**LA Oyster Task Force Minutes**

**Wednesday, March 4, 2020, 1:00pm**

**Terrebonne Council Building**

**8026 W Main St., Houma, LA**

**I. Pledge of Allegiance**

**II. Roll call and introduction of guests**

**Voting Members Present:**

Shane Bagala

Tracy Collins

Byron Encalade

Jakov Jurisic

Mitch Jurisich

Brad Robin

Brandt Lafrance

Peter Vujnovich

Willie Daisy

**Voting Members Absent:**

Dan Coulon

Al Sunseri

John Tesvich

Sam Slavich

**Non-Voting Members Present:**

Carolina Bourque

Chris Lemaire in for Justin Gremillion

Edward Skena

Frank Cole in for Karl Morgan

**Non-Voting Members Absent:**

Brian Lezina

Shane Bagala acknowledged the passing of Terry Nettleton. Mr. Nettleton passed away on Feb 22, 2020. The task force also acknowledged Paul Leonte’s passing on February 23, 2020. The board took a moment of silence in their honor.

**III.** Jakov Jurisic motioned to approve the February 12, 2020 meeting minutes, 2nd by Willie Daisy. Motion carries.

Suggestion to amend the agenda by postponing item E. To Discuss the Federal Government’s Recognition of Oyster Industry Farmers

Suggestion amend the agenda by adding item E. To Discuss the Possible Reopening Sister Lake

Willie Daisy motioned to amend the March 4, 2020 meeting agenda with the proposed suggestions, 2nd by Jakov Jurisic. Motion carries.

Peter Vujnovich motioned to approve the agenda as amended, 2nd by Brad Robin. Motion carries.

**IV.** Treasury Report:

Remaining Fund Balance- $464,984

Remaining Budget Balance- $105,288

**V.** Committee Reports:

1. Public-Private Oyster Seed Grounds Committee- no report
2. Enforcement Report- February 1st-February 24th

**Region 4** (Iberia)

None

**Region 5** (Calcasieu and Cameron)

1- Violate Comm. Actions on State Seed Grounds, untagged sack oysters

**9 sacks seized**

**Region 6**: (Terrebonne, Lafourche, Grand Isle)

Terrebonne

1-Fail to have commercial license in possession

1-Harvest oysters w/o harvester license in possession

1-Take commercial fish w/o commercial gear license

4-Unlawfully take oysters from private lease

2-fail to have written permission

6-Take oysters from unapproved area (polluted)

2-fail to cull oysters in a proper location

2-unlawfully take oysters from state water bottoms

2-Violate sanitation code (logbook)

1-dealer cited for 11 counts fail to complete trip tickets (oyster related)

1-dealer cited for 5 counts fail to maintain records (oyster related)

1-dealer cited for 3 counts fail to report commercial fisheries data, fail to have commercial license in possession wholesale/retail dealer (oyster related)

1-dealer cited for fail to have commercial license in possession wholesale/retail dealer (oyster related)

**24 sacks seized**

Lafourche

1-Violate sanitation code (refrigeration)

1-Fail to have commercial license in possession (Vessel license)

1-Take commercial fish w/o commercial gear license

1 – dealer cited for 61 counts fail to complete trip tickets (oyster related)

**18 sacks seized**

**Region 8**: (Jefferson, Plaquemines, St. Bernard, Orleans, St. Tammany)

St. Bernard

2-Fail to display proper number on vessel

1-No Gear license in possession (Scrapper)

2 nonresident businesses were charged with violate lacy act. In both cases, the state predicating charges were VMS violations related to out of state landing permit and not having the out of state landing permit.

Plaquemines

1-No Commercial License

1-No commercial gear license

2-Unlawfully take off private lease

2-Fail to have written permission

**27 sacks seized**

1. Legislative Committee-

Jakov Jurisic provided the task force with a legislative committee update, the committee considered draft legislation (HB433 by Representative Cormier) that would reduce the oyster seed ground vessel permit fee and create associated gear fees. The legislation would reduce the oyster seed ground vessel permit to $50 for residents and $200 for non-residents. In addition to the vessel permit fee, in order to harvest oysters from the public grounds, one must possess a Public Oyster Seed Ground Gear License. The gear license costs $200/ year for a resident and $800/year for a non-resident. This legislation was proposed as a result of the current state of the public seed grounds

The task force proposed one amendment to the legislation on page 2 line 16, scratch “or possess” and add “active” on line 17 in front of scrapers

Jakov Jurisic moved to accept the committee’s recommendation with proposed amendment, 2nd by Shane Bagala. Motion carries.

1. Legal Committee-

Joe Piacun addressed the board regarding a proposal to represent the task force as legal counsel

Mr. Piacun provided the task force with a little background about himself: local graduate from LSU undergrad and went to Loyola Law, also a lease holder and has worked for family oyster business for years. Stated that he is very interested and honored to potentially be engaged as outside counsel to advise the Oyster Task Force

Duncan Kemp stated that the approval process to hire outside counsel and some of the laws pertaining to the proposed action, WLF recognizes that Title 56 allows for the hiring of outside counsel with the approval of the WLF Secretary, DOA, and the AG’s Office (attorney fee Schedule). Statutes at issue are LA RS Title 36:610, 36:802, those two together transfers the OTF under the purview of WLF and provides for the powers capped by the OTF and what powers fall under WLF Secretary; As far as the DOA and the AG’s office, statutes can be found in Title 39:1551 RS49:258

Jakov Jurisic motioned that the task force research the law further and get more information on hiring outside legal counsel and come back with final recommendation to the board at the next meeting, 2nd by Willie Daisy.

The next item the committee discussed was WLF Commission agenda item 13. To Receive and Consider a Resolution to Request Funding for Oyster Water Bottom Assessment of Coastal Louisiana

Jakov Jurisic motioned accept the committee’s recommendation to request that the LA Department of Wildlife and Fisheries ask the WLF Commission to remove item 13 from the March 5th commission agenda due to lack of information to the oyster industry, 2nd by Willie Daisy. Motion carries.

The last item the committee discussed was to consider a consulting proposal from Margaret Henderson and Seb O’Kelly. These proposals are being considered due to issues setting up meetings in DC and the task force feels that the industry needs representation in Washington, D.C.

\*Add item for next meeting to discuss proposals

Jakov Jurisic motioned to accept the committee report, 2nd by Shane Bagala. Motion carries.

1. Research- no report
2. Coastal Restoration- no report
3. Marketing- no report
4. Health- Chris Lemaire thanked everyone who was able to come to the map showing and he encouraged other oyster fisherman to participate in future map showings
5. Aquaculture- last meeting was on January 23, 2020 and the committee discussed the following:

The committee considered board member volunteers

Volunteers included: Brain Callam, Percy Dardar, Steve Pollock, Donald Dardar (with Point-au Chien Indian Tribe), Scott Scandeski, and Tracy Roberts with Go-Fish, Mike Roberts

Brandi Shelley presented an update provided by Steve Pollock on seed production from Triple N Oyster Farm- Hatchery improvements are on schedule, holding several hundred adult broodstock oysters in Baton Rouge. Caps to increase to 300 million odd larvae next month. Seed orders are being taken daily and the majority of the orders are coming from Florida and Mississippi- very few orders from Louisiana. Pricing has remained the same over the last three years and there are no plans to increase in 2020. Willing to price match if a cheaper price is found elsewhere. Farm is currently being run at 16PPT

Aquaculture parks are being proposed for the following areas: Point-aux-Chenes, Terrebonne Parish- Go Fish is currently working with landowners to lay out some areas

Andrew Wilson provided an update on the Oyster Lease Moratorium

Andy Depaola provided the committee with a presentation on the Shellevator 4.0

1. Joint Task Force Working Group- no report

**VI.** New Business-

1. Chris Cannon and Walter Boasso provided a presentation on Spat-Tech, high density seeding of oysters for the restoration and repopulation of oyster reefs

More information regarding Spat-Tech can be found here: <https://vimeo.com/318313327>

Jakov Jurisic stated that the issue is not a lack of resource but rather an environmental issue

1. Bryan Marie provided a presentation on the LDWF enforcement drones
2. The board considered draft legislation that would make changes to the Public Oyster Seed Ground Vessel Permit Fee options

The task force already discussed this item in Legal Committee reports, no further discussion on this item

1. The task force discussed oyster violations and convictions in Terrebonne Parish

Glynn Bourgeois from the Terrebonne Parish DA’s office participated in the discussion

Willie Daisy stated that there have been a lot of cases of theft in Terrebonne Parish and a lot of times the offenses are pleaded down. Willie stated that this is a serious offense and the board would like to see a more solid conviction and prosecution.

Glynn Bourgeois stated that he didn’t have the opportunity to provide the numbers today but stated that the offenses are always taken very seriously. In Terrebonne Parish there is a system of communication called a Green Sheet where background on the case, how many man hours spent on the case, prior violations, etc. all the information goes with the file to court. Mr. Bourgeois stated that it might not be a bad idea for the task force to set up a meeting with the judges and he would be happy to help facilitate that meeting

Willie Daisy stated that he sees a lot of repeat offenders coming back and continually receiving a first offense violation

1. The task force discussed the possible reopening of Sister Lake

Willie Daisy stated that he would like to see Sister Lake open again sometime in April to try and get some of these areas going again, would like to see areas that have been hit hard opened and keep other areas closed. Seeing fresh spat set right now

Carolina Bourque stated that spat samples are coming back from all over Sister Lake, Carolina stated that she can get together and look at the areas being proposed opening

Jakov Jurisic asked about Grand Pass and Carolina Bourque stated that the area is not looking good as of right now, in sample sites, only two samples came back with spat set

Steve Voisin suggested keeping areas closed where the shell is clean and opening only the area where the shell isn’t clean and allow the fishermen to make a few dollars and clean up

Shane Bagala stated that he is concerned that the area they want to leave open in Sister Lake has no oysters left

F. The board considered funding to sponsor the Croatian American Society Festival

Joe Piacun stated that he is the vice-president of the society and last year the event was a tremendous success, individuals from different areas cooking Croatian dishes, showcase several oyster dishes

Jakov Jurisic motioned to sponsor the Croatian American Society Festival, providing $2500 in funding, 2nd by Willie Daisy. Motion carries.

\*Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, the festival was postponed until October 24, 2020\*

Mitch Jurisich requested that Jakov Jurisich forward all of the event information to Allison West to notify the task force so that they can attend

1. The board discussed OTF board member absences

Shane Bagala stated that the TF should send letters to the members who have not been attending to see if they desire to remain on the task force

Shane Bagala motioned to send out letters to all OTF board members requesting their participation in upcoming meetings and asking board members who are no longer able to/ interesting in serving on the board to notify the task force, 2nd by Willie Daisy. Motion carries.

**VII.** Public Comment

**VIII.** The next Oyster Task Force meeting was set for Wednesday, April 13, 2020 for 1:00pm at the New Orleans Lakefront Airport

**IX.** Jakov Jurisic motioned to adjourn, 2nd by Shane Bagala. Motion carries.