**Louisiana Blue Crab Task Force Meeting**

**Britney Breaux Chair**

**Thursday, February 18, 2021, 10:00am**

**VIA Webinar**

**I.** Pledge of Allegiance

**II.** Roll Call

**Voting Members Present:**

Chalin Delaune

Laquita Meek

Sheb Callahan

Trudy Luke

Pete Gerica

Britney Breaux

Al Cassagne

**Voting Members Absent:**

Eric Blanchard

George Jackson

Rodney Parfait

Dannon Lacoste

**Non-Voting Members Present:**

Julie Lively

Peyton Cagle

Jack Isaacs

Brian Marie

Melissa Daigle

**Non-Voting Members Absent:**

**III.** Al Cassagne motioned to approve the January 12, 2021 meeting minutes, 2nd by Pete Gerica. Motion carries.

**IV.** Pete Gerica motioned to approve the February 18, 2021 meeting agenda as presented, 2nd by Al Cassagne. Motion carries.

**V.** Financial Report

Remaining Fund Balance- $324,307

Remaining Budget Balance- $101,432

Pete Gerica motioned to approve the financial report, 2nd by Trudy Luke. Motion carries.

**VI.** New Business

1. Peyton Cagle provided an update on the combined MSC, RFM audits

Peyton Cagle stated that one of the things discussed at the previous meeting was whether or not to continue with the MSC or RFM sustainability certification or should the two be combined to where one of the assessors does both. The task force asked for some feedback on combining the two certifications. For the 4th RFM surveillance audit and reassessment will cost right at $79-80,000 a motion was made and additional funding was requested to be adding into the task force’s fiscal year budget. The MSC audit, which is typically done by another group, runs between $11-17,000/ year. To combine the two, we received a price from the assessor who already does the RFM, it would be an additional $5,000. So it will be $79-80,000 RFM plus an additional $5,000 to combine and do both RFM and MSC. Typically what is done is we come to the task force in April and say in June/ July the MSC audit is scheduled and request funding of $11-17,000, if you choose to combine the two the MSC audit would only cost $5,000.

Chalin Delaune motioned to dedicate funding to combine the MSC and Gulf RFM Sustainability Certification Assessments, 2nd by Pete Gerica. Motion carries.

1. The task force discussed possibly providing written comment regarding the FDA’s proposed rule, “Requirements for Additional Traceability Records for Certain Foods”

The proposed rule would require increased traceability documentation. You would need to be able to track product from the first receiver. Vessels are exempted in the current proposal, so it sounds as if the first receiver would then be the dock. So you would need to be able to track any sale of blue crab from the first receiver to the end user. It’s stated that this is mostly done for any type of food illness outbreak. This rule is not for country of origin labeling, but it will apply to any imported seafood. Each individual will have to assign lots. For instance as a processor you would have to assign lots, could be for a truck load, could be for a day, there is not too much detail on if they will make you do it one way or the other. A lot of times shipments are coming down from multiple fishermen who are fishing multiple areas that have multiple docks on one shipment. The FDA is conducting a comment period on the proposed rule, which ends February 22.

Pete Gerica stated that he thought trucks transporting product already have a log of where they have been, would this not suffice?

Peyton Cagle stated that for most of the record keeping for crab and shrimp, outside of oysters, trip tickets is the number one thing used. Also on the trucks individually each individual crates or vats have to be marked with each fisherman’s name and commercial license number.

Sheb Callahan stated that he already has traceability procedures already in place at his plant already. It’s not that difficult.

Laquita Meek stated that when you turn a trip ticket in, that trip ticket has the crabber’s name, the area fished, it has everything needed on the trip ticket. Most plans also follow a HAACP, and that includes a flow chart showing where the crab is coming from and where it was sold to. So most people are already doing what they are asking for, I don’t know what additional information can be given.

Peyton Cagle stated that there are some limitations with trip tickets as trip tickets are done through the first seller only so it puts the burden of traceability at the next stage. Trip tickets on the first sale, that’s easy, but when a dock sells to a processor there is an invoice well that processor would now have to keep up with each invoice for that day, assign it either a lot for the day or a truck or whatever the FDA defines as acceptable and that would just be additional record keeping

Britney Breaux stated that her opinion on is that the trip tickets cover the fisherman and the dock and from the dock they have invoices to the processors so it seems pretty redundant to apply more requirements

Al Cassagne stated that a dock that packs crabs to ship out is buying from 8-10 different fishermen, there is no way of knowing what fisherman’s crabs were the bad product. Would be totally against putting any more burden on the industry

Trudy Luke stated that they label every box with the fishermen’s name, so we know whose crabs are in each box. If a customer has an issue the fishermen’s information is the go to, but lids can get swapped on a truck. Once the product leaves the plant it’s out of our control

Peyton Cagle stated that currently there is no exemption for crab in the proposed rule. As far as live crab, a product that is not in its final form, it will be transformed, processed, cooked at some stage- should it be exempt? This is something for the industry to consider. As of right now crab is listed as being considered whether live or processed

Peyton Cagle stated that some of the exemptions listed were: vessels, anyone who makes less than $25,000/ year, raw product- as stated earlier if there is a raw product that is later going to be transformed there is a possibility for an exemption there

Gary Bauer stated that he would recommended that the traceability not go all the way back to the individual fisherman. If this is directed toward people like myself and others that process crab meat, we have records we can get back to a day’s production, but if the goal is to try and get back to which crabbers crab’s went into a certain pound of crab meat that’s impossible. This done with big items such as blue fin tuna, where each individual fish is tagged or even wild caught salmon to prove that is came from Alaska and that it’s wild caught. You can go in certain stores and see actually which fisherman caught it. To say anything that is processed in batches such as shrimp, oysters, or crabs you would be putting a burden on the docks and nothing would be gained from it. The industry should push back on this and the recommendation would be to not over regulate ourselves

Al Cassagne motioned to submit public comment in opposition to the FDA’s proposed rule, “Requirements for Additional Traceability Records for Certain Foods.” Also allow Britney Breaux to have final approving authority of the letter prior to its submission, 2nd by Trudy Luke. Motion carries.

1. The board received an update on Crab Task Force seat vacancy proposals

The CTF sent two names up as recommendations to be considered by the Secretary, one came from the Governor’s office. At this point in time Joey Edgar has been approved and appointed to the CTF as a hard crab fishermen. The recommendation from the Governor’s office, Will Martin, is awaiting approval at this time. The Secretary has given electronic confirmation that he will be approving this seat as well

**VII.** Public Comment

**VIII.** Next meeting set for ~~Tuesday, April 13, 2021~~, the meeting date was later changed to Monday, May 3, 2021 for 1pm at the LDWF headquarters- 2000 Quail Dr., Baton Rouge, LA 70898

**IX.** Al Cassagne motioned to adjourn, 2nd by Sheb Callahan. Motion carries.