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LOUISIANA WILD LIFE AND FISHERIES COMMISSION

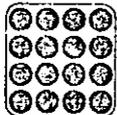
P R O C E E D I N G S

SPECIAL BOARD MEETING

Monday, December 6, 1971

9:30 o'clock a.m.

Wild Life and Fisheries
Building
400 Royal Street
New Orleans, Louisiana



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P R O C E E D I N G S

. . . A special meeting of the Louisiana Wild Life and Fisheries Commission convened at 9:30 o'clock a.m. on Monday, December 6, 1971, at the Wild Life and Fisheries Building, 400 Royal Street, New Orleans, Louisiana, J. G. Jones, Chairman, presiding. . . .

PRESENT WERE:

J. G. JONES

LLOYD AUTIN

J. E. KYLE, JR.

H. C. WRIGHT

J. L. WINFREE

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A G E N D A

RICHARD K. YANCEY:

- 1. Discussion of geese shortstopping in the midwestern states. 3)

TED O'NEIL:

- 2. Reconsider postponement of nutria season. 8)

OTHER BUSINESS:

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THE CHAIRMAN: My calling this special meeting was at the request of primarily persons from southwest Louisiana who wanted the opportunity to present to the Commission certain information and requests which they had regarding the dates that the Commission had set for the opening of the nutria season.

Prior to getting into that, at the Commission meeting last week, the Commission instructed Mr. Yancey and his staff to make a tour by plane of the Mississippi Valley area up into Kansas to get an eyeball look at what is happening to our geese and the other migratory waterfowl. Mr. Yancey has returned from that trip and I would like for him at this time to give us a report on what he found.

MR. YANCEY: Mr. Chairman, members of the Commission, for the past two or three years we have been vitally concerned with the fact that increasing numbers of blue and snow geese are being short-stopped on state and federal waterfowl refuges in the Missouri Valley. Now we all know that the wintering flock of blue and snow geese on the Gulf Coast annually amounts to about a million birds,



and our blue geese that winter here in coastal Louisiana number around four hundred to five hundred thousand birds each winter, and these birds migrate into Louisiana during the last half of October, but in recent years we have noted that these birds are coming in later, on up in December, and in fewer numbers, and we are very much concerned with the fact that there is now a definite possibility that eventually the blue and snow geese will winter in the Midwest rather than on the Gulf Coast. Of course, this is going to adversely affect hunting in Louisiana and certainly the blue and snow geese are an important part of the wild life scene in our coastal marshes, and to be without these birds is going to create somewhat of a disastrous situation insofar as Louisiana is concerned.

Following last Tuesday's meeting of the Commission, we made an aerial inspection of these state and federal refuges principally in Missouri and Iowa and over in Illinois, and we found that some 400,000 blue and snow geese, or around 40 percent of the Gulf Coast flock, are still in the Midwest when normally they should be in the Gulf



Coast marshes. It appears that the trend of short-stopping activity insofar as blue and snow geese has further increased over last year, to the extent of about 20 percent, so we are fearful that this trend is continuing to develop. It is increasing in scope and ultimately we feel that unless some drastic steps are taken in that region that our Gulf Coast marshes are going to be without blue and snow geese.

While we were up there we also looked over the refuges that are now accommodating the Canada geese that formerly wintered here in Louisiana, and I think we all know that at one time Louisiana wintered probably around 200,000 Canada geese and now we winter less than 1,000, as the result of the fact that that population of birds has been shortstopped very effectively in the Midwest. On the Swan Lake National Wildlife Refuge in central Missouri we found about 180,000 Canada geese. Of course, over in Horseshoe Lake in southern Illinois, there were another forty or fifty or sixty thousand Canadas.

It looks like the same thing is happening



with the blue and snow geese that has already happened with the Canada geese. Certainly we do not feel that this is in the interest of the biology of the bird to drastically change the wintering ground areas of those birds. What it actually amounts to is a tremendous overconcentration of blue and snow geese on very limited sanctuary areas. You have some very small refuges up there. Whereas our refuges run forty to 140,000 acres, theirs run from a few hundred acres in size up to six or seven thousand acres in size. To overconcentrate large numbers of geese in limited areas like that, we feel opens the door to the possibility of disease and parasites, which could very quickly decimate the populations of those birds. Of course, fowl cholera is something that can happen to blue and snow geese, so we are fearful that this is certainly not in the best interests of maintaining the populations of geese in this Flyway.

We have asked that steps be taken to stop this, and I think some steps have been taken, but it appears, from what we saw up there Thursday and Friday, that those steps were ineffective and that



the trend and the shortstopping of blue and snow geese has further increased over last year.

THE CHAIRMAN: As I recall, last year when Senator Ellender made an inquiry to the Secretary of Interior, he more or less got a written commitment from them that they would no longer engage in that type of activity. I think we should certainly make a report to Senator Ellender's office now as to what we found.

MR. YANCEY: I think that would be advisable. He did pursue this matter with the Bureau of Sport Fisheries and Wildlife and received what he felt was a commitment from them to curtail this activity, and I think they did take some steps up there, but they just were not adequate. As I said earlier, the shortstopping activity has increased about 20 to 25 percent over last year, because we found about 400,000 blues and snows in the Missouri Valley region on this flight, as compared to around 300 to 325 last year at the same time, on December 1.

THE CHAIRMAN: Does anyone have any questions?

MR. YANCEY: I might add one thing. The



main region of Louisiana affected by this at this time is that area from Marsh Island west to Sabine Pass, and principally the area between Calcasieu Lake and Sabine Lake. Those birds up there run at about half blues and half snows, and that is the composition of the flock that you find in that region of the state. In southeast Louisiana the flock runs about 95 percent blue geese, and this area has not been affected like the marshes of southwest Louisiana have been. Of course, the Texas Gulf Coast marshes are also being substantially affected by this shortstopping activity.

THE CHAIRMAN: Thank you, Richard.

Now we will move on to the purpose of the meeting. So that we can get some idea of about how many speakers we have, could we get some indication? Would you raise your hands? How many of you wish to be heard? We've got all day to hear as many people as want to be heard.

(Show of hands)

THE CHAIRMAN: It looks like about five, six, seven hands.

Let's sort of lay some ground rules down.



We will ask you to come to the mike and state your name and you may proceed to give us the position that you advocate. We ask you to conserve your time as much as you can, but we don't want to limit anybody in what they have to say and we don't want the Commission to make a decision until we have heard all of you.

After we finish with the speakers, I am going to ask the chief of the fur division, Mr. O'Neil, to come to the microphone and give us the benefit of his knowledge regarding the matter.

The request that I had received was the request that the Commission go back to the original date in opening of the nutria season, that we not wait until the 15th. Consequently, why don't we start the meeting by hearing from some of the people who advocate that position? Who would like to be the first speaker?

Mr. Dyson, Mr. Alvin Dyson from Cameron, a Representative for many, many years, who has worked for the Commission while he was in the legislature.

MR. ALVIN DYSON: I am Alvin Dyson,



Manager for the Miami Corporation land in Cameron Parish for the last 42 years. I have cooperated with the Commission and the law to the fullest extent. On the alligator seasons, we have a better population of alligators in Cameron Parish than you have got anywhere in the State of Louisiana, and that is because we cooperated with the enforcement division.

Now when you set the fur season, you sent out a questionnaire to all the landowners, people that were interested in handling furs, and made a request that the season be fixed uniformly. All animals we could start trapping on December 1. Then we have trappers who do other work besides trap. They roughneck and other types of jobs and they quit 15 days ahead of time to prepare for the trapping season. I have about 50 trappers and they were all ready to go, had their ditches and boats ready, and it is very expensive to get ready for these trapping seasons. Then on the 30th you came up with an order to delay the trapping season on nutrias only, which makes it very confusing to trap mink, coons, otters and rats and tell the nutria,



"Don't get in the trap because the season is closed on you."

Most of our land produces nutria only and it put us at a disadvantage, losing 15 days in the better part of our season. I understand the reason for setting this season back was on account of the meat. Well, we have outlets for all the meat in Cameron Parish. The Pure Ice has an order for 11 truckloads of meat in the month of December, which is 440,000 pounds. They got an order for 30 truckloads for the season, but for the month of December they have an outlet for 11 truckloads, which will take care of southwest Louisiana.

In setting this season back, it looks like to me that's a minor part of the fur business, the meat. The trapper gets everything that they pay him for the meat. The landowner gets nothing. We let them have that, to help them pay some of their expenses, and it amounts to about 15 cents per carcass, where the nutria fur will average from \$2.00 to \$3.00. It looks to me like we are letting the tail wag the dog, instead of the dog wagging the tail. We are on the wrong end of it.



I have no fuss with the people in this part of the state; if they want to delay the catching of the nutria, that's their affair, but I think that we should be allowed to handle our fur season as it was set by the Commission two months prior to the opening of the season.

Last year and the year before last, our people who handle nutria meat down there didn't have the market for 15 days, but we didn't ask them to shut the nutria season down in other parts of the state because we weren't selling our nutria meat to our local buyer in Cameron. We are not asking the Commission to shut it down or open the season all over the state. If it is not feasible for them in this part, well, let them have it. But it looks like it is unfair to our people to penalize them by closing the season 15 days and they just sit there, losing 15 days of trapping season.

As far as the fur, the nutria fur right now is just as good as they have ever been. We set our traps, they ran them on the first and on the second and third I ordered my trappers to go back out and snap their traps. They said, "My goodness,



we've got better fur now than we had any time last year, so why close it?" I said, "Because they didn't have a market for meat." They said, "Well, we're selling our meat," and they said, "If we couldn't sell it, we would rather lose that 15 cents in nutria and take the fur because that is what we make our money out of, is the fur."

If there are any questions any of you would like to ask me, I would be glad to answer them at this time.

MR. WINFREE: I would like to say this, Mr. Chairman. This is not a question, Mr. Dyson. You made the statement that, as you understood it, this season was reset because of the fact there was no purchasers for the meat. That's not quite right. That is just one factor that came into that. I just wanted that clearly understood. There are many, many factors that were presented to this Commission last Tuesday, and that was only one of them. It was not just because of the meat question. I know nothing about the meat situation but I did want to clarify that to you.

MR. DYSON: Well, that was our understanding



that we got, the reason for closing it down was because of the meat sales.

MR. WINFREE: No, as I say, that was just one of the factors. This will probably come out here today but that was not the principal reason.

MR. DYSON: Since we have a market for meat and since we have got a good quality fur and it is better now than it would be in the last part of February, because they will be shedding; they start breeding about that time and they start shedding their fur by the latter part of February, so we actually have a better nutria fur today than we will have in the last part of February. I am sure that some dealers here will verify that, if they want to be truthful about it, and I am still under the opinion that we are being penalized. Is there any other comment or question?

Well, in closing I hope that the Commission will see fit to open southwest Louisiana and let us get the benefit of the catch and the market that we have for our nutria meat, and if this part of the state don't want it, it's been done before; the season has been extended to some people in my



area whenever they had an overpopulation of fur, and we didn't take advantage of it because we didn't have. I hope you can reconsider the decision as made by the Commission last week.

THE CHAIRMAN: Alvin, are you asking for it just to be open in Cameron or Cameron-Vermilion? What particular area?

MR. DYSON: In southwest Louisiana. I am speaking primarily for Cameron Parish because nobody has contacted me from Vermilion Parish, but they have the same situation in Vermilion that we have in Cameron. They have a market, the people that are buying meat. I don't see why the meat part of it has come into the picture. We are speaking of fur. That's what the landowner traps for, the value of the fur, and if we can't take our fur, then we don't make anything out of it.

THE CHAIRMAN: Just to clarify for the Commission -- I am not asking for my own information; I already know, Mr. Dyson -- as I understand, the interests that you are speaking of are the same similar interests in Vermilion and Cameron, the same thing applies.



MR. DYSON: Right. Thank you.

THE CHAIRMAN: Thank you, Mr. Dyson.

Let's hear all of those that are speaking in favor of the Commission making some change first, and then we will hear the others. We will hear from everybody, and then if you have some questions of Mr. Dyson, I am sure he will be glad to answer them. We will cover the whole thing. Is there anyone else? First state your name and where you are from, please, sir.

MR. ROBERT HITCHCOCK: My name is Bob Hitchcock and for 38 years I have been buying, a non-resident dealer's license here, and I think it is common knowledge among the fur people that I am quite a factor in the fur business.

MR. WRIGHT: Where is your residence?
Where are you from?

MR. HITCHCOCK: New York, but for 38 consecutive years I have been having an office here in Louisiana, collecting the furs, and I think I handle as many as anybody does. I am in much disfavor, because we are penalizing primarily the trappers. As far as the inconvenience that it causes to me,



I can overcome it. I am a business man and it means that the people I have hired, I have taken away from other jobs because of the information I had that the season would open on the first, but I hear a certain point here now. I thought it had to do with the meat, which I didn't think was the function of the conservation department. They are interested primarily to see that there is a full crop of furs and wildlife, which is in harmony with everybody.

Now I want to hear the other points before I make my statement about why I am in favor of opening the season as was ordained by the law and the legislature. Thank you very much.

THE CHAIRMAN: Is there anyone else that would like to be heard in favor of the Commission making some change? Coming to the microphone is John Paul Crain, who is a former member of the Commission and he doesn't need any introduction; he feels at home here. John.

MR. JOHN PAUL CRAIN: Thank you, Jerry. About two or three weeks ago Jerry called me one day and asked my opinion on retarding the season,



and at that time he told me about the meat and I thought, well, maybe it might be a good idea, since they can't sell the meat and so on. Then, of course, in the meantime, we have a market for the meat now and so on. I haven't talked to any trappers but when one of our boys went and talked to some of those trappers about holding up a while, well, they were not happy at all, meat or no meat, so today I am here to ask you to go ahead and open the thing, consider opening it, in our area. We don't want to hurt anyone in east Louisiana or anywhere else. I think the Commission has a prerogative to open it in areas and so on, and we would like to see it open in our area.

I don't think I can add anything more to what Mr. Dyson has said in explaining the different phases of it, but I would certainly go on record to please consider letting our area go ahead and open as of now, and instead of closing on March 1, at this time I would like to suggest that we go to March 10, instead of closing March 1. We have been held up some by this. We are not trapping. I am not trapping, and it is always kind of a problem to



come back and want to get some extension on our season. I think we would like to do it now. I am asking for it now, I mean. Thank you, gentlemen. If there are no other questions, I will sit down.

THE CHAIRMAN: Thank you. Does anybody have any questions for Mr. Crain? Thank you, John.

While the next speaker is coming to the microphone, let me just give you a little background. On November 24 I received a call from Senator Ellender's office, from Sonny Summersgill, informing me of the meat problem and that Senator Ellender had convinced the government to bid for the 2.1 million pounds of meat, but they couldn't bid for it until December 13, and he asked me whether or not the Commission would grant an extension of the opening date, to solve that problem.

I told him that, of course, we couldn't do that until we had an official meeting. I think that was on a Wednesday, and that was the day that I talked to John Paul and talked to Mr. Dyson and got their feelings about it and I talked to a couple of other buyers. Then I called Sonny back and told him about the impression that I had gotten at that



time. Then the Commission then sent out a news release, stating that the Commission would consider at its meeting Tuesday whether or not there would be an extension, and the purpose of that was to inform everyone that the request had been made to extend the opening date to the 15th, to be fair with everyone so they could be here.

That is some of the background of how the Commission got involved in it. Sonny, do you want

MR. SONNY SUMMERSGILL: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Dyson, I want to make one thing perfectly clear. I didn't even approach the podium. Meat was not discussed at all at the last meeting. I understand since then, however, we have been editorialized against Golden Meadow and tail wagging the dog type thing, but meat was not discussed, not at any meeting when the Commission made a decision. We are glad to hear that your group has meat sales. The state needs the meat sales. It would be a shame to lose it. I would ask of you if you will ask your group, will they accept meat from our area. I am still in favor of holding the season back until the 15th. Thank you.



THE CHAIRMAN: Sonny, Mr. Dyson has a question for you.

MR. DYSON: Why are you asking this --

MR. SUMMERSGILL: First of all, please understand I am not trying to steal 15 days. Let's add it on to the end, per Mr. Crain's recommendation. Why should we lose it, even though it represents only X percent, it is still an X percent loss to our area. Now you say you have got these sales. I would appreciate -- we can arrange trucking for all of the trappers. If you are fortunate enough to develop these, and I am not questioning your statements at all -- we have been in sales of meat for ten-plus years and we don't have any idea where this meat is going. It's really got us snowed, because we know every major consumer, and if you say they have got 30 loads sold, I am sure nobody misrepresented anything, but I just really, I know that as of the 13th there will be 50 loads that the state can sell. Now, if they are packing on speculation against this, I find this hard to believe.

MR. HITCHCOCK: You said that meat was not an issue.



MR. SUMMERSGILL: It is now, because Mr. Dyson made it and I have been editorialized against and I will protect my position.

MR. HITCHCOCK: Do you think they will still be there?

MR. SUMMERSGILL: I would have to ask Mr. O'Neil how far they move.

MR. HITCHCOCK: Did you hear what the man just said about the geese?

MR. SUMMERSGILL: I don't think nutria have wings.

MR. HITCHCOCK: Aw, --

THE CHAIRMAN: Just a minute, just a minute. We want to be sure everything is down and let's proceed orderly. I will give you your opportunity if you want to question him; ask the question and let him give you the answer, and vice versa.

MR. SUMMERSGILL: I would have to ask Mr. O'Neil what the migratory pattern of a nutria is, how far he moves during his lifetime. I think he will be in the marsh five days from now. Mr. Dyson, Mr. Crain, everybody will tell us whether he will be half a mile away, a quarter of a mile away, or



100 yards away. I don't know. They are killing them now. We know that. They are just throwing the meat away. A freeze could kill them. I'll go along with that, but I don't know of too many diseases.

THE CHAIRMAN: Are there any other questions for Mr. Summersgill? Let's hear from the next speaker then, please. Oh, John Paul Crain has a question for you.

MR. SUMMERSGILL: Yes, sir.

MR. CRAIN: Do you object to opening in our area?

MR. SUMMERSGILL: In one word, no. I cannot honestly object because you have a means of disposal of your meat. I have no objection to opening your area, no, sir.

THE CHAIRMAN: Are there any other questions for Sonny? Thank you. The next speaker is the District Attorney from Calcasieu and Cameron, Frank Salter.

MR. FRANK SALTER: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Ladies and gentlemen, I know that we are all aware that the nutria business would not exist if



the only thing involved was the meat. The primary economic purpose is the fur, and the fur alone. Now the fact of the matter is, it seems to me that the question should be pretty well resolved as of now, but getting back to what I was talking about. Just as Mr. Dyson says, the furs in our area right now are good, and in February they will begin to shed, and you can believe that the fur will be decreased more than 15 cents in value in February as opposed to November and December and January.

It seems rather apparent to me that the people who sell the furs are going to lose more than the people who want to sell the meat. Nevertheless, it seems that all of the people here are in agreement that there is no objection to Calcasieu, Cameron that is, Cameron and Vermilion opening now and letting the other parts of the state remain closed until the 15th. There seems to be no objection from the people in the audience and certainly it is permissible within the law.

I am going to ask the Commission to amend its order to open the season in Vermilion and Cameron Parish now. Thank you.



THE CHAIRMAN: Do we have any other proponents that wish to be heard?

MR. WINFREE: I would like to say something, Mr. Chairman. The only thing I have heard this morning, they keep stressing this meat problem. As I have said to Mr. Dyson, the meat was hardly mentioned, if at all, and Mr. Summersgill did not appear here last Tuesday, if you recall. You weren't here. It was only one of the factors, and we have gotten this thing down to a debate now of the meat against the fur.

I think if you are going to look at it from the economic standpoint, I heard this gentleman from New York say that it was not the prerogative of this Commission to look into the meat. Well, I just disagree with him on that, but whatever the trapper can get, if he can get that little lagniappe from selling this meat, I would certainly think it would be an incentive for this poor fellow to get out and work those marshes a little more. I don't think this meat business has been going on too long in this state, but let's get this thing back in perspective now.



I would like to hear from Mr. O'Neil because, after all, he is the biologist for this Commission and is supposed to be the chief fur expert. I was more or less guided by his propositions last time. I would like to hear from him before we go any further, and let's cut this meat thing out for a minute.

THE CHAIRMAN: O.K., you want to hear from Ted now?

MR. WINFREE: Yes, I would like to.

MR. O'NEIL: Mr. Chairman, gentlemen of the Commission, it is true that the meat thing was not kicked around too much at the last meeting, but it did get into the minutes of the meeting. The meat was discussed this last time. I think I mentioned the meat.

The meat proposition has had something to do, not everything in the world to do, but something to do with these decisions. There was a shortage of meat outlets. We should go back a little bit. The mink ranchers started the nutria meat business, and the mink ranchers, when they were at their height, could take 8 to 10 million pounds of nutria



and they are the ones that did it and pioneered the meat business. The mink ranchers, as you know, have gone broke in the last five or six years, and they are just now building back. They started building back a little bit. They are at the bottom and the meat outlets to mink ranchers are not secure, your payments are not secured well enough. But during this period when the mink ranchers, when we saw that the mink ranchers were weakening down, we found an outlet for nutria meat with the Mission fly people, to rear screw-worm flies in Mission, Texas, a government project. In the last few years they have taken six to seven million pounds of the meat. In fact, they took all the meat to rear screw-worm flies.

In their screw-worm fly program, they decided to put on a crash program to rid all of Mexico from screw-worm flies. Instead of just forming this buffer zone across south Texas and keeping them out of the United States, it is their intention now to move this line down to Central America and get rid of the fly problem forever and just maintain a small area around the Panama Canal free of flies.



to keep those from coming up from South America. In this they didn't have the facilities in Mexico to store nutria meat. The nutria meat must be collected during the trapping season, which is 8 to 10 millions pounds, and it must be stored for the year around for their use. They went into a new program down in Mexico, with their plant down there, and they weren't going to use nutria meat. They were going to use another product to rear the flies.

We saw ourselves in such a terrible shape and here's where, in southeast Louisiana -- I'll have to go back. The people in southwest Louisiana, this has to be explained, and the people in southeast Louisiana are completely under a different set-up as far as nutria is concerned. The nutria of southwest Louisiana, starting in Vermilion and moving on into Galveston Bay, are used for plucking and shearing purposes. The nutria pelt comes out similar to a beaver, a fine beaver or an otter, and that was the old and the original nutria use, plucking and shearing, which was developed in Germany primarily and in Italy. Then the market for the long



hair nutria in southeast Louisiana was developed in the last five or six years, where they just use the nutria and not pluck and shear. The two processes are completely different. The plucking and shearing costs around \$2.00 to prepare a pelt, and around \$1.25 or \$1.00 to just dress a nutria for long hair.

The price of the nutria in the eastern part of the state, which is a thinner pelted nutria, lends itself to the long hair process more, and that nutria will only bring half the price of the nutria in the west. Therefore, the meat amounts to a whole lot more in the eastern part of the state than it does in the west, whereas the nutria in the west will only be a small portion of the value of the fur, whereas in the eastern part of the state it is a pretty big thing. The trapper makes all of his expenses out of the meat, so those things should be kept separate.

Now out of this, I am glad in a way, it shows the importance of the trapping business. That's the only good thing I can see that has come out of this whole hassle. It shows how important the trapping is to the state, and it shows how



important the nutria business is. Out of this is coming, I think, from working with Senator Ellender's office who worked so much with us, and Mr. Summersgill and Clark has done a great job on it, the whole Commission has, and Senator Long's office, they have told us, for God's sake, to quit bothering them about trying to shove this nutria meat to those fly people. They didn't need the meat, they weren't going to use, and we will do anything in the world for you, we'll do anything you want to do, but quit shoving on this nutria meat. They couldn't hardly tend to their work up there for us trying to get them to take our nutria meat.

They did get right to work on an outlet for the nutria meat for human consumption. We worked on it for many years and couldn't do it. Nobody would pack nutria meat for human consumption because it couldn't be slaughtered. We couldn't meet the slaughtering laws. We couldn't go out and pin the nutria up and knock it in the head and go into the Pure Food and Drug. You couldn't get any packer to pack a million pounds of nutria meat or even a truckload of nutria meat and keep it as



clean as they do raccoon meat or deer meat or rabbit meat, which is sold for human consumption. We couldn't get anybody to bell that cat. Nobody would take the chance on collecting two or three truckloads of meat and try to not be stopped by the Pure Food and Drug and lose their money and lose their time, but now we have Washington with us and we have everybody looking toward overseas shipments and we are getting it straightened out where everybody can put the nutria meat into a new category, human consumption, that will bring the trapper half of the value of his fur.

I should go back on that. Today the nutria fur amounts to around three or four million dollars a year, and the nutria meat amounts to close to a million, so it is a valuable thing. The one important thing that we have missed, the thing that got us in a bind, and I will say we did get in a bind on this, was the short notice. I will say we were doing the right thing, the Commission was doing the right thing. Our landowners didn't want to trap the few nutria they had. They thought they could take the nutria off. There was a shortage of



nutria in southeast Louisiana, and in southwest Louisiana there is a shortage of nutria. The land-owners and most of the trappers thought that if they could sell the meat and go along, they could wait 15 days, but there were a lot of trappers that were already out there that I found out later had quit their jobs and were out in the marshes, and there was no way in the world to enforce this law. It was completely unenforceable.

Mr. Hogan didn't speak last time. He should have. He should have gotten up. I asked for somebody to speak and nobody would speak much, but Mr. Hogan should have told us that there was no way to enforce this thing. I think the D.A. would say -- he's here -- I don't think he would take a case. It left us without enforcement and without teeth in our law, and it left the whole thing a mess, a stranded mess.

Now I think we should hear from a few more people as to how to get out of it. There is only one other little point. There is an organization that sells nutria in New York, on a New York bid, on a bidsheet. It sends out a blue sheet every



month, and just before the nutria season they sent this blue sheet out to everybody in the trade and said nutria will be 25 percent cheaper, start off 25 percent cheaper this year than it did last year. Well, that made all of our people who know anything mad. These people that send this sheet out only sold 10,000 nutria, or maybe 20,000 the whole season, and they dictate policy to us and then come out with a thing like that right in the teeth of the nutria season.

Well, there was in the back of most of our dealers' minds and a lot of landowners' minds that we could block a thing like that, that maybe we will show a shortage. I think that enters into this picture.

I would rather hear from some of the others on this, and we will eventually get it squared away, I imagine.

MR. WRIGHT: Ted, I would like to ask you something. What kind of enforcement are we getting on the closing of the nutria season now? Today. I am not talking about last Wednesday or Thursday. I am talking about today.



MR. O'NEIL: Well, the most honest people and the most sincere people, the landowners that were sincere and the trappers that are real sincere, they went out. It was up to them more or less. We couldn't tell our game agents to go in there. You could make a thousand cases. You could ruin the whole country with cases that wouldn't amount to anything. But most of the trappers have sprung their traps and are just waiting to hear what is going to come out here, but it leaves it open to the violators that are trapping along the edge of the legitimate trapper who is really trying to do something, and the violator is having a heyday. He can just run in there, especially with this high water, and shoot his nutria and run all over their boats and take advantage of the man that is trying to do something.

THE CHAIRMAN: I can partially answer that for you. Mr. Hoffpauer, the Director, is not here today. He is grounded in Houston. I talked to him about the enforcement part of it. I don't think Mike is in the room, is he? No. The attitude that the Director took about that was that



really since we had a decision that was made right at the last day and we had people out in the marsh who were honestly thinking they had the right to trap, the agents took the position of telling them they were in violation of the law. One other thing, we received excellent cooperation from the land-owners themselves. I see Roger Vincent in the room, with the Miami Corporation, and Mr. Dyson, and we received excellent cooperation when the matter was presented that the season had been changed and even though it did present a hardship to a lot of trappers, I think it worked itself out real well, especially these people that were dissatisfied. We give them the opportunity to have another hearing, where they can present their matters again, and that I think helps the situation a lot. I don't think we have really had that much of an enforcement problem, the large enforcement problem that we might have anticipated. Am I correct about that, Mike? That's correct? O.K.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: I would like to ask Mr. O'Neil a question. When all of these questionnaires came out of your office about setting the



season --

MR. O'NEIL: That's correct.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: -- how many objected to setting the season on December 1 for all furs? How many objections did you get?

MR. O'NEIL: Not one.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: In other words, it was a uniform deal where, when you went out to set a trap, you don't know what you are going to catch, but by making it a uniform season -- we used to have ten days difference in rats and minks; a mink is fine November 20th, you get a good mink, but on January 15th, they are not prime -- so by making it uniform, it has made it better for the trapper and for the dealers. You had no objections until the last minute, so we are not talking about furs now; we are talking about meat, because everybody was in accord with setting the season on December 1 by the report that you got. Am I right?

MR. O'NEIL: Yes, you are right on most points. The mink were trapped early because that was a swamp patch deal and we didn't consider mink much in the marsh and the mink did fine. You know



your big areas back in Cameron were good, too, which would work.

MR. MARLER: Could I ask you one question? What time of the year does your questionnaire come out?

MR. O'NEIL: It comes out before the -- it comes out in August.

MR. MARLER: Were you aware in August that there was going to be a shortage of nutria in the state of Louisiana?

MR. O'NEIL: That questionnaire comes out --

MR. MARLER: Were you aware that there was going to be a shortage of nutria, in August?

MR. O'NEIL: There is no way of telling until the storm season is over.

MR. MARLER: Mr. O'Neil, as a biologist, do you see any objection to opening the season in southwest Louisiana, in Cameron and Vermilion, now and leaving it closed, having a different season, in southeast Louisiana? Opening it the 17th?

MR. O'NEIL: Well, we have that legislative authority to open any area, even down to ten



acres, if the Board sees fit, and we have done that sort of thing before.

MR. MARLER: Is there any objection to it this year? Would you answer that two ways, as a biologist and as a conservationist?

MR. O'NEIL: As a biologist, I would want to manage my ground with very broad guidelines and do almost as I pleased with a trapping outfit, from the standpoint of a biologist, and I would want to trap very hard in most cases and take off as many animals as I could and burn my marshes and not have too much interference.

From a standpoint of this setup that we went into at the last Board meeting on that short notice, I did know that there was a shortage of nutria in southeast Louisiana and in the storms along our coast in Cameron and Vermilion and the people I worked with real close in Vermilion like Louisiana Furs, they had a big shortage. They were in favor of this sort of thing that we did, and I did recommend at first the tenth. I thought we could get by with just -- and I did think more trappers would know about this thing than did, and



I recommended the tenth, but when we had no objections for the 15th, I just went along on the 15th, and I got up to the microphone to say something about let's move it back to the tenth, and everything was going so good that I just didn't say anything.

MR. MARLER: Do you now object to it being opened today to southwest Louisiana and have a different opening in southeast?

MR. O'NEIL: I'll leave that up to the landowners, the same as if I was running a piece of land in southwest Louisiana I would want it to be left up to me, and I'll have to say I would go that way.

MR. WINFREE: Mr. Chairman, I want to say something.

THE CHAIRMAN: Yes, go ahead, Jim. Are we finished with Ted?

MR. WINFREE: I don't know whether we are or not.

THE CHAIRMAN: O.K., stay up here, Ted.

MR. WINFREE: I resent this Commission being made a whipping boy and I personally resent



being made a fool out of. Why was it November 30, at our last meeting date, before this thing was ever discussed as to when to change this season that was going to open the very next day?

MR. O'NEIL: Well, I think that was discussed.

THE CHAIRMAN: The only reason, as I said before, the only reason that a change was requested, to my knowledge, and the reason that I had the matter put on the agenda was that I received a call on the 24th from Senator Ellender's office, telling me about the bid for the 2.1 million pounds of meat, and I told Senator Ellender's office that I had no authority to make any changes, but that I would put it on the agenda for the Commission to consider. I also asked the Director to send a news release out, saying that the matter would be put on the agenda, so that all interested persons could be present and be represented.

Now, the only reason that I asked that the matter be put on the agenda was because of the request from Senator Ellender's office, regarding the meat sales. There was no request to me. There



was no discussion with me, and the Director informed me of no other problems involving the fur industry other than the business of the meat. I felt that a very important question because this Commission has throughout the year been trying to work with Senator Ellender's office in getting a sale, and when he comes up with a proposition where he has convinced the government to take bids, I think it is imperative that the Commission attempt to cooperate with him, at least discuss the matter. That is why I put it on the agenda. It was for no other reason other than sales of meat.

In fact, the day that Senator Ellender's office called me, I talked to Mr. Dyson and to Mr. Crain. I talked to them on the question of meat market. Incidentally, the market for meat in southwest Louisiana did not come until November 30, which was the day the Commission was meeting here. That was the sole reason that the matter was ever brought up for discussion, as far as I was concerned.

Now I was here for our Monday agenda meeting. I was not here for the Tuesday agenda



meeting, and at that time we discussed the business of the market for the meat, along with other matters which were brought to our attention by Mr. O'Neil regarding the storm damage, market questions which are -- let me have that news release -- which are contained in the news release that the Commission sent out on December 1. I have a copy of it here where it lists the reasons that the Commission took the action.

That is the reason that we got into the business at the last moment. I might say that I said to the people in Senator Ellender's office that they are asking us to do something at the last minute which is going to work a hardship, but on the other side of the coin was the question of trying to get a market for the six to eight million pounds of meat which we did not have, and I felt that the ability of the trapper to sell the meat is a pretty good part of the fur industry itself and after all, we are to take care of the interests of the land-owners and the trappers and everyone else. That's why the matter was brought up for discussion.

The reason it is brought up again today



for discussion is because a group in southwest Louisiana feels that they are not in that picture. I am not here advocating that we go and separate the state into all kinds of little groups, but I felt as chairman of the Commission it was my obligation when people want to be heard regarding an industry that we regulate, although it imposes upon me and the rest of you, I think we ought to listen to them. Especially southwest Louisiana produces quite a bit of fur. One of the big landowners, of course, is the Miami Corporation, and they have consistently cooperated with this Commission in the management of their marsh lands. They are one of the companies that don't go out and drain all of their lands and destroy them for wildlife.

I feel when big interests such as this make requests to the Commission, we should cooperate with them just as well as they have cooperated with us. That's the reason for today's meeting.

MR. WINFREE: Mr. Chairman, you have established the point, and that was this. It seems to me that there are four things, four factors, involved here. You have your landowner. You have



your meat buyer. You have your fur buyer. You have your trapper. Now, unfortunately, all four of them haven't been represented here. I imagine the trappers are in the marshes. I am sure the landowners are here. The meat buyers are here, and we have fur buyers that obviously are here. The point I am trying to establish is this: The only way that I could intelligently make a decision on my part would be for the biologists of this state that work for this Commission to keep us informed as to this type of problem that may arise.

Now, if the storms are going to interfere, maybe the questionnaire goes out too early. I don't know. But this happened, it seems to me, the last two years, perhaps the last three years, and this is not only a little embarrassing to the people of the state of Louisiana. It is embarrassing to the people of this Commission. I know these people out here have every reason to be here. If I were in this kind of business, I would be up here on the front row, screaming and hollering, but it just doesn't appear to me that this has been worked properly at all.



If a man was going into the marsh on December 1, certainly he couldn't have been here on November 30, which was last Tuesday. If a fur buyer has an abundance of furs from last year, I can understand his position. If you have these tout sheets coming out of New York, telling you that the furs are going to be 25 percent cheaper, I can understand a landowner may not want to trap his lands at this time; he is going to hold out and get a better price for his furs.

It looks to me like the fault is with this Commission, not with these people, and I for one am willing to take my blame if I am at fault, but personally I resent being made a fool of any longer on this thing.

MR. O'NEIL: Mr. Winfree, there is no one had any idea that the season wasn't going to go off as scheduled on December 1 until the last few days, when that information trickled down from Senator Ellender's office. It was all set to start on December 1. This is all a recent thing. I didn't know it.

MR. WINFREE: Well, there again, Senator



Ellender's office is not running this Commission. The thing about it is, meat is only one factor, as I understand it; about a fourth, or about a third. You said there was three and a half, four million dollars worth of furs and about a million dollars worth of meat. That's true, one of the factors. Now whether or not the people in southwest Louisiana can get this kind of money for their meat, I don't know. You are in a position to know that, and this gentleman that represents these meat buyers in southeast Louisiana, certainly he is in a position to know where he can sell that meat, and this gentleman here, large fur buyer, he knows where he can sell his furs or who he can sell them to after he buys them.

But what is the solution? Do we have a solution?

MR. O'NEIL: Well, that's what we are here for today.

THE CHAIRMAN: At the end of the presentation by everyone, Mr. Winfree, I am going to ask Mr. O'Neil, who is chief of our fur division, to give us his recommendation, point-blank without



fudging, one way or the other, what he thinks the Commission should do. Now whether we do it or not is a different matter. He is the man that should have the information.

MR. WRIGHT: Well, we asked him that last Tuesday.

THE CHAIRMAN: That's right. He gave a recommendation last Tuesday. Ed Kyle.

MR. KYLE: Mr. Winfree brought out the fact that the four people, landowner, fur buyer, meat buyer and trapper, were involved, and right now the meat has been predominant, but in the consideration of this thing, as far as my part, and I feel I am speaking for the other members of the Commission, this thing was primarily set back because biologically it was correct and economically we were led to believe by testimony here, with no objections, that it would be the greatest benefit for the fur people of Louisiana by moving this back to the 15th. Then it would be a better price for the fur in addition to the meat, but the price of the fur was essentially, I think, the big consideration in this thing.



THE CHAIRMAN: Incidentally, we face the same questions about deer seasons and what-not. You try to manage a resource and if you take a position that you have got to follow all the time, you can't really properly manage that resource, but there are factors on both sides.

Does anyone have any more questions for Mr. O'Neil? Then we will hear from some other members of the audience so we can proceed along. Yes, sir, state your name.

MR. HUGO SUCKOW: I am Hugo Suckow. I live at Manchac. I don't have a question for Mr. O'Neil, but I wanted to tell Mr. Winfree that we are trappers, and the trappers will be represented, but I wanted to speak a little later on.

THE CHAIRMAN: O.K., fine. Thank you, Ted. Just remember now, I am going to call you back up here for your recommendation. Are there any other persons who would like to be heard? Yes, sir, would you come to the microphone, please?

MR. EDGAR MONNIN: My name is Edgar Monnin. I live in Boothville, Louisiana, in Plaquemines Parish, and I have been in the fur



business for 53 years. In 1917 I started work in the fur business, and in 1917 the muskrat catch used to be 32 million, 32 million rats. That was the catch in 1917. The fur business to me every year, you have got less and less people in the fur business, and I think ordinarily it is a dying business. It is dying out. It is diminishing. I think this. There are fewer and fewer dealers in the fur business and the dealers are the ones that buy these furs. I think ordinarily that they should have a lot to say about the season, when to buy and when not to buy. That's my opinion.

I notice that plenty of the gentlemen that spoke, they are either landowners or they buy and sell like I do. They are no dealer. I think that we should hear from the dealers throughout this state. I thank you.

THE CHAIRMAN: Thank you. Who is the next speaker?

MR. BUTLER MARLER: Mr. Chairman, members of the Commission, someone made a statement a while ago, you were going to ask Mr. Ted O'Neil for his recommendation. He gave you his recommendation at



the last meeting. When you set the season for the 15th, the last word on your tape that was said in this room was said by Mr. O'Neil. "Gentlemen, you did the right thing." Now I don't know if he is going to come up here and make another recommendation.

I remember a few years ago, gentlemen, not too long ago, we had the colored against the white in this state of Louisiana. Today we have got a man from north Louisiana and a man from south Louisiana, and that's the way they campaign, the north against the south, and what is happening here today, somebody is trying to pit the east against the west now, in south Louisiana.

I want to tell you one thing. I am 55 years old and I have been in the fur business since I was eight years old. The only reason I am not an attorney is because my father couldn't get me out of the business. I wanted to count muskrat at eight, and I think I know it just as well as any one of these gentlemen that is out here. From the ground. I have never trapped. We are landowners, too, not only fur dealers and fur buyers, and we



have trappers. All of our trappers in Terrebonne and Lafourche and St. Mary are satisfied with the season.

Gentlemen, the only reason that we asked that you put the season back to the 15th was a shortage of nutria in the state of Louisiana by admittance from Mr. O'Neil and another gentleman that said it in the Director's office, that all of the state lands were 50 percent short of nutria. I don't know how the meat situation got into this thing. I do not buy meat. I am interested in seeing that my trappers can sell their meat, because as far as we are concerned in southeast Louisiana, it means about 25 percent of the catch. In other words, the skin will bring 75 percent and 25 percent is the meat. Now I am surprised to hear someone from west Louisiana say all they get is 15 cents for a carcass, because the west Louisiana nutria is much larger than ours, and ours average 25 and 30 cents. It has gotten to be a bigger issue than people think.

Now there is no issue here as to whether we want the people from west Louisiana trapping or



the people from east Louisiana to trap. Gentlemen, last year and for the last two or three years, I have come up here and argued and asked you to make the seasons the same throughout the state. Last year, some individuals in west Louisiana were given two weeks prior to the trapping season to trap and they were given two weeks after the trapping season to trap. That means that they had one extra month of trapping.

Now I am not in a position to say who gave them the permission to trap that 30 days, but they were given it, and I am sure that the rest of the dealers that are here are going to tell you that the only reason we are asking that you delay the nutria season till the 15th is because there is a total shortage of nutria from the Mississippi line to the Texas line. In fact, I think the shortage in west Louisiana is greater than ours, because Mr. O'Neil told us at the last meeting that there was a 11-foot tidal wave that went through Cameron and Vermilion this summer.

Gentlemen, we are asking that you do not give any consideration and that you keep the season



closed till the 15th. Now someone said a while ago, "What are you going to do? You are going to catch nutria while trapping rats." We understand that. We have been in the fur business a long time. The mink season closes in January, but still they catch mink in February.

"Now I have all the respect in the world for Mr. Crain and Mr. Dyson. I know both of them and I think they are my friends and I hope they will be my friends when I walk out of here, but one of them said that the skins were better in February, and the other one said they were not as good in February. Their ideas conflict as to whether the skins are better in February.

Gentlemen, I can tell you this, that the skins right now are not as good as they are going to be at January 1. Thank you.

THE CHAIRMAN: Thank you, Butler.

MR. HITCHCOCK: May I ask you one question about the value of the meat?

MR. MARLER: Mr. Chairman, may I say this, that Mr. Hitchcock wants to ask me a question and he reserved a right to come back. I would like



to reserve the right to rebuttal, too, after him.

THE CHAIRMAN: All right. We will hear from everybody.

MR. MARLER: I know nothing about the price of meat.

MR. HITCHCOCK: How much do you get a pound? How much do you get a pound?

MR. MARLER: I think it's like four cents, five cents. Five cents, he says.

MR. HITCHCOCK: Two and a half to three cents.

MR. MARLER: Well, there's the man that buys it.

MR. HITCHCOCK: Well, he pays that.

MR. MARLER: Are you calling him a liar?

THE CHAIRMAN: Let's don't proceed with an argument. I will give you the opportunity --

MR. MARLER: I'm not in the meat business so I can't answer that question.

THE CHAIRMAN: I am going to let you make your statement in a minute. We will get the answer from him. Fine. Thank you. Is there anyone else who would like to be heard? Let me say, we want to



hear from all of you. If you have got something you want to say, for goodness' sake, come up and say it.

MR. ALBERT MIRANDONA: Mr. Chairman, members of the Commission, my name is Albert Miranda. I am in the fur business, well, maybe not as long as these fellows. I'm 72 and I've been it since I was 17. I have been a dealer for about some 40-odd years. When I was 24, I was a dealer. I wish to say this. The main thing, I think, at issue here, is the catch. For the last two years, the catch, both on nutrias and muskrat is off, and it is going to be off again this year, so I don't know why they need a 90-day season to trap the animals that are short.

This Commission I think was appointed to conserve the resources of the state, the wildlife and so on, and apparently nobody seems to worry about this shortage of the catch. These are not my figures. These are the conservation figures. They get out this thing. In 1967-68, you had one million one hundred and some odd thousand nutria. In 1968-69 you had 1,754,000 nutria. In the 1969



season they dropped 150,000, 1,604,000. In 1970 they dropped 300 and some odd thousand. They dropped to 1,226,000. This is statewide. Those figures show that the drop is in west Louisiana as well as in south Louisiana.

Now the muskrats, you had 9,000,000 in '67-68. Not 9,000,000. I meant to say 900,000. In '68-69 you had a million and a half. In '69-70 you had 1,232,000. They dropped from 1,556,000 to 1,232,000. Last year you had 777,960.

Now the catch keeps dropping and I'll guarantee, I'll bet any man in this place, that the catch will be short this year, and I will bet him \$1,000.00. Anybody that wants to take me up, they are welcome. I think this. I think some consideration should be given to the catch. In addition to that, you have got a bad market right at this present time, and Mr. O'Neil mentioned the fact that a fellow sent the letter out, this United Fur Brokers. That guy, while he doesn't know too much about nutria, he said he sold about ten million; I think his own thing said he only sold six -- I meant to say ten thousand. His own article only said that he sold six thousand nutria in a year, and he went



on to say that the catch is going, the nutria is going to be 25 percent less in price, pricewise. He didn't say anything about a shortage.

That's about all I can say. As far as the meat is concerned, the meat is quite a factor to the people in south Louisiana. There is a man right there. Ask him to talk. He works nutrias. He says if he can't sell the meat he is not going to work them. He buys the whole nutria. He can also tell you that the nutria are very short in this area. In fact, they are short all over except possibly down the river in a few spots they have a few more nutrias, but on the conservation land down there, they are short.

West Louisiana, I don't know too much about west Louisiana. We used to operate out there. We don't but I talk and I hear people talk and you have got enough people here from west Louisiana. The report from the conservationists, the letter that they get out, giving the catch, shows a definite shortage two years in a row in west Louisiana, and I know the rats are short over there, because they were very short here and the catch



statewide proves that. That is about all I have to say. I do think this. I think setting this season like 15 days, if it was given the proper publicity, might have helped this market. I would be interested in that because I am carrying nutrias, and Mr. Steinberg isn't carrying any nutrias but he still thinks it would be good for the trade. I think he so stated the last time. Furwise, some people have said here that these nutrias are better now than they are in January. Well, that's a fallacy. Anybody that knows anything about furs knows better than that. A damned muskrat, you catch him right now, he's lucky he's got any fur on him. And they don't like No. 2's. They all want No. 1's.

THE CHAIRMAN: Thank you. Mr. Dyson has a question for you, I believe, Mr. Mirandona.

MR. DYSON: Not January, Mr. Mirandona. I said the latter part of February.

MR. MIRANDONA: I wasn't even talking about you, Mr. Dyson. I was talking about another party. I remember your nutrias in February. Remember when I was out there that time and you looked at them and you could see right through them.



MR. DYSON: Didn't you get one of these questionnaires about setting the season?

MR. MIRANDONA: I don't think I got it in writing. He may have called me on the phone. Ted generally calls me. But that's early.

MR. DYSON: Well, you weren't objecting to it at that time.

MR. MIRANDONA: No, because I hadn't seen this report from the Commission about the catch. They didn't have this thing out. Do you realize how much nutria we are short this year? 340,000, actually. The catch the season before last was 1,604,000 and this year, this past year, it was 1,226,000, so that's roughly about 370-some thousand short. That's statewide.

Now the rats, they were 1,232,000 season before last and 777,000 last year. That's 400 and some odd thousand short.

MR. DYSON: I understand what you are saying about the catch, that the furs are better now than they will be in February.

MR. MIRANDONA: I don't think they are better now than they will be in February. Maybe



on February 30 they might be, they start to go down a little.

MR. DYSON: In that situation do you set the season back and keep it as long or do you shorten the season?

MR. MIRANDONA: Well, I tell you, if you are trying to conserve the animals, you shorten the season. Do you know of a better way to conserve them? If you have cattle, will you kill all of them? If you know your herd is dropping down, do you keep on killing the same amount?

MR. DYSON: I agree with you. I am saying you don't set it back 15 days and let it run just as long. You shorten the season.

MR. MIRANDONA: I didn't say when it should be set, 15 days longer. I didn't say they should extend the season 15 days longer. I said they should shorten it 15 days for the good of the catch and for the good of the condition of the fur. They will be better fur and they will be more salable.

FROM THE FLOOR: We were referring to what the Commission would do.



MR. MIRANDONA: Well, listen, they set the season like they want. If they want to give Mr. Dyson the extension after the season, that's their business, but I don't think that it's good for the trade to make this thing statewide.

THE CHAIRMAN: While we are on that subject, let me ask you something. When you are speaking for the trade, you said it would not be good statewide --

MR. MIRANDONA: I am speaking, what would you say, conservationally?

THE CHAIRMAN: I am speaking, as a person in the industry, I have been one that advocated in the past and asked the Commission for certain extensions, after hearing from Mr. O'Neil about certain areas where the muskrat were plentiful and they were afraid they were going to have a lot of eat-outs, and --

MR. MIRANDONA: It is possible, what you are talking about, an eat-out and muskrats, that may work, but nutria --

THE CHAIRMAN: I am talking about muskrat now, but while you were at the microphone, I wanted



to ask your opinion as being in the industry. You don't see that any harm is really being done when the Commission does that, do you?

MR. MIRANDONA: In the case of muskrat?

THE CHAIRMAN: Yes.

MR. MIRANDONA: If a man's property is being eaten out?

THE CHAIRMAN: Yes, sir.

MR. MIRANDONA: I think he should be given some consideration.

THE CHAIRMAN: O.K.

MR. MIRANDONA: But I don't think they should open up a rat season on December 1 if you are thinking of the quality of the fur.

THE CHAIRMAN: O.K., fine. Yes, sir. Let's hear from some of the trappers.

MR. HUGO SUCKOW: Hugo Suckow. I come from Manchac, Louisiana, and trapping is my living. The only thing I heard about conservation just now came from Mr. Mirandona and I think that we all should be concerned about conservation since that is the livelihood of the majority of us here. I have been in the marshes and the swamps recently



and it seems to me that the proportion of small and large nutria, compared to what it has been at other seasons, in the area that I come from, there is an awfully lot more small nutria than normal, I think. I think this 15 days would help up in the long run. I am not for extending the season to go on into the time when they are becoming No. 2's. In other words, I think we should harvest the good ones. All the early nutria, anyway, I think all the trappers and all the dealers will tell you, have a lot of No. 2's to begin with. There are a lot of them that are scarred. They have been fighting. A lot of them you can't hardly skin without tearing them, because the scars open up.

As far as western Louisiana, I don't know, but I think in our area we are much better off in every which way if the season would be set back a little bit and not extended. The few we have, I think we can catch them pretty well out in the time that we have with 15 days taken off. Thank you.

THE CHAIRMAN: Are there any other trappers?

MR. KYLE: I would like to ask him a question.



THE CHAIRMAN: All right.

MR. KYLE: Would you have any objection to splitting the state down the middle? I mean, as far as a trapper, would you mind seeing a trapper work over in, say, west Louisiana, as against east Louisiana?

MR. SUCKOW: No, I don't. If they want to trap that early, it's up to them, I feel, but somewhere along there, there's going to be a line that is going to be a real enforcement problem.

MR. KYLE: I was just wondering about your opinion.

MR. SUCKOW: I would like to say this, too. If this season is extended, if it is extended to the 15th, I think that we ought to be really considered -- well, we should have the game wardens work real hard to try to enforce the law, because there are a lot of men that are going to hunt and that are going to trap, and like someone said earlier, there is no law says a nutria can't walk in that trap that is built for mink. In most areas around here, there's no place you can put a trap that you won't catch a nutria where there's mink



and coon, too. To begin with, Mr. Mirandona can tell you, I think he says they stink, speaking of mink, and I know the last I sold to him, that's the way he felt about it.

MR. HITCHCOCK: .If they opened up the season on the first, and you were a trapper or a landowner, does that force you to trap?

MR. SUCKOW: It doesn't force me to trap.

MR. HITCHCOCK: Then what's the difference?

MR. SUCKOW: No, but the man that's my neighbor on the next strip, if he opens up 15 days ahead of me, it makes a big difference to me.

MR. HITCHCOCK: Each person, I guess, has a different version of it.

MR. SUCKOW: True.

MR. HITCHCOCK: He doesn't force you to trap.

MR. SUCKOW: I don't know, Mr. Hitchcock. I believe if I was buying the way you are, I wouldn't want to get these No. 2's.

MR. HITCHCOCK: I happen to feel that the nutria is good now, in most instances. I'll put



the money up. My money is up.

MR. SUCKOW: There'll be a lot more damages now than there will in another 15 or 20 days, and there'll be a lot of these little ones that are almost big enough to sell, will be big enough.

THE CHAIRMAN: I am going to give you an opportunity to state your position, rather than just arguing with him, and I don't think there is any problem about that.

MR. SUCKOW: Well, I'm through, too.

THE CHAIRMAN: We want to keep it as informal as we can, so that everybody feels at home to say what they want to say. Are there any more trappers that want to be heard? We would like for you to be heard now before the Commission makes a decision, rather than walk out the door and say things. All right, O.K.

MR. JULIAN STEINBERG: Mr. Chairman, members of the Commission, my name is Julian Steinberg. I do business under the name of Steinberg and Company, raw fur dealers. I don't want to rehash all of these things that have been said



today but I just might briefly state what I agree with. I agree that in the eastern part of the state, the price that trappers receive for meat is an important factor in handling and marketing the catch. It means something to them and I think it is important that they be considered.

I also think it is important to keep in mind that there are certain conservation measures that should be taken, so that there will be a chance for the future, and by the records which were brought out here before, you can see that there is a sharp decline in muskrat and in nutria. Undoubtedly these extensions that have been given, these long seasons, are affecting that. Even if they haven't in the past, it should be kept in mind now and not just let people slaughter what is left out there.

I also want to point out that there is no question about the fact that skins that are produced early and skins that are produced late are not as good as the seasonable skins. In the case of muskrat, the best skins are produced in January and February. The next best skins would be the latter part of December.



In the case of nutria, the January-February catch, there is no question about it that it is far superior than the December skins, and the skins of nutria produced in the last part of December are better than the first part.

Now a dealer, well, you might say you don't have to buy the early skins, but you can go so far and you can't go any further. There are certain people that like to handle these early skins. They buy them, what they think is cheap, and then they turn them over and don't care about the other fellow. They come in here and they are out for themselves. They are not worried about the local dealers.

But I am a local dealer and I have buyers and my buyers go out and I can tell them to stay off the early skins, and they may try to do what I want them to do. They do stay off them. They stay off to a certain extent, but you are bound to get some of the skins, and how many you are going to get in a competitive, active business is unknown. It depends on how active you are. If you get them, you sell them. We pay cash now. Everybody here



gets cash. We sell on credit, some of us, and some for cash.

But later on the claims come in, and the complaints on these early skins, and it is invariably the first skins produced, even though I am not a law violator; I hold my buyers off as much as possible and I try to stay away from this kind of stuff, and I still get it, and I've still got to face that. This affects everyone. When you have a bad product on the market, everyone is affected. It is not just the dealer. The price is affected in the years ahead.

There is another thing. I heard a lot of talk about what prices the trappers are going to get for their skins, but this is something we don't know. We don't know. In the fur business it can change. It can go up or down, as the season goes along, but there is no question about the fact that the skins produced in the last part of December are going to bring more for the same kind of skins and the same kind of market as the skins produced in the first part of December.

Are there any questions?



THE CHAIRMAN: I had one question. It doesn't pertain really to nutria, but it pertains to the request Mr. Crain has made and which we have done in the past. As a spokesman in the industry itself, and as pertains to muskrats only, do you see any harm in the Commission granting extensions of seasons to certain areas where there are possibilities of eat-outs?

MR. STEINBERG: No, I don't. That might be helpful.

THE CHAIRMAN: I just wanted your opinion, from the industry. Who else would like to speak?

MR. CRAIN: John Paul Crain again. Gentlemen, I have heard a lot of talk about over-trapping and so on, and of course, my muskrats are low this year to what they were last year, but I want to tell you one thing, it is not from over-trapping. We didn't catch enough of them. Men like Mr. Yancey, Mr. O'Neil, can go look at the land and tell you what I am telling you is correct. In fact, Jerry knows that kind of stuff. He's raising fur.

But as far as a shortage of nutria, I do



not have a shortage of nutria. I have been in my marsh lately and we have got, I think, more than we had last year or even two years ago.

Of course, if anyone has got a shortage, I will go along with them. Maybe they shouldn't trap them so hard, but I need to trap mine. Otherwise, I am going to wind up just like I wound up with my muskrat.

Thank you, gentlemen.

THE CHAIRMAN: The gentleman in the back, would you like to speak now?

MR. HITCHCOCK: I want to make one statement. I have no ulterior motive, economic or anything else, about anything I would say. Just like Mr. Crain brought out, the worst enemy we have -- this is after 45 years, not only being a watcher but as a connoisseur -- the worst enemy we have against wildlife is overabundance, eat-outs, destruction by disease, and every piece of land is different. Every trapper, every landowner, has to have a different law. That's why I say it is not beneficial all the ways around.

There are some places that need to be



trapped. There are some places you can extend the season twelve months in the year, and they are not going to trap them if they have no fur. It makes no difference when you extend the season to, if they have no fur, they won't trap, and if they have fur, don't penalize them. Don't hurt your wildlife. When you outlawed nutria here in this state, I can show you the record. Every year we had more. Mr. Crain tried to outlaw the nutria on his land and killed every one of them. What is the outcome? Remarkable; he has more than ever. That's all I have to tell you.

THE CHAIRMAN: Here's a trapper. Let's hear from him.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: If anyone has an overabundance and is afraid of an eat-out, let me know. I think I can help.

MR. FRANK SLATER: Of course, gentlemen, I understand that what we are concerned with, the purpose of this meeting, is nutria and the date that the season opens. Now from all of the people that I have heard today, I have heard no objection from anyone to opening the season now in western

Louisiana, speaking of Vermilion, Cameron and Calcasieu Parishes. There was one slight objection and that generally said when we've got someone running north and someone running south in a political race, but that should have nothing to do with conservation.

On the question, your Mr. O'Neil, when asked the question as to whether he had an objection as a biologist or a conservationist to opening the season now in western Louisiana, made no objection. I am informed by the enforcement division of the Department of Conservation that they will have no problem with enforcement by opening western Louisiana now in those three parishes and leaving it closed in eastern Louisiana until the 15th of the month in accordance with the people's wishes from the eastern section.

In view of no objection, in view of the fact that no one has said that the nutria are not ready in western Louisiana, and on the contrary, everyone who has voiced an opinion has said it is time, I would hope that this Commission would open the season now for Vermilion, Cameron and Calcasieu



Parishes. Thank you.

THE CHAIRMAN: Is there anyone else besides Mr. O'Neil that wants to be heard -- and I am not too sure he wants to be heard.

We will have a little recess to give the reporter five minutes.

(A short recess was here taken.)

THE CHAIRMAN: We will come back to order. Is there anyone else that desires to be heard?
Yes, sir.

MR. EDGAR MONNIN: My name is Edgar Monnin from Boothville, Louisiana. The last meeting when I was here, we voted to have all parishes closed and I was told by the Commission here that all parishes would be closed. Now, I don't know how this thing is going to come out, but if Cameron and Vermilion are open, I want my parish to be open, too. That is all I have to say.

THE CHAIRMAN: Is there anyone else that desires to be heard? Anyone else? Mr. O'Neil.

MR. TED O'NEIL: Mr. Chairman and gentlemen of the Commission, I feel that we have heard



enough here to know that there is no objection to Cameron and Vermilion opening a trapping season. If everything was hinged on a meat outlet, Mr. Dyson says they have that, and a million and a half pounds will hold them for a while, and I think I have explained the difference in the type of fur, the uses of the fur. Even if they don't use the meat in Cameron and Vermilion, it is not a big part of their industry there, because they will get possibly \$3.00 for a good nutria, used for a different reason, so I will recommend that all of Cameron, Vermilion and Calcasieu Parishes be open to nutria trapping, and the rest of the state remain closed until the 15th.

MR. MARLER: Mr. Chairman, I would like to ask Mr. O'Neil to retract his statement that he made at the last meeting, when he said you did the right thing, when you set the season on the 15th. No, sir, that wasn't personal. He told this Board they did the right thing, and now he comes back a week later and he wants them to do something else.

MR. O'NEIL: Well, I'll retract that if



that will help any.

THE CHAIRMAN: Yes, and before you vote, I want something to be understood clearly, because my home is in Cameron Parish. I have had one conversation with Mr. O'Neil since December 1 about the season, and Mr. O'Neil has been out of the state and he called me from his home to ask me what the purpose of the meeting was and I told him, and that has been the extent of my conversations with Ted, and Ted will verify that. Just for clarification, since I do live in the area that Ted recommends being opened, I want it clearly understood that I have certainly not talked to Ted in any way about the thing. I want it understood.

O.K., you have heard the recommendations of Mr. O'Neil. What is your pleasure?

(No response)

THE CHAIRMAN: Well, the Chairman has the privilege of making a motion. I am going to make a motion that it be opened in Calcasieu, Cameron and Vermilion. Is there a second to the motion?

(No response)

THE CHAIRMAN: Hearing no second, it dies.



Before we conclude, I would like for Roger Vincent to come up to the microphone just a minute.

Roger, you may have something you want to say to the Commission, but I have something I wanted to say on behalf of the Commission to you. Mr. Vincent represents the Miami Corporation, which is a large, large landowner that owns a lot of prime hunting and trapping lands in Louisiana, and as you know, the Commission has had a lot of difficulties encountered in a lot of the lands in our state being cleared, being drained and destroying wildlife habitats.

The Miami Corporation is one of the companies, among others, that have taken a considerable interest in the sportsmen and the trappers of our state to see that that habitat is maintained in its natural state and to improve it if they can, and I certainly want to commend Miami Corporation, through you, Roger, that we certainly appreciate the cooperation that we get from Miami Corporation.

MR. ROGER VINCENT: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. I did want to come up and identify



myself, Rogert Vincent, with Miami Corporation. I also want at this time to thank the chairman and the Commission for giving this hearing a reconsideration to the people in southwest Louisiana. Most of them trap on our lands. We appreciate the opportunity. We will continue to abide by the law. Thank you very much.

THE CHAIRMAN: Is there any other business to come before the Commission?

MR. MONNIN: I would like to know about Plaquemines Parish. Is it going to be open or closed?

THE CHAIRMAN: No, the decision of the Commission is that the previous action taken, the season will begin on the 15th, as it was before. The Commission has taken no action today.

MR. WRIGHT: I move we adjourn.

THE CHAIRMAN: It has been moved --

MR. MARLER: Mr. Chairman, I would like to say something before we close.

THE CHAIRMAN: Yes, sir, Butler.

MR. MARLER: This will just take one minute. I want to address my comments to the people from



west Louisiana.

THE CHAIRMAN: All right.

MR. MARLER: Gentlemen, the 15th is only nine days off. The duck season opens on the 11th. Let's go duck hunting, and when we come back, we'll go trapping. Thank you.

THE CHAIRMAN: Mr. Dyson I think wants to say something.

MR. DYSON: There is one remark I would like to make. You know, the duck season and the trapping season conflict, one with the other, but we were fortunate that the first season closed just about the time that the fur season opened. That was going to give us ten days of free trapping, not being disturbed by the duck hunters. We all use the same trails, and any of you that have trapped know that whenever you pass in the morning, open your traps, take your fur out, and here comes a boat about 10:00 or 11:00 o'clock with the hunters. He turns all your traps over and you are really hurting the trapper, and we thought we were going to have a ten-day pre-season where the trapper wouldn't be hurt by the hunter. Although we know



the importance of the hunting in our area, because there are more people hunt on the Miami land than any other section of land in that part of the state, we haven't got, Mr. Roger can tell you, one part of a section that's not leased to somebody for hunting, trying to take care of the sportsmen, too, but with the decision that the Board made today, I can see it is pretty hard to back up on something that you have done, but you are really hurting people that obey the law and try to enforce the law, instead of letting the outlaws take over. That's what is going to happen.

In the next ten days my trapper is going to have to stay in the marsh and watch his ground or the outlaws are going to go out there, hunting at night, and you will be getting that same fur but we won't have the right to take it. Thank you.

FROM THE FLOOR: They are doing that already.

MR. DYSON: And I don't like it.

THE CHAIRMAN: Did I hear a motion we adjourn?

MR. WRIGHT: I made it.



THE CHAIRMAN: Moved by Mr. Wright. The meeting is adjourned. Thank you.

. . . Thereupon, at 11:30 o'clock a.m., Monday, December 6, 1971, the special meeting was adjourned. . . .

