**Oyster Task Force Meeting Minutes**

**Tuesday, May 9, 2023, 10:00am**

**New Orleans Lakefront Airport**

**6001 Stars and Stripes Blvd.**

**New Orleans, LA 70122**

Meeting called to order at 10:04am

**I.** Pledge of Allegiance

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

**Voting Members Present:**

Dan Coulon

Jakov Jurisic

Mitch Jurisich

Brad Robin

Brandt Lafrance

Al Sunseri

Matthew Slavich

Sam Slavich

Peter Vujnovich

Willie Daisy

**Voting Members Absent:**

Shane Bagala

Tracy Collins

Brandon DeBarge

Steve Pollock

**Non-Voting Members Present:**

Robert Caballero

Jennifer Armentor

Edward Skena

Sarah Roy

Isabel Englehart in for Harry Vorhoff

Brian Lezina

**Non-Voting Members Absent:**

**III.** Peter Vujnovich motioned to approve the April 11, 2023 meeting minutes, 2nd by Willie Daisy. Motion carries.

Jakov Jurisic motioned to amend the agenda by adding an item to New Business, item G. To Consider a Request for Documents to be Provided to the OTF Voting Members- hard copy books of Title 56 of LA LDWF Code, Title 51, MS Wildlide and Fisheries Code- Title 49, Department of Natural Resources Code- Title 43, NSSP Model Ordinance, Texas Park and Wildlife Code- Title 75, 2nd by Willie Daisy. Motion does not carry.

Al Sunseri stated that this can be brought up at the next meeting since this is not a pressing item- Title 76 and Title 51 have already been provided, Title 56 hasn’t been provided since the 1970s, Texas laws, would rather this be requested for next month and that way people are aware that it is being added as an item.

Brad Robin motioned to approve the May 9, 2023 meeting agenda as presented, 2nd by Peter Vujnovich. Motion carries.

IV. Treasury Report

Remaining Fund Balance- $585,450

Remaining Budget Balance- 8,420

April tag sales- 297,600

Peter Vujnovich motioned to approve the treasury report as presented, 2nd by Brad Robin. Motion carries.

V. Committee Reports

A. Public Private Oyster Seed Grounds Committee report- no report

B. Enforcement Report-March 31st- May 1

**Region 4** (Iberia)

None

**Region 5** (Calcasieu and Cameron)

None

**Region 6**: (Terrebonne, Lafourche, Grand Isle)

Terrebonne

4- 56:433 Take oysters closed season from state grounds.

4- 56:435 A Use illegal dredge.

5- 56:424 A Unlawfully take oysters from state water bottoms.

**Seizures:**

**100 Sacks**

**Region 8**: (Jefferson, Plaquemines, St. Bernard, Orleans)

St. Bernard

4-RS 56: 424 A – Take Oysters from unleased state water bottoms.

2-RS 40: 4 A – Violate Sanitation code (1 Log Book) ( 1 Refrigeration).

1-RS 56: 305 A – Fail to have commercial gear license in possession.

**Seizures:**

135 Sacks seized

Plaquemines

1-RS 56: 449 A – Fail to fill out oyster tags correctly

**Seizures:**

**None**

C. Legislative Report- no report

D. Legal Report- no report

E. Research Report- no report, AOC is progressing no other additions

F. Coastal Restoration Report- no report

G. Marketing Report- Anna Koehl stated that they were having some issues with audio got new equipment in and will start pushing and setting up times this week or next to set up meetings with oyster industry members

H. Health Report- Jennifer Armentor stated that there have been 7 reported illnesses- two fluvialis, 1 norovirus, 1 pcr positive, 2 parahaemolyticus and 1 cholera, none of met the FDA parameters of 2 or more within 30 days and from the same harvest time and areas, these were from areas 3,4,5,11 and area 17, have not shown any links that there are any outbreaks, April/ May always has issues, Mississippi served 99 sacks that day and had 1 illness, 2 cases from Florida were VP from area 3, consumption date- April 4 and March 15th both at restaurants in Florida.

I. Aquaculture Report- on track, seed production at the lab has been very good, John Zach Lea syayed that developing an oyster farm park south of Montegut hope that it will be 100-200 acres, invite the task forces’ observation or support

J. Joint Task Force Working Group Report- no report

VI. New Business

1. The task force discussed a white/ green tag usage and rules and regulations

Mitch Jurisich led discussion stating that the industry has been having some issues, would like to accommodate some issues they may have if equipment or refrigeration were to go out, would like to be able to change from a white to a green tag on the boat, this may be something that needs to go before ISSC, there may be certain criteria that needs to be involved in this change, the rules should include notifying LDH and LDWF of this issue and what is happening when an issue arises, would like to see if there is a solution that the task force can come up with

Al Sunseri motioned that this item be sent to the Joint Health and LDWF Enforcement Committee, also to make a request that FDA, John Veazey, to be involved in the deliberations to develop language, 2nd Peter Vujnovich. Motion carries.

Brad Robin asked if this can be accomplished in house, LDH stated that they believe it can be done in house, call 1800# when the issues arises, suggested a change to shucking or post-harvest consumption,

Jakov Jurisic stated that the call in may be an issue where there is no service, possible contact on channel 16

1. Darrah Bach with CRCL Oyster Shell Recycling Program provided a presentation on HB 255

HB255 A tax credit for restaurants recycling oyster shells for beneficial use

PURPOSE: To create an incentive for restaurants to divert shells from landfills to improve water quality, benefit aquatic habitats, support local economies and protect the coastline of this state. STATUS OF THE BILL CRCL testified in support of the bill in House Committee on Ways and Means on 4/18/23 • House received 64 emails in support of the bill

TAX CREDIT $1 per 50 lbs of oyster shells recycled with a cap of $2,000 annually (or 100,000 lbs). Proposed start date: Jan 1, 2024 WHO IS ELIGIBLE Restaurants recycling oyster shells. Bill language: “In order to be eligible for the credit in a taxable year, a restaurant claiming the credit shall, during the taxable year, have donated oyster shell material to the Oyster Shell Recycling Program of the Coalition to Restore Coastal Louisiana or any other oyster shell recycling program or activity designated in rule by the 8 Department of Revenue as an approved program or activity.” AUTHENTICATION CRCL will report poundage for our partner restaurants. Secretary of Dept of Revenue and LDWF will make rules, review etc.

HOW THIS BENEFITS THE OYSTER INDUSTRY • State-sanctioned support for oyster industry and reef restoration • Acknowledges the value of shell and shows restaurants they should be responsible with their shell • Increase amount of available shell for culch and restoration • Support expansion of CRCL’s Oyster Shell Recycling Program = more reef restoration projects that provide habitat for brood stock

Jakov Jurisic asked what material the bags are made of, Darrah Bach stated that the bags are made of a bio-cellulose material made of coconut fibers BESE, Jakov Jurisic suggested using cotton bags

Restaurants who are not giving shells to CRCL can still participate but they will have to work with LDR and LDWF to see what is required

Brad Robin asked what other areas - St. Bernard in Biloxi Marsh- Blind Lake, Point-Aux-Chenes, Hackberry Bay, Bay Adams, and last one in Point-aux-Chenes in Terrebonne and Lafourche as well, planning to do another in Bay Adams and Du Lac.

Dr. John Zach Lea mentioned carbon sequestration, climate change benefit

State of the Coast- Brad Robin is signed up to be on the panel, panel is set for June 2 at the New Orleans Convention Center, Peter Vujnovich and Jakov Jurisic stated that he would be happy to serve on the panel as well

1. The board discussed the packing of oysters in gallon containers

Gene Cavalier stated that they got an oyster complaint recently regarding some packing issues, this came about worked with inspectors, the issues arose from two packing places, one in state and one out of state, one of the obvious issues right off the bat was being short in weight, working with DHH as well, working with the packing place that’s in state to work on the issues, need to figure out a solution about the dual opportunity on how you label weight

Al Sunseri stated that back in early 2000s put a law in that shucked oysters were supposed to be sold by volume or count, weight was added onto this afterwards, there was a lot of political push to get this done by local shucking houses, should have lb or volume, should not have more than 15% free liquid in it

Al Sunseri motioned send this to committee getting a joint committee together of Health and LDWF Enforcement, LDAF, and LRA to try to develop something that can help the industry look better with the shucked meat industry, educate shucking houses, and possible law changes may be needed, 2nd by Jakov Jurisic. Motion carries.

1. The board discussed requesting feedback from the LDWF Secretary on the Mid-Barataria Sediment Diversion and the closing of the Failed Bohemia Salinity Control Structure and Neptune Pass

Brad Robin motioned to request that LDWF Secretary Shadoin attend the next Oyster Task Force meeting with feedback, 2nd by Jakov Jurisic. Motion carries.

1. Jack Isaacs provided an update on the per sack harvesting cost for the Oyster Lease Damage Evaluation Board

The last time these numbers were set was 1995, from 1995 they came up with an estimate of $5/sack, these costs need to be updated, looking into the current cost of sacks per trip, crew prices, length of vessel, fuel price and captain price

Sack per trip- 47.76-1999-2022

Fuel Price- $5/ gallon

Crew Price- $33.33/hr-$41.67/hr- $200-$250/day

Captain Price- $58.33/hr- $350/day

Length of Boat- 45ft

\*These figures look at about a 6-hour day

Combined private leases and public grounds-

Crew cost/ day- $200- equals $13.65 per trip harvest cost

Crew cost/ day- $250- equals $14.27 per trip harvest cost

Sarah Roy stated that currently reviewing Dr. Melancon’s salinity map as it is outdated, some new data is available and this will be reviewed and will keep the OTF updated on this, also stated that she can look into fuel or compensation for Sam Slavich and Mr. Buddy Pausina to attend the OLDEB meetings

Jack Isaacs stated that he would like to look at the sacks/ trip parameter, may want to shorten the time period, would like a little more time being provided for this to run the numbers, will come back with more information at a future meeting to be voted on by the task force

1. The board heard an oyster legislative update

Mitch Jurisich stated that HB 438 passed through the house committee, it was pleasant to introduce a bill and have it go through in less than a minute, AOC tried to tack something on to this bill, but this was not allowed, the bill unanimously passed, currently on the House floor getting ready to head to the Senate, it’s going to be an extension of vessel permit, the menhaden bill did get pulled

The bill would amend and reenact R.S. 56:433.1(A)(1), relative to oyster seed ground vessel permits; 3 to change the terminology of Public Oyster Seed Ground gear license to Public 4 Oyster Seed Ground gear permit; to change the requirements for a permitted vessel 5 to harvest oysters from public grounds; and to provide for related matters.

VII. Public Comment

Jakov Jurisic stated that months ago the task force discussed extend working hours prior to refrigeration from 1 hour to 2 hours, supposed to be dealt with in house at LDH asked for an update; LDH stated that they were not sure where Justin Gremillion left off with this but will take it up to him and will get a report on this for the next meeting

John Zach Lea requesting open discussion about Mid-Barataria Sediment Diversion, can use this to send to the members of the commission to have a scientific debate about the diversion, may be able to address during the State of the Coast address; urged for the OTF to forward to the Governor’s commission

**VIII.** The next meeting was set for Tuesday, June 6 for 1:00pm at LDWF Headquarters located at 2000 Quail Drive with a Joint Health and LDWF Enforcement Committee meeting set prior for 9:30am

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