**Finfish Task Force Minutes**

**Wednesday, December 7, 2022, 10:00am**

**Chairman- Ben Graham**

**LDWF Headquarters**

**2000 Quail Drive**

**Baton Rouge, LA 70898**

**I.** Pledge of Allegiance

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

**Voting Members Present:**

Daniel Edgar

Ben Graham

George Huye

Stuart Billeaud

Steve Rockwieler

Adam Guillory

**Voting Members Absent:**

James Pelas

Wayne Rollo

Daryl Simon

Acy Cooper

Jay Trotter

Senator Hensgens

Representative Stefanski

**Non-Voting Members Present:**

Jason Adriance

Gene Cavalier

Jack Isaacs

**Non-Voting Members Absent:**

Justin Gremillion

Edward Skena

**III.** George Huyemotioned to approve the September 14, 2022 meeting minutes, 2nd by Daniel Edgar. Motion carries.

**IV.** George Huye motioned to approve adding a presentation under new business, item B. To hear an Update on Cobia and Shark Limits, 2nd by Daniel Edgar. Motion Carries.

George Huye motioned to approve the December 7, 2022 meeting agenda as amended, 2nd by Daniel Edgar. Motion carries.

**V.** New Business

1. Jason Adriance provided and assessment of the red drum stock in Louisiana and potential management measures

**Red Drum Biology**

Long lived species up to 39 years • 100% maturity in males by age 5 and females by age 6 • Growth slows after age 5 and becomes difficult to assign age based on size alone • Spawn in nearshore waters and tidal passes from mid-August through mid-November • About 2 million eggs per spawn with spawning about every 7 days •Eggs hatch in 1 to 2 days and larvae spend about 2 to 3 weeks in offshore water column before moving into the estuaries • Grow to about 8 inches by first spring; takes about 1.5 years (on average) to reach 16 inches • The Inshore population comprised of mainly sub-adult fish • Red Drum can tolerate a wide range of salinities

**Stock Assessment Summary**

• Red Drum stock is not overfished (depleted), but overfishing (depletion) is currently occurring. • Overfishing has occurred frequently in the most recent decade (80%). • SPR began trending downward in 2005. • Recent recreational landings at lowest level observed since the 1980’s. • Current recruitment estimate is at lowest level observed and have been declining since 1994. • The assessment was peer reviewed by other Gulf state’s marine fisheries agencies and non-LDWF stock assessment scientists and those reviewers considered it technically sound with no major issues (comments and responses in LWFC materials).

**Projection Summary**

• Thirty-nine year stock projection (2023-2061) of base model • Projected population metrics are stock status indicators only (SPR and juvenile escapement rates) • Future recruitment levels assumed equivalent to the most recent decade (mean 2012-2021) • Each management scenario represents a specific percent reduction of landings in terms of weight (0 to 70% by factors of 5)

**Fishery Reductions Summary**

• Fishery reductions calculated from the LDWF LA Creel and Biological Sampling Programs (2019-2021) • Reductions in terms of fishery yield (total weight landed) • Reductions from creel and slot limit changes only • Creel limit reductions based on future directed effort and recruitment remaining comparable to current • Size limit savings based on a 5% discard mortality rate assumption • Proposed minimum yield reduction of 35%

**Next Steps**

• LDWF recommends implementing regulations immediately after receiving and considering public input • LDWF recommends a minimum 35% reduction in yield which corresponds to a possibility of rebuilding above target SPR by 2050 • Stock could be rebuilt faster with more drastic reductions in yield • Shortest rebuild occurs at 65% reduction by 2031 • LDWF recommends collecting public input via online and e-mail survey: • Keep or eliminate a fish over the slot? • Maximize creel by shrinking slot? • Sacrifice creel for slot width? • Elimination of guide limits?

Red fish are batch spawners, can spawn more than once in a season, spawning season is mid-August to November

Daniel Edgar stated that bull drum numbers are through the roof, believes the bull reds are eating the red fish

Richard Fischer stated that the charter industry hasn’t had the opportunity to poll guides yet among the few that were spoken to would be fine with getting rid of bull red harvest all together

Would increase the catch on the bull red, believe they are the issue, red fish have transitioned inshore

David Cresson stated that 13% of the overall harvest is above 27 inches

Habitat factor is there some habitat factor about these fish making it offshore, the ability of the habitat to sustain the habitat

Adam Guillory entered the meeting at 11:03am

Ben Graham stated that this goes back to basin management but when you look at how different the pressure is in each basin it’s very different, something this hot and that will have this big of difference, thinks more public meetings are needed and get more input before making a formal recommendation, believes this will have a lasting impact on people’s livelihood, would love in-put from the guys from these coastal areas; on the water, real-time data is going to be important for the industry

Steve Rockwieler something people do not think about is habitat loss, the marsh is gone, where the fish could hide in the 1960s is gone, loss 118 square miles in the last hurricane, another thing is the record amount of hours spent fishing now, fishermen are more efficient than ever

Ben Graham stated that he would like to see more time to have public input thinks there needs to be public meetings - would like more time, know it’s a lot of work

Daniel Edgar motioned to request for more time for public meetings and comment and more research done on this issue before the task force makes an official recommendation on this issue, 2nd by Adam Guillory. Motion carries.

The task force stated that they would send Jason Adriance further clarification on what research they are looking for at a later date via email

Jack Isaacs stated that he is putting together a questionnaire for an electronic, public based survey on red drum and he will come back at a future meeting and present the results

1. Jason Adriance provided an update on Cobia and shark limits

In January will have a NOI before the commission that is going to modify cobia harvest regulations, the changes will match the new federal regulations. This will change to 1 cobia per person for recreational and commercial harvest with a maximum of 2 fish per vessel, previously 2 per person and no vessel limit.

NOAA notified LDWF that beginning January 1 the commercial shark season they are upping the daily limit from 45-55, will follow up and LDWF will follow this up with a declaration of emergency so when the season opens we will also allow 55 sharks per commercial fishermen

**VI.** Public Comment

Ben Graham asked if there was any update on the Menhaden net that was lost? No update was available at this time

Abandoned gear net has to be marked and 24-48 hours to retrieve and there is some potential restitution for what was lost

Haley Gambill with LA Sea Grant stated that the LA Fisheries Forward Summit on March 1 will host an afternoon panel, labeled ‘Opportunities For Innovation’, putting the word out to connect with people who might be interested in attending/ participating. Please contact Haley if you know of a person who is engaging in innovative or new techniques who could participate

**VII.** No future agenda items submitted at this time, board members to email Allison West of item for submission

**VIII.** The next Finfish Task Force meeting is set for Wednesday, March 15, 2022 for 10am at LDWF Headquarters

**IX.** George Huye motioned to adjourn the meeting, 2nd by Steve Rockweiler. Motion carries.