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MINUTES OF THE
FOREVER WILD BOARD MEETING
JACKSONVILLE STATE UNIVERSITY
MERRELL HALL
JACKSONVILLE, ALABAMA 36265

MAY 2, 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 Jake Harper

6 Rick Oates

7 James "Mickey" Childers

8 Heather Howell

9 A.M. "Jay" Neumann

10 Karen Stanley

11 James B. McClintock

12 Jack Darnall

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1 COMMISSIONER BLANKENSHIP: Call to
2 order the May 2nd Forever Wild meeting.

3 I'll call the roll to make sure we
4 have a quorum. When I say your name, please
5 indicate that you're present so we make sure
6 we have a quorum.

7 Mr. Blankenship is here.

8 Mr. Childers?

9 MR. CHILDERS: Here.

10 COMMISSIONER BLANKENSHIP:

11 Mr. Parnell?

12 MR. PARNELL: Here.

13 COMMISSIONER BLANKENSHIP: Mr. Harper?

14 MR. HARPER: Here.

15 COMMISSIONER BLANKENSHIP: Dr. Howell?

16 DR. HOWELL: Here.

17 COMMISSIONER BLANKENSHIP:

18 Dr. McClintock?

19 DR. MCCLINTOCK: Here.

20 COMMISSIONER BLANKENSHIP:

21 Dr. Neumann?

22 DR. NEUMANN: Here.

23 COMMISSIONER BLANKENSHIP: Rick Oates?

1 MR. OATES: Here.

2 COMMISSIONER BLANKENSHIP:

3 Mr. Darnall?

4 MR. DARNALL: Here.

5 COMMISSIONER BLANKENSHIP: Dr. Saloom?

6 DR. SALOOM: Here.

7 COMMISSIONER BLANKENSHIP:

8 Ms. Stanley?

9 (No response.)

10 COMMISSIONER BLANKENSHIP: Raymond

11 Jones?

12 (No response.)

13 COMMISSIONER BLANKENSHIP: Dr. Keener,

14 Dr. Powers, and Dr. Valentine are not here.

15 So we do have ten. We have enough for a

16 quorum.

17 I'd like to express our appreciation

18 to Dr. Killingsworth and to the Earth and

19 Sciences, Dean Tim Lindblom for allowing us

20 to meet here at Jacksonville State

21 University. A couple months ago I was through

22 this part of the state, and it was really my

23 first opportunity to ever be on the campus

1 here at Jacksonville State. And I did not
2 realize what beautiful facilities that they
3 have here in Jacksonville.

4 And then I had the opportunity to come
5 back and meet with a lot of mountain bike
6 enthusiasts that use our Coldwater Mountain
7 Forever Wild property that is near here.
8 They use it extensively for mountain biking
9 and had great ideas and plans for
10 improvements that we could make on that
11 property. And Dean Lindblom offered us the
12 opportunity to meet here on campus, and so I
13 snatched up that idea pretty quickly. I knew
14 it was great for me to be able to see the
15 campus and I know many of you, this may be
16 your first or second time here on the campus.

17 So thank you so much for hosting us.
18 Is there anything you'd like to say or
19 welcome the group? It's up to you. If not,
20 I'll --

21 DEAN LINDBLOM: Sure, if you don't
22 mind.

23 COMMISSIONER BLANKENSHIP: Sure.

1 DEAN LINDBLOM: I'll stand right here.
2 It won't take but a second.

3 I want to thank everybody for coming
4 today. We're glad that you're here. We very
5 much support the work of Forever Wild and
6 State Lands. Commissioner Blankenship
7 mentioned Coldwater Mountain. We studied
8 that mountain in 2012 and estimated the
9 economic impact that that mountain has on
10 this region is between 2 and \$6 million
11 annually. And I'm sure those numbers have
12 increased over the years as mountain biking
13 has surged in popularity. So their work has
14 had a big impact on the economics of this
15 region. And we're very grateful for that.

16 I'm also happy that you are here at
17 JSU, Jax State, what we're calling ourselves
18 now. Feel free to wander around this
19 building. Two floors up is a beautiful
20 atrium. There's an event that's going on
21 that starts right about now. But you can
22 definitely go up there and look around from
23 the back. You won't disturb anybody. And

1 help yourself looking around. And if there's
2 anything I can do for you while you are here,
3 please let me know.

4 Thanks for being here today.

5 COMMISSIONER BLANKENSHIP: Thank you,
6 Dean, for hosting us.

7 So let's start our public comment
8 period. As usual, you'll have three minutes
9 to speak on the property that you're
10 interested in. As I call your name up, if
11 you'll just give me a chance to let the board
12 find the property that you are interested in
13 in the packet before you get started. That
14 way they can take a look at -- and know
15 exactly what property you're speaking on.

16 So our first speaker is on the Hales
17 Spring tract. It's -- well, it's a
18 conglomeration of a group of people.

19 Larry Rodick. And it is page -- Tab
20 4B, page nine.

21 MR. RODICK: Let me know when you're
22 ready.

23 Is this thing on? If you -- can you

1 hear me all right?

2 Good morning, I am Larry Rodick,
3 President of Friends of Shades Mountain,
4 private, nonprofit group, whose mission is to
5 preserve and protect the steep northwest
6 slope of Shades Mountain in Jefferson County.

7 Would everyone at this point who came
8 today to support us please stand up. I'd
9 appreciate it.

10 Thank you so much. Thank you.

11 On behalf of the 300 members of
12 Friends of Shades Mountain and the 700
13 signatories of our petition to establish a
14 Bluff Park Preserve to include Hale Springs,
15 I'm asking you to approve our nomination of
16 the 18-plus acres of Hales Spring tract.
17 This property is the largest remaining
18 undeveloped site on Shades Mountain. For
19 those familiar with the Alabama Gulf Coast,
20 it is comparable to how the high-rise condos
21 obstruct our view of the gulf with the one
22 exception of Gulf State Park. Hale Springs
23 is our Gulf State Park, and we need to

1 preserve it and protect it.

2 The site provides the best location
3 for hiking and rock climbing on the mountain.
4 Friends of Shades Mountain along with Boy
5 Scout Troop 21, the Southeastern Climbing
6 (sic) Coalition, and Friends of Moss Rock --
7 and by the way, all the leaders of all those
8 are here today -- have promised to maintain
9 the trails that we will build once the
10 property is secured. So we have a
11 maintenance plan in place.

12 Following are ten goods reasons to
13 preserve and protect Hale Springs. One, it
14 is the linchpin of the proposed Bluff Park
15 Preserve. Two, it is the original source of
16 drinking water for Bluff Park, including two
17 springs thought to contain medicinal water
18 that brought tourists and others to this
19 resort site in the years past. Three, it
20 provides gorgeous sunsets looking northwest
21 towards Shades Mountain and Red Mountain. It
22 is the largest remaining open space on the
23 Bluff Park atop Shades Mountain. It is a

1 venue for a trail to the springs and for more
2 trails from the crest to the creek. It'll
3 provide a venue to build a replica of the old
4 Crawford Fire Tower for visitors to enjoy.

5 It provides critical habitat for flora and
6 fauna on Shades Mountain, including the rare
7 scarlet tanager.

8 In a survey in 1901, the original
9 owner dedicated this track as a park to be
10 called Bluff Park. Its forest cover helps
11 protect Shades Creek by filtering
12 rainfall, and its forest cover helps keep the
13 air clean and cool inviting those from the
14 city to come for relief from the heat.

15 The following have written letters of
16 support for this nomination: County
17 Commission President James "Jimmie" Stephens
18 from Jefferson County; Mayor Frank Brocato,
19 City of Hoover; Mayor Randall Woodfin and
20 Council President Darrell O'Quinn from the
21 City of Birmingham; Mike Shaw, State
22 Representative District 47; Hoover Historical
23 Society; the Birmingham Historical Society;

1 Boy Scout Troop 21; Friends of Moss Rock
2 Preserve; Southeastern Climbers Association;
3 Cahaba River Society; Cahaba Riverkeeper;
4 Freshwater Land Trust.

5 I hope you'll see the value of saving
6 this important piece of land, keeping it open
7 for the future enjoyment of everyone.

8 Thank you.

9 COMMISSIONER BLANKENSHIP: Thank you.

10 MR. RODICK: I hope I stayed within
11 three minutes.

12 COMMISSIONER BLANKENSHIP: I have five
13 other people on this same green slip, so I'll
14 just call you and if you still want to speak,
15 we'll continue to come.

16 Peggy Quinn.

17 MS. QUINN: I'm not as tall as Larry.

18 Good morning, my name is Peggy Quinn,
19 and I'm on the board of the Friends of Shades
20 Mountain, which has nominated this tract. I
21 thank you, the board, and the staff for
22 allowing us to speak this morning.

23 While the acreage of this property is

1 small, its history is deep and its potential
2 to return something to the Bluff Park
3 community, as well as to Hoover and
4 Birmingham and Jefferson County is huge. The
5 Hale Springs property holds the longest open
6 view across Shades Valley that remains along
7 Shades Crest Road. You may hear that a lot
8 today.

9 Being a mountaintop community with
10 beautiful views and fresh breezes has always
11 been the heart and soul of Bluff Park. I'm
12 sure indigenous people who first inhabited it
13 were drawn to its high elevation, the painted
14 sky at sunset, a forested valley with
15 abundant wildlife, and the creek running
16 through. The paths they forged over and
17 across the mountain became wagon trails for
18 mountaintop resort visitors in the 1850s.

19 Settlers followed, including Gardner
20 Hale who bought the resort property in 1863.
21 He and his family were pioneers of Bluff
22 Park. The natural springs, their first water
23 source. The wagon trails became some of the

1 key roads that now lead to and from Bluff
2 Park. Much of the valley is filling with
3 rooftops, and wildlife is not so abundant.

4 But there is still green space in Shades
5 Valley and the view toward Red Mountain
6 remains beautiful. The sunsets are
7 captivating and draw crowds to watch them
8 color the sky and tint the clouds. Right now
9 the sunset crowds gather on the closed
10 business lot on the bluff. But where will
11 they go if another business opens there and
12 they're not welcome?

13 I grew up in Bluff Park in the '60s
14 and '70s and have lived most of my adult life
15 there. For decades there was wonderful
16 public overlook, more of a small park across
17 from the old fire tower on Shades Crest Road.
18 As a small child I picnicked there with my
19 family at the concrete tables. As a teen, a
20 preteen, I roamed the trails below the bluff
21 with friends, examined the silt bottom caves,
22 and climbed the magnificent boulders. As a
23 teenager, it was a perfect spot, a great

1 destination, for a bicycle ride and hangout.
2 As a young adult, it was the perfect spot for
3 my dog and me to sit for a while in silent
4 revelry.

5 That overlook no longer exists. It
6 was divided in the mid 1990s into five or six
7 small lots for big houses that commandeered
8 the view. I fear that fate for the Hale
9 Springs property as there are crestside
10 houses built on stilts only a block away.

11 Preserving the Hale Springs property
12 could begin to restore a place for picnics,
13 rock climbing, birding, sunset watching to
14 Bluff Park and the larger community.

15 Preserving this tract also would save the
16 natural springs and the mountainside that
17 have historical value, both for Bluff Park
18 and early 20th century Birmingham.

19 Friends of Shades Mountain has
20 proposed the Bluff Park Preserve and the City
21 of Hoover has supported it in both its 2019
22 Comprehensive Master Plan and its 2024 Parks
23 and Public Spaces Plan. There is strong

1 community support, as evidenced by today's
2 turnout and the more than 700 signatures on
3 the petition calling for a Bluff Park
4 Preserve. We want to save a piece of the
5 natural landscape that is Bluff Park's
6 history and its heart. It should also be its
7 legacy.

8 Thank you very much.

9 COMMISSIONER BLANKENSHIP: Thank you.

10 Mac Martin.

11 MR. MARTIN: Good morning. My name is
12 Mac Martin. I'm the city planner for the
13 City of Hoover, Alabama. I'm joined by
14 Mr. Ken Grimes, our city administrator who
15 will be up shortly. You've heard some of the
16 history, the background of Hale Springs as
17 its importance to the Bluff Park community.

18 I want to share with you briefly some
19 of the highlights that we see as a city in
20 having the property preserved, not only for
21 historical preservation purposes, but also
22 for recreational purposes as well. As Peggy
23 mentioned, we recently adopted a Park and

1 Recreation Master Plan for the entirety of
2 our city. A sizable component of this plan,
3 based on the public input that we received,
4 was that we needed to focus on developing a
5 trails network across our community, not just
6 one that would serve our residents and give
7 them an opportunity to recreate and be able
8 to get from point A to point B in a fashion
9 other than automobile. It also envisions our
10 connecting with the greater regional network
11 as well. This particular piece of property
12 that you have before you today is a linchpin
13 in making the connectivity happen.

14 The plan that we adopted envisions a
15 vast network of trails and greenways across
16 our city and connecting into the larger
17 regional network. One geographic issue that
18 we have in making some critical connections
19 is, of course, the Shades Crest Bluff and
20 being able to connect our Bluff Park
21 community with the Shades Creek area in the
22 valley below. Some of you may be well aware
23 of the beautiful multipurpose greenway path

1 that Homewood has accomplished along Shades
2 Creek, and you're probably aware that
3 Freshwater Land Trust owns a considerable
4 amount of frontage on Shades Creek, some of
5 which is at the bottom of this mountain.

6 This vision that we have for this particular
7 property as noted in our Park and Recreation
8 Plan envisions a preserve. This is a
9 multijurisdictional opportunity for several
10 municipalities and the county government to
11 come together in order to facilitate a
12 preserve with a trail network that connects
13 Hoover to the greater regional network as far
14 as also including existing greenway along
15 Shades Creek as well as potentially Red
16 Mountain Park, not far away.

17 So I wanted to present some of these
18 technical aspects and present to you an
19 overview of the plan and how it envisions
20 this site being a part of the overall
21 recreational trail network.

22 I certainly thank you for your time
23 today.

1 COMMISSIONER BLANKENSHIP: I do have a
2 question. Adjacent Jefferson County
3 property -- you're talking -- I'm asking you
4 since you're the planning guy.

5 MR. MARTIN: Yes, sir.

6 COMMISSIONER BLANKENSHIP: Is that
7 zoned in any particular way, like, where
8 Jefferson County has that zoned for
9 industrial or recreational use or any
10 restrictions on that property at all, or do
11 you know?

12 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: I heard
13 agricultural.

14 MR. MARTIN: An agricultural zoning
15 designation.

16 DR. MCCLINTOCK: Zone A?

17 MR. MARTIN: Yes, sir.

18 COMMISSIONER BLANKENSHIP: Next is Ken
19 Grimes.

20 Ken, good to see you in your role
21 there in Hoover.

22 MR. GRIMES: Yes, sir. Thank you.

23 COMMISSIONER BLANKENSHIP: I've been

1 working with you for decades in now Orange
2 Beach. I'm glad to have you closer to home.

3 MR. GRIMES: As you said,
4 Commissioner, it's an honor to be back. I
5 grew up in Bessemer. I spent 23 years at
6 Orange Beach, 21 at the city, 15 as city
7 administrator. I said that -- since you
8 bring it up, thank you. I'm extremely proud
9 to see the USA Today recognition a second
10 year in a row of the US Branyon Backcountry
11 Trails system. And I fully intend to end my
12 career in Hoover with giving it a run for the
13 money with the new trails program. But it's
14 an honor to see those things.

15 This Hale Springs parcel is really
16 unique. I think my standpoint to you, being
17 here six months, it's an entity that can
18 create a part of this partnership is that
19 really it brings together three things from
20 public, public, public, perspective of not
21 just the City of Hoover, but City of
22 Birmingham and Jefferson County.

23 And as y'all discussed, this is an

1 area that dealing with Shades Mountain and
2 dealing with Shades Crest Road, all of the
3 things that go across there, it is a
4 linchpin. It really does create the
5 connectivity that with that plan that is in
6 your packet that the City of Hoover has
7 passed with the plans that Jefferson County
8 is working towards. And a lot of that, as
9 you know, with the Freshwater Land Trust to
10 the south, on those parcels on Shades Creek.

11 That was the old Shannon landfill.

12 So for my life, not only going to that
13 landfill with my uncle's junkyard but also
14 with the fact that we went to Lover's Leap.
15 And we'll just stop there as we talk about in
16 the '80s. It was a very beautiful view.

17 None of us had good cars.

18 The key is that it is a partnership
19 opportunity. And I think the question that
20 you probably have is, well, where does the
21 City of Hoover stand when it comes to
22 financial obligations and such. And,
23 obviously, today I can give you the fact that

1 we're excited for the opportunity and we
2 would love to see that partnership between
3 the three governmental entities with other
4 private entities and nonprofits be able to
5 create something special in perpetuity for
6 everyone to enjoy. That view is unique. I
7 got to see it the other day as I went up. I
8 went up because we had a house fire, but I
9 knew we had this meeting. So we lost one of
10 our historic houses, but the person was okay
11 as we got them out, but just below that. At
12 the end of the day, seeing the view, it is
13 something that the pictures don't do it
14 justice. And you really do need to see that
15 when it comes to being in the middle of metro
16 Jefferson County. And I think for that, it
17 is a unique opportunity besides the historic
18 value.

19 I just want to encourage you to see
20 that opportunity and that we are there as a
21 partner to sit at the table and figure out
22 what decisions need to be made when it comes
23 to the future of operations of that facility

1 and how it would interconnect with all our
2 trails.

3 Thank you for your time.

4 MR. PARNELL: Ken, could you tell us
5 anything you know about the ownership of the
6 land and a little history. I realize you've
7 only been there a few months.

8 MR. GRIMES: You have people in the
9 room that know every detail. Because I've
10 been there only six months, I don't know it
11 best. Could I refer to them for that answer?

12 MS. MCCURDY: If we're going to have
13 someone speaking, though, please come to
14 the --

15 MR. GRIMES: I just don't want to give
16 you the wrong information.

17 COMMISSIONER BLANKENSHIP: Give your
18 name again for the court reporter, so she can
19 --

20 MR. RODICK: Larry Rodick from Friends
21 of Shades Mountain.

22 The question was about the ownership.
23 It's currently owned by a man named Ron

1 Roegner, and he bought it in the late '90s,
2 mid '90s, late '90s from the Gilberts. Roy
3 Gilbert was an older banker in Birmingham.
4 Some of you from Birmingham remember Roy
5 Gilbert. And he sold it to this man. And
6 he's been trying to sell it for six years
7 with no success. He had some developers look
8 it. It's very steep. I think that scared
9 them off. That's all we know right now.

10 He is very concerned about it being
11 preserved. He just told several people,
12 including some news reporters, that he wants
13 to see it preserved. We think he will be a
14 willing partner if you were to make an offer
15 to him. But that's all I know.

16 Do you have any other questions about
17 that?

18 MR. DARNALL: He owns the entire
19 parcel?

20 MR. RODICK: It's actually two
21 parcels. It's two parcels that make up the
22 triangle basically of this property that goes
23 down the mountain.

1 COMMISSIONER BLANKENSHIP: Dr. Saloom.

2 DR. SALOOM: Has there been any
3 communication, if you're privy to say,
4 between the City of Birmingham and the
5 Freshwater Land Trust in terms of access to
6 this area, this triangle area as well?

7 And the other question is, is there
8 accessible parking in that area for people to
9 be privy to that access to this triangle here
10 besides Shades Mountain Road?

11 MR. RODICK: Well, we just met with
12 Freshwater Land Trust actually Tuesday and
13 talked about how this would fit in with their
14 trail plan for the county. And they're --
15 they're willing to look at it. We haven't
16 really gotten down the road with them about
17 how it would connect. And it would have to
18 go through Jefferson County property, which
19 you may see on the maps is a sizable
20 property, over 400 acres down there below
21 this tract. And we have not had time to work
22 with Jefferson County about that either. But
23 I think what we really need to do is get

1 around the table with all the entities and
2 work that out. That's all I can tell you
3 right now.

4 We do want to connect to their trail
5 systems, especially along Shades Creek.

6 MR. CHILDERS: Shades Valley Crest
7 Road is on one of the boundaries of the
8 property.

9 MR. RODICK: Shades Crest Road.

10 MR. CHILDERS: Where is the bluff in
11 relation to that road?

12 MR. RODICK: The road runs along the
13 top of the mountain, and that property comes
14 off to the north steep from that road.

15 MR. CHILDERS: There's no access from
16 that side to the property, right, unless you
17 fall off the bluff?

18 MR. RODICK: We're going to have to
19 develop -- and that's something we're
20 planning to do, to help with the parking, is
21 develop some parking spots along the road
22 there that allow people to get to the
23 trailheads.

1 MR. CHILDERS: There's no access from
2 the other side because you've got to come
3 across the Jefferson County property, right?

4 MR. RODICK: Unless we work something
5 out with them to come up with --

6 MR. CHILDERS: That's what --

7 MR. RODICK: There is a road at the
8 bottom, Shannon Road, that runs along the
9 creek. But that would all have to be worked
10 out. It has not -- we've not approached that
11 yet.

12 COMMISSIONER BLANKENSHIP: Any other
13 questions?

14 Mr. Harper.

15 MR. HARPER: On the map this TipTop
16 Grill site is actually a business on the
17 property now?

18 MR. RODICK: That's been closed
19 several years.

20 MS. MCCURDY: But the structure is
21 there, and it still is privately owned. The
22 business owner has closed. But there is
23 potential that it could open back up if there

1 was another commercial party.

2 MR. HARPER: So if we get an
3 appraisal, we would be appraising this
4 building, or is the building not included?

5 MS. MCCURDY: It's not -- there are no
6 structures on the nominated track. It's just
7 next to it, right next to it. It's a point
8 of reference, but it is not part of this
9 tract.

10 MR. RODICK: We've spoken to the owner
11 of the TipTop property, and he's willing to
12 be part of the Bluff Park Preserve, the four
13 properties that we plan to set up as a
14 preserve.

15 MR. GRIMES: Commissioner, may I --

16 COMMISSIONER BLANKENSHIP: Yes, sir.

17 MR. GRIMES: To your question, it does
18 concern us from the standpoint of our Public
19 Spaces Plan that it's private, and I've seen
20 tremendous terrain -- although this is very
21 steep, where I've seen tremendous terrain in
22 the city that has been developed so it has
23 potential. That's concerning on that side.

1 To yours, I've been here six months I
2 know that the county manager who also came
3 from Baldwin County, and the City of
4 Birmingham would definitely be willing at
5 that point to start working those. And then,
6 lastly, with that building, that is the
7 current parking. So one of the questions is
8 would there be consideration -- there are
9 private parcels across the road. But there's
10 a signal there that stops so traffic slows at
11 that intersection where it connects. So the
12 city could be involved if that came to that
13 for accessing a piece, building parking
14 there, and all the things that tie back to
15 that business.

16 So there's a combination of things
17 that would happen to try to give you that
18 ability to park for the public access.

19 MR. CHILDERS: In some of the
20 literature I received, it mentioned that the
21 property had been for sale since 2016. Has
22 anybody got an idea what that property has
23 been listed at price-wise?

1 MR. RODICK: He started out at \$1
2 million and he dropped it \$600,000, the last
3 I heard.

4 MR. GRIMES: So started at a million
5 and dropped to 600,000. I think the tax
6 records are a little bit below that for
7 Jefferson County for two parcels.

8 MS. QUINN: Could I add one comment?

9 COMMISSIONER BLANKENSHIP: Please give
10 your name again for the court reporter.

11 MS. QUINN: I'm sorry, Peggy Quinn
12 with Friends. And I just wanted to mention
13 that we have letters of support from the
14 mayor of the City of Birmingham as well as
15 Hoover and from the Jefferson County
16 Commission chairman and you should have them
17 in packets we provided today. But I just --
18 as far as cooperation, I just wanted to make
19 sure you were aware.

20 COMMISSIONER BLANKENSHIP: Yes, ma'am.
21 Thank you.

22 Next is Ken Wills.

23 MR. WILLS: I'm Ken Wills. I

1 represent two groups today. I'm the
2 president of the Friends of Moss Rock
3 Preserve. We're on the other side of Bluff
4 Park. And I also represent Boy Scout Troop
5 21, which my son is getting ready to eagle
6 out of that troop. Basically the Friends of
7 Moss Rock, we're committed to helping them
8 build the trail down to the springs. We have
9 a lot of experience building trails for free
10 at Moss Rock. And The Troop 21 has committed
11 to help maintain that trail. And I just
12 learned Troop 93 is willing to help as well
13 on the other side of Bluff Park, so you've
14 got some partners there.

15 I'm also a biologist. I got my
16 biology undergrad degree from right here at
17 JSU. I was asked to help inventory the
18 plants and animals. We just started. They
19 asked me to do it in the dead of winter. And
20 so, so far we've got about 200 species.
21 About 150 of those are plants. The others
22 are birds and an assortment of other things.
23 We put that iNaturalist. If we've got more

1 time, we could probably find a lot more
2 plants and animals. The biology of this
3 tract is it is a nice mesic upland hardwood
4 forest with a little bit of pine. Normally,
5 when you get up on ridgetops and stuff, it's
6 real dry chestnut oak stuff. This is good
7 stuff with big tulip poplars, big northern
8 red oaks, big white oaks.

9 If you get down on the lower end of
10 that triangle, you actually get a lot of the
11 spring ephemeral wildflowers. And you have
12 some sandstone, lots of sandstone cliff
13 habitat, which I'm not as familiar with some
14 of those species.

15 But I think the most significant
16 feature for this tract in terms of biology is
17 this 20 -- I'm sorry, 18 acres sits next to
18 660 acres. Part of it is owned by Jefferson
19 County, and part of it is owned by the
20 Freshwater Land Trust. So by protecting this
21 18 acres, you can see how it juts and goes
22 down the mountain. If they try to do another
23 development like Waterford Falls where they

1 cut the side of the mountain down, that's
2 going to push the edge of the forest in and
3 fragment this habitat more. So by protecting
4 this habitat, this 20 acres, you're going to
5 help maintain this big block of unfragmented
6 forest that's used by nesting species like
7 the scarlet tanager.

8 And as previously mentioned, this is
9 about the only undeveloped land at the top of
10 the bluff where you can actually get up to
11 the top of the bluff and access it from the
12 top of the bluff potentially. So there's a
13 lot of potential for this area, you know, to
14 have recreational access from the top of the
15 bluff down to Shades Creek and through all
16 these other lands. We've still got to work
17 out the details.

18 But, anyway, a lot of potential, and
19 we hope you guys buy this land.

20 Thank you.

21 COMMISSIONER BLANKENSHIP: As a father
22 of an Eagle Scout, I'll tell you
23 congratulations on that.

1 MR. WILLS: Almost there. If the
2 weather holds this weekend.

3 MS. WHITE: I'm Marjorie White,
4 chairman and director of the Birmingham
5 Historical Society. Thank you for providing
6 those with an interest in preserving Hale
7 Springs the opportunity to provide you
8 information.

9 The freestone and chalybeate water of
10 Hale Springs on the rocky bluffs of Shades
11 Mountain in Birmingham have been known for a
12 millennia. An ancient Indian trail linking
13 the Cahaba and Warrior Rivers cross the
14 mountain, bringing many to these life-giving
15 waters. Gardner Hale, the New England whiz,
16 who developed Daniel Pratt Cotton Gin works
17 in Prattville into the world's largest in the
18 1840s and '50s, retired and purchased the
19 springs in 1863 and built up a resort
20 community on the mountain in the Bluff Park
21 above.

22 In 1885, Hale's heirs subdivided his
23 vast holdings, reserving the springs as,

1 quote, Bluff Parc, P-A-R-C, a French idea of
2 a private park reserving the waters for those
3 who bought lots in the first subdivision on
4 Shades Mountain. 1885, a subdivision and a
5 community became known for the park on the
6 bluff, Bluff Park. Hale's son, Daniel Pratt
7 Hale, acquired the park, timbered the site,
8 and built the Bluff Park Hotel. This
9 mountain resort attracted visitor from across
10 the south to take the waters and enjoy the
11 breathtaking views and cool air. Alabama
12 State geologists declared the waters
13 beneficial.

14 In the 1920s with the advent of well
15 and later city water, the site disappeared
16 from public view. Fortunately, it attracted
17 the attention of the nation's premier park
18 planners, the Olmsted brothers. Frederick
19 Law Olmsted, Junior, son of Frederick
20 Olmsted, founder of Central Park in New York
21 and the founder of the profession of
22 landscape architecture in America, led
23 Olmsted Brothers. Olmsted Brothers was then

1 the largest landscape architecture practice
2 in the world and considered by many to be the
3 finest. Olmsted Brothers designed park
4 systems for Baltimore, Boston, Chicago,
5 Portland, Seattle, Louisville, California,
6 and in 1925 produced a plan for the
7 Birmingham region, a park system for
8 Birmingham.

9 The 1925 plan describes the bluffs of
10 Shades Mountain as, quote, a rugged hillside
11 with its outcropping rock, both wild and
12 picturesque. The value of Shades Creek and
13 the precipitous northwesterly face of Shades
14 Mountain, the plan continues, offers perhaps
15 the best opportunity for enclosed natural
16 landscape and inspiring broad outlook in the
17 Birmingham district. Factors the Olmsted
18 brothers said pointed to the particular
19 fitness of this area to supply the essential
20 functions of a park of metropolitan scale,
21 end quote.

22 Today Hale Springs is an 18-acre site.
23 The only site along the Shades Mountain ridge

1 that has escaped subdivision. Its
2 acquisition can move one step closer towards
3 that park of metropolitan scale envisioned in
4 1925. A hundred years ago, Frederick Law
5 Olmsted, Junior, managing partner of Olmsted
6 Brothers, the nation's preeminent park
7 planning firm recommended the acquisition of
8 the bluffs of Shades Mountain as a park.

9 Please consider making this
10 acquisition a reality. And if you'd like to
11 check my quotes or review an Olmsted plan, I
12 have copies here if anyone would like one. I
13 believe I sent one to you.

14 COMMISSIONER BLANKENSHIP: You did.

15 Thank you for sending that to me.

16 I am just a big enough nerd to read a
17 hundred-year-old document.

18 MS. WHITE: It's fascinating.

19 COMMISSIONER BLANKENSHIP: And it was
20 fascinating.

21 MS. WHITE: And, you know, since we
22 reprinted it years ago, everybody has raised
23 their hand and we're either in there, we want

1 to do it, or we're doing it. We are part of
2 the Olmsted vision. It's something that has
3 caught on nationally and caught in our area.
4 We're just so fortunate that the forester who
5 brought Olmsted to Birmingham -- he would
6 have bought all this property, but
7 unfortunately, he died at the end of the
8 process. The opportunity is still there on
9 this small parcel. And with everybody else
10 working together, you could put together this
11 magnificent vision of a park of metropolitan
12 scale.

13 Thank you.

14 COMMISSIONER BLANKENSHIP: Next is
15 Janet Hineman.

16 MS. HINEMAN: Hello. My name is Janet
17 Hineman, and I grew up at Bluff Park. And
18 Peggy and I were classmates a long time ago.
19 I saw her Facebook, and she said there's a
20 meeting. I live in Jacksonville now. I'm a
21 big bike rider. I've used the trails here,
22 and I just wanted to tell you something, just
23 a little quickly. I believe that this -- I

1 took the time to print out some pictures.
2 This is Lover's Leap. I don't know if you
3 can see, but it's just gorgeous. I used to
4 go there. My husband used to go there. We
5 -- when we did get married, but that's
6 besides the point. That has nothing to do
7 with it. This is TipTop. It is just a
8 gorgeous view. My mother, who is now
9 deceased, she lived in Bluff Park. I would
10 even walk from 2448 Old Briar Trail to go to
11 TipTop, which has the bluff. And then there
12 is the beautiful, beautiful sunsets. And I
13 can tell you it's a God moment when you look
14 out over the bluff. And I am 100 percent for
15 this, and I appreciate all you can do to make
16 this happen.

17 Thank you very much.

18 COMMISSIONER BLANKENSHIP: The next
19 speaker is Mr. Jerry Joe Ingram on the Cooper
20 Branch nomination. That's Tab 4B, page five.

21 MR. INGRAM: Hey, do you mind if Drew
22 goes before I do?

23 COMMISSIONER BLANKENSHIP: All right.

1 The next speaker would be Mr. Drew Nix on
2 that same piece of property. 4B, page five.

3 MR. NIX: Cooper Branch tract, it's in
4 Shelby County, one of the fastest growing
5 counties here in the state and has been for
6 several years. This tract lays off -- south
7 of County Road 11 and kind of between Pelham
8 and Chelsea. It's in the Ridge and Valley
9 Province which makes up roughly 9 percent of
10 the state. And breaking that down to an eco
11 region number four, it's on the southern
12 section on the ridges which is even smaller
13 than that nine percent. It's a very small
14 area.

15 The tract is approximately 900 acres
16 in size. It's got spectacular views. the
17 elevations range to just over 1,000 feet
18 above sea level. It's full of mixed pine and
19 hardwood mature forest. It has oak, hickory,
20 poplar, loblolly, shortleaf, and Montane
21 longleaf trees on it. I also spent some time
22 on the tracts of a possible new site of
23 Boynton oak, which is a sandstone dwarf oak

1 that's very rare in the state. It's found
2 less than a mile away on Oak Mountain State
3 Park and also found on y'all's Hinds Road
4 outcrop piece outside of Gadsden. But a
5 pretty rare species. I'm checking with
6 Patrick Thompson at the Auburn Arboretum to
7 do some verification of those.

8 Another big thing, it's got great
9 habitat for several endangered bat species.
10 It's within the U.S. Fish and Wildlife
11 Service range for Indiana bats, gray bats,
12 northern long-eared bats, and the proposed
13 endangered tricolored bat. That ruling
14 should be out on it here before too awful
15 long. These bats, the Indiana bat, there's a
16 known hibernacula less than ten miles away at
17 Lake Purdy. The forest provides their
18 foraging habitat for most of these bats,
19 other than the gray bat. They forage mostly
20 in the forest, but they also can have
21 maternity colonies where they raise their
22 pups in forested stands like this. It's got
23 a lot of species on it. They have

1 exfoliating or rough sloughing bark that
2 these bats use as maternity trees.

3 That's about all I've got. I'm out of
4 time. Thank you for y'all's consideration.

5 MR. HARPER: One question. On the
6 map, there's a couple of blocks that are
7 blocked out. Why are they blocked out? Are
8 there residents there or -- tell us the
9 situation on that land.

10 MR. NIX: Mr. Ingram is going to cover
11 that. He's the next speaker.

12 COMMISSIONER BLANKENSHIP: Jerry Joe
13 Ingram.

14 MR. INGRAM: I'm Jerry Joe Ingram.
15 You mentioned Mr. Ingram. I didn't know my
16 father was here today.

17 Thank you board and commissioner for
18 having us here. The outparcels, if you look
19 at the map, there's three of them. The one
20 that's kind of on the west side, that belongs
21 to the Shelby County Water Authority. They
22 have a water tank up there. They have an
23 all-weather crushed rock road to access that.

1 And they go up there probably, you know,
2 several times a week just to check on the
3 water tower. That's a water main water line
4 easement that leads there that goes down to
5 the neighborhoods and all that. So it
6 does -- that is an outparcel.

7 The other two outparcels -- when we
8 sent this nomination in, the other two that's
9 kind of in the middle of the property and one
10 that's kind of on the east side, those belong
11 to a family member. At the time we were
12 doing this, the owner of the property has
13 since acquired those. So it could be at the
14 option of this board. He's not really
15 contributing any value to them. He's bought
16 them. They were outparcels so he bought them
17 to make them all continuous. If you wanted
18 to include those outparcels in your
19 consideration, you could, or he would sell it
20 like it was when it was presented to y'all.

21 The middle outparcel actually has a house on
22 it. It's one of the highest elevations on
23 the property. It's actually -- the owner's

1 son built it. He drilled down into some rock
2 with some rebar and built an I-beam frame and
3 built a log cabin suspended above those
4 rocks. It has a 360-degree angled view.

5 They said you can see four counties from up
6 there. I don't think I can see four
7 counties, but you can see a long ways. I
8 know y'all don't like to buy anything with
9 structures on it. it's a completely two to
10 three-bedroom log cabin completely off the
11 grid. If nothing else, you could maybe
12 repurpose it for a viewing deck or something
13 like that.

14 The other little outparcel that's on
15 the east side, that is nothing, just timber
16 land.

17 COMMISSIONER BLANKENSHIP: Any
18 questions?

19 Mr. Parnell.

20 MR. PARNELL: Jerry, tell us about the
21 ownership and the history of the land.

22 MR. INGRAM: The ownership, the
23 current owners owned it, I believe, about 15

1 years. He bought it really for kind of a
2 family venture. First, his whole family was
3 going to build houses out there. They liked
4 it because it was a large tract of land, one
5 of the largest tracts, I think, left in
6 Shelby County. And they were going to build
7 family houses on it. And he's since bought a
8 farm and he has built there, but his son
9 built the house up there on top of the
10 plateau. Prior to that, I'm not sure what
11 the ownership was. But the timber has been
12 fairly well managed. So many big tracts you
13 go on, somebody in the last 10 or 15 years
14 has gone in and cut a lot of timber.

15 To my knowledge, Drew -- I don't know.
16 I don't -- it's probably been 20, at least 30
17 years since there's been any timber
18 harvested. So it's aesthetically a pretty
19 property.

20 COMMISSIONER BLANKENSHIP:

21 Dr. McClintock.

22 DR. MCCLINTOCK: Yes, does the Cooper
23 Branch -- the creek that runs down the middle

1 of it run year round, or is that just
2 periodic?

3 MR. INGRAM: I think it's got enough
4 springs charging in a very hot, dry summer, I
5 haven't actually seen it in a super, super
6 hot, dry summer. But it could slow down to a
7 trickle at that time, but I think it's got
8 enough elevation off those twin mountains
9 there that it's going to keep a pretty good
10 little steady stream coming all the time.

11 DR. MCCLINTOCK: Thank you. And can
12 you speak to the potential management of the
13 property and the road infrastructure that
14 exists on it at present?

15 MR. INGRAM: There's one -- if you
16 look on the map, the west parcel where the
17 water tower is, there's a -- the county does
18 kind of maintain that to have good ingress
19 and regress. The road does go further past
20 there all the way to the property line. And
21 I've got just a regular Jeep. I can drive
22 every road on that in my Jeep, and I don't
23 need four-wheel drive. There's -- on the

1 other twin -- that's twin mountains. On the
2 twin mountain that's closest to Oak Park, Oak
3 Mountain State Park, there's a good road that
4 runs the ridge of the mountain. There's a
5 good road on it. And there's another good
6 road that goes to where that middle outparcel
7 is where the house is. All of those in a
8 two-wheel drive pickup truck you can get
9 around in.

10 DR. MCCLINTOCK: What about the
11 management?

12 MR. INGRAM: Basically just letting
13 Mother Nature do its thing.

14 COMMISSIONER BLANKENSHIP: Dr. Saloom.

15 DR. SALOOM: Are you saying that the
16 county manages the interior of this property
17 road?

18 MR. INGRAM: They maintain the road
19 that goes just to the water tower, just for
20 their own purposes of having to get up there
21 and do samples and stuff like that.

22 COMMISSIONER BLANKENSHIP: Thank you.

23 Next speaker is Chandler Graham on the

1 Davidson Creek tract, Tab 3B, page four. 3B,
2 page four, Davidson Creek Tract.

3 MR. GRAHAM: I'm here to speak on the
4 Davidson Creek tract in Coosa County, where
5 Hatchett Creek runs, Socapatoy Creek runs,
6 and Hatchett Creek. I'm really here today
7 to, one, express interest of the landowners
8 in continuing this process. I think y'all
9 have first appraisal back on this tract. So
10 we'd like for -- you know, to take the next
11 step and see where this goes. And, also, to
12 answer any questions and to invite any of
13 y'all that want to come take a look at this
14 unique piece of property to reach out. We'd
15 love to spend an afternoon with you on it.

16 COMMISSIONER BLANKENSHIP: Any
17 questions?

18 (No response.)

19 MR. GRAHAM: Thank you.

20 COMMISSIONER BLANKENSHIP: Next
21 speaker is Chad Hoffman on the same property,
22 Davidson Creek tract.

23 MR. HOFFMAN: My name is Chad Hoffman.

1 I'm program director at Coosa Riverkeeper.
2 I've had the luxury of joining Keener and
3 Dr. McClintock out at the Davidson Creek
4 track. I'm lucky enough to have a job where
5 I can spend time at places like that during
6 the weekday. But I think what's special
7 about it is it's the same kind of place I
8 seek out on the weekends with my wife, with
9 my friends, where I enjoy the kind of places
10 where it holds ecological value, where it can
11 kind of restore you, reconnect you back to
12 your roots, back to nature. It truly does
13 feel wild. I first saw this area as I
14 paddled from Hatchett Creek 280 all the way
15 down to the Hatchett Creek takeout on 231.
16 As you are getting closer to 231, you hit
17 the confluence of Socapatoy and Hatchett
18 Creek. And it really is just truly one of
19 the most beautiful places I've seen. We hit
20 that confluence and honestly spent the rest
21 of the day there. We watched a family of
22 deer cross over Socapatoy Creek, caught
23 redeye bass. We saw Coal darter swimming

1 around. And this was just a casual day
2 spending time out there.

3 But to learn about this opportunity
4 for Forever Wild, I felt very passionate that
5 I needed to come share, one, my personal
6 feelings about it, but also from a
7 professional standpoint I truly believe this
8 place holds significant value for the State
9 of Alabama. Hatchett Creek, Socapatoy Creek,
10 Davidson Creek is prime habitat for the Rocky
11 Shoals Spider Lily. It's prime habitat for
12 so many diverse species that we're lucky that
13 we have here in Alabama. And I think there's
14 endless opportunity out here, whether it's
15 from a recreation standpoint with trails. I
16 know a lot of whitewater kayakers enjoy
17 Socapatoy Creek. And I know many anglers
18 like myself who have pins all up and down
19 every body of water that we might can find
20 around Coosa County. It's a significant
21 area. It holds great importance to me, but I
22 know in a state where we have so much private
23 land I feel lucky to live in a state and

1 recognize the hard work that y'all put in to
2 try to create more public land and public
3 access in the State of Alabama. So I look
4 forward to seeing more of this opportunity
5 pursued.

6 And thank you for taking time to
7 listen to all of us and for giving us time to
8 share our thoughts and feelings. And, yeah,
9 thank you guys.

10 COMMISSIONER BLANKENSHIP: Thank you.

11 Our last speaker is Justinn Overton on the
12 same property, the Davidson Creek tract.

13 MS. OVERTON: Good morning. And
14 welcome to the Coosa River Basin. Thank you
15 so much to Jax State for hosting us today.
16 My name is Justinn Overton. I have the
17 pleasure of protecting the waterway that I
18 learned how to swim in, boat on, learned how
19 to properly and safely jump off rocks, but
20 also to paddle on.

21 One of the reasons that I'm so
22 passionate about this river system is because
23 it suffered the greatest mass extinction in

1 North American history. And one of the
2 places that I'm here to talk about today, the
3 Davidson Creek tract, is home to tons of
4 biodiversity despite the fact that this river
5 system lost over 36 species when it was first
6 dammed. So the ecological value that this
7 particular area provides is very special and
8 unique because the Coosa River is such a
9 developed river system. Whether it be you're
10 a lake person or a creek person, Coosa
11 Riverkeepers' interest in protecting water
12 quality coincides with your mission of
13 protecting land and providing spaces for
14 families to practice the intergenerational
15 traditions of hunting and fishing and hiking
16 together.

17 So I'm very excited that this
18 particular piece of property -- I've been
19 able to visit myself. Coosa Riverkeeper has
20 submitted a formal letter of support that has
21 some pictures.

22 If you haven't been able to visit,
23 please take Chandler up on the opportunity to

1 go see it. This creek is not only beautiful
2 and provides habitat to some of the most
3 special critters that still remain in the
4 Coosa River Basin, but paddling this creek is
5 extraordinary because a lot of places in
6 Alabama you paddle and you still see -- you
7 see homes when you pass by, but this
8 particular section of Hatchett Creek is a
9 place where you do -- you are able to unplug
10 and truly enjoy the great outdoors that I
11 know that each of you are interested in
12 protecting.

13 Thank you so much for what you do. If
14 you have any further questions about Coosa
15 Riverkeeper or about the particular species
16 that are in this waterway, I'd be more than
17 happy to answer.

18 Thank you.

19 COMMISSIONER BLANKENSHIP: Thank you,
20 Justinn.

21 That's all the public comments. We'll
22 now move to go into executive session. By
23 regulation, appraisal values are confidential

1 during periods of negotiation. Accordingly,
2 in order to discuss tract and appraisal
3 values, the board will need to go into recess
4 for executive session.

5 Is there a motion for the board to now
6 recess to attend an executive session?

7 DR. SALOOM: So moved.

8 MR. HARPER: Second.

9 COMMISSIONER BLANKENSHIP: Moved by
10 Dr. Saloom and seconded by Mr. Harper.

11 As I call your name, please state your
12 position on the motion to recess. Those in
13 favor indicate by saying aye. Those opposed
14 indicate by saying nay.

15 Chris Blankenship, yes.

16 Mr. Childers?

17 MR. CHILDERS: Aye.

18 COMMISSIONER BLANKENSHIP:

19 Mr. Parnell?

20 MR. PARNELL: Yes.

21 COMMISSIONER BLANKENSHIP: Mr. Harper?

22 MR. HARPER: Yes.

23 COMMISSIONER BLANKENSHIP: Dr. Howell?

1 DR. HOWELL: Yes.

2 COMMISSIONER BLANKENSHIP:

3 Dr. McClintock?

4 DR. MCCLINTOCK: Yes.

5 COMMISSIONER BLANKENSHIP:

6 Dr. Neumann?

7 DR. NEUMANN: Yes.

8 COMMISSIONER BLANKENSHIP: Mr. Oates?

9 MR. OATES: Yes.

10 COMMISSIONER BLANKENSHIP:

11 Mr. Darnall?

12 MR. DARNALL: Yes.

13 COMMISSIONER BLANKENSHIP: Dr. Saloom?

14 DR. SALOOM: Yes.

15 COMMISSIONER BLANKENSHIP:

16 Ms. Stanley?

17 MS. STANLEY: Yes.

18 COMMISSIONER BLANKENSHIP: For the
19 record, Ms. Stanley has joined us and will be
20 joining us in executive session. So that is
21 unanimous. We'll now enter into executive.
22 It is 10:53. We plan to return in
23 approximately 20 minutes.

1 (Off the record.)

2 COMMISSIONER BLANKENSHIP: We are back
3 from executive session. It is 11:20. We'll
4 pick back up on the agenda with the program
5 status reports.

6 Ms. McCurdy.

7 MS. MCCURDY: All right. Good
8 morning, everybody. For those in the crowd,
9 I'm Patti McCurdy. I'm director of the State
10 Lands Division for the Department of
11 Conservation.

12 At this point every meeting we run
13 through the financial information, kind of
14 the financial status to help the board,
15 remind the board of the properties you have
16 already directed me and my staff to work
17 toward acquisition on, and to let you know
18 how much money you would have available today
19 if you wanted to make any additional motion.

20 I will start with your Tab 2A. If you
21 would, you have some updated information
22 slightly in your green folder, your kind of
23 yellowish color page. So that's what I'm

1 going to be running through.

2 The tracts that we have in some
3 portion of our due diligence process prior to
4 the actual acquisition closing that we're
5 working on are the following: Bon Secour
6 River Wetlands Addition, Baldwin County;
7 Heron Bay Wetlands Addition, Mobile County;
8 Lillian Swamp Blackwater Addition, Baldwin
9 County; Sipsey River Swamp-Brownville
10 Addition, Tuscaloosa.

11 And taking those tracts into
12 consideration, several of which benefit from
13 some form of grant leverage funding. Taking
14 that into account you have approximately 30
15 million available for action, if you so
16 chose. So that's kind of the -- where you're
17 at money-wise.

18 I also would like to note on the
19 second page of your Tab 2A, that is where we
20 just keep a running list of the tracts that
21 we have closed in the prior fiscal year and
22 the current fiscal year, as well as the
23 tracts that you asked us to close but we were

1 unable to close for some reason and are now
2 noted as declined. One of those that I
3 wanted to mentioned that had moved on to that
4 page as a declined tract since the last
5 meeting was the Skyline WMA-Fowler Cove
6 Addition. After some ongoing efforts and
7 talking with the landowner, we're just not
8 going to be able to get agreement on
9 appraised value and the valuation of that
10 property. So that is now considered
11 declined.

12 So I just wanted to highlight that.

13 That is one recent change I wanted you to be
14 aware of.

15 Any questions on the acquisition and
16 closing status?

17 (No response.)

18 MS. MCCURDY: All right. If you'll
19 look at Tab 2B. That is also kind of one of
20 the yellow pages that was in your green
21 folder. I'd like to kind of update you on
22 the status of the stewardship fund. Each
23 fiscal year you authorize and commit a

1 certain amount of money from the stewardship
2 fund that can be used for the land
3 management, maintenance, and some improved
4 recreational improvements on our properties.

5 You had committed -- we had committed 2.5
6 million for this fiscal year. To date you
7 have approximately 1.6 million of that to
8 finish out the fiscal year. I think we're
9 fine. I currently don't know of any reason
10 that's not going to be sufficient for current
11 needs. That includes the work we're doing
12 and the recent purchases on the hog traps,
13 cameras, et cetera, related to the feral
14 swine mitigation effort. So you are seeing
15 that money tick down. But we're fine, I
16 believe, going through the end of the fiscal
17 year.

18 We also note on Tab 2B, as is further
19 detailed on 2C the information we are
20 provided each quarter by the treasurer's
21 office, and the current net asset value of
22 the stewardship fund is about 46.9 million.

23 For the benefit of the audience, I will note

1 that for each acquisition, funding has to be
2 transferred to the stewardship fund. And
3 that is designed to perpetually care for all
4 the needs of these properties so that the
5 program is self-sustaining and self-
6 supportive.

7 So I appreciate the treasurer's office
8 assistance managing those funds and also
9 keeping us up-to-date on the status.

10 Any questions on stewardship fund, 2B
11 or 2C, information?

12 (No response.)

13 MS. MCCURDY: All right. If you
14 would, keep flipping. We are going to go
15 into Tab 3 and Tab 3A. This is the portion
16 of the meeting where I give updates on the
17 status of the nominations that you have made
18 motions for appraisals, the first appraisals,
19 the first step toward acquisition. I'm going
20 to detail -- each meeting I detail every
21 tract that you have made that motion on and
22 account for where it is in that process.

23 So I want to run through the

1 appraisals that we have back and that are --
2 therefore, make these tracts available for
3 additional motions if you so choose.

4 The Blackwater River SOA-Clapper
5 Addition, Baldwin County. I want to note on
6 that one -- and we'll talk about you have
7 also information in your packet which would
8 be your Tab 5C, running through some
9 information. We had a reduction of acreage.
10 That's not Clapper. That's Lillian. I'm
11 sorry, I've gone off -- wrong tract. I need
12 more caffeine.

13 I should have mentioned previously
14 when we were discussing Tab 2A, but we'll get
15 to it later, that if you'll flip back to 2A
16 with me for just a second. My apologies.

17 The Bon Secour River Wetlands Addition --
18 you can tell I'm muddling my Baldwin County
19 tracts. We have discovered through our
20 normal due diligence work that the acreage
21 that we can obtain title to that were not
22 already part of adjoining acreage has reduced
23 that tract from 81 acres to 67 acres. I'll

1 get to that later. I'm going to ask the
2 board for discussion on that later. But
3 since I messed up just now, skip that. Let
4 me go back.

5 I'm now back on Tab 3A. So, again,
6 available appraisals. Blackwater River
7 SOA-Clapper Addition, Cathedral Caverns State
8 Park-Gurley Drive Addition, Davidson Creek
9 tract, Coosa County; Historic Blakeley State
10 Park-Pye Addition, Baldwin; Red Hills-Section
11 23, Monroe County; and Red Hills-Swift
12 Addition, Monroe County; West Fowl River
13 Tract, Mobile.

14 Just a reminder, if we have discussion
15 on the Red Hills tracts, we, again, have
16 several Red Hills tracts. We'll need to keep
17 straight if we have any discussion which Red
18 Hills tract you're on. The one appraisal
19 that you motioned for that has not yet been
20 completed by the appraiser -- it is in
21 process -- is the Freedom Hills WMA-Sutton
22 Hill Addition. And so those are all the
23 appraisals.

1 I will mention that the forestry
2 commission is working on -- or working with
3 them on the Dugdown appraisal. But they are
4 covering those costs, so you don't see that
5 one on here. But we are actively working
6 together on that one.

7 So of the appraisals that we have
8 in -- that's not accounting for Dugdown.
9 That's not accounting for Freedom Hills --
10 that's approximately \$11 million worth of
11 property that are currently pending in that
12 status.

13 Sorry for my confusion. But are there
14 any questions on Tab 3A, the appraised
15 nomination status?

16 (No response.)

17 MS. MCCURDY: Okay. We'll keep moving
18 then. If you will, as always, now turn to
19 Tab 5A.

20 COMMISSIONER BLANKENSHIP: While we
21 are moving to Tab 5A, I would like to
22 recognize Dr. Tolley-Jordan who is a former
23 Forever Wild board member that is a professor

1 here at Jax State. And I do see her in the
2 audience there. Many of us served with
3 Dr. Tolley-Jordan during her time on the
4 Forever Wild board. So thank you for joining
5 us today and reliving the glory days of your
6 career as a board member.

7 MS. MCCURDY: On behalf of staff, I
8 want to thank you for being here. And we so
9 valued your tremendous participation and wise
10 stewardship on this board and just your help
11 to us. So it's a personal privilege from the
12 podium. Thank you very much.

13 All right. Tab 5A, during each
14 meeting I give you a status of sort of our
15 efforts to secure some type of leverage
16 funding, partnership funding, grant funding,
17 whatever staff can come up with to contribute
18 to or offset the cost of potential nomination
19 acquisitions. So I'm going to run through
20 the status of the properties we currently
21 have some opportunities on and where they are
22 in the process.

23 Currently, we have the Bon Secour

1 Wetlands Addition, the one I just mentioned.
2 That is benefiting from a National Coastal
3 Wetlands Conservation Grant Program that is
4 contributing 69 percent towards the valuation
5 and, also, fire lane installation, prescribed
6 burn, and trail development. So some
7 additional stewardship help from that grant.
8 That one as well -- that one is, again, in
9 the acquisition closing process.

10 I mentioned before that we have had a
11 declined status given to Skyline WMA-Fowler
12 Cove, which it also had -- has had some
13 support opportunity.

14 The nominations that are currently
15 appraised that we just ran through that have
16 some leverage potential include the
17 Blackwater River SOA-Clapper Addition.
18 That's one of the tracts that Chuck and the
19 Wildlife and Freshwater Fisheries Division
20 has available and has agreed to commit some
21 Pittman-Robertson funding towards that one to
22 reduce that to a 75/25 split, with the 25
23 percent approximate valuation acreage going

1 to Forever Wild. There is a map that's
2 showing the proposed split between Wildlife,
3 which would hold title to their acreage
4 through the grant funding, and the Forever
5 Wild acreage that is provided in Tab 3B.

6 They're -- the exact split was going to
7 result from kind of a completed analysis on
8 the valuations. All the structures are on
9 Wildlife's acreage. And so we're tying down
10 the exact, exact amount. But it's been now
11 appraised, and we can do that precisely to
12 get to that 75/25 split.

13 Red Hills-Section 23 also has Pittman-
14 Robertson potential and has the appraisal
15 back, has a split map that we're
16 double-checking based on that. We'll be very
17 close.

18 And, also, the Red Hills-Swift
19 Addition has opportunity to apply some U.S.
20 Fish and Wildlife Section 6 Recovery Land
21 Acquisition funding on that 75/25 basis.

22 Again, the split map in Tab 3B.

23 On any of those properties, if the

1 board did decide to make a motion and move
2 forward I gave some example motions simply --
3 the same motion. It's just simply noting
4 that it's contingent upon the contribution of
5 the Pittman-Robertson fund. Otherwise, it's
6 a normal motion.

7 Update, I hate to report this, but as
8 you may recall we had been invited by NOAA to
9 apply for some funding that would have
10 provided a 100 percent land acquisition
11 potential for the West Fowl River Tract. We
12 submitted that grant, and it just was not
13 selected in the end. So I wanted to let the
14 board know the tract has been appraised.
15 It's fine as to its board's status. I just
16 -- we weren't successful in trying to get
17 those additional funds.

18 Look to the shortlist and potential
19 there. We talked about the Dugdown Mountain
20 Corridor. Again, that appraisal is already
21 in process. Really nothing for the board to
22 do on that at this time.

23 Mr. Oates, do you want to give any

1 update on that?

2 MR. OATES: We are, as you said, in
3 process with the appraisal. And we should
4 hopefully have all that ready by the next
5 meeting.

6 MS. MCCURDY: And our staff and
7 forestry commission staff has been working
8 toward a split map. We also -- we haven't
9 been able to delineate that. I'll have that
10 for the next meeting.

11 All right. Just regular updates that
12 we do. We're continuing with the grant we
13 received from the National Fish and Wildlife
14 Foundation Cumberland Plateau Southern
15 Appalachian Fund. The grant that we received
16 there to establish a shortleaf pine forest on
17 the Little River Canyon tract. That work is
18 progressing and no issues there.

19 We're continuing to work with the Gulf
20 of Mexico Energy Security Act, the GOMESA
21 funding, that Governor Ivey awarded that will
22 support improvements on both the
23 Mobile-Tensaw Delta Bartram Canoe Trail and

1 the Perdido River Canoe Trail. And that
2 architect for the shelter, some overnight
3 shelters and some improvements to existing
4 shelters, architect that we're required to
5 retain has been retained and is working on
6 that. We're progressing. Not all of those
7 improvements will be on Forever Wild
8 property, but some of them will. And the
9 connectivity that will give and the
10 additional options for paddlers to have
11 different lengths of stops accommodating
12 different abilities and some ADA
13 improvements. We are excited about the
14 wholistic result of that.

15 Any questions on grant status in Tab
16 5A?

17 COMMISSIONER BLANKENSHIP: We did
18 mention earlier about Innovate Alabama and
19 the work on Coldwater Mountain. I see T.C.
20 McLemore with Innovate Alabama is here with
21 us. Innovate Alabama board has committed to
22 \$1.1 million toward improvements in and
23 around Coldwater Mountain and the mountain

1 biking facilities here. That project is
2 underway. There will be new trails and some
3 other amenities around the trails. And
4 really expanding that to try to get it into
5 at least a silver designation, International
6 Mountain Biking Association, Silver
7 Designation. So a lot of good work going on
8 there. That was not included on the memo
9 today. But after seeing T.C. and
10 Dr. Lindblom who's very instrumental in
11 helping with that in the audience, I did want
12 to mention that. That is -- work is being
13 done on the Forever Wild property at no cost
14 to Forever Wild, through this cooperation and
15 partnership with Innovate Alabama.

16 Sorry.

17 MS. MCCURDY: No, that's great. We'll
18 try to coordinate and track some of that in
19 our memo.

20 Okay. Then we are ready to move to
21 the review of the shortlist nomination. If
22 you would, turn to Tab 4. And for the
23 benefit of the audience, a bit of process.

1 Each nomination that we receive, the way the
2 constitutional amendment forming the program
3 is written, any tract can be nominated by any
4 member of the public. So we receive the
5 nomination. Once we have a good idea of the
6 scope of that nomination and the exact tract
7 involved, our next step is to send a willing
8 seller letter to the landowner to confirm
9 that that landowner is okay with their tract
10 being discussed in public and being
11 considered by this board. It contains no
12 obligation to the landowner other than if we
13 need access to evaluate the tract. But it
14 does clearly demonstrate that we have a
15 willing landowner who wants to sell their
16 property because that's the only type of
17 transaction this board pursues.

18 That's our next step. Once we have
19 that willing seller letter signed and
20 confirmed, each tract is evaluated under four
21 categories; nature preserve, general
22 recreation which can include hunting, but
23 then specifically wildlife management area,

1 special opportunity area, hunting type
2 properties, and then state park acreage. So
3 each tract is reviewed and scored in those
4 four categories. The tracts compete amongst
5 themselves in the northern, central, and
6 southern district. A tract has to score in
7 the top three of at least one of those four
8 categories to make it into -- make it on to
9 the shortlist. Now, some properties score
10 across all or several different categories.

11 But that's how a tract gets on the
12 shortlist.

13 We also have tracts that are zeroed
14 out or not scored for some reason because we
15 could not -- our evaluation showed they
16 either could not be utilized or additional
17 work needed to be done to see if they could
18 be utilized.

19 The list I'm running through today
20 represents those that have scored and had the
21 top three scores in at least one of the four
22 categories in their district. And those
23 tracts would be available to the board,

1 either for a motion for first appraisal or
2 interest by the board but wants additional
3 information or additional work done on the
4 tract. If you'll let me know that when we
5 get to the general discussion, we can pursue
6 that. So the tracts that are currently on
7 the shortlist include: Bon Secour River-Cook
8 Road Addition, Baldwin County; Cooper Branch
9 Tract, Shelby County; Dugdown Mountain
10 Corridor, Cleburne County. Again, that one
11 is already under appraisal, so nothing would
12 be motioned for that one. Hale Springs
13 Tract, Jefferson County; Red Hills-Beaver
14 Creek Tract, Monroe County; Riverton
15 Community Hunting Area, or CHA, Pickwick
16 Shoreline Addition, Colbert; and Upper Delta
17 Management Area -- Wildlife Management Area,
18 or Upper Delta WMA-Stiggins Lake Addition,
19 Baldwin County. Those are the tracts that
20 are procedurally available for first
21 appraisal motions.

22 MR. HARPER: Ms. Patti.

23 MS. MCCURDY: Yes, sir.

1 MR. HARPER: Explain to me, again, the
2 Dugdown Mountain has never been formally
3 nominated, but appraisal is going on in
4 conjunction with the Forestry Commission; is
5 that correct?

6 MS. MCCURDY: It's never -- you never
7 made a motion for first appraisal because you
8 didn't have to. The Forestry Commission is
9 at its own expense pursuing that, that
10 appraisal. So you've done -- all that can be
11 done at this stage is being done to continue
12 processing that nomination for potential
13 purchase.

14 MR. HARPER: So we may not nominate
15 it. After we get the appraisal, we will look
16 at it then?

17 MS. MCCURDY: Correct. Any additional
18 questions on the shortlist items?

19 (No response.)

20 MS. MCCURDY: Okay. Commissioner,
21 that runs through my program status reports.

22 I think we're ready to go into general
23 discussion unless I've missed something or

1 somebody else has a question before we go
2 into general discussion.

3 COMMISSIONER BLANKENSHIP: Now we'll
4 enter into general discussion where motions
5 are generally made on properties and other
6 items. Is there any discussion from members?

7 Dr. Saloom.

8 DR. SALOOM: I would like to make a
9 motion that we begin the Red Hills-Beaver
10 Tract section, 726 acres, for a first
11 appraisal and possible motion to purchase.

12 COMMISSIONER BLANKENSHIP: That's
13 Dr. Saloom. Dr. Saloom has made a motion for
14 first appraisal. We'd have to have that
15 before we can move to second appraisal.

16 Is there a second?

17 MS. STANLEY: Second.

18 COMMISSIONER BLANKENSHIP: Seconded by
19 Ms. Stanley. Any discussion on that? All
20 those in favor, please raise your hands.

21 (Indicating)

22 MS. MCCURDY: Commissioner, we have
23 ten.

1 COMMISSIONER BLANKENSHIP: Okay.

2 Motion carries. Thank you.

3 DR. MCCLINTOCK: Commissioner
4 Blankenship.

5 COMMISSIONER BLANKENSHIP: Yes,
6 Dr. McClintock.

7 DR. MCCLINTOCK: I'd like to nominate
8 the Davidson Creek tract in Coosa County for
9 second appraisal and purchase.

10 COMMISSIONER BLANKENSHIP: Is there a
11 second?

12 MR. DARNALL: I'll second that.

13 COMMISSIONER BLANKENSHIP: Davidson
14 Creek tract, second appraisal, move to
15 purchase. Motion by Dr. McClintock and
16 seconded by Mr. Darnall. So that's the
17 Davidson Creek tract, second appraisal and
18 move to purchase. All those in favor, please
19 raise your hand.

20 (Indicating)

21 MS. MCCURDY: We have nine. Please
22 keep your hands up.

23 Commissioner, we have nine.

1 COMMISSIONER BLANKENSHIP: Motion
2 carries. Thank you.

3 DR. NEUMANN: I'd like to make a
4 motion.

5 COMMISSIONER BLANKENSHIP:
6 Dr. Neumann.

7 DR. NEUMANN: I personally know this
8 Upper Delta WMA-Stiggins Lake. It's a great
9 place. I grew up in that delta. And this
10 completes our Forever Wild acreage in that
11 area, or a big part of it anyway.

12 MS. MCCURDY: I'm sorry. Dr. Neumann,
13 if you could speak into your microphone a
14 little bit.

15 DR. NEUMANN: I'd like to make a
16 motion for the board to proceed with first
17 appraisal of the Upper Delta WMA-Stiggins
18 Lake Addition.

19 COMMISSIONER BLANKENSHIP: Is there a
20 second?

21 MR. DARNALL: I'll second that.

22 COMMISSIONER BLANKENSHIP: Seconded by
23 Mr. Darnall. This is for a first appraisal

1 on the Upper Delta-Stiggins Lake Addition.
2 All those in favor, please raise your hand.

3 (Indicating)

4 MS. MCCURDY: I think I got eight. I
5 have eight for yes. Can I see the hands for
6 no?

7 Are you no, Mr. Childers? Then we
8 have -- I didn't count you. It is a long
9 line. Please raise your hands, please, if
10 you're a yes.

11 (Indicating)

12 MS. MCCURDY: We have nine.

13 COMMISSIONER BLANKENSHIP: Motion
14 carries for the first appraisal, Upper
15 Delta-Stiggins Lake. All right.

16 MR. OATES: Commissioner.

17 COMMISSIONER BLANKENSHIP: Mr. Oates.

18 MR. OATES: I would like to move for a
19 second appraisal on the Swift Addition. Red
20 Hills-Swift Addition contingent upon the
21 Pittman-Robertson funds.

22 Second.

23 COMMISSIONER BLANKENSHIP: Motion was

1 made by Mr. Oates, seconded by Dr. Saloom for
2 a second appraisal and move to purchase on
3 the Red Hills-Swift Addition contingent upon
4 the Wildlife and Freshwater Fisheries
5 Division of the Department of Conservation
6 and Natural Resources providing 75 percent of
7 the purchase price. Is that correct?

8 MR. OATES: You said it better than I
9 could.

10 COMMISSIONER BLANKENSHIP: Any
11 discussion on that?

12 (No response.)

13 COMMISSIONER BLANKENSHIP: All those
14 in favor, please raise your hand.

15 (Indicating)

16 MS. MCCURDY: We have ten on that one,
17 Commissioner.

18 COMMISSIONER BLANKENSHIP: That motion
19 carries.

20 MR. OATES: I'd like to make the same
21 motion for Red Hills-Section 23 Addition.

22 COMMISSIONER BLANKENSHIP: Mr. Oates
23 has made a motion for second appraisal and

1 move to purchase contingent on Wildlife and
2 Freshwater Fisheries Division provides 75
3 percent of the funding for the Red
4 Hill-Section 23. Do I have a second?

5 MR. CHILDERS: I'll second.

6 COMMISSIONER BLANKENSHIP: Seconded by
7 Mr. Childers. Any discussion on that?

8 (No response.)

9 COMMISSIONER BLANKENSHIP: All those
10 in favor, please raise your hand.

11 (Indicating)

12 MS. MCCURDY: Again, we have -- no, we
13 have ten.

14 COMMISSIONER BLANKENSHIP: Motion
15 carries.

16 I'm catching up. Give me just a
17 second, please.

18 Any other discussion? General
19 discussion?

20 (No response.)

21 COMMISSIONER BLANKENSHIP: Thank you.

22 On the Hales tract -- Hales --

23 MS. MCCURDY: Springs.

1 COMMISSIONER BLANKENSHIP: The Hale
2 Springs Addition, there was a lot of
3 conversation about that, a lot of materials
4 provided. Knowing the rest of the
5 relationship that we have with Hoover and
6 with Ken Grimes and others, before the next
7 meeting can you or the staff have some
8 discussions with them and the Freshwater Land
9 Trust and Jefferson County on how we could --
10 if there's a possibility on how that could be
11 managed for public access.

12 MS. MCCURDY: Yes, we can do that.
13 And I'll start with Ken. And I think we can
14 gain some additional information and bring
15 that back to the board. Happy to do that.
16 Know Ken well. That will be fine.

17 COMMISSIONER BLANKENSHIP: Thank you.
18 Putting you on the spot, Ken.

19 MS. MCCURDY: Wave your magic wand,
20 Ken.

21 MR. GRIMES: Can you fix trash
22 problems? I'll take that too.

23 COMMISSIONER BLANKENSHIP: Go ahead

1 with your miscellaneous reports.

2 MS. MCCURDY: Okay. If the board
3 members would turn to Tab 5, this is the
4 portion of the meeting where there are items
5 that I either just need to update you on or
6 that I need or would like, or need depending,
7 a motion or feedback from the board on some
8 topics. So this is usually where I initiate
9 questions and discuss motions that you may or
10 may not want to make.

11 I'll direct you first to Tab 5B. This
12 is our standard report of the nominations
13 that have either been on the shortlist or
14 appraised nominations list for so long that
15 we normally procedurally remove them unless
16 we have a request from a board member to keep
17 them on. As last meeting, Dugdown Mountain
18 pops up solely because it is the length of
19 the grant process. If anyone is going to ask
20 for that to continue, I would ask if it might
21 be possible and okay if we just consider that
22 one a hold until we get the appraisal back.
23 Because, otherwise, I'm going to have to ask

1 you this -- hopefully we'll have it back.
2 But we'll keep it on if that's okay. If
3 somebody wants to suggest that --

4 MR. OATES: I would like to ask that,
5 Patti.

6 MS. MCCURDY: Okay. I will do that.

7 MR. CHILDERS: Do you need a motion?

8 MS. MCCURDY: No, sir. This just
9 takes one board member. So I just wanted to
10 say -- in case we don't -- if we don't have
11 it moved to the appraised nominations in the
12 next meeting, since I have board permission,
13 we're just going to allow that one to stay on
14 the shortlist. All right. That one was easy
15 enough. I wanted to warm you up with an easy
16 one.

17 All right. If you'll look at Tab 5C.
18 I referenced earlier that as part of our
19 standard due diligence, title opinion review,
20 survey review, et cetera, we discovered that
21 on the Bon Secour Wetlands Addition that the
22 landowner actually did not own all of the
23 acreage. This was not an intended

1 misrepresentation. I think this was some
2 confusion on some boundary lines. But it
3 came to light, as it always does if there's
4 an issue, during the title opinion review.

5 If you'll look at your map, attached to Tab
6 5C we have gone in and we have clarified the
7 adjacent boundaries and worked through the
8 issues. And so what you see in blue on the
9 map would be the areas that would fall out.
10 What would remain is in red. As with any
11 time we have a change in acreage, a change to
12 a nomination, our staff goes through a
13 process to evaluate the changed acreage to be
14 sure that the evaluation score would not have
15 been impacted, that access remains, we're not
16 losing an area with a habitat that's the
17 basis of the purchase, et cetera. We have
18 completed that evaluation, and we see there's
19 nothing adverse to the tract or no reason not
20 to move forward. However, it is a change in
21 acreage. And I don't move forward on changes
22 -- with a change in acreage like this without
23 coming back to you and conferring and asking

1 for a motion if you want to proceed.

2 Questions?

3 MS. STANLEY: Question, Ms. Patti.

4 I'm looking at the map, and I see that the
5 14 acres reduced already belonged to us.

6 MS. MCCURDY: A portion of that, yes.

7 MS. STANLEY: A portion of that. So
8 what is the corresponding reduction in price?

9 MS. MCCURDY: Yes --

10 MS. STANLEY: Or is there a new --

11 MS. MCCURDY: We do. We have go back
12 to the appraiser, the same appraiser, and ask
13 him to update. We are in that process. I do
14 not have the resulting valuation for you.

15 But if you are good with continuing with the
16 process, then I would need a motion. And we
17 would continue to move forward with closing
18 at the resulting revaluation, or we'll just
19 hold on this and come back to you after that
20 valuation. We are -- this is a
21 grant-supported tract, and we are working
22 with the grantor to get the grant amended. I
23 don't expect any problem with that, but we're

1 also doing that.

2 COMMISSIONER BLANKENSHIP: Is there a
3 motion? A question?

4 MR. CHILDERS: A question. Are we in
5 the process of appraisal and purchase or
6 second appraisal?

7 MS. MCCURDY: Yes, sir. It was in the
8 closing process. You had told us to go get
9 it, and we were trying to get it and in doing
10 our usual due diligence discovered this.

11 MR. CHILDERS: I make a motion we hold
12 where are were until we see the appraisal.

13 MS. STANLEY: Second.

14 COMMISSIONER BLANKENSHIP: So just to
15 make sure I understand what your -- the
16 motion is. It's a little bit different than
17 in the memo. So you're asking just to hold
18 until we get the appraisal back?

19 MS. MCCURDY: And actually -- yes,
20 asking to hold or we can -- with no action at
21 all, without a motion for me to continue with
22 this change in acreage, I would not --
23 without a positive motion, I wouldn't

1 continue anyway. But I would like some
2 feedback from the board. If there's -- if
3 you want to proceed or you want to hold. So,
4 yes, you could take that as a motion to
5 direct staff not to proceed with closing
6 until we come back to the board with the
7 revised appraisal value.

8 MR. CHILDERS: That was the intent of
9 my motion.

10 COMMISSIONER BLANKENSHIP: All right.
11 Does everybody understand that? Is there any
12 clarification needed?

13 All those in favor of getting the --
14 having the updated appraisal at the next
15 meeting and then deciding to move forward
16 with the property, please raise your hand.

17 (Indicating)

18 MS. MCCURDY: I believe that carries.
19 It's nine.

20 COMMISSIONER BLANKENSHIP: Motion
21 carries. Thank you.

22 MS. MCCURDY: All right. If you will
23 now just -- Tab 5D is the next matter to

1 bring forward. As you've seen in previous
2 meetings, we sometimes have individuals or
3 companies come to us asking for various types
4 of easements across the Forever Wild acreage.
5 We currently have a requested easement from
6 Alabama Power that impacts the Barbour
7 WMA-RMack Addition. There is an attached
8 map. There is a larger project Alabama Power
9 is undertaking that is converting to
10 underground utilities. And part of the new
11 path crosses Barbour WMA. The power company
12 has a current easement that you see, that
13 black line. But the path they need to go
14 with the underground, this new underground
15 effort, is the red line. And so we did our
16 usual evaluation to be sure that granting of
17 the easement, the work being done to take the
18 utilities underground would not create a
19 disturbance or have an adverse impact to the
20 tract or impact the habitat or access or
21 recreation or anything like that. The staff
22 has no concern about the request.

23 As usual we have informed Alabama

1 Power that they will bear the cost of the
2 appraisal work that will be needed because it
3 is a transfer of an interest in the land
4 through the easement and any survey cost and
5 then, of course, have to pay the appraised
6 value of that. But we normally do not -- I
7 do not like to ask companies to proceed with
8 that without a -- and that expense without
9 board approval for the granting of the
10 easement.

11 If the board agrees with the power
12 company's request for the easement, I've
13 given you a sample motion to make it easy, or
14 you can take no action. It's up to the
15 board.

16 COMMISSIONER BLANKENSHIP: Dr. Saloom.

17 DR. SALOOM: I make a motion for the
18 board to approve staff proceeding with
19 efforts to grant Alabama Power Company
20 easement related to the Barbour County
21 WMA-RMack Addition as described.

22 MR. PARNELL: Second.

23 COMMISSIONER BLANKENSHIP: Seconded by

1 Mr. Parnell. Any discussions or questions on
2 that?

3 (No response.)

4 COMMISSIONER BLANKENSHIP: All those
5 in favor --

6 MS. MCCURDY: I would normally
7 condition that expressly on the company
8 paying the cost of the survey and appraisals
9 and also the value of the interest. And that
10 may be assumed in that motion, but I wanted
11 to be clear on the motion from the board.

12 DR. SALOOM: Yes.

13 COMMISSIONER BLANKENSHIP: We'll add
14 that to the motion. All those in favor, say
15 aye.

16 (Ayes affirmed.)

17 COMMISSIONER BLANKENSHIP: Any
18 opposed?

19 (No response.)

20 COMMISSIONER BLANKENSHIP: None
21 opposed. Motion carries.

22 MS. MCCURDY: Same thing, different
23 property. Channel Cat Solar, LLC has

1 requested an easement that would cross the
2 Forever Wild Field Trial Area in Hale County.
3 If you'll look at your map, you'll see the
4 area -- the exact path is going to be --
5 still needs to be precisely determined due to
6 a little bit of terrain right there. But
7 that would be the area that the easement
8 would cover. The staff has done the same
9 analysis as to any adverse impact. And we
10 have no concern about granting this easement.

11 But the request from Channel Cat Solar
12 relates to their need to connect those two
13 sort of corner touching parcels to allow for
14 electricity to be -- that's generated on one
15 parcel to be transferred to a substation on
16 another privately owned parcel. And so they
17 have asked us for that permission for that
18 easement. They, similarly, are aware of
19 their requirements to pay cost of appraisal
20 and survey and the valuation of that acreage.

21 So same request to the board, either a
22 motion allowing us to continue working with
23 them and grant that easement, or if you take

1 no action, we won't proceed.

2 DR. MCCLINTOCK: I move that we grant
3 this request and -- contingent upon their
4 providing the funds for the valuation of the
5 property value.

6 DR. SALOOM: Same.

7 COMMISSIONER BLANKENSHIP: Moved by
8 Dr. McClintock and seconded by Dr. Saloom.

9 MR. HARPER: Question before we move
10 on.

11 COMMISSIONER BLANKENSHIP: Yes, sir.

12 MR. HARPER: Has any research been
13 done on the people north of this first tract,
14 allowing it to go that way instead of going
15 through us?

16 MS. MCCURDY: Yes, sir. We normally
17 -- we normally ask that and ask them -- we
18 try to determine if they're not just trying
19 to take the easy path, so to speak, through
20 us. And staff that did that thought that --
21 there are some -- I hope I don't get this
22 wrong. I keep thinking they told me some
23 wetlands in that area, or there's some aspect

1 that makes --

2 MR. HARPER: Makes going through it
3 more logical than the other way?

4 MS. MCCURDY: Yes, sir.

5 MR. HARPER: Okay. Just a question.

6 MS. MCCURDY: No, sir. And we do --
7 that is one thing that we evaluate on each of
8 these. It's a good question.

9 Commissioner, while we're having a
10 moment of discussion, again, just to clarify,
11 it's both the cost of the evaluation and the
12 associated due diligence.

13 COMMISSIONER BLANKENSHIP: All those
14 in favor, say aye.

15 (Ayes affirmed.)

16 COMMISSIONER BLANKENSHIP: Any
17 opposed?

18 (No response.)

19 COMMISSIONER BLANKENSHIP: None
20 opposed. Motion carries.

21 MR. CHILDERS: Ours is probably
22 cheaper than theirs.

23 MS. MCCURDY: We now move to Tab 5F.

1 We're actually going to be -- let me mention,
2 Tab 5F and 5G are sort of tied together.

3 There are certain meetings at which
4 every year we sort of do the same thing.
5 This is one of those. These two are items
6 that we do at the May meeting each year.

7 The first, Tab 5F, is our annual
8 approval from the board setting an amount
9 from the stewardship account, the stewardship
10 fund, that we are allowed to work with for
11 stewardship purposes as defined by the
12 constitutional amendment.

13 The way the amendment is worded, the
14 interest income, not the net value, interest
15 income is not going to be sufficient to fund
16 all the needs that that we would have for
17 that fiscal year prior to that, the new
18 fiscal year starting, the board has to grant
19 approval to spend funds from the corpus of
20 the stewardship fund. That is really the
21 case every year.

22 So every year we do two things. We
23 inform the commissioner that we've done that

1 analysis and we're going to need to expend
2 some amount of funding from the corpus. And,
3 secondly, the commissioner prepares a finding
4 that -- of insufficiency of the interest
5 earnings. That is attached as Exhibit A to
6 memo 5F that he does every year.

7 Also, what the staff does in preparing
8 for that discussion and that analysis is we
9 look at what we term "routine needs" on each
10 of our tracts or perhaps tract-specific
11 needs. And in 5F I run through some of the
12 routine activities. And they'll vary. But,
13 I mean, road repair maintenance, boundary
14 line maintenance, recreational, either
15 maintenance of trails, for example, or
16 additional trails, continuing prescribed fire
17 work, invasive species control, those type of
18 things that in some form or another most
19 tracts need.

20 We then look at each tract to see if
21 there's a tract-specific need. One thing we
22 look at specifically each year is where we
23 might have a reforestation need, and we

1 separate that out for the board. We could --
2 something could come up, but that is our
3 forecast for reforestation. Sometimes it's
4 because we've gotten release from a timber
5 reserve. Sometimes it's just following up on
6 prior harvesting activities.

7 We also took into account this year
8 the ongoing feral swine mitigation efforts
9 and the board commitment of potential funding
10 for that each fiscal year. Taking all that
11 into consideration and looking at the budget
12 and talking with Commissioner, we are
13 recommending a \$3 million amount be approved
14 by the board for the upcoming fiscal year to
15 be spent from the stewardship account.

16 We will also, of course, before we
17 pull from the corpus of the account, utilize
18 any interest earnings. But there will be a
19 significant need that will need to come of
20 that 3 million.

21 So we bring it up in May because it
22 must -- some amount must be approved this
23 fiscal year, and we only have one more

1 meeting. So if there are any questions or
2 problems, I need to know. Otherwise, there's
3 a sample motion.

4 Ms. Stanley.

5 MS. STANLEY: Yes, Attorney McCurdy.
6 Could you help me understand the relationship
7 of the 3 million? Are you saying 3 million
8 from the corpus or the 3 million in total and
9 part of that is from the corpus?

10 MS. MCCURDY: 3 million in total. We
11 obviously are kind of in the middle of the
12 current fiscal year. So I don't know exactly
13 what the interest income would be, but it's
14 comparatively minimal. It is a 3 million cap
15 on that.

16 MS. STANLEY: Is that related in any
17 way to this \$1.223 million on the
18 unreimbursed expenditures? Is that --

19 MS. MCCURDY: No, that's an
20 administrative cost. That's a cost to State
21 Lands --- yes, ma'am.

22 What Ms. Stanley is referring to is
23 5G. That is our annual request for the

1 transfer to State Lands for partial
2 reimbursement for the State Lands expenses
3 that are more administrative in nature. The
4 stewardship account is really the hands-on
5 land management by its definition. And so,
6 traditionally, the reimbursement of State
7 Lands that we look at every year, we do -- I
8 look -- I asked for that in this current
9 fiscal year. We've already expended funds.
10 Even with the transfer request in that, there
11 is still an unreversed amount that State
12 Lands absorbs as part of our efforts.

13 But the first motion deals solely with
14 the stewardship fund, your Tab 2B, that we
15 talk about each meeting. And what amount you
16 are okay setting as the cap for our
17 expenditures, whether it's trail
18 installation, prescribed fire, whatever the
19 tracts need, reforestation, whatever they on
20 the ground need.

21 MS. STANLEY: For comparison, what was
22 that number last year?

23 MS. MCCURDY: 2.5. So we have

1 additional work on -- committed to feral
2 swine, so we upped it just a little. We
3 didn't -- anyway, any other questions on
4 that?

5 On this one I will say I gave you a
6 motion because I will need a specific --

7 Mr. Parnell.

8 MR. PARNELL: I'd like to make that
9 motion to use of the stewardship account up
10 to \$3 million.

11 DR. NEUMANN: Second.

12 COMMISSIONER BLANKENSHIP: Motion is
13 seconded by Dr. Neumann.

14 Any other questions or discussion on
15 that?

16 All those in favor, say aye.

17 (Ayes affirmed.)

18 COMMISSIONER BLANKENSHIP: Any
19 opposed?

20 (No response.)

21 COMMISSIONER BLANKENSHIP: None
22 opposed.

23 Thank you.

1 MS. MCCURDY: What we're about to
2 discuss now relates to the annual
3 administrative transfer to State Lands. What
4 I do each year in the analysis that
5 Ms. Stanley was referring to is to try to
6 give context for the request, I run through
7 receipts and expenditures that State Lands is
8 connected with and how some of our own money
9 goes in support of our staff, which we're
10 proud to do.

11 So we're asking for the -- a level,
12 since FYI '20, transfer of 900,000 to State
13 Lands. With that, we still have over a
14 million that is connected with our work. For
15 example, what we do with the Field Trial
16 area, part of that acreage had to be titled
17 to State Lands because of the structures and
18 the facilities on that. So we're covering
19 some staff. We're covering utilities. We're
20 covering things that is pure State Lands, in
21 addition to some of our administrative costs
22 of our staff connected with the
23 administrative program. So that is what

1 that's connected to.

2 I'll take any questions. It's another
3 one that I need kind of a little specific
4 motion for, for money transfer, so I've given
5 y'all an example. But I'll take any
6 questions.

7 DR. MCCLINTOCK: Do you want me to
8 make a motion?

9 MS. MCCURDY: If you'd like to.

10 DR. MCCLINTOCK: I make the motion for
11 the board to approve the State Lands division
12 staff proceeding with the request of an
13 administrative transfer in the amount of
14 \$900,000 for the fiscal year 2024
15 administrative support provided by the State
16 Lands division.

17 MS. STANLEY: Second.

18 COMMISSIONER BLANKENSHIP: Seconded by
19 Ms. Stanley.

20 All those in favor? Any discussion on
21 that?

22 (No response.)

23 COMMISSIONER BLANKENSHIP: All those

1 in favor, please say aye.

2 (Ayes affirmed.)

3 COMMISSIONER BLANKENSHIP: Any
4 opposed?

5 (No response.)

6 COMMISSIONER BLANKENSHIP: None
7 opposed, motion carries.

8 MS. MCCURDY: And you had one more
9 miscellaneous item -- two, I'm sorry. This
10 is in your packet. 5H. And this is just
11 what I'm kind of doing each meeting, giving a
12 little bit of an update on the feral swine
13 activity. At our last meeting we retraced
14 sort of what we had delineated as our first
15 sort of priority grouping. We were
16 concentrating first on trying to get some
17 organization or order to our efforts. We
18 have issued -- and it did go out through our
19 state process -- a request for proposals that
20 I had provided to the board and posted on our
21 web site seeking some professional
22 contractual services to assist with those
23 efforts. Those were out.

1 We did receive -- we received actually
2 only two responses to that. Since then I
3 have received some additional calls and
4 inquiries. So we may look to do additional
5 action in the future. But we only received
6 two responses. Those have been communicated
7 to our department of finance, and those are
8 in the stages of being notified and
9 proceeding as to those results. So just a
10 little short of being able to tell the board.
11 I'll tell you we'll have -- we will begin
12 negotiations here very shortly on some
13 contractual services for the mitigation.

14 That process is going and is fine. We may
15 look at ways to get additional responses and
16 activity in the future. We will begin
17 negotiation. And I'm confident we'll get
18 services under contract.

19 We were also asked last time to give
20 some description -- I'll call it strategy we
21 used to evaluate the operation of the traps
22 and our success or at least how we gather the
23 data on our results. So I detailed the

1 information that -- I want to detail the
2 steps we take and along the way the
3 information that we will be tracking.

4 Frankly, most of this has been tracked in
5 the past, but we'll do it in a consistent
6 method that we can -- I can update the board
7 on periodically.

8 But to tell you kind of the steps that
9 both Wildlife and Freshwater Fisheries staff
10 and State Lands staff implement as to sort of
11 our strategy on this. We, as many other
12 private landowners, are really looking at
13 whole sounder removal. That's what we call
14 our strategy, a whole sounder removal
15 strategy. And so as part of that, we first
16 conduct a population survey. Frankly, we're
17 just trying to be sure what you have there,
18 and where they are. And that's one reason
19 why the additional cameras were necessary, so
20 we were able to fully monitor the tracts.

21 We're then going to identify the individual
22 sounders, really the family group, the
23 generational groupings of females and

1 offspring.

2 Once we feel like we've got that
3 information, we will set the trap and
4 condition it with bait and then observation
5 of reaction to that. When you have the
6 sounder, the whole sounder, or as close as
7 you think you're going to be able to get, you
8 deploy the trap, and then the hogs are
9 removed. You then are, again, back to
10 monitoring to see what pigs are still there,
11 where they are, or hopefully you have -- even
12 if they'll be back you have managed it the
13 best you can.

14 So as part of those activities, what
15 we're going to collect and require
16 specifically for contractors to collect would
17 be the following as to each trap that is set:
18 The location of the trap, the monitoring
19 start date, the number of individuals
20 identified, and the number of the sounders
21 identified. Trap deployment dates, meaning
22 the traps shut, and the number removed
23 through those traps, but also possibly due to

1 specific actions by staff or even hunters
2 that are killing them as they're on the
3 tracts.

4 So that's the data that we will track
5 and continue to track and provide -- start
6 providing to you. If anyone has any
7 questions or want to discuss anything
8 additional, I'm happy to get with you at any
9 time and work through any other suggestions
10 or requests. But that's sort of where we are
11 on that.

12 COMMISSIONER BLANKENSHIP:

13 Mr. Parnell.

14 MR. PARNELL: Commissioner, I
15 understand we need a process, and Ms. Patti,
16 but let's not build such a process that we
17 can't get rid of wild hogs.

18 MS. MCCURDY: No, sir, I will not.

19 COMMISSIONER BLANKENSHIP: The process
20 is more just to provide information back. As
21 you can imagine, there's never really been a
22 contract for killing hogs in state government
23 before. So we have had to work through our

1 state purchasing officer, even after we did
2 the RFP, to try to get the contracts in
3 place. I think our legal section and our
4 state purchasing officer came to an agreement
5 yesterday.

6 MS. MCCURDY: Maybe through exhaustion
7 more than anything else.

8 COMMISSIONER BLANKENSHIP: I don't
9 know who gave in first, but anyway, we are
10 now to the point we can --

11 MS. MCCURDY: We did not give in. I
12 can report that.

13 COMMISSIONER BLANKENSHIP:
14 Trendsetters, trendsetters in state
15 government.

16 DR. MCCLINTOCK: Just wondering if
17 information be gathered on the sex of the
18 hogs, the size of the hogs, things that might
19 be valuable in evaluating how we're impacting
20 the population.

21 MS. MCCURDY: That may be observed,
22 but it will not be data specifically
23 collected, I do not believe.

1 DR. MCCLINTOCK: Number of hogs.

2 MS. MCCURDY: You can kind of tell
3 generationally where you are at, but not more
4 than that.

5 COMMISSIONER BLANKENSHIP: Thank you.
6 Is that all you've got?

7 MS. MCCURDY: One more. You had one
8 -- it's just an update matter. But in your
9 green folder, I mentioned last meeting that
10 we were continuing trying to find
11 opportunities where we could to implement
12 more campus conservation program activity.
13 That's where we try to get the university
14 students that are biology majors, wildlife
15 majors, or taking that coursework, involved
16 in that course work, providing opportunities
17 to have some field-based experiences and
18 actually working with our staff, hoping not
19 to just increase their knowledge, but,
20 frankly, to encourage them to pursue the
21 types of careers we need in the field.

22 So I had mentioned last time we had
23 another group. We've got a great partnership

1 working with Tuskegee University. The
2 students are really very eager to come and
3 enjoy the properties and enjoy the
4 opportunities to interact with our staff.
5 So we had enforcement staff and biologists
6 from Wildlife and Freshwater Fisheries
7 Division and State Lands that worked last
8 weekend the Field Trial area with that group.
9 And they did introduction to fishing, hands-
10 on fishing techniques, instructing them --
11 some really frankly had not fished before.
12 So this was a new opportunity. But it's not
13 just fun. You've got to clean them and
14 prepare them after that. They were taught
15 how to do that. And what good is that if
16 you're not going to cook them. So they had
17 some cooking instructions, and then went on
18 to shooting skills, shotgun instruction and
19 wing shooting. Just a little update on that.
20 I've got a few pictures. It really was, I
21 think, a successful event.

22 We continue to talk to some additional
23 institutions. And I know Dr. Powers was

1 interested in South Alabama joining us. We
2 are working on that. We are very close to
3 having a weekend for the Tuskegee students to
4 go down to Baldwin County to do a week's stay
5 at the National Estuarine Research Reserve
6 and get some experiences with sort of the
7 coastal ecology down there.

8 We're working on additional fishing at
9 the Field Trial area and trying to develop
10 some native grass restoration informational
11 opportunities and just, again, wildlife
12 habitat restoration.

13 That's some fun. I made y'all work
14 some. So I thought I'd end it with some
15 pictures and everybody was very appreciative.

16 Commissioner, let me look at staff.
17 Anything I've forgotten y'all can think of?
18 Unless a board member has something or you
19 do, that's all that I had under
20 miscellaneous.

21 MR. CHILDERS: One comment.

22 MS. MCCURDY: Yes, sir.

23 MR. CHILDERS: Some of the staff --

1 some of the board enjoyed touring of Dugdown
2 Mountain.

3 MS. MCCURDY: Thank you everybody with
4 the Alabama Forestry Commission. They did
5 all the legwork. We just got to see --

6 MR. CHILDERS: I see some of them
7 sitting back there. I wanted to thank them
8 for the tour and Commissioner for arranging
9 it and staff for arranging it. Very
10 informative.

11 MS. MCCURDY: It was great. Thank
12 you, Mr. Childers, for reminding us to thank
13 them.

14 If any member wants to visit the
15 tract, you don't have to wait for a field
16 trip. Let me know. We'll organize it.

17 MR. OATES: I would like to thank my
18 staff for putting that together. They did a
19 great job.

20 COMMISSIONER BLANKENSHIP: The next
21 item is approval of the minutes from the
22 February 1st Forever Wild board meeting.

23 MR. CHILDERS: So moved.

1 COMMISSIONER BLANKENSHIP: Moved by
2 Mr. Childers and seconded by Mr. Harper.

3 Are there any corrections or changes
4 to the minutes?

5 (No response.)

6 COMMISSIONER BLANKENSHIP: All those
7 in favor of approving the minutes from
8 February 1st, please say aye.

9 (Ayes affirmed.)

10 COMMISSIONER BLANKENSHIP: Any
11 opposed?

12 (No response.)

13 COMMISSIONER BLANKENSHIP: None
14 opposed. Motion carries.

15 Our next meeting will be August 1st.
16 And I -- we are still working on a meeting
17 location for that. And we'll be shortly in
18 touch with the board. The meeting will be on
19 our first Thursday in August, August 1st.

20 Any other business?

21 (No response.)

22 COMMISSIONER BLANKENSHIP: How about a
23 motion to adjourn?

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MR. CHILDERS: Moved.

COMMISSIONER BLANKENSHIP: We are
adjourned. Thank you.

(End of proceedings, 12:19 p.m.)

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 9/30/24

Commissioner for the

State of Alabama at Large

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