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MINUTES OF THE
FOREVER WILD BOARD MEETING
ALABAMA FORESTRY COMMISSION
513 MADISON AVENUE
MONTGOMERY, ALABAMA 36104

February 1, 2024
10:00 a.m.

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TRANSCRIPT OF PROCEEDINGS

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Proceedings taken before Lisa Bailey
Certified Court Reporter
State of Alabama
ACCR #289

1 BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT:

2 Commissioner Chris Blankenship

3 Jimmy Parnell

4 Salem Saloom

5 John Valentine

6 Jake Harper

7 Sean Powers

8 Rick Oates

9 James "Mickey" Childers

10 Raymond B. Jones, Jr.

11 Heather Howell

12 A.M. "Jay" Neumann

13 Karen Stanley

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1 CHAIRMAN BLANKENSHIP: Welcome to the
2 February 1, 2024, meeting of the Forever
3 Wild Board. While members are taking their
4 seats, I'll call the roll. And if you'll
5 indicate that you're present so we make
6 sure we have a quorum. Mr. Blankenship is
7 here.

8 Mr. Childers?

9 MR. CHILDERS: Here.

10 CHAIRMAN BLANKENSHIP: Mr. Holloway?
11 (No response.)

12 CHAIRMAN BLANKENSHIP: Dr. Howell?

13 DR. HOWELL: Here.

14 CHAIRMAN BLANKENSHIP: Mr. Jones?

15 MR. JONES: Here.

16 CHAIRMAN BLANKENSHIP: Dr. Neumann?

17 DR. NEUMANN: Here.

18 CHAIRMAN BLANKENSHIP: Mr. Oates?

19 MR. OATES: Here.

20 CHAIRMAN BLANKENSHIP: Dr. Powers?

21 DR. POWERS: Here.

22 CHAIRMAN BLANKENSHIP: Dr. Saloom?

23 DR. SALOOM: Here.

1 CHAIRMAN BLANKENSHIP: Ms. Stanley?

2 (No response.)

3 CHAIRMAN BLANKENSHIP: Dr. Valentine?

4 DR. VALENTINE: Here.

5 CHAIRMAN BLANKENSHIP: Mr. Parnell?

6 MR. PARNELL: Here.

7 CHAIRMAN BLANKENSHIP: Mr. Harper?

8 MR. HARPER: Here.

9 CHAIRMAN BLANKENSHIP: And

10 Mr. Darnall?

11 (No response.)

12 CHAIRMAN BLANKENSHIP: We do have a
13 quorum.

14 And, Dr. McClintock, I did not call
15 his name. We knew he wasn't going to be
16 here. So he is not here.

17 I want to express my appreciation for
18 Rick Oates for hosting us here at the
19 Forestry Commission's office.

20 I will say if you have not had the
21 chance to view the mural on that side of
22 the building, it is quite impressive, and
23 it in picture form shows a lot of the

1 things the Forestry Commission does. It
2 really looks great. It's a good addition
3 to downtown Montgomery.

4 Would you like to say anything?

5 MR. OATES: I'll just say we're glad
6 to have y'all here and be able to host the
7 board. I was certainly going --

8 I will tell you there's coffee in the
9 room in there. If you haven't found the
10 restrooms, they're in the lobby. Go back
11 past the elevator and you'll find the
12 restrooms.

13 I was going to mention the mural. I
14 would like to add, if you haven't looked at
15 it, go take a look at it. That's in
16 celebration of our 100th anniversary. So
17 we are excited to have that. We recently
18 got added to the Alabama Mural Trail, if
19 y'all knew there was a mural trail.

20 Anyway, we've enjoyed having that up
21 there. And it really does make a nice
22 attraction and addition to the building,
23 which needs all the help it can get.

1 CHAIRMAN BLANKENSHIP: As we were
2 talking, when they were doing the mock --
3 the mural dedication the other day, it
4 helps you find this building much easier
5 than looking for a sign out front. It's a
6 billboard all along the whole entire side
7 of the building, so it looks great.

8 We've come to the time for our public
9 comments. I do have a few green slips,
10 three of them from people to make public
11 comment. If there's somebody that wanted
12 to make public comment that hasn't had the
13 chance or missed the opportunity to fill
14 out a slip, if you will just raise your
15 hand, one of the staff members will get it
16 to you.

17 MS. MCCURDY: Commissioner, we're
18 expecting one more. We may have one more
19 person come in, in just a second.

20 CHAIRMAN BLANKENSHIP: All right.

21 The first speaker is Ralph Waldrep on
22 the Freedom Hills, Tab 4B, page 7. 4B,
23 page 7. We'll give just a second to find

1 it.

2 Go ahead.

3 MR. WALDREP: Okay. I'm here to
4 speak on behalf of the piece of property in
5 front of you there. I purchased this
6 property, and it's right almost directly
7 behind my house. But Natchez Trace -- the
8 piece of property I purchased was
9 approximately 70 acres of land, and the
10 Natchez Trace cuts the property. And it
11 cuts this 17 acres off, which puts it on
12 the west side of the Natchez Trace. And so
13 one side of it is blocked by Natchez Trace,
14 and the other two sides of the triangle are
15 completely surrounded by Forever Wild. And
16 I would also mention the access road to all
17 of the Forever Wild on that west side of
18 Natchez Trace, in that part of the Forever
19 Wild allotment in Freedom Hills, goes
20 through this 17 acres of property. I would
21 offer it to the board, just -- I couldn't
22 buy the property without buying the entire
23 spot. I tried. That's really all I've got

1 to say.

2 CHAIRMAN BLANKENSHIP: Any questions
3 from the board?

4 (No response.)

5 CHAIRMAN BLANKENSHIP: Thank you,
6 sir.

7 MR. WALDREP: Thank you.

8 CHAIRMAN BLANKENSHIP: The next
9 speaker is Ann Crawford and Jill Jordan on
10 the Forever Wild tract on Wolf Bay. It's
11 Tab 5F. 5F. This was a request for a land
12 swap. Just a second. A little further
13 back. All right.

14 MS. CRAWFORD: Hi, I'm Ann Crawford.
15 My mother, back in the '40s and '50s,
16 bought and built on Wolf Bay. Actually we
17 call it Hammock Bay because it empties into
18 Wolf Bay. And, luckily, Forever Wild took
19 the 500 acres to, you know, our west
20 because they were talking about huge
21 developments and all kinds of things. So
22 I'm very pleased that you guys are there.

23 However, we are in the process of

1 closing my mother's estate, and my sister
2 has children that want to return to our
3 area and build next to us. The problem is
4 the point which we landlock Forever Wild on
5 this property is -- for you to have water
6 access to it, you would need some of the
7 point that's along the east side of the
8 bay. And what we'd like do is swap the --
9 I think it's two and a half acres at the
10 end of the bay, for some setback land on
11 the acreage up, you know, where we all
12 live.

13 So I understand it was brought to the
14 board last meeting and that there was
15 questions and concerns, but, you know, we
16 did not attend. We were told it was not
17 necessary if we turned in all this
18 information. So I'm here to answer any
19 questions or concerns you guys may have.

20 And we know that we have to pay for all
21 the survey changes. It won't cost Forever
22 Wild anything. And I think that Forever
23 Wild is starting to let people onto the

1 property on the west side of the tract.

2 So questions, concerns?

3 (No response.)

4 CHAIRMAN BLANKENSHIP: Thank you.

5 MS. CRAWFORD: Okay.

6 CHAIRMAN BLANKENSHIP: The next
7 speaker is Mike Bunn on the Blakeley -- I
8 think the Pye Addition. Tab 3D, page 5.

9 MR. BUNN: Good morning. My comment
10 is more of a question, and it may very well
11 be answered in this meeting. So I
12 apologize if I don't quite know all the
13 process.

14 The landowner, current landowner, had
15 asked the realtor she first contacted and
16 myself about the process because I know
17 Forever Wild was considering this tract.
18 And I came to the last meeting because I
19 think there was a move to do a first
20 appraisal. And I was simply showing up to
21 understand where we're at and what it is,
22 so I can tell her information that's
23 useful. And I wasn't just quite sure what

1 happens next or where we're at. It may be
2 on the agenda today, so I'm not sure if you
3 have a definite answer. But if it's
4 something to be discussed today, that's
5 what I came to listen to and understand.

6 CHAIRMAN BLANKENSHIP: Sure. I'll be
7 glad to briefly explain where that is in
8 the process. So first appraisal has been
9 done on the piece of property. It is up,
10 available for the board to consider a
11 second appraisal and move to purchase if
12 they so desire. It is in the list of
13 properties they can consider today.

14 MR. BUNN: That's the answer for
15 that. Thank you very much.

16 CHAIRMAN BLANKENSHIP: Thank you.

17 For the record, I want to note that
18 Ms. Stanley has joined us so she can be
19 counted as present on the -- for the
20 minutes.

21 Is there any other speakers? Did the
22 other person show up?

23 MS. MCCURDY: No. Let me

1 double-check.

2 CHAIRMAN BLANKENSHIP: I don't want
3 to cut anybody off if they have a desire to
4 share their three minutes.

5 (Off the record.)

6 MS. MCCURDY: Commissioner, there is
7 somebody here. I'll go ahead and tell you
8 the tract as I understand it. If y'all
9 want to go ahead and be turning there, it's
10 the Upper Delta WMA, Stiggins Lake
11 Addition. That's Tab 4B, page 9.

12 Sir, you can come on up.

13 CHAIRMAN BLANKENSHIP: For the
14 record, this is Mr. Ed Travis on the Tab
15 4B, page 9, Upper Delta, Stiggins Lake
16 Addition. Just take one as she's passing
17 those out.

18 All right, sir. Go ahead.

19 MR. TRAVIS: First of all, I
20 appreciate the opportunity to come before
21 this board and to represent some
22 information to the citizens of the state.
23 I've been in positions kind of like you

1 guys are now where we were looking at land
2 trust issues and accepting conservation
3 easement. So I've been around the -- I
4 think it's important for everyone to know
5 that not only the presentation of the
6 property and how critical it might be, but
7 also to give some credibility to the
8 presenter, who are representatives of the
9 landowners, and our background. You'll
10 notice that I used to serve on a board with
11 a quite a few members that were on this
12 board at one time. But I've been around
13 with -- as a consulting forester in real
14 estate and appraiser for a long time and
15 served on the Alabama Forest Resource
16 Center, which it used to be, but it's now a
17 different entity, the TREASURE Forest Board
18 and other things. And I've been involved
19 over many years in forest management and
20 appraisal of these kind of wild places.
21 Some of them -- and it goes to my memory
22 now, I actually worked on the Wehle
23 property before it came into the state,

1 Grand Bay Savanna, the Sandhill Crane
2 Refuge, Mobile Delta. We did some timber
3 work and also appraisal work on the
4 Splinter Hill Bog.

5 So we've got some unique background
6 in working with these kind of asset
7 classes. But the Stiggins Lake tract, the
8 most important thing here is the Mobile-
9 Tensaw Delta. And for those that are not
10 familiar with the Mobile-Tensaw Delta, it's
11 probably one of the most significant
12 watersheds in the whole United States. It
13 has importance from many biological,
14 ecological reasons to the citizens of the
15 state and also to the United States as a
16 whole. So this is an excellent location,
17 and Forever Wild already owns some land
18 adjacent to it. So it's kind of one of the
19 few private inholdings left in that system
20 with this significance.

21 We have a timber inventory that we've
22 done on it, which is not included in this
23 information, which we can provide. It is a

1 unique timber stand condition. It's a
2 large, big area, close to 700 acres of
3 tupelo gum cypress that's mature. It has
4 been forested over many years. And a --
5 when you're looking at a bottomland
6 hardwood system, most of the time it really
7 doesn't peak out until it's 80 to 100 years
8 old. So a year here and there is not a
9 whole lot of change. But it's a long-term
10 asset class that has special considerations
11 that have to be -- used to deal with.

12 It has some boat access from Mount
13 Vernon and Hubbard Landing in Baldwin
14 County. And all this tract is actually in
15 Baldwin County, but it fronts on the Mobile
16 River, on each side of the Mobile River.

17 We have offered to have you guys
18 consider the possibility of purchasing
19 this. We're also going out to the free
20 world for whoever might be interested. My
21 job is to represent the landowners and
22 market this property to the best interest.

23 In this material you'll have a lot of

1 location maps and aerial photographs. And
2 if the citizens want to go see this
3 package, you can go to the Internet, to our
4 web site. And there's a full -- the same
5 presentation is there if you wanted to look
6 at it.

7 We have a timber stand map that we
8 did. Like I said, it's a very diverse
9 tract. It's -- there's some photographs of
10 the various conditions, and it's something
11 you can't do a whole lot with in three
12 minutes. I've about run out of time.

13 I did want to say it's good to see a
14 few of you I know here from past, and we
15 hope and trust that you guys will consider
16 this property of being worth the Forever
17 Wild consideration.

18 I don't guess we take questions or
19 anything from --

20 CHAIRMAN BLANKENSHIP: Are there any
21 questions from the board?

22 Mr. Jones?

23 MR. JONES: Yes, I notice in your

1 literature that you're not conveying the
2 mineral rights. Is the landowner keeping
3 the mineral rights?

4 MR. TRAVIS: I don't even know if we
5 own any -- no, that's the great science.

6 You never know whether you have -- I'm not
7 even sure of the mineral interest that we
8 own. Normally, we try to reserve all of
9 them in a location like that, but it's
10 always negotiable. I'm not even sure --
11 the title search would determine what your
12 minerals are. You might own one third, but
13 when it comes down to it, you own one third
14 of one-thirty-second of some kind of weird
15 interest. So that's a consideration we
16 have to talk about.

17 CHAIRMAN BLANKENSHIP: Mr. Parnell?

18 MR. PARNELL: Yes, sir. Could you
19 give us a little history of the property
20 and how long the current owners have owned
21 it and that type thing?

22 MR. TRAVIS: Yes, sir. The current
23 owners acquired title to it within, I

1 think, the last year.

2 Keith, is that right?

3 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Year and a
4 half.

5 MR. TRAVIS: It has been in the same
6 family ownership probably 70 to 80 years
7 prior to that. As part -- and there was
8 some internal, let's say, separation
9 between some of the family entities. And
10 some of them retained certain parts of it.
11 Some of the interests were separated, and
12 that's how it ended up this way. It's been
13 under the same pattern of use for -- since
14 it was created.

15 It's a special place, no question
16 about it.

17 Question?

18 MR. HARPER: Mr. Travis, you know
19 there's a discrepancy on the acres, what
20 we've got and you've got. This 1679 is the
21 acres that you're offering to sell?

22 MR. TRAVIS: Yes, sir, that's what --

23 MR. HARPER: At this price?

1 MR. TRAVIS: Yeah. And that of
2 course -- the timber component is where
3 there's a big chunk of this price. And
4 that would be something that y'all would
5 have to consider and we would investigate
6 and do the due diligence you need to.

7 Questions from the floor?

8 MS. MCCURDY: It looks like our maps
9 are very close between the map that you
10 have and what we've just received in the
11 packet. So I think we can work together to
12 clarify the difference, about a 20-acre or
13 22-acre difference. We will figure that
14 out, but the shape looks very similar to
15 what you have and what's in --

16 MR. TRAVIS: I might add that in our
17 exhibit, some of the tax map overlays in
18 Alabama and Mississippi are not always
19 correct. So a lot of these imagery will
20 show an overlay based on a tax map
21 configuration, and there's a jog in this
22 particular one that the survey -- you guys
23 have copies of the survey, so you'll be

1 able to see that survey has been somewhat
2 dated. But it's a survey, and that's a
3 unique thing to have down in that area.

4 CHAIRMAN BLANKENSHIP: Dr. Saloom?

5 DR. SALOOM: Ed, thank you for your
6 presentation. Can you speak to the access
7 to this piece of property?

8 MR. TRAVIS: Yes, sir. The access to
9 this property is mainly by boat access for
10 the public. Forever Wild has always owned
11 adjacent land, and over the years there has
12 been access to this property by road for
13 management purposes. Of course, when Scott
14 Paper owned a lot of the Clearwater
15 property up there. You guys have a unique
16 position in terms of being able to do
17 things that the third-world public may not
18 be able to do by your joining ownership.
19 And this property has been logged -- like I
20 said, an 80- to 100-year-old forest.
21 There's old roads in there. So it has been
22 -- had forest operations. And when Scott
23 Paper, of course, had their barge and

1 helicopter fleet operation, that was --
2 but, you know, in 100 years stand of
3 timber, a lot of economic and biological
4 changes impact an ownership. There's always
5 something about that that does come into
6 play, and we recognize that.

7 CHAIRMAN BLANKENSHIP: Did you have
8 something else?

9 MS. MCCURDY: No. I was going to ask
10 Mr. Travis after the meeting to get
11 together on the acreage and get the willing
12 seller letter corrected -- the acreage
13 correct, we'll figure that out and get that
14 corrected on the nomination.

15 CHAIRMAN BLANKENSHIP: Dr. Powers.

16 DR. POWERS: I don't know if it's
17 appropriate. Tell me if it's more of a
18 general discussion. But I'd like to hear
19 from Chuck on the WMA there, whether it's a
20 popular WMA. I see the score is fairly
21 high.

22 CHAIRMAN BLANKENSHIP: Chuck?

23 DR. POWERS: And if he needs to

1 investigate it more, that's fine.

2 MR. SYKES: Thank you, Dr. Powers. I
3 had a meeting with my chiefs yesterday, and
4 Keith specifically pointed out he's worked
5 a lot down there. And he said this would
6 be an excellent addition to the WMA. It is
7 very popular. And it does close a hole
8 that would cut down on a lot of the
9 boundary markings and things like that to
10 make things simpler.

11 MR. OATES: Do you know what the
12 total acreage of this wildlife management
13 area is?

14 MR. SYKES: Not right off the top of
15 my head, I don't.

16 CHAIRMAN BLANKENSHIP: Thank you,
17 sir.

18 I think that's all the public comment
19 that we have. Now it's time for us to talk
20 about going into executive session. By
21 regulation, appraisal values are
22 confidential during periods of negotiation.
23 Accordingly, in order to discuss tract

1 appraisal values, the board will need to go
2 into a recess for an executive session.

3 Is there a motion for the board to
4 now recess to attend an executive session?

5 MR. PARNELL: So moved.

6 MR. JONES: Second.

7 CHAIRMAN BLANKENSHIP: I will say
8 that the motion was made by Mr. Parnell and
9 seconded by Mr. Jones. As I call your
10 name, please state your position on this
11 motion to recess.

12 Those in favor indicate by saying
13 yes, and those opposed by saying no.

14 Chris Blankenship, yes.

15 Mr. Childers?

16 MR. CHILDERS: Yes.

17 CHAIRMAN BLANKENSHIP: Dr. Howell?

18 DR. HOWELL: Yes.

19 CHAIRMAN BLANKENSHIP: Mr. Jones?

20 MR. JONES: Yes.

21 CHAIRMAN BLANKENSHIP: Dr. Neumann?

22 DR. NEUMANN: Yes.

23 CHAIRMAN BLANKENSHIP: Mr. Oates?

1 MR. OATES: Yes.

2 CHAIRMAN BLANKENSHIP: Dr. Powers?

3 DR. POWERS: Yes.

4 CHAIRMAN BLANKENSHIP: Dr. Saloom?

5 DR. SALOOM: Yes, sir.

6 CHAIRMAN BLANKENSHIP: Ms. Stanley?

7 MS. STANLEY: Yes.

8 CHAIRMAN BLANKENSHIP: Dr. Valentine?

9 DR. VALENTINE: Yes.

10 CHAIRMAN BLANKENSHIP: Mr. Harper?

11 MR. HARPER: Yes.

12 CHAIRMAN BLANKENSHIP: Mr. Parnell?

13 MR. PARNELL: Yes.

14 CHAIRMAN BLANKENSHIP: It is
15 unanimous. It's 10:23. We will now take
16 approximately a 20-minute recess and then
17 return.

18 (Recess held.)

19 CHAIRMAN BLANKENSHIP: It is now
20 10:49, and we are back in the regular
21 session, back from executive session. We
22 move to the program status reports.

23 Ms. McCurdy, I think that's you.

1 MS. MCCURDY: That is me. For the
2 board, if you would, we're going to do our
3 usual run through of financial information.
4 You'll have in your green folder slightly
5 updated financial information. Our meeting
6 being on the first is a little unusual.
7 But we did some in that slightly updated
8 information in your green folder.

9 What I always like to do first is run
10 through the current status of the funding
11 available, if you desire to make any
12 motions towards acquisitions and also just
13 generally update the board and the public
14 on the status of nominations that have been
15 previously motioned by the board for staff
16 to proceed for acquisition.

17 So the properties that we have
18 somewhere in the closing process based on
19 this board -- motions to the board are the
20 Bon Secour River Wetlands Addition in
21 Baldwin County; Heron Bay Wetlands
22 Addition, Mobile County; Sipsy River
23 Swamp-Brownville Addition, Tuscaloosa

1 County; Skyline WMA-Fowler Cove Addition,
2 Jackson. And we are also working on what
3 is a 100 percent donation that we discussed
4 at the last meeting, so that's not
5 reflected here because it was not -- it was
6 not a purchase but an acceptance of a
7 donation.

8 So with all that being said, the
9 unencumbered balance for the board, taking
10 all that into account, is about \$25.5
11 million of what's available to the board.

12 And that is within the budgetary
13 authority.

14 Since our last -- well, let's see,
15 this fiscal year -- I keep up with closings
16 by fiscal year. So for this fiscal year so
17 far we've had two closings. The John
18 Moss -- John Doss Mountain Addition, and
19 the Oak Mountain State Park-Belcher
20 Addition, phase two. We've had those two
21 closings to date.

22 So that's a picture of what you have
23 available. If there are no questions, I

1 will move on to the next report.

2 All right. Next, I wanted to provide
3 an update to the board on the status of our
4 stewardship fund. We had -- the board had
5 previously motioned for a stewardship fund
6 in the amount of \$2.5 million to be
7 available for expenditures this year.

8 Currently, we've spent just over 400,000.

9 We're still fine. We think we're within
10 what the board has asked us to do with the
11 money we have available. If you'll also
12 look on Tab 2C, you'll see in conjunction
13 with that, the standard report that we
14 received from the state treasurer's office
15 related to the investments that they place
16 and manage for the board within the
17 stewardship fund.

18 MS. STANLEY: I just want to note, I
19 think this page three has a typo. It says,
20 Net assets as of December 31, 2024. And
21 I'm pretty sure you mean 2023 at the bottom
22 left of that.

23 MS. MCCURDY: We sure do. Thank you.

1 Although, that would be okay at the end of
2 2024. But, yes, that date and that figure
3 is reflected in Tab 2C that the State
4 Treasurer provides. It shows the last
5 compiled number we have from them as net
6 assets being just under \$46 million. Thank
7 you, Ms. Stanley, for that.

8 MS. STANLEY: You're welcome.

9 MS. MCCURDY: I appreciate it.

10 Those are the usual financial reports
11 that we go through. If there are no
12 questions, I'll move on to tab three, into
13 the appraised nominations.

14 MR. HARPER: Are any of -- is any of
15 the supplies being used for hog traps?

16 MS. MCCURDY: Yes, sir. And we'll
17 circle back to that in the miscellaneous
18 section. We have a short -- a brief
19 report, but a little bit of a report, on
20 the hog eradication efforts.

21 Any additional questions?

22 (No response.)

23 MS. MCCURDY: All right. So if you

1 would again, we will go to Tab 3, Tab 3A.

2 And so this is -- each meeting I run
3 through the status of every tract that is
4 pending that the board had asked the staff
5 to pursue appraisal work on. And that's
6 what I'm going to do now and let you know
7 what's available for this meeting, if you
8 would like to take additional actions
9 towards purchase, and then what's still in
10 the works.

11 The appraisals that we have in hand
12 include the following: Blackwater River
13 SOA-Clapper Addition, Baldwin County;
14 Cathedral Cavern State Park-Gurley Drive
15 Addition, Marshall County; Historic
16 Blakeley State Park-Pye Addition, Baldwin
17 County; Lillian Swamp Blackwater Addition
18 in Baldwin County.

19 And as an update both for the board
20 and the public, this nomination has been
21 slightly revised. This tract originally
22 had two detached parcels, the northern
23 parcel and the southern parcel. The

1 southern parcel is no longer available. So
2 what has -- stands appraised and available
3 to the board is the northern tract within
4 that original nomination.

5 And the staff -- any time we have a
6 change in the nomination, the staff again
7 reviews that nomination to be sure that
8 nothing has changed that alters the scoring
9 of that tract, that it should have been on
10 the shortlist, it would still be on the
11 shortlist, and no acreage change has
12 impacted tract access, the intended
13 recreational usage, or possibly loss of a
14 habitat that was to be the conservation
15 focus. The staff has performed that
16 evaluation. This tract is rightfully still
17 available to the board, still would be on
18 the shortlist originally. So, again, that
19 one is available.

20 I now want to run through the tracts
21 that are in some stage of appraisal work
22 based on the board's motion, but we do not
23 have those back in hand so they're not

1 available to the board for additional
2 action this meeting. Those appraisals are
3 for the following tracts: Davidson Creek
4 Tract, Coosa County; Red Hills-Section 23,
5 Monroe County; Red Hills-Swift Addition,
6 Monroe County; West Fowl River Tract,
7 Mobile County.

8 I do need to update the board. You
9 had previously asked for us to appraise the
10 Coldwater Mountain-Oxanna Addition up in
11 Calhoun County. We no longer have a
12 willing seller on that tract. That tract
13 is no longer available to the board. So we
14 did not make any move towards appraisal on
15 that, obviously, but did want you to know
16 why you're not seeing and why you will not
17 see it on a future list.

18 If there are no questions on the
19 status of the tracts that are on the
20 appraised nomination list, I will keep
21 moving.

22 Any questions?

23 (No response.)

1 MS. MCCURDY: Okay. If you would, we
2 now will run through our grant status memo,
3 which is Tab 5A in your packets. I'll give
4 you a chance to get to Tab 5A. I'm going
5 to run through the tracts that are
6 benefiting or could benefit from some
7 amount of leverage funding, partnership
8 funding, grant funding, just so you're
9 aware of those. We have -- the tracts that
10 are already in the closing process, just
11 again to remind you that we are taking
12 advantage of leverage funds. We have the
13 Bon Secour River Wetlands Addition in
14 Baldwin County that I mentioned was in
15 closing. That was a National Coastal
16 Wetlands Conservation Grant Program award
17 that we're leveraging in that one. We
18 still have pending the Skyline WMA-Fowler
19 Cove Addition. This was an offer of a
20 potential partnership between Chuck's
21 Wildlife and Freshwater Fisheries division,
22 and their Pittman-Robertson funding, and
23 Forever Wild's being the state match

1 acquisition for that program.

2 As to the nominations that are
3 somewhere in the appraisal process that I
4 just went through, we have the Blackwater
5 River SOA-Clapper Addition. This was
6 another opportunity to partner with the
7 Wildlife and Freshwater Fisheries division
8 on the 25 -- 75/25 split acquisition, also
9 a Pittman-Robertson opportunity. We have
10 certain funding available we anticipate to
11 be a 25 percent -- 75/25 split opportunity
12 with Red Hill-Section 23 Addition. Also,
13 Wildlife has the opportunity to utilize
14 some of its Section 6 RLA funding on the
15 Red Hills-Swift Addition.

16 And as an update, the West Fowl River
17 tract, I mentioned to the board in our last
18 meeting that State Lands has been given the
19 opportunity -- gotten an invitation from
20 NOAA to submit a grant proposal related to
21 acquisition of that tract. If awarded, it
22 would provide 100 percent of the funding,
23 the acquisition funding. We thought we

1 might have an award about now, but it looks
2 like it's going to be closer -- an award
3 announcement, but it looks like it's going
4 to be closer to the summer on that. But we
5 will keep you up-to-date as soon as we get
6 word if that's been awarded.

7 Moving to the shortlist nominations,
8 the Dugdown Mountain Corridor, I think we
9 have some encouraging feedback. So I'm
10 going to give the honor to Mr. Oates.

11 MR. OATES: Thank you, Patti. You
12 know we've been talking about this one for
13 quite a while. It's a legacy grant that we
14 put in a couple years -- two or three years
15 ago. We've now gotten word that we're on
16 the list. We haven't seen the list, and we
17 haven't gotten an actual award letter yet.
18 But we're confident enough that this is
19 going to go forward that we are moving
20 forward with the appraisal. And it's -- I
21 can't explain the whole process, but it's
22 called the Yellow Book Appraisal, but it's
23 a little more complicated than our regular

1 appraisals. We're going to go ahead and
2 move forward with that appraisal for this
3 property and expect to see the award
4 letter, Darcy, maybe the end of February.

5 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: That's the
6 hope.

7 MR. OATES: That's the hope. But
8 we're confident enough that we're going to
9 go ahead and move forward with the
10 appraisal on that property and get that
11 underway. And that will be a 75/25 match,
12 and hopefully this board will agree to
13 provide the 25 percent to match that grant
14 money.

15 MS. MCCURDY: And so the board knows,
16 we have been working closely with AFC and
17 Rick and his staff to be sure that the
18 appraisal that results that AFC is paying
19 for would be able to be utilized by the
20 board, adopted by the board, and utilized
21 by this board if you so choose to in the
22 future. We're coordinating closely on
23 that. And it is not just -- not only is it

1 Yellow Book, but it's also the forestry
2 service's process, which is --

3 MR. OATES: Infinitely crazy.

4 MS. MCCURDY: But we've worked
5 through it before so we will all work
6 through it again. So I want to thank you
7 and your staff for helping us work through.

8 MR. OATES: I notice we need to do
9 something with the "no board action." Is
10 this an appropriate time to do that or
11 do --

12 MS. MCCURDY: I'll tee it up.

13 So just to close out the grant
14 status, these are not acquisition-related
15 grants, but we are working on two grants
16 still, the Little -- related to Little
17 River Canyon-Hancock/TNC Addition tract.

18 That related to a National Fish and
19 Wildlife Foundation Cumberland Plateau,
20 Southern Appalachian Fund Award. So we are
21 using some funding to leverage Forever Wild
22 stewardship funds to establish -- support
23 establishment of a shortleaf pine forest

1 there. That's moving along fine.

2 And then we are in the process of
3 getting with an architect to produce the
4 drawings that we need for the improvements
5 that would relate to the Mobile-Tensaw
6 Delta Bartram and Perdido River Canoe
7 Trails Improvement Project. That was a
8 Gulf of Mexico Energy Security Act, or
9 GOMESA, award that was received by the
10 governor. It is on acreage other than
11 Forever Wild, but there will be some
12 enhancements occurring on Forever Wild
13 acreage. So I'm going to keep the board
14 abreast of those, that process and those
15 improvements.

16 Unless there are questions on
17 grants --

18 Yes, sir.

19 DR. POWERS: So the Blackwater River
20 SOA-Clapper Addition, do we know the time
21 frame that Chuck needs an answer?

22 MS. MCCURDY: I'm going to ask Chuck.
23 Chuck, if it's not you, someone on your

1 staff. I don't want to mess up when you
2 need if there's a deadline on that PR cycle
3 that would apply to that tract. I'll defer
4 to you.

5 MR. SYKES: We get a PR allotment
6 every year. We don't know -- we can
7 estimate what it is. So the sooner the
8 better. But if it misses a cycle, we will
9 just roll it into our next cycle's
10 apportionment.

11 MR. POWERS: So if you don't get the
12 match on this, you would use the funding
13 for some other piece of property? So you
14 wouldn't lose the funding if we chose -- it
15 would just go to a different property?

16 MR. SYKES: We have taken great pride
17 in not turning any money back over the past
18 decade and want to continue to do, so we
19 have several things in the hopper.

20 MR. POWERS: But all those things in
21 the hopper you need a match for?

22 MR. SYKES: Correct.

23 MR. POWERS: Got you.

1 MR. SYKES: Yes, sir. Thank you.

2 MS. MCCURDY: Yes, sir. Dr. Saloom?

3 DR. SALOOM: Just out of curiosity,
4 the Coastal Zone Management Habitat
5 Protection and Restoration operation, where
6 is that pot of money?

7 MS. MCCURDY: Well, that was a
8 federal bill, but it allotted money to
9 various agencies. EPA, NOAA was one --
10 also one of the agencies. NOAA elected to
11 institute a competitive program limited to
12 its Coastal Zone Management programs and
13 National Estuarine Research Reserves of
14 which our department, the two, the State
15 Lands division -- the commissioner has two
16 -- has both of those programs in Alabama.

17 And so that is the -- it's still
18 competitive among those programs, but it's
19 locked in to the states that have either
20 Coastal Zone Management or the National
21 Estuarine Research Reserves. So that's
22 what we were invited through. There's some
23 additional money through that bill that is

1 more broadly competitive to nonprofits,
2 universities, and other organizations.
3 We're working with them down that pipe.

4 Any additional questions?

5 (No response.)

6 MS. MCCURDY: If there are none, then
7 I would get you to go to Tab 4. We're
8 going run through the shortlist. And so,
9 also for the benefit of the public,
10 pursuant to Amendment 543 that formed the
11 program, all tracts that are nominated to
12 the program must be evaluated. And we are
13 -- we come up with what we term in our
14 language as a shortlist or priority list of
15 tracts based upon scoring and staff
16 evaluation. We have different staff
17 members that score these tracts in State
18 Parks, WMA, or SOA opportunities, general
19 recreation, and then nature preserves, or
20 really just any type of habitat
21 conservation work. They're scored in those
22 categories.

23 We then take those scores, and we --

1 the nominations compete in their district;
2 the northern, central, and southern. And
3 we take the top three scoring tracts by
4 district in each of the four categories
5 that I've mentioned to produce the
6 shortlist. Tracts may score in more than
7 one, top three in more than one, which
8 starts shortening your list, and some of
9 these you'll see that on.

10 We also have had some nominations
11 that have not had willing seller letters
12 returned or have been removed for
13 consideration. Also, we do -- we're trying
14 to evaluate these tracts to be sure that
15 the ones that do shortlist and come before
16 the board do represent a viable
17 opportunity.

18 Our list this time looks oddly short.
19 That happens sometimes by all those
20 factors. I'll say -- I'll mention it again
21 a little bit later. But in our last review
22 of the last fiscal year, we were still at
23 what has been a pretty constant 15 percent

1 figure comparing nominations that come in
2 to tracts that close. So only about 15
3 percent of the nominations we receive work
4 their way through and end up in a closing.

5 At least for last fiscal year that has
6 stayed consistent. We'll see as we go
7 forward if this shorter list is -- if this
8 time it's a blip or if we're moving into
9 having shorter lists. There are several
10 factors that I mentioned I think led to
11 this one being shorter this time.

12 MS. STANLEY: As I was looking at the
13 scoring -- I want to thank the staff for
14 all the work. I know there's a lot that
15 goes into those numbers that we have on
16 this list. But is there a goal number?
17 Would 100 be the perfect piece of land that
18 we should definitely vote yes on? Help me
19 with the range of numbers.

20 MS. MCCURDY: I will. It is very,
21 very true that, yes, that is -- the higher
22 the number, the better, the more attractive
23 that it is. Aspects of our scoring take

1 into consideration things like access,
2 where it's located, management cost, how we
3 would use it. There are certain unknowns,
4 though, that is really where the board's
5 expertise and discretion comes in. For
6 example, you may have a tract somewhere
7 that we don't have any other acreage. If
8 you ask me, I'll have to tell you, Sure,
9 that's going to increase our management
10 cost, but the board may feel that's an
11 important area of the state that isn't
12 represented in the acreage, and therefore,
13 you're willing to go there and we go there.
14 We don't want to keep that type of an
15 opportunity off your available list. There
16 may also be a parcel that is very critical
17 because it does solidify or help us with
18 access or takes out an easement. As that
19 little tract by itself, if you view it in a
20 vacuum, it may not be as great a score, but
21 it scores high enough to be on here, it may
22 be very valuable for that reason.

23 So I will say what we're trying to do

1 in our review is progressively take off the
2 tracts. We call it "zero out" the ones
3 that are just not -- do not have a viable
4 positive potential impact for the board,
5 for the program in light of what may become
6 board priority. You're going to see some
7 at times that score -- make the shortlist,
8 but you're not sure either why it's low or
9 it's high. If that makes -- a long way
10 around, but that's where we need the
11 board's input and discretion and just where
12 you want the program to go. We try to
13 leave you open the opportunities that are
14 viable but not burden you with the ones
15 that just are not going to work or have no
16 value that we can find.

17 If there are no other questions, I'm
18 going to run through the list. You can
19 still ask me questions after I run through
20 the list. The tracts currently on the
21 shortlist are Bon Secour River-Cook Road
22 Addition, 19 acres, Baldwin County; Dugdown
23 Mountain Corridor, approaching 2,000 acres,

1 Cleburne County; Freedom Hills WMA-Sutton
2 Hill Addition, 17 acres, Colbert; Upper
3 Delta WMA-Stiggins Lake Addition, which
4 we'll clarify that acreage, but is
5 approaching 1700 acres in Baldwin County.
6 And then you have two Weeks Bay Reserves.
7 That is one of the National Estuarine
8 Research Reserves that I referenced
9 earlier. We abbreviated it WBR. That
10 facility is near Fairhope in Baldwin
11 County. But you have the Weeks Bay Reserve-
12 Holly Addition, approximately 163 acres in
13 Baldwin County, and the Weeks Bay
14 Reserve-White Addition, approximately 46
15 acres in Baldwin County.

16 So those tracts represent the
17 shortlist.

18 MR. JONES: Patti, the Weeks Bay, as
19 I understand it, there's a ton of
20 ownerships, like different governmental
21 type of ownerships, who manages all that.

22 MS. MCCURDY: Well, it depends on the
23 underlying ownership. But most of it in

1 the Weeks Bay Reserve, what NOAA would
2 consider is potential boundary. You have
3 private ownership. You have Forever Wild
4 ownership, and then you have State Lands
5 division ownership. And then there's some
6 other property that, for example, might be
7 Department of Mental Health, but it's
8 property State Lands manages. So it ends
9 up being large State Lands managed or local
10 government managed right there at the
11 reserve. But there is, mixed in that, a
12 lot of private acreage. Those are always
13 high dollar, and that's a very popular --

14 MR. JONES: But most of it is managed
15 by State Lands?

16 MS. MCCURDY: Most of it is.

17 MR. JONES: Okay. Thanks.

18 MR. CHILDERS: There's not a lot of
19 Forever Wild access there.

20 MS. MCCURDY: We have had some tracts
21 that are in the area. If you pull it back
22 out, we do have a good bit in Baldwin
23 County. If you'll look on your -- the two

1 maps, what you see in yellow --

2 MR. CHILDERS: I don't see --

3 MS. MCCURDY: Tab 4 -- I'm sorry, 4B
4 and the two Weeks Bay maps, what you see in
5 yellow is actually Forever Wild titled.
6 But using that as an example, what you see
7 reflected there, DCNR acreage, Mental
8 Health acreage, that's basically State
9 Lands-managed acreage.

10 MR. JONES: Wetlands Solutions,
11 that's a land --

12 MS. MCCURDY: It's a mitigation bank
13 right now, yes. We also -- there's a
14 mitigation bank that we actually manage,
15 but that is still with the Wetlands.

16 Right? Wetlands Solutions?

17 MR. DEATON: It's still in their --
18 under their operation.

19 MS. MCCURDY: And that's Doug Deaton.

20 Yes, that was -- there is potential
21 for future -- there's been talk of
22 potential future transfer of that. But it
23 is still with that entity.

1 Any additional questions?

2 (No response.)

3 MS. MCCURDY: All right. If there
4 are no questions, either on the shortlist
5 or what we've gone over so far, or,
6 Commissioner, you had something else you
7 wanted to add, I think we can move into
8 general discussion. But I don't want to
9 rush anybody.

10 CHAIRMAN BLANKENSHIP: No other
11 questions on that. We'll move into the
12 general discussion.

13 This is the part of the meeting where
14 generally if there are motions made for
15 first or second appraisals on property,
16 this is where that happens or any other
17 discussion from the board. So I'll open it
18 up for the board.

19 Mr. Jones?

20 MR. JONES: I would like the
21 nomination for second appraisal and move to
22 purchase the Lillian Swamp Blackwater
23 Addition-Northern tract of 166 acres.

1 DR. NEUMANN: Second.

2 CHAIRMAN BLANKENSHIP: Motion made by
3 Mr. Jones and seconded by Dr. Neumann on
4 the Lillian Swamp, the Blackwater North.

5 Let me make sure I get that title right.

6 MR. POWERS: Commissioner, what tab
7 is that?

8 CHAIRMAN BLANKENSHIP: Sure. That
9 will be Tab 3.

10 MS. MCCURDY: Tab 3B, page 6.

11 CHAIRMAN BLANKENSHIP: Thank you.
12 Lillian Swamp Blackwater Addition-Northern
13 tract of 166 acres. The motion was for a
14 second appraisal and move to purchase of
15 that tract. Any questions or discussions
16 on that?

17 (No response.)

18 CHAIRMAN BLANKENSHIP: All those in
19 favor, please raise their hands.

20 (Members raise hands in affirmative.)

21 MS. MCCURDY: Commissioner, we have
22 all -- only one -- all positive except one,
23 so that carries.

1 CHAIRMAN BLANKENSHIP: Motion

2 carries.

3 Mr. Jones.

4 MR. JONES: Yes, I'd like to make a
5 motion for first appraisal on the Freedom
6 Hills WMA-Sutton Hill Addition.

7 MR. PARNELL: Second.

8 CHAIRMAN BLANKENSHIP: Motion by
9 Mr. Jones and seconded by Mr. Parnell for
10 the 17 acres on the first appraisal of the
11 Freedom Hills WMA-Sutton Hill Addition.

12 Any questions on that, discussion?

13 (No response.)

14 CHAIRMAN BLANKENSHIP: All those in
15 favor, please raise your hands.

16 (Members raise hands in affirmative.)

17 MS. MCCURDY: That looks unanimous.

18 CHAIRMAN BLANKENSHIP: Thank you.

19 Motion carries.

20 Anything else?

21 (No response.)

22 CHAIRMAN BLANKENSHIP: All right.

23 Thank you.

1 MS. MCCURDY: We'll move then to Tab
2 5, our miscellaneous discussion. If you'll
3 give me one second to get my papers back in
4 order. So we're at Tab 5B, and this is our
5 standard report each meeting on tracts that
6 require a request by at least one board
7 member to leave on the list, or they will
8 roll off due to no board action.

9 This meeting, the only tract that
10 would otherwise be removed by the staff
11 through that process is the Dugdown
12 Mountain Corridor.

13 MR. OATES: Please keep it on, one
14 more time.

15 MS. MCCURDY: We'll keep it on.

16 That was Mr. Oates.

17 We will keep working on that one.

18 That has been a labor of love for y'all.

19 We'll keep working for you.

20 So next, if you would, is Tab 5C,
21 which are management plans.

22 I also would ask you to look at
23 another memo, Tab 5J, that is in your green

1 folder. Dr. McClintock could not be here
2 today, but he had asked for one revision
3 that I'll mention in a second.

4 Let me first introduce that we are --
5 we have a couple of management plans -- a
6 couple of tracts that we need to approve
7 management plans for within --

8 MR. CHILDERS: Which one?

9 MS. MCCURDY: I'm sorry, the green
10 folder, 5J.

11 So in Tab 5C is your standard packet
12 that you get from staff. Within a year of
13 acquisition we are charged with developing
14 a management plan for each tract that's
15 acquired. We try to come to the board with
16 one meeting to spare in case there are any
17 questions or follow-up. So they do come to
18 you very early so they are -- the tract
19 additions are -- sometimes descriptions are
20 very general in there. But we have two
21 tracts that we need to address this
22 meeting. And that's the Autauga WMA-Hart
23 Addition and the Cahaba River Shelby

1 County Park-Peel Addition. Both of those
2 tracts staff is recommending inclusion or
3 incorporation into existing management
4 plans. For the Autauga WMA-Hart Addition,
5 that it be added to the Autauga Wildlife
6 Management Area Complex Management Plan.

7 And for the Peel Addition, that it be
8 added to the Cahaba River Shelby County
9 Park Complex Management Plan.

10 The request from Dr. McClintock after
11 he reviewed the packet material was to add
12 the opportunity -- a reference for the
13 opportunity to the potential addition of
14 paddling trails within the Shelby -- excuse
15 me, the Cahaba River Shelby County Park
16 Complex Management Plan. So I noted in
17 your Tab 5J memo that that would be under
18 section 5, item number four of that plan.

19 So I normally for these plans, because it
20 always gets wordy, try to give you all the
21 draft motion on these. So Tab 5J, if there
22 are no other requests for additions to
23 those plans, would be the motion that staff

1 would need to formally incorporate these
2 tracts in those two management plans.

3 MR. PARNELL: Would you clarify for
4 me what paddling is? Canoeing?

5 MS. MCCURDY: Canoeing, kayaking, any
6 type of water-based --

7 MS. STANLEY: Mr. Parnell brings up a
8 good point because the word "paddling"
9 sounds like what happens to the bad boys at
10 school. I was wondering is that the
11 professional reference to it, because why
12 wouldn't we say paddling/canoeing or just
13 name those?

14 MS. MCCURDY: I think, although you
15 make a fine point, especially for the --

16 MS. STANLEY: Is that sports
17 enthusiast language that they would in no
18 way misunderstand that?

19 MR. PARNELL: Speak for yourself. I
20 assure you, you never had a paddling.

21 MS. STANLEY: I said the bad boys,
22 not bad girls.

23 MS. MCCURDY: Another excellent

1 point. But the reason is we were not
2 distinguishing between just canoeing, or
3 just kayaking, to the generally used
4 paddling.

5 MS. STANLEY: Maybe we can just add
6 the word "activities," paddling activities,
7 because -- I don't know. Paddling water
8 activities? I don't know.

9 MS. MCCURDY: I think that's fine.
10 No, no, I think anything that you see on
11 these if it's not clear to you --

12 MS. STANLEY: Just a layperson, just
13 first thought.

14 MS. MCCURDY: That's right. If it
15 brings up a question in your mind, I think
16 it's good that we go ahead and do that.

17 Yes, sir.

18 DR. POWERS: So no one does paddling
19 at the universities anymore -- sorry, in
20 the classroom. But I think she was also
21 talking about paddle boards as well. If
22 you're going to be specific in what
23 paddling -- paddling activities should, I

1 guess, cover.

2 MS. MCCURDY: I think paddling
3 activities would encompass anything --
4 anything that -- if you've got something in
5 your hand.

6 MS. STANLEY: Paddling sports?

7 MR. CHILDERS: Paddling water
8 activities should be sufficient.

9 MS. STANLEY: Paddling water sports?

10 MS. MCCURDY: I think paddling water
11 activities as Mr. Childers' suggestion --

12 MR. CHILDERS: You wouldn't be
13 paddling much on land. Shouldn't be.

14 MS. MCCURDY: With that, any other
15 thoughts on -- anybody else see anything in
16 either -- anything else in either
17 management plan?

18 MR. POWERS: I'll go ahead and -- the
19 board approves the State Lands Division
20 proceeding with inclusion of the Autauga
21 WMA-Hart Addition and the Cahaba River
22 Shelby County Park-Peel Addition into
23 existing management plans set forth as a

1 memorandum dated February 1, 2024, to
2 include the addition of paddling water
3 activities as a potential recreational
4 activity in that Shelby County Park Plan.

5 CHAIRMAN BLANKENSHIP: Excellent job,
6 Mr. Powers.

7 MS. STANLEY: Second.

8 CHAIRMAN BLANKENSHIP: Seconded by
9 Ms. Stanley. Is there any other discussion
10 on these management plans?

11 (No response.)

12 CHAIRMAN BLANKENSHIP: All those in
13 favor of approving the motion, please say
14 aye.

15 (Ayes affirmed.)

16 CHAIRMAN BLANKENSHIP: All opposed?

17 (No response.)

18 CHAIRMAN BLANKENSHIP: None opposed,
19 motion carries.

20 MS. MCCURDY: I think that,
21 Commissioner, progressing now to things
22 that haven't already been discussed, I want
23 to go to the Feral Swine Management Update.

1 If the board -- if you would turn to, in
2 your packet that you were mailed, Tab 5G.
3 I wanted to provide a bit of an update
4 since our last meeting, our planning and
5 activities are ongoing. But I wanted to
6 provide a brief overview to the board of
7 some of the activities we've been involved
8 in related to feral hog mitigation and
9 management efforts related to -- across our
10 tracts to that problem.

11 And we -- the board had previously
12 noted and requested that we have available
13 up to \$1 million as needed to use wisely,
14 but as needed, to implement additional
15 measures. So I wanted to run through the
16 first phase of what I would call the
17 purchase of traps and the tracts that we
18 have prioritized getting them on. And also
19 as we bring on some contract services, we
20 will still be on many of the tracts
21 purchasing the tracts -- excuse me,
22 purchasing the traps on those tracts. But
23 I wanted to run through -- currently, as of

1 when I did the memo anyway, had purchased
2 35 traps that were in some portion of our
3 accounting acquisition and delivery
4 process. And those 35 will be placed
5 across some tracts I'll name here in a
6 second. Those systems are the usual cell
7 camera corral trap systems, and we also
8 have some cameras that are being added for
9 the purposes of monitoring. Again, trying
10 to ensure that we don't have an emerging
11 problem somewhere, that we'll spot it
12 quickly. And I want to run through the
13 traps. Again, this is -- I don't mean to
14 say this is exhaustive, but this is what
15 the first phase of implementation has been.
16 That has been the Lauderdale WMA; Freedom
17 Hills WMA, both in Colbert and Lauderdale
18 Counties for those two tracts; the Mulberry
19 Fork WMA which crosses Walker and
20 Tuscaloosa; our Sipsey Complex in
21 Tuscaloosa County; Fort Toulouse, Elmore
22 County; our Forever Wild Field Trial area
23 where a lot of our youth hunts, disabled

1 hunts, and sporting events occur; the Old
2 Cahawba Tract in Dallas County; Portland
3 Landing and Rum Creek tracts, also in
4 Dallas County; Barbour WMA which crosses
5 Barbour and Bullock; Red Hills WMA, Monroe
6 County; Thigpen Hill in Butler; Grand Bay
7 Savanna, Mobile; and then the Mobile-Tensaw
8 Delta Complex which stretches across Mobile
9 and Baldwin Counties.

10 We also continue with -- as you may
11 recall, we had contractor services that
12 assisted us to formulate what we thought
13 would be some costs to present to the board
14 and also help us understand how we might
15 interact with contractors. We've used a
16 group to help us on Thigpen and on our Old
17 Cahawba tract, kind of to get a grasp of
18 some of the numbers we brought to you
19 before. We're utilized some spending
20 authority we had in our purchasing system
21 on that to just proceed on with work at
22 Thigpen Hill. That is a tract that we are
23 concentrating on and beginning to work

1 through a recreational plan for, so we went
2 ahead, and we do have an issue there. So
3 we concentrated some of those leftover
4 efforts. But we also -- and I want to
5 thank Charlanna Skaggs, our general
6 counsel, and the commissioner who were very
7 helpful to me and my staff on working on an
8 RFP, a request for proposal, similar to
9 what you saw with our appraiser contracts.
10 And so we're wrapping that up and will
11 similarly provide that to the board. If
12 there are vendors that you'd like to have
13 respond to that once we get it finalized
14 and approved through the state for
15 issuance, that should be pretty soon. I'll
16 get that to y'all, and you can let anybody
17 else know in addition to our contacts.
18 That is, of course, posted through the
19 state system, but I want to be sure y'all
20 have or know landowners that are
21 particularly pleased with certain groups,
22 that we -- that the groups are aware of the
23 opportunity.

1 That's a brief overview. I want to
2 thank my staff and let me say Chuck's staff
3 and my wildlife staff and Lands staff that
4 have done a lot of work on this in figuring
5 out next steps and what to do. And we'll
6 continue to update you.

7 MR. HARPER: Ms. Patti, are these
8 ranked in any way? They all have problems,
9 I assume. But are they ranked by severity
10 or anything?

11 MS. MCCURDY: They're not in -- this
12 first phase, I would not say is internally
13 ranked, other than this is both where we
14 thought there was a need and also where we
15 thought we could move sort of quickly where
16 we think we know where we're going or know
17 where we're going to put the traps and go
18 ahead and hit the ground. So I don't have
19 them ranked independently. I actually put
20 them in more of a loose geographical order
21 to present to you. These were identified as
22 to where both staff wanted to move quickly
23 and get some traps and also where -- in

1 some places we're setting the traps, we're
2 handling the traps ourselves in the interim
3 of getting contractor services.

4 MR. HARPER: My question -- I had a
5 landowner requesting help in north
6 Escambia, Monroe County. Is that Red Hill?

7 MS. MCCURDY: Yes, sir.

8 MR. HARPER: That's the area? Okay.
9 Thank you.

10 DR. POWERS: So in the last point
11 here you said RFP for statewide contractual
12 services. So you're not talking about just
13 one? So it'll work more like your
14 appraisal where you're trying to identify a
15 pool of people and then each opportunity
16 they would tell you a price on.

17 MS. MCCURDY: I don't want to
18 presuppose what we will receive or how
19 those will be evaluated. But we're open to
20 and looking for either some -- an entity
21 that can provide statewide or it does need
22 -- we're sort of tied to our respondents.

23 And so until we see kind of what we get

1 and whether they can go statewide or need
2 to be focused geographically, but the end
3 result is that we want to cover statewide,
4 either with one or more.

5 DR. POWERS: All right. And the
6 second thing is it's always on these -- for
7 any invasive species or any problematic
8 species, it's always hard to judge the
9 efficacy or success of your actions. Are
10 you going to have anything in here beyond
11 just body count that judges that? I mean,
12 you have cameras so you can look at before
13 and after. Just because you remove so many
14 doesn't mean -- doesn't mean you have to --
15 or you are successful, or you just still
16 are not seeing a difference between before
17 and after, so you know you need to get more
18 management and more removals in there. Is
19 that going to be part of the process?

20 MS. MCCURDY: Yes, we will have
21 access -- one thing the pictures will help
22 show is that, too, you want to -- you don't
23 want to pull the trap door, so to speak,

1 before you have the picture seen in there.
2 You don't want to -- just because one is in
3 there, you don't want to drop the trap. It
4 will help us evaluate how the contractors
5 are doing and how we're doing. But, yeah,
6 we're -- you're correct in that it is a
7 difficult -- if you are not seeing any,
8 you're sure hoping it's because you're
9 doing well. If you are seeing them, are
10 you technically pulling them off somebody
11 else's property. It doesn't matter. We've
12 got them in our trap. We've killed them
13 and they're gone. But as I said before,
14 I'm not going to mislead the board, that it
15 is -- other than watching these traps to
16 see when you've got one in there, that
17 you're dropping the door at the right time
18 and not prematurely.

19 DR. POWERS: I would just like some
20 study to see if it's successful or needs to
21 do more because it may be you knock down
22 that population, and all you've done is
23 create more opportunities for the young.

1 And really, you're not -- you know, the
2 population could compensate for all of
3 those removals unless you really hit it
4 hard. And without that information, that
5 before and after and some monitoring, it's
6 hard to adaptively manage your removals and
7 things like that.

8 MS. MCCURDY: Right. And I do think
9 that, again, the population, unless you
10 somehow -- we find a way that nobody else
11 has to be sure that we get every one from
12 everywhere, the population will continue.

13 I will combine with my staff and Wildlife
14 and try to see if we can give you some
15 feedback other than monitoring the cameras
16 and monitoring the numbers. And with the
17 additional recommendations of those who
18 work in the private sector as to trap
19 placement, as to populations that we're
20 seeing, I've -- you know, it will be
21 somewhat of a loose science. I'm not going
22 to mislead you. But I will ask my staff
23 and Wild -- Chuck's staff to get together

1 to see, but --

2 DR. POWERS: And I know it's kind of
3 a loose science, but if you have good
4 surveys or cameras before and after, at
5 least there will be some --

6 MS. MCCURDY: And that is part of the
7 reason for why we're buying some cameras
8 separate from the system's, is trying to
9 monitor for presence and keep an eye on
10 emerging problems. I'll do my best to give
11 you some overview, but it will be a --
12 we're going to go at it hard, and we're
13 going to go at it with all the expertise we
14 can find. That I do promise.

15 Ms. Stanley?

16 MS. STANLEY: Yes. Understanding
17 that the staff will do the best that it can
18 with the procedures and the monitoring,
19 what is the opportunity in the future --
20 say the effect or the outcome is that this
21 isn't enough effort in this direction, we
22 would increase the budget toward this in a
23 future year? Help us understand, you know,

1 because it's, like, needs assessment,
2 process, evaluate. What happens after
3 that, before and after camera, then when is
4 that --

5 MS. MCCURDY: I think it's basically
6 what you just described, is that we are --
7 we're going to -- my opinion would be we
8 are going to spend the money we need to
9 spend to have effective efforts. And we'll
10 constantly be evaluating that. But it's
11 just not as easy as some others.

12 MS. STANLEY: Right.

13 MS. MCCURDY: But I do think if we're
14 continuing to see pigs, we're going to
15 continue to spend money to get them off. I
16 think it's going to be an ongoing process.

17 I will say if we think that it is
18 something more money could help us with,
19 we're going to come back to the board.

20 MS. STANLEY: That's what I wanted to
21 know. This not a fixed grant from somebody
22 else that we're going to use this money and
23 then it's over. And then the problem just

1 comes back.

2 MS. MCCURDY: Right. And the dollar
3 that we brought -- dollar figures we
4 brought before the board and you granted us
5 was really to give you an idea of what we
6 thought based on some of the assistance
7 that we would get through contract service
8 and input from those providers, what would
9 be for our first year's efforts. We are
10 going to have to keep updating you. I
11 don't know where that's going to lead us
12 money-wise.

13 Dr. Valentine?

14 DR. VALENTINE: We learned a lot from
15 marine protected areas and how things move
16 a lot between things. And what I'm hearing
17 are defined boundaries for Forever Wild
18 property. You're going to have to consider
19 the input of wild hogs from the surrounding
20 owners' property as well. This is a
21 long-term project. It's not going to be a
22 snapshot.

23 MS. MCCURDY: No, absolutely not.

1 And that's why, you know, we are -- that's
2 what we're -- wherever they come from, if
3 we kill them, that will be great. It will
4 be a positive.

5 CHAIRMAN BLANKENSHIP: I think this
6 is like a lot of the other stuff. We are
7 just going to have to do some adaptive
8 management of it. We will start with the
9 million dollars with these traps, with
10 these contractors, and provide data on what
11 they're seeing in different places and for
12 the different tracts. We'll have a good
13 idea moving forward whether -- the traps
14 will be owned by us. We'll continue to
15 employ those with what we need to come back
16 to the board with, for additional requests
17 for funding in the future. This is the
18 first time we're doing this with
19 contractors and this method, with this
20 first million dollars. And I think we'll
21 adaptively manage that moving forward
22 depending what we see with the success in
23 different tracts around the state.

1 Yes, sir.

2 DR. VALENTINE: I wonder if it might
3 not be useful to have some sort of outreach
4 built around this effort and see what the
5 surrounding property owners are also saying
6 and what they're running into.

7 MS. MCCURDY: Yes. And I think our
8 ground staff does currently communicate
9 with surrounding landowners. I know that
10 Mr. Harper and I worked on -- called me on
11 something that unbeknownst, frankly, to a
12 landowner and to me, based on our
13 conversation, the landowner staff and my
14 staff had already been working on the issue
15 and worked through the problem and had a
16 great communication already going on as far
17 as having that landowner have access they
18 needed to fight their problem on their
19 acreage.

20 So I think that our staff will make
21 an extra effort to be in touch with the
22 surrounding landowners. That's ongoing.

23 CHAIRMAN BLANKENSHIP: And I will say

1 there was an article last week concerning
2 this efforts. But appreciation for the
3 board for what they provided for this work,
4 and from that we've had a landowner
5 adjacent to one of our properties that came
6 up and met with me last week to talk
7 about -- happy to see what we're doing and
8 help provide input on how he thought it
9 would be successful close to his property.

10 The outreach effort from the article did
11 reach some folks.

12 MS. MCCURDY: Feel free to call with
13 any questions along the way, or if you have
14 landowners with questions, please pass them
15 along and let us know.

16 If there are no additional questions
17 on that, we'll move on to Tab 5H memo.

18 This is much more exciting news than
19 talking about hogs. We have a ribbon
20 cutting at the Big Canoe Creek Forever Wild
21 tract tomorrow. The city of Springville
22 really had had just great support from the
23 City of Springville and St. Clair County,

1 and everybody up there is very, very
2 excited about the ribbon cutting tomorrow.

3 The actual grand opening to the public
4 will be Saturday. But this tract is a
5 fabulous example of Forever Wild's money on
6 acquisition and some money assisting with
7 trails and site conditions being far
8 leveraged -- further by City of Springville
9 funding and the time of their staff and
10 having trails put in, in St. Clair County
11 and trail work -- significant parking lot
12 work to really get this open to the public.

13 They've had several businesses in the area
14 that have contributed time, money, and
15 equipment to getting the work done and
16 getting the trails in place and getting
17 this open to the public. So the
18 commissioner will be at, of many of his
19 recent ribbon cuttings, will be at the City
20 of Springville tomorrow. And if anyone
21 needs information on that, again, at 1:00.
22 If you need directions, just let me know.

23 But the trail system is going to

1 incorporate hiking, biking, horseback
2 opportunities, paddling, bird watching, and
3 -- paddling in a good way -- bird watching
4 and enjoyment of -- really it's, we say, an
5 aesthetic beauty. But it really is a
6 beautiful tract and really well done. I
7 want to thank my staff in addition to the
8 city and county and all the volunteers. We
9 had volunteer groups helping us. That's
10 just a great example of everybody working
11 together.

12 I'll move on to tab -- next would be
13 5K. I have a memo, I think, in the last
14 packet also. But I wanted to kind of give
15 you an ongoing update to some of our
16 student recruitment and collegiate
17 mentoring efforts. That is an ADCNR
18 program, and Wildlife and Freshwater
19 Fisheries is very involved in that. And I
20 think we've talked about their efforts
21 before. But that is a program that is
22 really designed to introduce students to
23 outdoor recreation opportunities but also

1 conservation careers and on-the-ground
2 understanding of both the strategy and the
3 implementation of various habitat and
4 wildlife land management efforts. And so
5 within that program, one of the goals is to
6 also be sure that those opportunities are
7 provided to historically black colleges and
8 universities. We also do want to be sure
9 those students are encouraged further in
10 understanding the career opportunities that
11 are out there and hopefully interest them
12 and want to pursue them once they had an
13 opportunity to learn more about them.

14 I also talked with Dr. Powers after
15 the last meeting, and we're working on some
16 opportunities also with the University of
17 South Alabama students we'll keep you up to
18 date on. But we have had -- at our Forever
19 Wild Field Trial Area in Hale County, we
20 had a waterfowl workshop and wing shooting
21 clinic, actually toward the end of last
22 fiscal year. So students from both
23 Montevallo and Tuskegee stayed at the

1 facility and participated in that effort.
2 And then they came back again the middle of
3 December, December 19th through the 21st,
4 and took advantage of being on-site with
5 ADCNR biologists and conservation
6 enforcement officers who both reviewed
7 them. Some of the strategies that have
8 been discussed at previous meetings and
9 then were able to go out and demonstrate
10 some of the successful outcomes of those
11 activities being implemented.

12 We are continuing to schedule
13 efforts. We don't have an exhaustive list.
14 We're working with the universities and
15 building on these. But I can go ahead and
16 let you know of a few upcoming events.
17 Alabama A&M and Tuskegee students will be
18 staying at our Wehle Land Conservation
19 Center, similar to the field trial area
20 that is a partnership between Forever Wild
21 and the State Lands division at those
22 facilities. But those students will be
23 there February 2nd through the 4th, and

1 they're going to be staying with us and
2 learning about our facility but also using
3 our facility as a drop -- sort of a jump-
4 off point for some off-site hunting
5 opportunities.

6 Tuskegee University students, through
7 a cooperative effort of many organizations,
8 which include the Minority Outdoor
9 Alliance, Quail Forever, and Pheasants
10 Forever, will be staying also at Wehle
11 later in February. And that is -- that
12 effort and that partnership with those
13 other entities really is designed to
14 enhance exposure to upland bird hunting for
15 those students. And then Tuskegee students
16 will be back at the field trial area in
17 April. They're going to be sort of what we
18 call the Fishing 101 and pond management
19 workshop there.

20 So just mainly I wanted to let you
21 know a brief overview of some of those
22 activities. If you have any questions or
23 if you'd like to join in on any of those

1 visits with those students, just let me
2 know.

3 So, Commissioner, I think that --
4 I'll double-check that I haven't skipped
5 something, but I think that leads us to the
6 annual report that we do each year. I'll
7 let you -- I'm sure there are some things
8 you want to highlight from that.

9 But for the board's benefit, the
10 Amendment 543 established that the program
11 would every year, on no later than February
12 1st, present a report to the governor,
13 lieutenant governor, and speaker of the
14 house, giving an overview of the past
15 fiscal year's worth of activities,
16 meetings, board memberships, and just an
17 overall update on board activities.

18 Commissioner.

19 CHAIRMAN BLANKENSHIP: I know you
20 covered it good. This was provided to the
21 governor, lieutenant governor, and speaker
22 of the house today as required by law. And
23 it's got a good synopsis of your activities

1 for the last year and activities of the
2 staff and what was acquired, what work had
3 been done with some of the tracts for
4 access, and just other information I
5 thought may be of interest for you to take
6 a little time to read through that to
7 refresh your memory of what all you did
8 last fiscal year as the board.

9 I appreciate the work that you did
10 and from our staff.

11 The next -- do you have anything you
12 want to --

13 MS. MCCURDY: I was going to have a
14 minor correction to the notes. I'm jumping
15 ahead.

16 CHAIRMAN BLANKENSHIP: Go ahead.

17 MS. MCCURDY: I wanted to -- as
18 usual, the Commissioner will ask the board
19 for any corrections or additions to the
20 minutes that are in your packet. That is
21 your Tab 6.

22 I did discover one error -- we did
23 not catch the first time. And it's on page

1 -- and you have a condensed version. But
2 it's on the transcript page 101, and it's
3 line 22. And it's -- it was recorded as
4 "cutting grass" and cogongrass. And I'll
5 get with the court reporter on the correct
6 spelling of that. And so that cutting
7 should be cogongrass.

8 If there are any other corrections,
9 I'll take -- Commissioner, you can proceed.

10 I did want to -- again, that's 101, line
11 22. Cutting should be cogon.

12 CHAIRMAN BLANKENSHIP: I've made that
13 change. Are there any other corrections or
14 additions to the minutes?

15 (No response.)

16 CHAIRMAN BLANKENSHIP: With that
17 change, do I have a motion to accept the
18 minutes?

19 MR. OATES: Motion --

20 MR. PARNELL: Second.

21 CHAIRMAN BLANKENSHIP: So moved by
22 Mr. Oates and seconded by Mr. Parnell. All
23 those in favor of approving the amendment

1 of the November 2nd 2023 minutes with that
2 one correction, please say aye.

3 (Ayes affirmed.)

4 CHAIRMAN BLANKENSHIP: Any opposed?

5 (No response.)

6 CHAIRMAN BLANKENSHIP: Unopposed.

7 Motion carries.

8 The next meeting will be May 2nd at
9 Jacksonville State University. And Dr. Tim
10 Lindblom is excited to host us there.

11 President Killingsworth is excited to have
12 us on campus. I don't know if we've ever
13 had a Forever Wild board meeting there.

14 Dr. Tolley-Jordan, many of you remember as
15 a board member that she has represented
16 Jacksonville State University. I think

17 she's excited to have us come to her
18 campus. And so the area of the state to
19 meet there was really at the request of

20 Mr. Rick Oates. I'll let Mr. Oates --

21 MR. OATES: Thank you, Commissioner.

22 Just like we've been talking about Dugdown
23 Mountain for so long, I would like to

1 invite y'all. We're going to try to host a
2 tour of the property we're going to
3 purchase, as well as maybe what will be
4 phase two of that property, or that
5 purchase, the day before the meeting next
6 time. So we'll get details out to y'all.
7 But if y'all are available, we'd like you
8 to come up the day before. We'll take a
9 tour of that property and see what we're
10 talking about and why it's a good addition
11 to the Forever Wild and the State Forest
12 Program. I'll get more information to
13 y'all out on that before the meeting.

14 CHAIRMAN BLANKENSHIP: Thank you,
15 sir.

16 Also, I just want to point out in Tab
17 8, you see in the back of these most every
18 meeting that there are contributions that
19 are made to the Forever Wild program for
20 different reasons. One of those in this
21 past quarter dealt with the passing of a
22 long-time Department of Conservation
23 employee, Marine Resource Division, Bob

1 Hastings. He passed towards the end of the
2 last year. He requested that in lieu of
3 flowers, that donations be made to the
4 Forever Wild program. I just wanted to
5 acknowledge, even though he did not work on
6 the Forever Wild program or work for State
7 Lands, as many employees of the Department
8 of Conservation are very proud of the work
9 that the department does. And we
10 appreciate his service to the state during
11 the time he worked in the Marine Resources
12 Division. And just acknowledge his passing
13 and contributions that are being made to
14 the fund on behalf of his -- from his
15 friends and family.

16 So do we have anything further from
17 the board?

18 (No response.)

19 MR. OATES: I'll just remind
20 everybody to go take a look at the mural.

21 CHAIRMAN BLANKENSHIP: Do I have a
22 motion to adjourn?

23 MR. HARPER: So move.

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MR. JONES: Second.

CHAIRMAN BLANKENSHIP: All those in favor, say aye.

(Ayes affirmed.)

CHAIRMAN BLANKENSHIP: Motion carries. We are adjourned. Thank you.

(End of deposition, 11:51 a.m.)

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C E R T I F I C A T E

STATE OF ALABAMA)

JEFFERSON COUNTY)

I hereby certify that the above and foregoing deposition was taken down by me in stenotype, and the questions and answers thereto were reduced to computer print under my Supervision, and that the foregoing represents a true and correct transcript of the deposition given by said witness upon said hearing.

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



Lisa Bailey, CCR #289
CCR #289, Expires 9/30/16
Commissioner for the
State of Alabama at Large

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