

February 26, 2014

Senator Brice Wiggins
Chairman, Senate Ports and Marine Committee
Mississippi State Senate
P O Box 1108
Jackson, MS 39215

Re: Department of Marine Resources' Artificial Reef Program

Dear Chairman Wiggins:

As Chairman of the Commission on Marine Resources, I was very disappointed to receive a letter from you with regard to the MDMR's responsibilities for maintenance of artificial reefs along our Gulf shores. The letter contains considerable incorrect information and was released to the media without the courtesy of calling to check the facts. Since I am unaware of your experience in building and maintaining reefs, I will share mine and address your concerns.

For over 30 years I have been directly involved in building and maintaining artificial reefs - both inshore and offshore - through my associations with the Fishing Banks, CCA, Charter Boat Association and the MDMR. It has been a labor of choice because these reefs provide breakwater protection for our islands and shores and create critical habitat for so many species of sea life in the Gulf. These reefs provide enormous economic impact to the Coast and State as they provide great fishing for our commercial fishermen, charter fleet and local residents. They also reduce damage done by wind and tide erosion to our Coast.

Allow me to provide some facts that have been misrepresented by your letter:

Neither the CMR nor the MDMR was ever asked and did not consider buying the concrete from the Grand's site demolition south of Beach Blvd. We negotiated to receive as much donated concrete as our storage site would allow, a site leased by MDMR for \$10 per year since Hurricane Katrina. I had arranged to have any excess material brought to another storage site for free. The columns being removed from the structure are being stored on the demolition site until deployment on Katrina Key south of Deer Island. This will extend Katrina Key for protection of Deer Island and expansion of important fishing habitat.

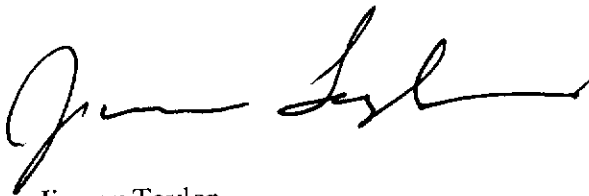
You alleged we have sufficient concrete to last four years in storage for building and maintaining reefs. This is not correct. Over half of the current inventory is scheduled for

use this year. The remainder is to be used to replenish and enhance existing reefs including oyster habitat due to subsidence, excessive fresh water and tropical activity. We need a continuous resupply and stockpile of concrete rubble to assure continuity of our citizens' reefs.

A very important use of the concrete is provision of suitable cultch material for oyster spat adherence. This is essential for maintaining a healthy oyster population. Typically crushed limestone rock costing about \$28 per ton has been deployed for this purpose. Crushed concrete costs from \$12 to \$16 a ton deployed and in this instance is available free.

When Jamie Miller became the MDMR Director, we learned its financing and integrity were in disarray. He has done a remarkable job in striving to restore the public trust and tighten the financial controls of its budget. At our CMR meeting on Feb 13 he reported that planned expenditures are less than expected revenues for 2014. Senator, we both know that no MDMR operating funds are used for projects you describe in your letter. These projects are funded by the "Rigs to Reef Funds" which are not taxpayer funds, and "Tidelands Funds." Tidelands Funds or Rigs to Reef funds can be used for the MDMR operating budget. They are derived from casino leases and the removal of oil platforms and are required to be used for reefs and public access.

I am distressed that you would attempt to hijack the "Rigs to Reef Funds" program for the MDMR's "Seafood Fund" in your bill without any discussion with the Commissioners. I have personally received over 50 calls or emails from concerned citizens who are angry with your position and actions in these matters.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jimmy Taylor". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Jimmy Taylor
Chairman CMR