Minutes of August 19, 2013

Bayou D’Arbonne Lake Watershed District Commission

Union Parish Courthouse Annex, 303 East Water Street

Farmerville, LA 71241

1. President Steve Cagle called the meeting to order. Present were Don Hogan, David Hopkins, Noel James, Edward Lee, Joe Rainer, and Terri Towns.
2. Mr. Lee led the invocation, and Mr. Hogan led the Pledge of Allegiance.
3. The agenda was approved. Motion by Mr. Rainer and a second by Mrs. Towns. The motion passed unanimously.
4. The minutes of the July 15, 2013 meeting were approved after a motion by Mr. Hogan and a second by Mr. Lee. The motion passed unanimously.
5. The treasurer’s report was presented and approved. Motion by Mr. James and a second by Mr. Hogan. The motion passed unanimously.
6. Old business:

Tainter Gate - Mr. Riley reported that the project is back filled. Started hauling rip rap, and should continue to haul for another 10 days. Rodney Hunt, the gate manufacturer from Massachusetts, will start setting up for the testing on the gates on Monday, August 26, 2013. They will dry test the gate first and show the DOTD personnel what to oil, grease, and how to adjust. Then they will flood the structure between the tainter gate and the cofferdam to see if holds. The testing should take most of the week. A small crane and a large crane will be used to put the stop logs in. The gate will be tested with a generator because no electricity has been established at this time. After all testing and the rip rap is completed then the cofferdam will be removed. All work on the tainter gate is estimated to be completed mid to late October as long as everything goes well.

New Business:

LDWF, Mike Woods, an author of the 1991 Bass Master Plan, made some comments on a study of the mortality project. The project entails three years of extensive sampling to determine what impact can create a result. For a regulation to be effective you have to know recruitment, growth of the fish, how long they live, and what the anglers are doing. LDWF measured the basic population dynamics. LDWF did the same study on eleven water bodies in Louisiana. They did the Atchafalaya Basin first and found the regulation was not effective and the area was more subject to natural influences and what the anglers were actually doing.

LDWF, Ryan Daniels reported a brief summary of the study that was just completed. The study was based over a period of three years from 2009 to 2012. The study was conducted on bass and crappie. Mr. Daniels commented on the bass results and will comment on the crappie results at a later time. The main components looked at in the study were the abundance, spawning success, growth rate, body condition, and longevity of the bass population. To acquire this data they did extensive amounts of sampling on the lake over the three year period. They collected bass and measured, weighed, collected otolith (inner ear bones) from some fish and sent the results to an aging growth lab in Baton Rouge. They also did a creel survey in 2011 to get estimate of fishing pressure on Lake D’arbonne.

Figure 1 in the report shows that the population distribution looks good and there is a lot of middle size fish. The bass in the lake are spawning successfully and are getting good recruitment year after year. Your average age one bass will be 7.7 inches. Average age two bass will be 11.5 inches. It takes approximately 2.1 years for a bass to reach 12 inches in Lake D’arbonne. The study concluded that growth was rapid up to age four and then slowed down to about an inch or less per year after that. LDWF looked at the body condition for the bass and found that they were very healthy and weighed what they are estimated to weigh. The bass are getting plenty to eat. The recruitment is very good in the lake and when compared to the other ten study lakes, D’arbonne has the best recruitment variable.

The mortality study is defined as the rate that fish die every year. The fishing mortality consists of the death caused by fisherman and natural death caused by disease. The study indicated that the total annual mortality rate is 57%. If you started with One Hundred one year old bass after five years only ten of those fish would remain. The mortality estimates suggests that the Lake D’arbonne bass are more influenced by natural factors than by fisherman. They fishing mortality rate was estimated at 28%. The 28% was derived from the actual harvest rate of 18%. Fishermen were only keeping 18% of the legal sized bass that were caught. The remainder of the fishing mortality can be attributed to catch injury and handling stress on released fish.

The length distribution, age structure, growth rate, and mortality rates were found to be normal for the Lake D’arbonne bass population. Bass harvest is low, but the total angler induced mortality was considered to be relatively high when post release mortality was included. The dynamics of the D’arbonne Lake bass population and the current characteristics of the D’arbonne Lake anglers are such that the size restriction regulations will have an insignificant effect on the population.

Mr. Daniels also commented on the creel survey that was conducted in 2011. Throughout the year 337 anglers were interviewed and 93 bass and 159 crappie were measured. The average fishing trip duration was 4.5 hours, and the average distance fisherman drove to get to Lake D’arbonne was 24 miles. Fisherman caught .5 bass per hour and averaged 1.5 bass per trip. Crappie fisherman averaged .5 per hour and 1.2 per trip. 68% of fisherman indicated that they were satisfied with the current fishing regulations on the lake.

Mr. Woods commented that the crappie creel limit on D’arbonne Lake is 50 fish per person per day. When you are off the water, possession is twice the creel limit.

1. Public Comment: None.
2. Adjourn: Motion by Mr. Lee, second by Mr. Hopkins. Motion passed unanimously.