**Crab Task Force Meeting**

**Tuesday, January 12, 2021, 1:00pm**

**St. Bernard Port Harbor and Terminal**

**100 Port Blvd. St. Bernard, LA 70043**

I. Pledge of Allegiance

II. Roll Call:

**Voting Members Present:**

Eric Blanchard

Chalin Delaune

Laquita Meek

Sheb Callahan

Trudy Luke

Pete Gerica

George Jackson

Al Cassagne

Britney Breaux

**Voting Members Absent:**

Rodney Parfait

Dannon Lacoste

**Non-Voting Members Present:**

Julie Lively

Peyton Cagle

Jack Isaacs

Brian Marie

**Non-Voting Members Absent:**

Melissa Daigle

III. Eric Blanchard motioned to approve the October 6, 2020 meeting minutes, 2nd by Trudy Luke. Motion carries.

IV. Al Cassagne motioned to approve the January 12, 2021 meeting agenda, 2nd by Britney Breaux. Motion carries.

V. Financial Report

Fund Balance- $312,972

Budget Balance- $101,432

The task force unanimously approved the financial report as presented

VI. New Business:

1. Britney Breaux led discussion on the CARES Act qualifications, issues with 35% loss requirement and full time

Jason Froeba stated that the 35% loss requirement rule was set in federal legislation that provided the CARES Act funding to the Department of Commerce. Louisiana has absolutely no control over the 35% loss requirement. In fact, the Department of Commerce doesn’t have any control over the 35% loss requirement, it would have to be done legislatively at the Federal level to have the rule changed. LDWF is waiting to hear from the Department of Commerce and NOAA on the requirements on the new round of funding. Just recently they passed another bill for Coronavirus funding and $300 million has been allocated to fisheries in this new bill as well. LDWF is still waiting for more information on the new round of funding, have not heard anything regarding how much will be allocated to Louisiana and what the requirements are as of yet. Regarding the current round of funding that has already been allocated, there is not a whole lot the state can do to change the requirements. The current requirement for full time fishermen was set by using the Certified Fishermen endorsement that you can get on your license. You can get the endorsement for LDWF or through the Department of Revenue, if you are getting the tax exemption on your vessel. The Certified Fishermen requirement was put into place at the request of the industry over years and years of discussions on what the certification means and how we should identify those that are fulltime fishermen. LDWF is looking at a few things for vessels and few things for additional applications and scenarios where some folks may have forgotten to apply for certain sectors. Working with NOAA right now to try and get those issues resolved, but the base certification requirements for fulltime fishermen was set up upon recommendations from the industry.

1693 applications received

892 approved

580 incomplete/ waiting for additional information

194 denied/ not eligible

How many trip tickets are required? For basic eligibility there’s no particular amount of trip tickets required, only thing required is you had to have landings in 2018 or 2019 and a 2020 license outside of that the only other big requirement is the 35% loss. Beyond basic eligibility, each of the different fisheries, at the vessel level, has a requirement to get to fulltime level. A fulltime level is established by having more trips or landings than 70% of the rest of the industry in that fishery to qualify as fulltime. So those numbers were generated from trip ticket data and the number of trips everyone took and the annual average landings that everyone had. We recognize that there are a lot of fulltime commercial fishermen that got made fulltime because they are certified but their vessels aren’t necessarily certified, LDWF is working with NOAA to try and make changes to that so fishermen who qualified as fulltime under the certified designation will also make their vessels fulltime. If NOAA approves of this change what will happen is each fishermen who qualified as fulltime because they are certified, their vessels will also be considered fulltime vessels.

Britney Breaux also raised concern for fulltime fishermen who qualified based on their taxes as fulltime but are not Certified Commercial Fishermen. Currently the only change LDWF is proposing to NOAA is the fulltime vessel change. As proposed earlier, if the task force wants to get together with the other industry task forces as make a recommendation to LDWF to suggest this change they can do so and LDWF will consider and review that recommendation. Britney stated that she doesn’t understand why if your taxes show you are fulltime commercial fishermen why you need a CPA to certify that fact?

Currently working with NOAA to fix the issue with fulltime fishermen getting part-time vessel payments. Proposed amendment for those who only have commercial fishing as their source of income for those to be a commercial fishermen; the requirement is set in law, two state laws tax exemption that you can get as a vessel owner and the other is for a vessel owner, signed and notarized by a CPA. Would to propose an amendment that would allow for schedule C tax forms to be accepted as proof of fulltime commercial fishermen.

Jason Froeba stated that the fulltime fishermen rule is set in law. There are two state laws that put this into place, one is tied to the tax exemption that you can get a vessel owner, the other is written specifically for LDWF and both of those say that it has to be signed and notarized and filled out by a CPA and the reason for that would be that LDWF’s licensing agents really can’t look at your taxes and make a determination. There will not be any money left over from this initial CARES Act funding as after first payments are made there will be a second round of payments that will go out based on how much is left over after the initial payments.

Britney Breaux motioned to send a letter to Garrett Graves and Steve Scalise, congressional delegation, and state representatives requesting to lower the loss % requirement to qualify for funding, also requesting to add an additional option that would accept schedule C tax documents to determine the status of a fulltime fishermen, and for the Louisiana fishermen to get more money from the total pot of $300M given to Gulf States for the second round of Coronavirus funding, 2nd by Al Cassagne. Motion carries.

Britney Breaux motioned to write a letter to LDWF regarding the current CARES Act funding requesting to lower the loss % requirement, also to request adding an additional option to accept taxes schedule C document to determine the status of a fulltime fishermen, and to consider a re-application period to accept additional applications for left over funding, those that exceed $10K, 2nd by Al Cassagne. Motion carries.

Eric Blanchard stated that if you’re showing 35% loss you should be able to get the assistance

1. Peyton Cagle led discussion on the 2019 fisheries disaster spending plan- direct payouts could possibly be allowed but the main goal is what can improve the resiliency for the industry if this type of event were to happen in the future, I.e.- more efficient motors, programs, currently seeking ideas

* Direct payments- determination of fulltime vs part time, loss on lbs instead of dollar value,
* Grant reimbursement- reimburse an amount paid for repairs or to purchase upgraded equipment (Nets, motors, refrigeration, crab traps, upgrading to crab pullers or crab rakes)
* Money for crab trap cleanup, during the time of a closure would pay commercial fishermen to pick up traps, getting shrimpers to trawl up traps, suggested detailing it by basin commercial fishermen from that area allowed to come and reclaim and make money
* ~~Business training, financial investment, help an individual become their own business, learn how to invest money \*CTF did not like this option\*~~

1. Gary Bauer led discussion on the sustainability of the LA blue crab fishery and the value of MSC vs RFM certifications

What do suppliers ask for: quality, consistency and sustainability (MSC, SQF (safe quality foods)) can have a dual certification, all in on MSC due to customer requirements

NSF accredited to work and certify both MSC and RFM, to perform audit

John Fallon stated that he is speaking to RFM on Thursday how do we line up the certificates (RFM and MSC), time the two certifications up

The task force would like more information on how much both certifications cost, how much do they cost together, and who will hold the certifications?

Consider getting some money from the Seafood Promotion and Marketing Board for subsidizing chain of custody costs

Peyton Cagle suggested that the industry designate a point person to hold the certification and audit, the department will still be there to supply data and help in the process

Already paid for MSC audit in June 2020 and it will come up in June 2021 for consideration

RFM Audit somewhere between 80-90K using MSF international (used to be global Trust), MSC audit (Lloyds Register)

Proceeding with scheduling for the RFM for April and who is the point person “client of record”- Chalin Delaune agreed to be the point of contact for the RFM certification

The task force unanimously motioned to appoint Chalin Delaune as the CTF sustainability certification point of contact. Motion passes unanimously.

The task force requested that the MSC audit funding be on the next meeting agenda

1. The task force heard an update on proposed CTF seat vacancies

Joey Edgar’s paperwork is being processed for approval for his appointment to the task force as a commercial hard crab fishermen

1. George Jackson motioned to appoint Britney Breaux as the chairman of the Crab Task Force, 2nd by Pete Gerica. Motion carries.

Chalin Delaune motioned to appoint Pete Gerica as the vice chairman of the Crab Task Force, 2nd by Eric. Motion carries.

VII. Public Comment:

VIII. Next Meeting Tuesday, April 13, 2021- venue TBD

IX. Chalin Delaune motioned to adjourn the meeting, 2nd by Eric Blanchard. Motion carries.