

Crab Task Force Meeting Minutes
Tuesday, February 20, 2024, 10:00am
Terrebonne Parish Government Tower, 2nd Fl. Meeting Room
8026 W Main Street, Houma, LA 70360

I. Pledge of Allegiance

II. Roll call

Voting Members Present:

Eric Blanchard

Laquita Meek

Trudy Luke

George Jackson

Al Cassagne

Rodney Parfait

Edward Frekey

Britney Breaux

Voting Members Absent:

Chalin Delaune

Sheb Callahan

Joey Edgar

Dannon Lacoste

Non-Voting Members Present:

Peyton Cagle

Captain Boyd in for Major Edward Skena

Julie Falgout in for Melissa Daigle

Non-Voting Members Absent:

Jack Isaacs

Eric Blanchard motioned to make an amendment to the agenda, the date for the minutes being approved is incorrect instead of approving the January 17, 2023 meeting minutes the task force would instead be approving the September 26, 2024 meeting minutes, 2nd by Edward Frekey. Motion passed unanimously.

III. Eric Blanchard motioned to approve the September 26, 2024 Crab Task Force meeting minutes, 2nd by Edward Frekey. Motion carries.

IV. Eric Blanchard motioned to approve the February 20, 2024 meeting agenda as presented, 2nd by Edward Frekey. Motion carries.

V. The task force heard the financial report

Remaining Fund Balance: \$45,488

Remaining Budget Balance: \$45,488

Eric Blanchard motioned to approve the financial report, 2nd by Edward Frekey. Motion carries.

VI. New Business

A. The task force discussed crab violation habitual offenders

Britney Breaux led discussion stating that the task force worked hard in previous years to change the laws on the books to make all the penalties higher for crab offenders; revoking licenses, adding monitoring systems, higher fines, etc.. There is concern that the local district attorney's offices are not prosecuting these laws. The LDWF agents are going out and giving tickets and dumping crabs but nothing is being done in the courtroom. If these habitual offenders are always just paying the fines they are never going to move on to the next stage of losing their license, getting the monitoring system, etc. Would like to get all the local DAs on the same page so they understand exactly how expensive a crab trap is and how much money that one crab trap can generate in a week or a month's time.

Eric Blanchard stated that we need the DAs to prosecute these offenders and maybe the next step is to add some teeth to the law by maybe adding something new into legislation or adding to the current laws on the books

Peyton Cagle stated that in his area if an oysterman is caught violating LDWF could actually suspend their license, not sure, if they are suspending the commercial fishing license or the permit. If the CTF law is written in, a way where LDWF can suspend the license this may be something to look in to. The crab industry may be able to do something similar to where LDWF can suspend the commercial license until prosecuted. Will look at the current crab laws and the oyster law and come back with more information at the next CTF meeting.

Peyton Cagle stated that another issue might be the class that some of these violations are listed under. The adjustment made for crab theft is now a class 6 violation and once you pass a class 2 it is no longer a civil matter

B. David Melancon with the Lafourche Parish DAs office stated that his office communicates with the LDWF agents on each of these cases. Under the impression that when his office screens for PTI, habitual offenders do not qualify for PTI

Lonnie Taix, Assistant DA with Jefferson Parish added that Jefferson Parish does not usually do pretrial diversion. Office has a great relationship with LA Department of Wildlife and Fisheries and their agents. Work very closely with the agents on tracking these cases and LDWF is great at including in their reports how many times they may have had contact with the individual and whether or not they are a habitual offender. These cases are being prosecuted completely in Jefferson Parish. When it comes to sentencing that is determined by the judge. The judges are made aware of any background on the case prior to sentencing and whether or not it is a repeat offender case.

Trudy Luke requested that LDWF Enforcement provide a violation report by parish at the next meeting

C. The board discussed the fresh product license and the possibility of implementing a required training course

Trudy Luke led discussion stating that proper data is not being recorded; people using this license to sell their products are not following the rules and that a training video is warranted.

Michaela Mayers from the Trip Ticket Section communicated that all new license applicants do go through training on requirements and trip ticket completion.

D. The board held officer elections

Al Cassagne motioned to nominate Britney Breaux as Crab Task Force chair, 2nd by Edward Frekey. Motion carries.

Eric Blanchard motioned to nominate Edward Frekey as the Crab Task Force Vice-Chair, 2nd by Al Cassagne. Motion carries.

VII. Public comment

VIII. The next Crab Task Force meeting was set for Tuesday, April 16, 2024 for 10:00am at the Terrebonne Council Government Tower

IX. Al Cassagne motioned to adjourn the meeting, 2nd by Trudy Luke. Motion carries.