  
17 to spearhead oyster restoration projects.

18 I'm here today to present to you an  
19 oyster restoration plan focusing on restocking  
20 oyster populations in tidal creeks across  
21 Coastal Alabama, using shell and live oysters.

22 This plan was built in collaboration  
23 with the ADCNR State Lands, ADCNR Marine  
24 Resources Division, the Alabama Department of  
25 Public Health, several NGOs, and both the wild

1 and farmed oyster industry, and follows the  
2 plans laid out in the Alabama Comprehensive  
3 Oyster Restoration Strategy published in 2021.

4 The goal of this project is to plant  
5 over 200 oyster reefs from Bayou La Batre to  
6 Fort Morgan using small vessels in a  
7 nonobstructive or intrusive way.

8 These reefs will mimic what was  
9 historically found in these areas and are meant  
10 to supplement any oyster populations that are  
11 currently found there, or used to be found  
12 there.

13 This project is centered around the  
14 oyster industry itself. And so oysters will be  
15 used in the project will be purchased or donated  
16 from Alabama oyster farms. The shell will come  
17 from the Alabama Coastal Foundation Shell  
18 Recycling Program. The labor will be supplied  
19 by Alabama organizations.

20 I have been working very hard to make  
21 this an Alabama-driven project for Alabama.

22 But the goal is to create these reefs  
23 as larval source reefs that will provide larvae  
24 to previously planted limestone and shell that  
25 have been placed by AWF and Marine Resources

1       Division. And the idea behind it is to  
2       reestablish a robust network of reefs that will  
3       supply larvae to the surrounding locations and  
4       also renourish prime areas to support  
5       biodiversity, especially along the Forever Wild  
6       tracts. We're targeting to begin planting in  
7       March of 2026.

8               And I'll take any questions that you  
9       have about it. It is a big project -- but it'll  
10       take us about five years, we believe, to restock  
11       all of these reefs.

12               THE COMMISSIONER: All right. Thank  
13       you.

14               DR. BOYD: Cool. Thank you.

15               THE COMMISSIONER: The last time we got  
16       together, we were eating a bunch of oysters.  
17       Too bad we don't have oysters to eat today.

18               Thank you. That concludes our public  
19       comment period.

20               The next order of business is to recess  
21       for executive session. By regulation, appraisal  
22       values are confidential during periods of  
23       negotiation. Accordingly, in order to discuss  
24       tract appraisal values, the Board would need to  
25       go into recess for an executive session.

1                   Is there a motion for the Board to now  
2 go to recess to attend an executive session?

3                   MR. HARRIS: So moved.

4                   MR. PARSELL: Second.

5                   THE COMMISSIONER: Motion made by  
6 Mr. Harris, seconded by Mr. Parnell.

7                   As I call your name, please indicate  
8 whether you are in favor of going to executive  
9 session.

10                  Chris Blankenship -- yes.

11                  THE COMMISSIONER: Mr. Conlon?

12                  MR. CONLON: Yes.

13                  THE COMMISSIONER: Mr. Harper?

14                  MR. HARPER: Yes.

15                  THE COMMISSIONER: Mr. Harris?

16                  MR. HARRIS: Yes.

17                  THE COMMISSIONER: Dr. Howell?

18                  DR. HOWELL: Yes.

19                  THE COMMISSIONER: Dr. Keener?

20                  DR. KEENER: Yes.

21                  THE COMMISSIONER: Dr. Martin?

22                  DR. MARTIN: Yes.

23                  THE COMMISSIONER: Dr. Neumann?

24                  DR. NEUMANN: Yes.

25                  THE COMMISSIONER: Mr. Oates?

1 MR. OATES: Yes.

2 THE COMMISSIONER: Mr. Parnell?

3 MR. PARNELL: Yeah.

4 THE COMMISSIONER: Mr. Tuggle?

5 MR. TUGGLE: Yes.

6 THE COMMISSIONER: Dr. Valentine?

7 DR. VALENTINE: Yes.

8 THE COMMISSIONER: We are now in  
9 executive session. It is 10:26; we hope to  
10 return in about 20 minutes.

11 (A break was taken.)

12 THE COMMISSIONER: All right. We are  
13 back from executive session. It is 10:43, and  
14 we are back on the record.

15 Ms. McCurdy?

16 MS. McCURDY: All right. Thanks,  
17 Commissioner. And hope you-all can see me. My  
18 staff is making fun of me for not being taller  
19 than the podium, which they built; so this is --  
20 this is an example of the work that my staff  
21 does.

22 They had a bucket for me to stand on,  
23 but I -- actually, it was great because my -- I  
24 can't read anymore, my eyes; so, now, everything  
25 is right here.

1                   Anyway. So I just wanted to go ahead  
2 and acknowledge, yes, I know, I'm barely taller  
3 than the podium.

4                   So, as usual, I would like to direct  
5 the Board to their Tab 2a. This is the portion  
6 of the meeting that I sort of remind the Board  
7 and, also, for the public's information, I will  
8 go through the properties that the staff is  
9 actively working on trying to get closed because  
10 you previously motioned for us to do so.

11                  So I kind of would just want to run  
12 through where we are and, also, an update on  
13 financial information.

14                  So the tracts that we are working on  
15 getting to closing, the West Fowl River Tract,  
16 Mobile County -- I will update you: Everything  
17 on that one is done. There were a couple of  
18 the -- there is several -- well, a bunch of  
19 ownership within a family. There has been a --  
20 a death, and so we're now having to get with the  
21 heirs to confirm their authority for that  
22 particular landowner. That one is just right on  
23 the edge of closing.

24                  Beaverdam Swamp, Lowe Addition -- we  
25 had been waiting on the Phase I environmental

1 site assessment. That was fine, but we're  
2 moving on with that; so it should be closed  
3 soon -- and working on the Dugdown Mountain  
4 Corridor, Phase I, Cleburne County.

5 We're also working on the Davidson  
6 Creek Tract, Coosa County; Dugdown Corridor,  
7 Phase II, Cleburne County; Graham Bayou,  
8 Baldwin County; Turkey Creek Nature Preserve,  
9 both the Bell Addition Tract and the Red Hollow  
10 Road Addition Tracts, both of those in Jefferson  
11 County.

12 Taking all of that into account with  
13 the current cash balance, you have roughly 29  
14 million to work with. I'll remind you: For  
15 every purchase, whether it is a purchase or a  
16 donation such as Beaverdam Swamp, we -- at  
17 the -- have to move 15 percent of the purchase  
18 price -- the appraised value, into the  
19 stewardship account. So that reflects how much  
20 money that you have right now.

21 Those properties that we're working on  
22 right now, including that 15-percent transfer --  
23 we're working on just -- just over -- over  
24 \$19 million worth of acquisition and stewardship  
25 money.

1                   So you'll see on the second page, I  
2 always give you the past year and the current  
3 year -- fiscal year, which started October 1.  
4 We have not quite had a closing yet; so we're  
5 working toward that.

6                   Any questions on that information? All  
7 right. If not, let me ask you to look at your  
8 Tab 2b.

9                   You have information at the close and  
10 transfer of a fiscal year. I try to give you a  
11 look back as to the stewardship fund, what we  
12 had -- what we spent, and then looking forward  
13 kind of where we are.

14                   So if you will look at, actually, what  
15 is your sort of yellow page for 2b, that -- it  
16 looks like we're going to have about 268,000  
17 left for the fiscal year; so we had a little bit  
18 of cushion coming out of the stewardship fund.

19                   Your next page, which is the white page  
20 of your 2b -- this is the current fiscal year  
21 stewardship fund. And we've just gotten  
22 started, but we have the 3 million budgeted  
23 authority. And, obviously, we're just getting  
24 kicked off; so we still have about 2.9 remaining  
25 on that.

1                   I've also provided, for the end of the  
2 fiscal, the net asset value for the stewardship  
3 account, which worked out to be just over 52  
4 million.

5                   As always, Tab 2c is a report prepared  
6 by the treasurer. And I want to thank them,  
7 again, for the work that they do for us. And  
8 that gives you a little bit more information as  
9 to the current investment strategy of the  
10 stewardship fund.

11                  Any questions on that? All right.

12                  That is -- concludes our financials  
13 information update. Commissioner, unless you  
14 have something, I will move into the review,  
15 Tab 3a.

16                  I want to run through the tracts and  
17 give you, the Board, and the public, an update  
18 on all the tracts that the Board previously  
19 motioned for staff to proceed with obtaining the  
20 second -- excuse me -- the first appraisal.

21                  So the tracts that are currently  
22 appraised, the appraisals we have in hand,  
23 include the Coon Gulf - Craze Bend Addition,  
24 that is Jackson County; Cooper Branch Tract,  
25 Shelby County.

1                   We did obtain and had back in the  
2 appraisal for the Dugdown Corridor, Cleburne  
3 County Tract. I just learned there has been  
4 a -- a change in the underlying ownership of  
5 that landowner; so I do not have our willing  
6 seller letter.

7                   As everyone knows, this program only  
8 operates with willing sellers; so I currently  
9 don't know that status. We'll know more for the  
10 next meeting, but I would consider that one on  
11 hold at this time.

12                  The Sipsey River Swamp, Kellytown  
13 Addition, Tuscaloosa County -- I was not able to  
14 secure back in hand the appraisal that was  
15 motioned for the DeSoto State Park, Oakhill Road  
16 Addition.

17                  I will have that for you for the next  
18 meeting. It has been initiated, but we did not  
19 have the deed information we needed from the  
20 landowner to provide to the appraiser in time to  
21 get all that handled for this meeting.

22                  But those are the tracts that had been  
23 appraised, and that is the update on that.

24                  If there are no questions on the  
25 appraised nominations, we, at this time always

1 go to Tab 5c. Excuse me -- 5a in your packet.

2 I want to provide the Board just a  
3 brief update on the status of various grants or  
4 leveraging opportunities that staff has been  
5 working on. We are always trying to identify  
6 opportunities to potentially provide grant  
7 funding to support your acquisitions or, simply,  
8 various grants or opportunities that help fund  
9 our land management activities; so I want to run  
10 through that.

11 We have benefitted two nominations that  
12 are currently in the closing process, Dugdown  
13 Mountain Corridor, Phase I and Phase II. I want  
14 to thank Mr. Oates and the Alabama Forestry  
15 Commission: They obtained a US Forest Service  
16 Forest Legacy Program grant that went to support  
17 that acquisition. Forever Wild served as the  
18 required state-based match, the 25 percent  
19 valuation on those two that enabled us to access  
20 the grant funds.

21 Forestry Commission will -- will  
22 acquire and own through the grant funds about  
23 roughly 75 percent, and Forever Wild will hold  
24 title to approximately 25 percent through that  
25 grant program.

1           My other updates really relate more to  
2 attempts to help offset -- either add  
3 enhancement or offset management costs. We  
4 still have not received word on the grant that  
5 we are partnering with the Alabama Forestry  
6 Foundation on. Through the National Fish and  
7 Wildlife Foundation, or NFWF, they have a  
8 program for long-leaf landscape grant: That is  
9 the name of that program.

10           We are hoping to benefit the Coosa WMA,  
11 Autauga WMA, and Gothard-AWF Yates Lake tracts  
12 through that work; so we -- now, here, we may  
13 get word this month. We are unsure.

14           We've closed out now -- I just wanted  
15 to report the last time you'll see the Little  
16 River Canyon Hancock-TNC Addition grant that was  
17 also a NFWF grant through their Southern  
18 Appalachian fund grant.

19           And we had used that with a 50/50 match  
20 on stewardship fund to remove a loblolly -- I  
21 can't say that today -- pine stand and then to  
22 transition into short-leaf pine forest impacted  
23 about or assisted on that 375 acres. So  
24 we're -- we're wrapping that up, the educational  
25 kiosk. We're the last step on that one.

1                   We continue work and, I'm pleased to  
2 say, got contractor -- a contractor awarded on  
3 the Mobile-Tensaw Delta Perdido River Canoe  
4 Trail enhancements. If you recall, that was  
5 money that Governor Ivey assisted us with  
6 through the Gulf of Mexico GOMESA funds.

7                   And so we are -- we came in within  
8 budget to place in additional water-based trail  
9 enhancements and shelters and landings. Some of  
10 those are on Forever Wild, not all; so we're  
11 continuing working with the contractor and  
12 excited to -- we'll start seeing some actual  
13 pictures of those here soon.

14                   And then we also are working with a  
15 National Coastal Wetlands Conservation Grant  
16 that we had received that did support  
17 acquisition funding for the Bon Secour River  
18 Wetlands Tract. But we are also able through  
19 that to have some additional funds for a  
20 prescribed burn and habitat management and,  
21 also, installation of about a mile and a quarter  
22 of trail, recreational trail, as well as a  
23 trailhead. So we're working on that.

24                   Prescribed burning is -- is our -- our  
25 next step on that tract.

1                   So that is just an update of the grant  
2 work. I always do that to just give you an idea  
3 of any tracts. We currently don't have any  
4 tracts on the shortlist or the appraised  
5 nomination list that are current leveraging  
6 opportunities, but that is why we normally run  
7 through it at this stage.

8                   So, if there are no questions on  
9 grants, I will go ahead and move to your Tab 4.  
10 This is the portion of the meeting where I run  
11 through the tracts that have -- do have  
12 confirmed willing sellers and that have scored  
13 high enough to reach the shortlist.

14                   As a reminder, for those who might be  
15 new to our process, the constitutional amendment  
16 forming the program established that land to be  
17 acquired had to fit within four categories:  
18 recreation -- general recreation, which can  
19 include everything; and hunting or,  
20 specifically, additions to our wildlife  
21 management areas or our SOAs, the specific  
22 hunting programs; additions to state parks; and  
23 then nature preserve acreage.

24                   Now, I'll run through those categories  
25 to explain the scoring process. If any of them

1 are acquired, we manage them through a multiuse  
2 philosophy.

3                   But how they get on the shortlist --  
4 they compete. Each one is scored in each of  
5 those four categories. They're then divided  
6 amongst the northern, central, and southern  
7 districts. The nominations compete amongst  
8 themselves. You have to make the top three in  
9 one of those categories to make the shortlist.

10                  A lot of these tracts have attributes,  
11 that mean they score in more than one category;  
12 so the number of tracts on the shortlist is  
13 always a -- a moving target. But I want to go  
14 through the ones that have made it through that  
15 process and would be available for first  
16 appraisal or just any questions that you might  
17 have.

18                  As usual, I'm going to run through them  
19 fairly quickly. If you have a question, I  
20 probably won't see your hand; so just -- just  
21 speak up, and I will stop.

22                  So tracts currently on the shortlist --  
23 Bay Log Creek Tract, Dale County.

24                  The Certain Tract - Sunset Cove  
25 Addition, Madison County -- that nomination lies

1       within the Blevins Gap Nature Preserve, which is  
2       managed by the Land Trust of North Alabama.

3                   Dead River Island -- this is Pickens  
4       County. I would note for the Board: As you  
5       will see, there are currently three parcels that  
6       were provided by the land owner nomination. We  
7       are going to engage in discussions with the  
8       landowner to see if they would be willing to get  
9       down to just the island tract, but that is  
10       available if the Board wants. But we are  
11       engaging in those discussions.

12                  We have the Double Oak Tract, Shelby  
13       County. This is the tract with the offer from  
14       Shelby County to contribute 25 percent toward  
15       the purchase price and then, thereafter, manage  
16       the tract.

17                  Dunnavant Valley Oaks, Jefferson and  
18       Shelby County -- it crosses that line there.

19                  Fillmore Drive Tract, Mobile County.

20                  Freedom Hills WMA - Heard Addition,  
21       Colbert County.

22                  Geneva State Forest - Flat Creek  
23       Addition -- I would note: If you would look on  
24       the -- if you notice from the map on that one,  
25       that is adjacent to Alabama Forestry

1 Commission's Geneva State Forest.

2 We've actually been in discussion  
3 between staff, AFC, and my staff. And we are  
4 looking at a potential for, possibly, a swap  
5 opportunity that might benefit the overall  
6 management; so let us continue those discussion,  
7 and we'll -- we'll come back to the Board with a  
8 potential suggestion on that one.

9 Little River - East Fork Addition,  
10 Cherokee County -- this tract does have two  
11 conservation easements that cover that acreage.  
12 We have received all those documents and  
13 reviewed those, and I did so in consultation  
14 with our Legal Section.

15 We feel that they would allow us to  
16 manage the tract, including the habitat  
17 management burning, the things that we normally  
18 would do to would allow the public to use that.  
19 We are -- have reviewed that again.

20 I asked for some clarification from the  
21 holder of the easement just for confirmation  
22 that what we would do is our normal management  
23 such as the roads, the trailheads, et cetera.  
24 Getting the public on would be doable with that  
25 tract. That discussion could proceed parallel

1 with a motion for first appraisal.

2 I just wanted you to know I'm going to  
3 be doing a little extra work on that one before  
4 I would actually spend the money on the first  
5 appraisal. But I don't see an issue, but I just  
6 wanted to let you know what was going on with  
7 that one.

8 Riverton Community Hunting Area, or  
9 CHA, Rose Trail -- Rose Trail Addition, Colbert  
10 County.

11 And, unless I skipped one, that -- that  
12 is our -- our current shortlist tracts. Any  
13 question on the shortlist tracts? Okay.

14 Commissioner, I'm going to turn it back  
15 to you for -- for the general discussion period.

16 THE COMMISSIONER: So this is the --  
17 the time of the meeting where -- where we  
18 generally receive motions on either first or  
19 second appraisals.

20 And I will go slow, and I will try and  
21 make sure -- for the court reporter's benefit,  
22 make sure I name the person who makes the motion  
23 and who -- who does the second to help you -- to  
24 help you out, so --

25 MS. McCURDY: And your mics should be

1 on. But, again, just look for a green light.  
2 If you don't see a green light, we can help you.

3 THE COMMISSIONER: All right. Mr.  
4 Harris.

5 MR. HARRIS: Commissioner, I would like  
6 to make a motion for a first appraisal of Double  
7 Oak Mountain.

8 DR. KEENER: I'll second that.

9 THE COMMISSIONER: Who was the second?  
10 Dr. Keener.

11 So motion by -- by Mr. Harris, seconded  
12 by Dr. Keener for a first appraisal on the  
13 Double Oak Tract in Shelby County.

14 Any discussion or questions on that  
15 one? All right.

16 All those in favor, please raise your  
17 hand.

18 MS. McCURDY: If you-all please keep  
19 them up.

20 Commissioner, we have 11, so that --  
21 we'll move forward --

22 THE COMMISSIONER: The motion carries.  
23 All right.

24 MS. McCURDY: Any other motions or any  
25 questions?

1 MR. HARRIS: You want another motion?

2 THE COMMISSIONER: Yes, sir.

3 MR. HARRIS: Yeah. I would like to  
4 make a motion to proceed with the second  
5 appraisal and purchase of Cooper Branch.

6 DR. HOWELL: Second.

7 THE COMMISSIONER: So the motion by  
8 Mr. Harris -- and is seconded by Dr. Howell for  
9 a second appraisal and move to purchase on the  
10 Cooper Branch property in Shelby County. Any  
11 questions or discussion? All right.

12 So the motion is for a second appraisal  
13 to move to purchase on the Cooper Branch. All  
14 those in favor, please raise your hand.

15 MS. McCURDY: And please keep them up  
16 for me.

17 Commissioner, I see seven hands.

18 THE COMMISSIONER: All right.

19 MS. McCURDY: So let me -- you-all keep  
20 them up. I'm going to double-check on this one;  
21 keep them up.

22 Seven. We do have seven; so that  
23 failed.

24 THE COMMISSIONER: Motion fails.

25 MS. McCURDY: And for the benefit of

1 the public who may not have attended before, it  
2 does require -- regardless of how many Board  
3 members we have present, we do need an  
4 affirmative vote of nine board members to  
5 make -- take action toward acquisitions.

6 THE COMMISSIONER: Dr. Martin?

7 DR. MARTIN: Yeah, I have a quick  
8 question.

9 You were mentioning the Little River -  
10 East Fork Addition. You're still waiting for  
11 some information on that one?

12 MS. McCURDY: We have information.  
13 Just we've been through it. We're ready to have  
14 some additional discussion with the easement  
15 holder to confirm what -- how we would manage  
16 what our management plan would be, and that it  
17 would be permissible.

18 As I mentioned, if anyone wants to  
19 motion for a first appraisal, I can do that and  
20 then, if I don't have any concerns, proceed with  
21 the first appraisal. I don't know if that would  
22 hold anything up, but I do -- wanted you to be  
23 aware that we, along with their Legal Section,  
24 do want some confirmation back from the easement  
25 holder.

1 DR. MARTIN: Okay. I would make a  
2 motion to move that forward to first appraisal.

3 THE COMMISSIONER: All right. So  
4 Dr. Martin.

5 DR. VALENTINE: I'll second that.

6 THE COMMISSIONER: All right.

7 Dr. Martin makes a motion to -- for first  
8 appraisal on the Little River - East Fork  
9 Addition, seconded by Dr. Valentine.

10 So any other questions or discussion on  
11 that one?

12 All those in favor of a first appraisal  
13 on the Little River - East Fork Addition, please  
14 raise your hand.

15 MS. McCURDY: Nine, Commissioner.

16 THE COMMISSIONER: Nine. All right.

17 Motion carries.

18 MR. OATES: Commissioner?

19 THE COMMISSIONER: Yes, sir, Mr. --

20 MR. OATES: I would like to --

21 THE COMMISSIONER: -- Mr. Oates.

22 MR. OATES: -- move for a second  
23 appraisal and move to purchase the Sipsey River  
24 Swamp - Kellytown Addition.

25 DR. MARTIN: Second.

1                   THE COMMISSIONER: Seconded by  
2 Dr. Martin.

3                   Motion by Mr. Oates, seconded by  
4 Dr. Martin for a second appraisal and move to  
5 purchase on the Sipsey River Swamp - Kellytown  
6 Addition.

7                   All right. Any question? discussion?

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

10                  MS. McCURDY: I'm at eight,  
11 Commissioner.

12                  THE COMMISSIONER: Motion fails. All  
13 right. Any other -- any other motions or  
14 general discussion?

15                  All right. Thank you.

16                  MS. McCURDY: All right. Commissioner,  
17 we will move in as usual.

18                  Miscellaneous reports -- I would direct  
19 you to your Tab 5b; so we'll kind of run through  
20 anything we haven't -- haven't already  
21 discussed.

22                  5b. -- I wanted to note: This is the  
23 report I give every meeting about tracts that  
24 will roll off of either the shortlist or the  
25 appraised nomination list because they have been

1 on those lists for an extended period of time  
2 and -- with no interest or action from the  
3 Board.

4 So the only one that we have that will  
5 roll off is the -- a shortlist nomination,  
6 Dunnivant Valley Oaks. If there is a Board  
7 member that wants that tract to remain, I would  
8 need you to -- to speak up at this point. If  
9 not, you will not see it next time.

10 All right. No requests to carry that  
11 one.

12 If you would, go to Tab 5d.

13 As a reminder, also, we are required  
14 for each tract to establish a management plan  
15 within a year of its acquisition. I try to  
16 bring the plans to the Board one meeting in  
17 advance in case there is any concern or question  
18 that comes up. So they are, generally, fairly  
19 broad, but -- because we want to bring them to  
20 you at this -- we have to bring them to you at  
21 this stage.

22 We happen to, this time, actually have  
23 three acquisitions that need to be approved as  
24 to their management plan. As it works out, each  
25 of these tracts were additions in the area of

1 other tracts, and so we really are not proposing  
2 new plans. We're just recommending melding in  
3 to existing plans. Excuse me.

4 Those tracts are Freedom Hills WMA -  
5 Sutton Hill Addition, Colbert County; Red Hills  
6 - Section 23 Addition, Monroe County; and the  
7 Bon Secour River Wetlands Addition in Baldwin  
8 County.

9 At this time, if there are any  
10 questions, I would be happy to address those.  
11 If there are no questions, I will need a motion  
12 from the Board to approve the management plans  
13 to those tracts.

14 MR. CONLON: So moved.

15 THE COMMISSIONER: All right.

16 Mr. Conlon has made a -- made a motion. Would  
17 you mind just reading the -- reading the motion?

18 MS. McCURDY: It is at the -- the  
19 bottom, a suggested one, obviously.

20 MR. CONLON: All right. The Board  
21 approves the State Lands Division in proceeding  
22 in the inclusion of the Freedom Hills WMA -  
23 Sutton Hill Addition, Red Hills - Section 23  
24 Addition, and the Bon Secour River Wetland  
25 Addition and existing management plans as set

1 forth in the memorandum dated November 6, 2025.

2 THE COMMISSIONER: All right. Motion  
3 by Mr. Conlon -- is there a second?

4 MR. HARRIS: Second.

5 THE COMMISSIONER: Seconded by  
6 Mr. Harris. All right. All those in favor, say  
7 aye.

8 Any opposed? None opposed. Motion  
9 carries.

10 MS. McCURDY: All right. Commissioner,  
11 at this time, if everyone would look at Tab 5e.

12 I want to provide an update on some of  
13 the forest management activities.

14 As the Board knows, in addition to our  
15 regular management and monitoring, we have been  
16 specifically monitoring the southern pine beetle  
17 situation. And, again, we want to thank AFC  
18 for -- for their help that they are all always  
19 giving us on that.

20 I want to describe some actions that --  
21 that we are recommending, and I want to thank --  
22 I have several foresters on my staff. But Sandy  
23 here has -- has pulled all this information  
24 together for me, and I want to -- I want to  
25 thank Sandy for that.

1                   The actions that we are currently  
2 evaluating for potential actions include the  
3 Shelby Park Cahaba River stands and the Shelby  
4 Park Cahaba River stands. You'll see two  
5 different tracts. One is -- excuse me --  
6 stands. One is 228 acres; one is 22 acres.

7                   We're recommending a first thin on the  
8 larger area and then a final harvest on the  
9 smaller area.

10                  As an update on items that were  
11 previously discussed, we have the following  
12 tracts -- excuse me -- stands that are under  
13 contract for the actions.

14                  As a final harvest, the acreage that  
15 you see occurring at Autauga County WMA; Gothard  
16 AWF - Yates Lake WMA; a first thinning at the  
17 Charles D. Kelley Autauga County WMA; and on the  
18 Red Hills complex, a portion there, as well,  
19 with the second thinning occurring on an  
20 additional portion of the Charles D. Kelley  
21 Autauga WMA.

22                  Again, no real action from the Board,  
23 but I do like to keep you up to date on what we  
24 are seeing and what we are doing, especially  
25 with the southern pine beetle situation.

1                   If anyone has any questions, we're  
2 happy to address those. Or if you want to talk  
3 to any of my foresters one-on-one about those  
4 activities, you know, please just let me -- let  
5 me know.

6                   If no questions on that, if you'll just  
7 take a moment, Tab 5f. This is really just an  
8 update, no action.

9                   So as the Board may recall, there was a  
10 tract in Jefferson County, the Hale Springs  
11 Tract.

12                  We had had several members of the  
13 Friends of Shades Mountain Board of Directors  
14 that had come to one of our prior meetings.  
15 They have still been engaging in activities with  
16 the City of Hoover, City of Birmingham,  
17 Jefferson County, due to the jurisdictions  
18 there, trying to come up with overall approval  
19 moving forward on that tract.

20                  Because of the -- some shifts in  
21 leadership due to the recent elections, the  
22 Friends of Shades Mountain -- they just simply  
23 asked for me to put that nomination on hold.  
24 They want to finish their work with the City of  
25 Hoover and have the new mayor fully informed

1 before they bring back anything to the Board to  
2 be sure they have local jurisdictions aligned,  
3 as we had requested, and are addressing the  
4 various issues and questions that we had.

5 So just wanted to let you know you're  
6 not seeing that one because they have asked it  
7 to be put on hold.

8 I believe they'll be at our -- our  
9 February meeting with additional information and  
10 progress with the local jurisdictions that they  
11 can update you on.

12 Tab 5g -- I won't go into all the  
13 details, but this is our quarterly.

14 We have every meeting an update on  
15 where we are conducting the enhanced feral swine  
16 mitigation efforts. A twofold strategy is still  
17 being employed, the purchase of additional  
18 equipment as we need it, and staff time on the  
19 tracts, as well as the contractor efforts that  
20 we are employing on a few of the tracts where  
21 that made sense. And that really does give us  
22 some added capacity that has been very helpful.

23 We're encouraged. As you know, it's  
24 always an up-and-down adventure, but we have  
25 seen some improvements in some areas, and we're

1 encouraged.

2                   I want to thank my staff that have  
3 continued attention to that, just like the  
4 southern pine beetle. That is just an ongoing  
5 battle that we get to -- get to work on.

6                   Tab 5h -- I wanted to review a request  
7 and kind of let the Board know discussions we've  
8 been involved in. And there are discussions --  
9 still additional discussions will need to be  
10 had.

11                  But we were approached by the Bon  
12 Secour Volunteer Fire Department, Baldwin  
13 County. If you will notice on the map that I've  
14 attached to your memo, they are looking to  
15 expand their -- their facility there, enhance  
16 their firefighting capacity.

17                  And they would like to both swap some  
18 acreage, some adjacent acreage, with Forever  
19 Wild. But, because of a swap needing to be a  
20 value-for-value transaction and the amount of  
21 acreage they need to truly implement their  
22 design plan, they would like to both swap  
23 acreage and purchase some additional acreage  
24 that is Forever Wild property.

25                  I really -- really just want to gauge

1 and get some feedback from the Board. If you're  
2 okay with us continuing to look at that and to  
3 try to work through a swap and purchase solution  
4 for the volunteer fire department, I will come  
5 back to the Board with more valuation  
6 information.

7 But if you have any concerns or do not  
8 want to work with the fire department in this  
9 manner, I -- I just kind of need some feedback  
10 before I get too far down the road and they  
11 incur any expenses as we would normally require  
12 for a swap or purchase transaction like this,  
13 the appraisal survey, et cetera.

14 But I would like some feedback, if I  
15 could, from the Board or any objection from the  
16 Board.

17 MR. HARPER: Ms. Patti, I'm all for it.  
18 I mean, the volunteer fire departments are very  
19 important in rural areas. I'm all for it if we  
20 can work it out.

21 MS. McCURDY: Thank you. Any  
22 opposition from anyone?

23 All right. Thank you. We will proceed  
24 with that.

25 Another request that we have received

1 involves the Big Canoe Creek Tract in St. Clair  
2 County.

3 The Big Canoe Creek Preserve partners  
4 have asked -- asked for approval to construct a  
5 nature playscape, which is, best I could -- I  
6 call it a playground. They have presented their  
7 conceptual drawings -- I guess more than that,  
8 now, actually: I guess design -- conceptual  
9 design drawings and some examples through  
10 pictures of what they would like installed.

11 They are currently not asking Forever  
12 Wild for any funding to construct and install  
13 the playground. They anticipate it is going to  
14 be just over a million dollars that will be  
15 necessary. And they are going to pursue  
16 fundraising for that. They did not want to  
17 engage in fundraising efforts if there were any  
18 concerns from the Board about an addition of a  
19 playground-type area.

20 I will tell you that we will, if the  
21 Board is -- wants us to continue those  
22 discussions, I will be going beyond the -- the  
23 nonprofit group to the City to be sure that the  
24 City and the County are on Board.

25 And, also, we would need a substantial

1 MOU, including indemnity and insurance  
2 provisions, et cetera, et cetera. All of  
3 that -- again, I will work on and come back to  
4 the Board.

5 But before I do that, similar to the  
6 last proposal, I wanted to gauge the Board's  
7 approval for the installation of a playground at  
8 Big Canoe Creek. Our staff is fine with the  
9 location; we've looked at the location. It is  
10 just a different type of activity; so I'm coming  
11 to you for feedback and direction.

12 MR. PARNELL: Question.

13 THE COMMISSIONER: Yes, sir.

14 MS. McCURDY: Yes, sir.

15 MR. PARNELL: Talk to me about -- as I  
16 read this, it says the City of Springville is  
17 willing to help with this.

18 Do you feel like they will sign the  
19 document saying they will maintain it long-term?

20 MS. McCURDY: Let me not overstate the  
21 current -- there is an overlap of -- one of the  
22 members of the -- the partners group also works  
23 for the City of Springville. But I do not have  
24 the answer.

25 What I'm telling you is I would not

1 move -- want to move forward without that type  
2 of agreement. But, again, before we tie up the  
3 City's time, their lawyers, our lawyers, et  
4 cetera, I wanted to be sure you-all were okay  
5 with the end result. And I will come back to  
6 the Board --

7 MR. PARNELL: What about the City's  
8 agreement? I think it would be worthwhile.

9 MS. McCURDY: Any additional feedback  
10 or questions?

11 MR. HARPER: I have a question.

12 MS. McCURDY: Yes, sir.

13 MR. HARPER: Have we done this type of  
14 thing before?

15 MS. McCURDY: We have. For example, we  
16 operate our Dothan Tract in cooperation with the  
17 City of Dothan. They came with a proposal for  
18 a -- a dog park.

19 Similarly there, we brought that to the  
20 Board; the Board was okay with that. But we  
21 also have an MOU and a contract with -- with  
22 Dothan for their management, their  
23 responsibility long term, as well as the  
24 covering of the liability.

25 So that is the -- I think, the most --

1 the closest. We don't really have anything of  
2 this scale quite anywhere.

3 MR. HARPER: Thank you.

4 MS. McCURDY: All right. Well, with  
5 that, we'll continue those discussions. And  
6 I'll report back as to the City's willingness to  
7 sort of stand behind that venture; so I  
8 appreciate that feedback.

9 Tab 5j, really, is one of those good  
10 news updates I wanted to let the Board know.

11 Our Coldwater Mountain complex in -- in  
12 Calhoun County -- and Commissioner probably will  
13 even state more about it, but we were excited  
14 that recently -- there was a recent event called  
15 the Lifetime Coldwater Mountain Trail Bike and  
16 Run Race; so they had a lot going on at the same  
17 time.

18 But they actually provided us some  
19 economic impact information. And it was just  
20 interesting to hear that they had 631  
21 participants that came from 27 states and,  
22 actually, two countries. And the best they  
23 could tell, about 70 percent of the participants  
24 were from out of state.

25 They calculated the visitation for the

1 event at probably about 1,500 people, and the  
2 economic impact of that one event, 1.3 million.

3 So that information is -- was provided  
4 to us by Tom Nelson, who is with the Northeast  
5 Alabama Bicycle Association.

6 They gave us some nice pictures and  
7 just an update on the partnerships there. That  
8 tract is really becoming nationally recognized  
9 as a -- a biking destination; so it's good news.  
10 I wanted to pass it along.

11 Commissioner anything else you want to  
12 add?

13 THE COMMISSIONER: Oh, you know I do.

14 MS. McCURDY: Uh-huh.

15 THE COMMISSIONER: That is one of my --  
16 my favorite properties that we have, and the  
17 work that goes on up there at Coldwater  
18 Mountain -- very similar to what we were talking  
19 about in Shelby County with Oak Mountain State  
20 Park. We are working to also have the Coldwater  
21 Mountain facility recognized as an IMBA Silver  
22 site.

23 So we would like to have two of those  
24 in Alabama, one in Shelby County with Oak  
25 Mountain and the other tracts, and then the one

1 at -- at Coldwater Mountain in the Anniston  
2 area.

3 We've similarly spent about -- about a  
4 million dollars from Innovate Alabama funds at  
5 Coldwater Mountain, with the folks in -- in that  
6 part of the -- part of the world to build long  
7 trails.

8 The City of Oxford has invested their  
9 own money to build a -- a skills park or pump  
10 track.

11 The City of Anniston has also  
12 contributed money to that.

13 And our hope is that we'll be able to  
14 have two IMBA Silver designated sites in  
15 Alabama, hopefully by the end of next year.

16 And so I appreciate the work that  
17 they've done in partnership with our -- with our  
18 staff at Coldwater Mountain.

19 And it sure is good to see these  
20 economic numbers to see what -- what that means  
21 to the cities in Anniston and Oxford and Heflin  
22 and the other areas that -- that are surrounding  
23 the Coldwater Mountain tract. It really has  
24 turned into a -- a mountain bike destination,  
25 and I think it is only going to get better

1 there, so --

2 MS. McCURDY: And I think they're  
3 treating it similar to almost, like, a Robert  
4 Trent Jones, hopping from one property to  
5 another. So I would tell you to go check it  
6 out, but I don't know. Don't hurt yourself, is  
7 all I got to say. It is quite the -- it is  
8 quite the trail.

9 So, Commissioner, I wanted to -- if  
10 there are no other questions or other business  
11 at this juncture, I was just going to move  
12 into -- since we are here at the M. Barnett  
13 Lawley Forever Wild Field Trial Area, I wanted  
14 to just take a minute and give an overview.

15 I struggled mightily -- as my Chief of  
16 Enforcement, Jeremy Doss, told me, there is  
17 really no way to put on paper what all goes on  
18 here. He is correct; so I'm about to turn the  
19 microphone over to him to let him try.

20 But I do want to note: I -- I included  
21 a couple of things in your packet. And one just  
22 is -- actually, it is just a text, but it is  
23 kind of funny.

24 The Florida Panhandle Pointing Breed  
25 Club, an out-of-state club that comes here,

1        loves the property. They were preparing for  
2        their upcoming event here, and the  
3        registration and everything went wild off the  
4        charts with interest. It kind of stunned them  
5        and stunned us.

6                But, you know, the text included, you  
7        know, It is nuts, as a quote, of how popular it  
8        is and that, as a quote, Everybody wants to come  
9        to Bama.

10                But, anyway, it just notes -- I just  
11        thought it was funny. It just shows you kind of  
12        real time amazement.

13                We also had a -- you have a thank you  
14        note from students from Tuskegee University, who  
15        came here.

16                And we have Bill Freeman with our --  
17        the Department's Wildlife and Freshwater  
18        Fisheries Division. And I want to take a moment  
19        to just thank the Wildlife and Freshwater  
20        Fisheries Division for their partnership on all  
21        these tracts, and working with us and allowing  
22        Bill Freeman to -- to spend some time. And I'll  
23        let him tell you about the program that he runs.

24                But, then, I included just a very  
25        simple map to kind of get you oriented and,

1 also, to give you an idea of which areas of the  
2 property are used for what activity.

3 And then -- at our August meeting, we  
4 have activity reports; so I just included that  
5 again as a refresher.

6 But with that exceedingly brief  
7 introduction, let me -- I'm going to ask Jeremy,  
8 who serves as my chief of enforcement -- and a  
9 plug to all of his staff: Every blade of grass  
10 you see here is loved by them and taken care of  
11 by them, whether it is a prescribed --  
12 prescribed fire efforts.

13 Managing this tract for the multiple  
14 users is a daunting task. It would be very easy  
15 to manage it just for sporting dog events or  
16 just for youth hunting or just for physically  
17 disabled hunting or the bird trail events. But  
18 they manage this property for all of that, while  
19 also improving just the land itself and all  
20 the -- the grassland management that goes on,  
21 the natural grass.

22 So, anyway, I'm going to let Jeremy  
23 talk about it and let Bill speak to you. And  
24 then I'll close us out on that topic. And  
25 you're almost done.

1                   But, Jeremy, if you'll come up.

2                   MR. DOSS: Again, I want to tell  
3 you-all the story, kind of.

4                   About two years ago, the Commissioner,  
5 Ms. McCurdy, and myself met in the building that  
6 the Commissioner described in the beginning of  
7 the meeting on some other matters. But while we  
8 had him here, he asked me about my vision for  
9 this place and the State Lands's vision for this  
10 place, departmentally.

11                  And I told him. I said, I would love  
12 for this place to be the best field trial area  
13 in the Southeast, if not the nation.

14                  And very quickly and very simply, he  
15 looked at me and said, What do you need?

16                  And I said, We need an event center.  
17 And here we are.

18                  So there has been a tremendous amount  
19 of interest outside -- nationwide right now in  
20 the field trial area. Last year and the year  
21 before, we started to see the beginnings of  
22 that.

23                  From my listening to the various field  
24 trial groups, we're sitting on a precipice of a  
25 real special thing here.

1                   And we want to thank the Board for  
2 allowing us to do the things that we need to do  
3 here to make that happen. It is going to be a  
4 giant impact to Greensboro and Demopolis and  
5 Hale County economically; so thank you all for  
6 that.

7                   Today, we would like to -- you know,  
8 anybody that is interested in going and seeing  
9 the grounds, myself and my staff would love to  
10 be able to do that for you so that you can kind  
11 of see just a little bit of the various actions  
12 that have to take place.

13                  Ms. McCurdy mentioned the complicated  
14 -- the fact that it is complicated to manage  
15 these many different things at one time here.  
16 We could very easily make this the best youth  
17 hunting area in -- in the state; we could very  
18 easily make this the best field trial area in  
19 the state. But when you mix all the things  
20 together, it gets kind of complicated.

21                  The renovation work goes beyond the  
22 event center. We have taken the property, as a  
23 whole, and really looked at it strategically,  
24 and we are very proud of the things that are  
25 happening.

1                   I can't say that, though, without  
2 recognizing the staff that has been a part of  
3 that. Two of the people that I'm going to  
4 mention live local. The rest of them travel  
5 here to help us take care of the things that we  
6 do, and they spend time away from their  
7 families. They're one of the most selfless  
8 groups of people that I know.

9                   And so I'm going to ask them to stand:  
10 Joe Worthen, Mandis Hill, Scotty Hammerlee,  
11 Vince Robinson, Mott Hunt, Trent Danley, Mark  
12 Brasher, Brandon Hunnicutt, Tyler Roberts, Tom  
13 King, David Hopper, Griff Johnson.

14                   Jacques Hollings has helped us a good  
15 bit. And where's Sandy? Sandy Harris. These  
16 are the guys that help make this --

17                   (Applause.)

18                   MR. DOSS: And none of us are experts  
19 at what we're doing. But when we put all our  
20 heads together, we get a pretty good plan going.  
21 So thank you to them.

22                   Again, we want you to see the native  
23 grass -- the native prairie grass restoration  
24 areas that we have, and we want you to see the  
25 field trial areas that we have. We want you to

1 see the roadwork that we've done.

2 Youth duck hunts have been phenomenal  
3 here. The youth deer hunts are -- are really  
4 sitting on a precipice of something great.

5 We're still running a hundred percent  
6 safe success rate for at least the past two and  
7 a half years here, and we're pretty proud of  
8 that, too.

9 The youth gets to come here, and get a  
10 real chance to see some things that you may not  
11 get to see anywhere else in the state of Alabama  
12 in a one-day hunt; so we're very proud of this  
13 place.

14 There is a lot of things that happen  
15 here, including a collegiate educational  
16 program. I've worked closely with Bill Freeman  
17 on this, but he is the real lead and the power  
18 behind that, and investing with some of the  
19 local colleges. And I say local: I mean the  
20 state. That is our local group.

21 And I'm going to let him come up and  
22 have a few minutes to tell you-all about some of  
23 the work that he has done, too. Bill?

24 THE COMMISSIONER: Thanks, Jeremy.

25 MR. FREEMAN: Good afternoon. I'm Bill

1 Freeman with the Wildlife and Freshwater  
2 Fisheries Division.

3 I kind of head up a campus conservation  
4 program. And the goal of that program is to get  
5 college kids and grade school and elementary  
6 kids interested in the outdoors.

7 So I've been fortunate enough to  
8 partner with Ms. Patti, State Lands Division, on  
9 making those things happen and come true.

10 It is important because outdoor  
11 recreation -- certain aspects of it are  
12 declining, such as hunting and fishing, and have  
13 been for the last 20 years. But we're noticing  
14 changes in mountain biking, like we heard today,  
15 the land acquisitions. People are different --  
16 or are focusing on different activities and  
17 sports and outdoors.

18 So these facilities give me the  
19 opportunity to introduce people to these new  
20 construction projects. And, as Jeremy  
21 mentioned, the waterfowling out here at the  
22 state cattle ranch, which we take advantage of.

23 Every year, we do three hunts here with  
24 colleges from across Alabama.

25 The Wehle Center is another place that

1 I use six or seven times a year for multi-day  
2 events such as hunts and field days, aquatic  
3 education events. So we're just real excited.

4 As of right now, we are in over 19  
5 colleges in Alabama. Those include four-year  
6 institutions, junior colleges. We are in 15 or  
7 20 grade schools and elementary schools.

8 So through lectures and presentations  
9 and hands-on projects, the certifications, this  
10 last physical year we've been in contact with  
11 over 6,000 students.

12 So these facilities are a great big  
13 part. I appreciate getting to be a part of  
14 this, and I just appreciate everything you guys  
15 do on finding property and letting us use it  
16 here to introduce people to the great outdoors  
17 of Alabama. Thank you.

18 THE COMMISSIONER: Thanks, Bill. Thank  
19 you for what you're doing, trying to get more  
20 and more people into the outdoors.

21 And, really, when -- when you go to  
22 these events that Bill puts on, you see the --  
23 the college kids, but really all the different  
24 people that are involved in our either adult  
25 mentor hunting program or the other -- other

1 programs that they run.

2 It is pretty good to see them there --  
3 are so excited to see them get to shoot their  
4 first deer or even catch a fish for the first  
5 time. These are adult people that have never  
6 really done that. They do a great job; so  
7 appreciate that work.

8 MS. McCURDY: Thanks. And I just want  
9 to -- and, yeah, let Jeremy thank everybody on  
10 my staff.

11 But I just want to reiterate that and  
12 tell you-all just the little things I ask, Well,  
13 hey, what are we going to do about a podium?

14 Oh, Mandis is already building one. I  
15 come out, I have chairs. The fencing that you  
16 see, the -- the barns, you know, the stalls, the  
17 paddocks -- I'm using the wrong word -- it is  
18 amazing what they do, putting in hookups for --  
19 you know, electrical hookups for the -- the  
20 trailers and the campers for the folks  
21 attending, just -- just a lot that goes on,  
22 and -- for this facility.

23 And I know it is -- we have our  
24 meeting, and we have the ribbon cutting, but I  
25 want to thank Jacques and, also, my assistant

1       director, Doug Deaton, in addition to Jeremy and  
2       his crew, and all the ideas that -- we had a lot  
3       of invoices moving. And I want to thank  
4       everybody administratively and in the field.

5               The woodwork you see -- that was with,  
6       you know, the help of my staff. That was an  
7       extra touch that was added. So I just want to  
8       thank them. Everything that you see is, really,  
9       their heart, and I -- I can't thank them enough.

10              But I guess I'll stop, but I just  
11       wanted to -- wanted to double down on that.

12              MR. HARPER: Ms. Patti?

13              MS. McCURDY: Yes, sir.

14              MR. HARPER: I've got one question for  
15       Jeremy.

16              Is there any native birds on the tract?  
17       I know field trial, and you're sure you've got  
18       to have a lot of pen-raised birds to keep the  
19       cycle going. But is there any effort being made  
20       to preserve native birds of any here?

21              MR. DOSS. So we do have some. We are  
22       growing that population hopefully.

23              But a lot of the work that you see, a  
24       lot of the habitat manipulation that you see  
25       today -- it is going to be headed towards trying

1 to create some habitat to sustain the native  
2 birds.

3 THE COMMISSIONER: And the one thing I  
4 do want to -- you know, just, again, you're  
5 sitting in the event center. This is where  
6 we're meeting today.

7 But, really, the renovations here --  
8 we'll hopefully take -- have a chance to ride  
9 with some of our officers and ride around the  
10 property and see, you know, the barn was  
11 expanded, the new paddock.

12 Putting restrooms in the field trial  
13 areas -- you know, they may be, you know, pit  
14 toilets or, you know, they're -- but they are --  
15 were much needed. We didn't have any facilities  
16 out there. There is 4,000 acres and, you know,  
17 that was one of the concerns that people had on  
18 the -- with the field trials, not having  
19 restroom facilities out in the field trial; so  
20 we've been able to add those.

21 The fencing along 35, Highway 35, out  
22 there looks fantastic, the entrance gate, paving  
23 the roads; so it -- it was a tremendous amount  
24 of renovations that were done here.

25 And, since it is the Forever Wild

1       Board, I do also want to make sure and point out  
2       that no Forever Wild dollars were spent on this  
3       event center here. This was all done with --  
4       we've got some appropriation from the general  
5       fund; we had some money from Innovate Alabama  
6       that went into this and then Department funds to  
7       do this work out here.

8                   So just wanted to make sure that was  
9       clear. I didn't want you-all thinking we're  
10       spending all of the State's Forever Wild money  
11       building something. That was done with -- with  
12       other funds.

13                  The field trial area here is probably  
14       the best in the Southeast, if not the best in  
15       the nation, for the field trials. And we needed  
16       an event center; we needed a facility that is  
17       commensurate with that so that we can host these  
18       regional and national events. It is something  
19       we can all be proud of here.

20                  And I think that Patti and the -- the  
21       staff have really accomplished that in what --  
22       what they've done, not just with the event  
23       center but the rest of the infrastructure here  
24       at the Forever Wild Field Trial Area.

25                  And I can't -- can't wait to open this

1 up and -- and hear what all the groups that have  
2 been coming out here for years and making do  
3 with the facilities that we had, how it is -- I  
4 want to hear the feedback from them, how -- how  
5 they're going to be excited to have this and --  
6 and, really, draw in some of those national  
7 events.

8 And it is going to a big deal for Hale  
9 County and Marengo County and -- and the  
10 surrounding areas.

11 MS. McCURDY: And, yeah, please do just  
12 grab any of the staff. They're all ready to  
13 take you anywhere, anything particular you want  
14 to see.

15 And, as the Commissioner said, the  
16 structures are in partnership with State Lands.  
17 That is acreage the State -- the State Lands  
18 Division owns, similar to our Wehle facility,  
19 so -- anyway. But it takes all of it to make  
20 this work.

21 So, I guess, Commissioner, that -- as  
22 far as our miscellaneous business, I think we  
23 have -- I think we've hit everything, unless  
24 there are any questions or any requests from the  
25 Board for anything.

1                   THE COMMISSIONER: So the next order of  
2 business is approval of the minutes from the  
3 August 7th meeting. That is Tab 6 in your -- in  
4 your book.

5                   Is there a motion to --

6                   MR. HARRIS: So moved.

7                   MR. HARPER: Seconded.

8                   THE COMMISSIONER: All right. Motion  
9 by Mr. Harris, seconded --

10                  MR. HARPER: Harper.

11                  THE COMMISSIONER: -- by Mr. Harper.  
12 All those in favor of approval of the minutes,  
13 say aye. Any opposed or any corrections? All  
14 right. Motion carries.

15                  And then our -- our next meeting will  
16 be in -- on February the 5th. And it will be in  
17 the Montgomery area because we always have that  
18 first meeting of the year in Montgomery, with  
19 the legislature in session. And so we look  
20 forward to -- to that.

21                  And then our May meeting will be in the  
22 Mobile area since that coincides with two  
23 large -- two of our members have events in  
24 Mobile area on the same day that we have the  
25 Forever Wild meeting; so we've decided to host

1 the meeting this year in Mobile so they could  
2 attend. They could do both; so, Dr. Valentine,  
3 you're welcome.

4 So if there is no other business, I'll  
5 make a -- entertain a motion to adjourn.

6 UNIDENTIFIED BOARD MEMBER: So moved.

7 THE COMMISSIONER: All right. All  
8 those in favor, say aye. We are adjourned.

9 (Hearing adjourned at 11:40 a.m. CST.)

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1 C E R T I F I C A T E

2

3 STATE OF ALABAMA )

4 JEFFERSON COUNTY )

5

6 I hereby certify that the above and  
7 foregoing proceeding was taken down by me in  
8 stenotype, and the colloquy thereto were reduced  
9 to computer print under my supervision, and that  
10 the foregoing represents a true and correct  
11 transcript of the proceedings given by said  
12 parties upon said hearing.

13 I further certify that I am neither of  
14 counsel nor of kin to the parties to the action,  
15 nor am I in anywise interested in the result of  
16 said cause.

17 *Jason Kobielsus* Signed the 18th day of November, 2025.  
18

19 /s/ Jason Kobielsus  
20 Jason Kobielsus, Commissioner  
(My commission expires September 8, 2026)  
21 RPR #990854 - Expires December 31, 2025  
Alabama CCR #668 - Expires September 30, 2026

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