**Oyster Task Force Meeting**

**Tuesday, March 15, 2022, 1:00pm**

**LDWF Headquarters**

**2000 Quail Dr.**

**Baton Rouge, LA 70898**

**I.** Pledge of Allegiance

**II.** Roll call and introduction of guests

**Voting Members Present:**

Tracy Collins

Dan Coulon

Jakov Jurisic

Mitch Jurisich

Brad Robin

Brandt Lafrance

Sam Slavich

Peter Vujnovich

Willie Daisy

**Voting Members Absent:**

Shane Bagala

Al Sunseri

Matthew Slavich

**Non-Voting Members Present:**

Justin Gremillion

Bryan Marie

Brian Lezina

Karl Morgan

**Non-Voting Members Absent:**

Carolina Bourque

Harry Vorhoff

**III.** JakovJurisic motioned to approve the February 22, 2022 meeting minutes, 2nd by Peter Vujnovich. Motion carries.

Jakov Jurisic motioned to postpone item A. To Hear an Update on the Low Salinity Tolerant Oyster Research and take up item D. To Discuss and Consider a Legislative Proposal that Would Allow Any Parish to Represent the LODGA Association on the Oyster Task Force as the first item under New Business on the agenda, 2nd by Peter Vujnovich. Motion carries.

Jakov Jurisic motioned to approve the March 15, 2022 meeting agenda as amended, 2nd by Peter Vujnovich. Motion carries.

**IV.** Treasury Report

Remaining Fund Balance- $586,399

Remaining Budget Balance- $122,658

**V.** Committee Reports

1. Public-Private Oyster Seed Grounds Committee- No report
2. Enforcement Report-

St. Bernard 2/23-Take commercial fish without gear license- 50 mini sacks seized

St. Bernard 3/5- Violate sanitation code-Log Book

Violate Sanitation code-Refrigeration (white tags)- 60 full sacks seized

Terrebonne

1 unlawfully take oysters from a private lease

1 fail to have written permission

1 take oysters from an unapproved area

5 sacks of oysters seized

Jakov Jurisic requested more details on these reports for the next meeting

1. Legislative Committee Report- no report
2. Legal Committee Report- no report
3. Research Report- no report
4. Coastal Restoration Committee Report- no report
5. Marketing Committee Report- no report; met with Anna Koehl of BMF talked about trying to keep the oyster industry’s stories alive and well on the web and social media pages, looking for anyone with any industry information to reach out to BMF; wrote a letter in response to CPRA needed to be filed by Feb 26
6. Health Committee Report- Justin Gremillion during the last health commission meeting it was discussed to take out some of the language for fishermen who want to check oyster leases, checked with LDH legal and this can be done by rule making, as long as this goes through the rule making process and no one objects then this should be able to be accomplished, maybe done a year from now- March 2023, in the mean-time will just conduct business as usual

Working on some rule changes that have come down through ISSC regarding time/ temperature will have more details by the next meeting

1. Aquaculture Report- no report
2. Joint Task Force Working Group Report- no report

**VI.** New Business

1. The task force discussed and considered a legislative proposal that would allow any parish to represent the LODAG Association on the oyster task force

Mitch Juricish stated that some of the coastal parishes are having some issues with filling seats, looking to expand to accept seats from the LODGA from any parish

Steve Pollock would like the LA Oyster Aquaculture Association to be added as a seat on the OTF

Peter Vujnovich motioned to move forward with the bill as presented and would approve of an amendment to add a seat for a representative from the LA Oyster Aquaculture Association to the board, 2nd by Sam Slavich. Motion carries.

Buddy Pausina stated that LODGA is open to discussions on adding a seat but expressed that this was poorly handled

Currently fielding questions from the Natural Resources Committee on the bill

1. The task force heard a presentation on CRCL’s oyster shell recycling program

Kellyn Lacour provided a presentation on CRCL’s oyster shell recycling program

CRCL’s Oyster Shell Recycling Program (OSRP):

* Recycles waste shell from New Orleans area restaurants for coastal restoration purposes
* Mobilizes volunteers to prepare and deploy cured shell for oyster reef creation
* Constructs living shorelines – reef restoration projects that serve as coastal protection
* Monitors reef projects to assess oyster development and changes in erosion rates



 

**Areas for CRCL & OTF Collaboration:**

* Identify new reef project and shell curing sites
* Restaurant and industry/marketing engagement
* Develop a clientele base for sale of recycled shell
* Advocacy, Outreach, and Events
	+ Future Coastal Leaders & Student Ambassadors
	+ Washington Mardi Gras
	+ State of the Coast
	+ Shell-A-Bration
	+ Coastal Day at the Legislature
	+ MRD Summer Celebrations

Sam Slavich stated that the seasoning of the shell is an important part of the process, asked for more information and what is the science behind how long the oysters need to cure; Kellyn Lacour stated that there is some literature out there that states that a minimum of a month is good to limit pathogen development and vibrio and other sorts of parasites that can be found in the muscle tissue, some other oyster shell recycling programs err on the side of caution and some do a three month minimum, we even go beyond that with six months not only to limit the risk of pathogen transfer but we also have volunteers bagging our shell and the six months make it really nice and clean for volunteers

Mitch Jurisich asked if cages hamper growth, oyster can triple in size if allowed to grow, are bags capable of breaking up when oysters start to grow, should you look at material that may be environmental and degradable, see lots of small recruitment but nothing that is large enough to get to market size

Kellyn Lacour stated that CRCL is trying to find something that will stick around for around two years and then degrade, open to ideas of biodegradable materials

Mitch Jurisich stated that he did receive photos of cages washed up on the banks after Hurricane Ida, maybe bags placed right on the shoreline might be a better option instead of leaving too much area in between

CUP is needed to install these reefs

Mitch Jurisich stated that he would love to provide CRCL with any information needed and the industry appreciates what they do

1. The board heard an update on the oyster seed ground permit review board

Jakov Jurisic stated that he received a call from Ty Lindsey stating that the board had been abolished since last year

Patrick Banks stated that within the license restructure the board was abolished but the permit was not, spoke to the task force about this a meeting previously and there was some disagreement among the OTF as to whether or not the board should remain or not, the appeals board was taken away but the permit remains, if someone is denied a permit they still have the ability to appeal to LDWF to get the permit, ability to appeal is still there but board is not, the last few appeals that have come in have gone directly to the LDWF Secretary

Jakov Jurisic asked if LDWF would oppose establishing the board again,

Patrick Banks stated that the board was not following the letter of the law

Peter Vujnovich stated that we as a board did not feel that the letter of the law provided for all of the circumstances that presented themselves, would these special circumstances be taken into account now

Peter Vujnovich could we ask that LDWF provide records on who becomes appellants, who is rejected and who is approved, Patrick Banks stated that he would have to look into this and see if this would be against privacy

**VII.** Public Comment

Mitch Jurisich stated that there is a battle that is going on in TX, this is something LA should be concerned with and keeping an eye on it, this happened in Sabine Lake and it’s now shut down for oyster harvesting, trying to turn them all into sanctuaries, attacking the Menhaden plant in Empire, the oyster industry needs to stay vigilant and watch what happens and be helpful to our neighbors- Save Texas Oysters, seen price of oysters go up because of the shortage; Brad Robin stated that the OTF should get a campaign going now to be ahead of this, reach out to these organizations; Steve Pollock stated that the OTF should reach out to TX and see if one of the oysterman will come speak to the OTF

Robert Walron provided comment on an assessment of the potential value of ocean calcifiers in sequestration of atmospheric carbon; carbon dioxide sequestration is being monetized

Dr. John Zach Lea stated that the money that Sea Grant is handing out now through grants has already impacted the decision making of the oyster producers of LA because now they can decide what type of gear is used for producing oyster in cages

Chris Schieble provided a brief update on the oyster season for Sister Lake. Had an early opening in November and that was for bedding and sacking oysters, the most recent season was March 7-10, 2022, had an estimated 2009 sacks that were harvested, recalling back to July when the oyster stock assessment was presented to the task force, the total from that area was 139,222 barrels of oysters between seed and sack size and the proportion of that remaining is estimated to be 1359 sacks that are still possibly available in Sister Lake. We had an average of about 32 boats out there during the harvest season, with a 25-sack limit per boat per day. Looking at offering an additional 3 day season and considering March 21-23, 2022 as the possible dates for the season.

Jakov Jurisic moved to add an agenda item under New Business to approve the reopening of an additional oyster season for Sister Lake, 2nd by Brad Robin. Motion carries with one objection by Willie Daisy.

Jakov Jurisic motioned to recommend reopening Sister Lake for an additional oyster season on March 21-23, 2022 with a 25-sack limit, per vessel, per day, 2nd by Brad Robin. Motion carries

**VIII.** The next meeting was set for Tuesday, April 19 for 1:00pm at the New Orleans at the Lakefront Airport

**IX.** Jakov Jurisic motioned to adjourn the meeting, 2nd by Sam Slavich. Motion carries.