

ALLIGATOR ADVISORY COUNCIL (AAC)

JUNE 23, 2021, 1 PM

LOUISIANA DEPARTMENT OF WILDLIFE AND FISHERIES (LDWF) HEADQUARTERS
LOUISIANA ROOM

ATTENDANCE

Council Members Present

Vic Blanchard
Tom Benge
Craig Sagera
John Currier
Chad Courville
Barry Wall

LDWF Present

Jason Waller
Jeb Linscombe
Randy Myers
Tanya Sturman
Eric Ledet
Dunkin Kemp
Jim LaCour

Others Present

Javier Nevarez
Noel Kinler
Mark David
David Donaldson
Breanna Dominguez
Nathan Wall

Council Members Absent

Tony Howard
Al Marmande
Jeff Donald

APPROVAL OF MINUTES FROM THE PREVIOUS AAC MEETING

Motion made by Tom Benge to dispense with the reading of the March 22, 2021 minutes and approve those minutes as presented. John Currier seconded. Motion carried.

BEN ISENBERG VIDEO CONTRACT

Jeb Linscombe had requested a proposal from Ben Isenberg for a video project which would highlight how the alligator industry impacts livelihoods and communities in Louisiana. Mr. Linscombe worked with Noel Kinler, Christy Plott, and Ben Isenberg to create the scope of service for this proposal. The videos will be used to promote the benefits and successes of the Louisiana alligator program.

For budget consideration for this project, Mr. Linscombe reviewed the council's budget and allocated expenditures for the upcoming fiscal year.

Motion made by Chad Courville to approve the Alligator Program Promotional Videos contract for \$74,000. Tom Benge seconded. Motion carried.

DECREASE IN ALLIGATOR RELEASE RATE

Jeb Linscombe showed a coastal nest count graph that spans the decades from 1970 to the present. Even as the percentage of releases has decreased due to increased production, the number of alligators released into the wild has continued to increase. Survival of released alligators is comparable to that of alligators hatched in the wild. . The Secretary has proposed dropping the release percentage from 10% to 5% starting with 2021 egg permits, which would be reflected in the returns due by 2023.

John Currier expressed concern about decreasing the release rate. John Currier represents the alligator hunters and he feels that the release rate decrease would benefit the alligator farmers but not the wild hunters. He asked that the minutes reflect his concerns.

Motion made by Craig Sagrera to support the proposal to decrease the alligator release percentage. Barry Wall seconded. Motion carried with five council members in favor and one opposed.

LSU ALLIGATOR DISEASE STUDY

Javier Nevarez presented a summary of his research on alligator diseases. On average, approximately 70,000 alligator hatchlings are imported into Louisiana alligator farms annually from Florida alligator farms. LSU tested samples from some of these imported alligators for two bacterial infections, *Chlamydia* and *Mycoplasma alligatoris*. This monitoring study confirmed that the majority of *Chlamydia* infections found in alligators on Louisiana alligator farms were associated with Florida imports. This study also confirmed that *Chlamydia* and *Mycoplasma alligatoris* have been found in Louisiana wild alligators. The next phase of this study would be to test alligators across various farms and evaluate the impact of importing diseased hatchlings to Louisiana's alligator population. Jeb Linscombe said that moving forward they plan to test imported alligators, hatchlings on Louisiana farms, and alligators being returned to the wild. LSU will move ahead to test alligators prior to hatching if landowners will provide the eggs.

Motion made by Chad Courville to ask the Department to reconsider testing hatchling alligators for Chlamydia before they enter the state of Louisiana. No second. Motion failed to progress to a vote.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Breanna Dominguez is the current alligator festival queen. She talked about her role in representing the alligator industry and the alligator festival around the state of Louisiana. She thanked the council for the alligator bag that she was given.

Motion made by Barry Wall to adjourn. John Currier seconded. Motion carried.