Oyster Task Force Meeting

Tuesday, December 1, 2020, 1:00pm

Belle Chasse Auditorium

8398 LA-23, Belle Chasse, LA 70037

**I.** Pledge of Allegiance

**II.** Roll Call:

**Voting Members Present:**

Mitch Jurisich

Jakov Jurisic

Sam Slavich

Brad Robin

Brandt Lafrance

Peter Vujnonvich

Willie Daisy

Dan Coulon

**Voting Members Absent:**

Shane Bagala

Tracy Collins

Byron Encalade

John Tesvich

Al Sunseri

**Non-Voting Members Present:**

Carolina Bourque

Justin Gremillion

Brian Marie

Harry Vorhoff

Brian Lezina

**Non-Voting Members Absent:**

Karl Morgan

**III.** Peter Vujnovich motioned to approve the December 1, 2021 meeting agenda, 2nd by Sam Slavich. Motion carries.

Jakov Jurisic motioned to approve the September 23, 2020 meeting minutes, 2nd Willie Daisy. Motion carries

**IV.** Treasury report-

Fund Balance- $487,522

Budget Balance- $136,656

Willie Daisy motioned to approve the treasury report as presented, 2nd by Brandt Lafrance. Motion carries.

**V.** Committee Reports:

1. Public-Private Oyster Seed Ground Committee: no report
2. Enforcement Report:

**September 24, 2020 to November 30, 2020**

**Region 4**

Iberia-no report

**Region 5**

Cameron-no report

Calcasieu-no report

Vermillion-no report

**Region 6**

Terrebonne

3-violate sanitary code (logbook)

1-violate seed ground requirements (no permit)

1-no wholesale licensed (worked on complaint, person selling oysters from house)

Seizures-14 sacks of oysters

A Terrebonne parish business pled guilty to one count of violating the lacy act in federal court. The case was worked by LDWF agents, NOAA, and FDA.

Lafourche-no report

**Region 8**

St Bernard

1-Buy from an unlicensed fisherman

4-fail to maintain records

Plaquemines

1-take commercial fish without a vessel license

2-violate sanitary code (logbook)

Seizures-11 sacks of oysters

1. Legislative Report: no report
2. Legal Committee:

The committee has been discussing the hiring of legal counsel, would like a status update on the hiring of Joe Piacun. LDWF requested a more specific scope of work regarding Mr. Piacuns contract. The other item discussed at the Legal Committee meeting was putting together objection letters/ public comment concerning the Strategic Plan and the OLACP, the deadline to submit is December 4.

1. Research Committee Report: no report
2. Coastal Restoration Committee: no report
3. Marketing Committee:

Discussed hiring a public relations firm to represent the task force

1. Health Committee:

There has been a record number of closures this year, thanked the industry for their help and cooperation. Been hearing a lot about people selling oysters possibly unpermitted, LDH does the best they can but rely a lot on reports in these instances.

1. Aquaculture Committee: no report
2. Joint Task Force Working Group: no report

**VI.** New Business

1. The task force considered submitting letters pertaining to the Oyster Management and Rehabilitation Strategic Plan

Mitch Jurisich led discussion, a draft letter was written in regard to the Oyster Management and Rehabilitation Strategic Plan for the task force’s consideration

Jakov Jurisic motioned that the task force submit the proposed draft letter as official comment from the task force on the Oyster Management and Rehabilitation Strategic Plan, 2nd by Peter Vujnovich. Motion carries.

One of the reasons for the objection was the task force felt there was no input from the oyster industry in developing the plan, which directly impacts the oyster industry. As a result of not being a part of the development, the task force feels that the plan is flawed. Because the oyster industry has been first and foremost advocates of coastal restoration by building on the water bottoms and stabilizing shore lines, there should be no reason why the industry cannot partner with CPRA to develop a plan that works for both. The letter will also request for extra time for the task force to review the public comment before coming up with a final comment on the plan.

1. The task force considered funding to hire a PR firm, Beuerman Miller Fitzgerald, to represent the board

The task force hosted a Marketing Committee meeting where they heard a presentation from Beuerman Miller Fitzgerald. The task force was pretty impressed by what the firm has to offer.

Jakov Jurisic motioned to dedicate $40,000 in funding towards hiring Beuerman Miller Fitzgerald to represent the Oyster Task Force, 2nd by Sam Slavich. Motion carries.

Beuerman Miller Fitzgerald provided a presentation of their services:

Scope of Services

Assist the Louisiana Oyster Task Force (LOTF) and LDWF in developing and implementing a public relations and marketing plan that will: include rapid response, crisis communications and issues management; work to unify the industry by informing, educating, and involving; promote positive stories to showcase the industry’s historical, economic and culinary importance; foster improved multi-agency governmental relations; collaborate marketing and advertising initiatives; build synergies with other industry sectors; and strategic planning regarding coastal erosion, water quality and sustainability.

• Rapid response and crisis communications

To establish a consistent Rapid Response Management Team of the LOTF and department representatives, to create a well-defined issues management structure, communications protocol, and lines of authority, as well as preapproved messaging and draft Q&A’s around anticipated issues, event and challenges to better streamline rapid response and impactful internal and external communication.

• Unifying the industry: Informing, Educating and Involving

To audit internal communication capabilities and platforms and the current level of effectiveness and performance, improve existing processes, protocols and platforms to fill critical voids or streamline communication among relevant internal stakeholders; identify new tools to be used to further educate and mobilize; develop and maintain databases to ensure the ability to conduct outreach, education, and mobilization quickly and efficiently; train internal staff in managing and measuring the effectiveness of all platforms; supplement communications capabilities of internal staff; build an internal infrastructure and processes that the LOTF can utilize effectively for years to come. Create a visually appealing e-newsletter format to keep the oyster community and other key stakeholders informed, and encourage LOTF members and others to become more engaged in the use of relevant social media tools that help improve engagement.

• Promote positive stories to showcase industry’s historical, economic and culinary importance

Provide audience identification and the creation of highly strategic media databases for local, regional and national media; identify story angles, key messages and themes for pitching media; ongoing media and social media monitoring to keep an eye on what is being said about Louisiana oysters and the shellfish community (locally, regionally and nationally) and to identify areas of opportunity and potential challenges; development and placement of letters to the editor and op-eds; identify and plan editorial board meetings; media pitching and coordination of media interviews; plan and implement FAM tours with influential business, environmental and food writers, editors and bloggers; plan and coordinate targeted special events

• Foster improved multi-agency governmental relations

Help navigate relationships and relationship building between various federal, state and local governmental agencies; create effective and functional cross- agency communication practices and establishing readily available platforms that encourage collaboration and engagement; establish a small working group committed to frequent engagement and the sharing of information toward advancing commonly held objectives or mitigating or minimizing conflicts in a respectful manner.

• Collaborate marketing and advertising

Explore additional opportunities, beyond those currently underway, with the Louisiana Seafood Promotion & Marketing Board (SPMB) to extend the LOTF promotion budget; Utilize the existing relationship with the SPMB to accomplish certain LOTF priority objectives in the marketing segment; purchased advertising, scheduled events and PR initiatives as well as promotion themes and other external partnerships; develop a year-long calendar of events to identify any gaps during key marketing periods; creative design, development and implementation of social media and digital advertising, search engine optimization, website enhancements, developments and upgrades, video content development and production and adverting placement.

• Build synergies with other industry sectors (restaurant, tourism, energy, etc.)

Work with LOTF to create strategies to engage third parties, including relevant businesses, brands, and corporations, academic institutions and public policy think tanks and non-profits that open lines of communication and explore ways to make these new relationships meaningful for all parties and bring value

• Strategic planning Re: coastal erosion, water quality and sustainability

Focus media expertise and contacts on stories and other opportunities to spotlight oysters as a critical partner in saving our coast. Seek coverage by entities such as National Geographic, the Weather Channel, nature channels and other high impact media outlets to help set the stage for state and federal attention and funding of oyster projects. Proposal is hereto attached as Appendix A.

Mitch Jurisich stated that the task force is trying to showcase what the industry does, for the environment, for coastal restoration, and for the people the industry serves

1. The task force considered designating and hiring a PR firm to represent the board

Jakov Jurisic motioned to hire Beuerman Miller Fitzgerald as the PR firm representing the Oyster Task Force, 2nd by Peter Vujnovich. Motion carries.

**VI**I. Public Comment

Peter Vujnovich asked if LDWF has done any sort of assessment to figure out how much damage the storm has caused

Patrick Banks stated that LDWF has been doing some sampling and the department is trying to gather the data to submit an additional request to NOAA for a federal fisheries disaster

Dan Coulon stated that Farm Bureau met this morning and the purpose of the meeting was to make recommendations to the Farm Bureau board so that they can develop a position regarding the Oyster Lease Acquisition and Compensation Program. Do not have the recommendations on hand but when a copy is received promised to forward to the task force

Jakov Jurisic stated that the task force is interested in hosting the Day on the Bay, would like to possibly put supporting the funding for the Day on the Bay as a future agenda item

**VIII.** The task force did not set their next meeting date at this time, date and time of next meeting TBD

Peter Vujnovich motioned to allow the OTF chairman to set the next meeting date at his discretion, 2nd by Jakov Jurisic. Motion carries.

**IX.** Peter Vujnovichmotioned to adjourn the meeting, 2nd by Willie Daisy. Motion carries.