**Shrimp Task Force Minutes**

**Monday, September 14, 2015, 10:30 a.m.**

**Terrebonne Council Meeting Room**

**8026 Main Street, Houma, LA 70360**

Meeting called to order at 10:40am

Allison West called roll:

Voting Members present:

Clint Guidry

Lance Nacio

Acy Cooper

Mark Abraham

Alan Gibson

Andrew Blanchard

Eric Hansen

Voting Member Absent:

George Barisich

Byron Despaux

Lance Authement

Non-voting members present:

Mark Schexnayder

Dr. Jack Isaacs

Chad Hebert

Non-Voting Members Absent:

Dr. Carrie Castille

Lance Broussard

Nick Cole

Introduction of guests Dan Davis, Rep Joe Harrison, Rep Gordy, Senator Norby Chabert, Myron Fischer

Mark Abraham made a motion to approve April 1 meeting minutes, 2nd by Andy Gibson

Rene Lebreton reviewed the budget report, fund balance available -$346,000.

Discussion of shrimp industry promotion opportunities

Spreadsheet for STF ‘Walk the Hill’

Andy Gibson- proposed walking the hill, pick date for the end of the year, wants to go during the OTF prime time, maybe go back during the year

Mark Abraham- suggested doing a Washington cooking demo, similar event to OTF, maybe tie in that you can visit both oyster and shrimp, conducive to talking to people on the Hill, also mentioned using Certified LA label and asked processors to get other processors on board with the program to create and promote the label/ brand.

Clint Guidry suggested promoting by using the ‘label’ and encouraging everyone to get on board and participate/ DC trip bring up seafood safety and branding, come up with some sort of promoting mechanism for branding and promotion.

Marketing Committee Report:

Karen Profita from the Seafood Promotions and Marketing Board said there is $8.7 million to spend by June 10, 2018 and they are looking at dividing that evenly over the three years. Some of the items they are working on are restaurant and grocery store programs as well as tackling domestic vs. imported marketing promotion.

The Seafood Marketing Board offered to help facilitate, restaurant co-op, grass roots campaign to use local shrimp

Richard Williams updated the Task Force on the Shrimp Refrigeration Cost-Share Program, this year the application was total online and funding was limited and there were some complaints on window to apply. July 31 announcement and on Aug 31 the program opened by 3:30pm that day all funds had been administered, so on September 1 the program closed. 17 applications have been processed so far with an estimated $25,000/ per person, totaling about $430,000, but no payouts have been made yet.

Mark Abraham asked that people who receive the grant put together a report on how the grant is being used and how it has helped their business. That way the STF can see the results and the ROI of the grant.

Clint Guidry stated that funding is a problem and there has been a shown need for this type of program. Suggested addressing getting more money for the Grant Refrigeration Program on a legislative level

Changing the program deadline to April 30- asked to take that into consideration

Damon Morris presented the Task Force with a Sustainability Program update.

1. Currently working on a Gulf specific sustainability program with the Audubon institute and we are now at the stage where the standard is going through an accreditation process with an ISO accredited body; we have almost reached the point where the standard would be acceptable to an international accreditation body. There are still a few more steps in the process to develop more technical criterion for the actual certification itself, but over all we are doing well. Currently working on a case study to include blue crab and oyster, asked that we include shrimp in this type of program.
2. A few years ago a certification sustainability pre-assessment under the Marine Stewardship Council Certification Program. The way a fishery improvement plan works is that a pre-assessment is done on the fishery so that we can gage where we stand relative to a certification standard. In this case we used the Marine Stewardship plan and there were some issues that caused us not to be able to reach the fisheries certification level, so what a fisheries improvement plan is intended to do is to demonstrate that those fishery participants are still interested in working towards creating a more sustainable fishery even though they can’t obtain that certification. With the completion of the Fishery Management Plan and with recent legislation we closed out the sustainable fisheries partnership Fishery Improvement Plan. Audubon Nature Institute is now taking over the Fishery Improvement Plan and it will now be called a Marine Advancement Plan and rather than working with the Marine Stewardship Council it will fit in with the Audubon Gulf Certification Program.

Revised Sustainability Pre-assessment

Damon Morris stated that since we have closed out the conditions for that initial Fishery Improvement Plan and it has been transferred to the Audubon Nature Institute is has been suggested that is would be a good time to reassess the fishery beings that we have closed out those other conditions and now can carry out a new pre-assessment and update where we stand. Suggested to us that we should do this to the MSC standard and we may also want to consider doing a similar pre-assessment to the Audubon Gulf standard.

Mark Abraham suggested that this be done before the end of the year and opened the floor for any Task Force members to comment on funding a pre-assessment.

Andy Gibson mentioned to make sure we don’t get involved with the NGO’s and there is a fair shake at it. What will this type of investment yield, make every supplier have to follow the same standards/ procedures even playing field

Damon Morris said that an early pre-assessment in 2010/11, previous pre-assessments have cost in the range of $10,000. Cost of certification program around $100,000 and after that the audit will cost about $20-$25,000 after that audited yearly to make sure certification standards are maintained and recertified every five years. MSC vs. Audubon Gulf for the assessment. Fishery management plan about 5yrs, provides STF with a certain type of assurance to buyers and good for marketing/ promotion, where we stand against market certification programs

Mark Abraham proposed to pay for MSC pre-assessment use funds to do this before the end of the year, suggested they pick out their own third party to conduct cert. Be sure there is enough data and experience to prove this is correct route, finish up with the MSC pre-assessment and then continue forward with Audubon.

Clint Guidry expressed concern on cost, wanted a break down on costs associated with assessment

Rene Lebreton suggested at the pre-assessment level it would be a STF expense, but after that we will have to look into options for funding. Suggested looking at the pre-assessment reports and going from there to decide on future decisions

Motion made by Clint Guidry to approve STF spending $10,000 on a shrimp fisheries pre-assessment, 2nd Lance Nacio. Motion adopted.

Clint Guidry made a motion to add the agenda item ‘Federal Shrimp Moratorium’ 2nd Andrew Blanchard

Jeff Gearhart presented on TED testing in skimmer nets

Acy- giving fisherman the option to come on the vessels to educate on TEDs, water depth and TED angle testing

Lance Nacio added that Louisiana shrimp are still red listed with Monteray Bay for skimmer use; Whole Foods is not allowing sales do to skimmer use

Mark Schexnayder presented on the Sea Turtle Monitoring Project

Proactive on where turtles are, no in water testing with trawls. Funding for a pilot study and meeting with other states and comparing data and feedback

Andrew Blanchard -setting of shrimp seasons

Suggested meeting before the commission meets to discuss and have data prior to commission meeting so that STF can provide opinion and feedback

Clint Guidry proposed to have a meeting where the Task Force can give their recommendation and opinions to the commission before the commission meets.

Andrew Blanchard suggested that seasons should be based more on biology than opinion. As a board taking into account all dimensions

Andy Gibson said that not every area is ready for a state- wide opening. Putting shrimp on the market all at the same time can hurt the price etc. and maybe having a segmented opening may make for a better market on shrimp; suggested working with the Department and some of the fisherman to come up with some recommendations to bring to the commission.

Andrew Blanchard made a motion for a request to ask WLF to make a biological presentation on the status of the shrimping industry before the commission meeting, Lance 2nd Andy Gibson. Motion adopted

Barry Rogers revised the laws in place for shrimping in closed seasons

The law has no bite for offenders. As fisherman we would like to see the law change for habitual offenders. Would like to move forward on having the law changed

Clint Guidry said the law now states:

1st offense- may revoke or suspend license for 1 year and 40 hours of community service

2nd offense- shall revoke license for 3 years from the date of the second conviction and mandatory jail requirement

3rd violation- shall revoke license for 10 years along with jail time requirement these penalties are all dependent on judge.

Suggested that we hold more meetings to move forward with this initiative

Comment by Neil Hotard- gear license is not what we need to go after, we need to go after vessel license. Law should be in place to seize vessel license and not gear license to enforce offenders to follow laws and season, we should get the DA and LDWF on board to get this in motion

Andy Gibson suggested fisherman to get with the DA and legislators to forward buckling down on the law for offenders and having a committee meeting with the DA

Shrimp Moratorium in federal waters- Myron Fischer

Gulf wide there are 1461 permits, of those 395 are from Louisiana. There are a few permits that will expire this year and once the permits expire the Louisiana will lose those permits. We need assistance with matching people selling permits versus people purchasing, encouraging participation with the process, work on constructing a reserved pool. Encourages participation in the council process.

Public Comment:

Thomas Olander asked the task force to perform TED testing in Vermillion Bay, there is a crab trap issue. Asked that feedback be provided about safety

Jeff Gearhart said they are willing and open to do the testing in Vermillion Bay

Motion to adjourn by Clint Guidry, 2nd Lance Broussard. Motion adopted

Next Meeting- not set at this time