October 7, 2014

Public/Private Oyster Grounds Committee Meeting called to order at 10:37 a.m. by Mr. Buddy Pausina.

Meeting sign-in sheet was passed to take attendance of meeting.

Present members: Al Sunseri, Willie Daisy, Jakov Jurisic, Sam Slavich, Peter Vujnovich, Dan Coulon, Samuel Martin, Stephen McManus, Cole Garrett, Buddy Pausina and Brad Robin, Byron Encalade, Wilbert Collins

Dan Coulon read through the meeting minutes from the enforcement committee meeting on August 6.

Mr. Jurisic raised some questions regarding VMS. Lt. or Major Steve McManus responded to Mr. Jurisic’s question on how enforcement VMS has helped enforcement with theft of oysters. The system can be useful if there are also witnesses collaborating on what the VMS indicated.

Enforcement uses one of 3 brands approved by NOAA. It is in use by certain permit holders and mandated in legal by those convicted of prior oyster thefts.

Dan Coulon asked enforcement for a “wish list” of what would help make their job easier. He also mentioned that VMS would help with FDA regulations.

Jakov Jurisic mentioned the leniency of penalties for those convicted of theft.

Al Sunseri recommended that we move forward with supporting legislation for VMS. Mr. Buddy Pausina said that the motion was to develop a framework for potential legislation to assist enforcement with decreasing theft from oyster leases. John Tesvich suggested that the task force develop a list of questions and recommendations. Buddy Pausina said that he will take the recommendations to come up with a list and asked that enforcement come up with any ideas that they have to help decrease poaching.

VMS costs under the current system, the unit ranges in price with an approximate costs of $1500. Cost of enforcement VMS is currently the responsibility of the convicted person or permit holder.

Mr. Coulon recommended a sunset clause, and asked how we the industry can assist the agents. Mr. Encalade suggested the task force supporting with funds the hiring of additional enforcement agents.

John Tesvich made a motion that the VMS system should be required on all oyster harvesting vessels, substitute motion by Al Sunseri that would require VMS on all licensed oyster vessels with certain exemptions. Second by Dan Coulon.

When opinion was called majority was in favor.

Al Sunseri said that all licensed oyster vessels will have a system on board and it will be required for all but those on their own boats and their own lease, they would also have to call in to report this.

Dan Coulon agreed on the exemption, but doesn’t agree that you need to call-in. Sam Slavich agreed that lease owner on his vessel and on his lease would be exempt.

Jakov is in opposition. Willie Daisy agrees with Al Sunseri, but no calling in. Mr. Wilbert Collins said that the VMS system should be required to stay on 24 hrs. Mr. Brad Robin said that there should be no exemption for private lease holders. Mr. Byron Encalade agreed with no special provisions for oyster lease holders. Mr. Vujnovich agreed with no exemptions as well. Mr. Tesvich agreed with no exemptions. Mr. Coulon came back to change his opinion and asked for no exemptions. The ruling is that there will be no exemptions.

Motion by Dan Coulon to develop a framework to require VMS systems, second by John Tesvich. Majority was in favor of doing so.

John Tesvich asked enforcement for a description of the two monitoring systems in place and which one might best suit the task forces wishes, with the assistance of LDWF legal. Also, whether or not someone’s activity would be available to others on the system. Al Sunseri said that he would like to see public access for what is happening on public oyster leases. Peter Vujnovich suggested we look into the viability of using the AIS system currently required on large vessels. John Tesvich went on to say that the private lease holder activity should be available to private lease holders. Al Sunseri asked enforcement for suggestions on what 1st, 2nd and 3rd offense fines would be. Dan Coulon said that fines collected should go back to LDWF. Matthew Slavich suggested we hold public meetings and engage coastal legislators in the public meetings. Byron Encalade said that the oystermen’s association will help assist with any public meetings. Dan Coulon recommended we consider input from the FDA as well.

Motion to adjourn by John Tesvich, second by Jakov Jurisic.