**Oyster Task Force Meeting**

**Tuesday, July 20, 2021, 1:00pm**

**New Orleans Lakefront Airport**

**6001 Stars and Stripes Blvd**

**New Orleans, LA**

**I.** Pledge of Allegiance

**II.** Roll Call:

**Voting Members Present:**

Jakov Jurisic

Mitch Jurisich

Brad Robin

Brandt Lafrance

Al Sunseri

Sam Slavich

Peter Vujnovich

**Voting Members Absent:**

Shane Bagala

Dan Coulon

Byron Encalade

John Tesvich

Willie Daisy

**Non-Voting Members Present:**

Carolina Bourque

Justin Gremillion

Bryan Marie

Harry Vorhoff

Brian Lezina

**Non-Voting Members Absent:**

Karl Morgan

**III.** Peter Vujnovich motioned to approve the May 11, 2021 meeting minutes, 2nd by Al Sunseri. Motion carries.

Brad Robin motioned to amend the agenda, adding item F. To Discuss Participating in the 2022 LA Alive Event, 2nd by Peter Vujnovich. Motion carries.

Peter Vujnovich motioned to accept the agenda as amended, 2nd by Al Sunseri. Motion carries.

**IV.** Treasury Report:

Remaining Fund Balance- $546,751

Remaining Budget Balance- $110,421

Peter Vujnovich motioned to accept the treasury report as presented, 2nd by Al Sunseri. Motion carries.

**V.** Committee Reports

A. Public-Private Oyster Grounds Committee- no report

B. Enforcement Report-

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| **OTF CASES 4/6/2021 TO 7/13/2021** |
| **Parish** | **Violation** | **No. of Violations** |
| **REGION 5** |
| **CAMERON** | **Possess Untagged Oysters (under 10%)** | **1** |
| **4 sacks of oysters seized** |
| **REGION 6** |
| **LAFOURCHE** | **Taking Oysters From Unapproved Area (Polluted)** | **2** |
| **LAFOURCHE** | **Violate Sanitation Code (Refrigeration)** | **1** |
| **3 sacks of oysters seized** |
| **TERREBONNE** | **Failure to Display Proper Number on Vessel** | **1** |
| **TERREBONNE** | **Harvest Oysters from Unmarked Lease** | **3** |
| **TERREBONNE** | **Violate Sanitation Code (log book)** | **1** |
| **TERREBONNE** | **Violate Sanitation Code (Refrigeration)** | **1** |
| **1 sack of oysters seized** |
| **REGION 8** |
| **PLAQUEMINES** | **Unlawfully Take Oysters From State Water Bottoms** | **1** |
| **PLAQUEMINES** | **Violate Sanitary Code (log book)** | **1** |
| **PLAQUEMINES** | **Violate Sanitary Code (No Tarp)** | **1** |
| **PLAQUEMINES** | **Fail To Display Proper Number on Vessel** | **1** |
| **2 sacks of oysters seized** |
| **ST BERNARD** | **Fail to Have Commercial License in Possession** | **1** |
| **ST BERNARD** | **Fail to Comply with Oyster Packaging Regulations** | **1** |
| **ST BERNARD** | **Violate Sanitation Code (Waste Bucket)** | **2** |
| **ST BERNARD** | **Violate Sanitation Code (log book)** | **1** |
| **ST BERNARD** | **Violate Sanitation Code (Refrigeration)** | **5** |
| **ST BERNARD** | **Operate Watercraft Under License Suspension** | **1** |
| **161 sacks of oysters seized** |

Mitch Jurisich requested that drone cases be added to the enforcement report

Al Sunseri requested that tags be checked for unit of measurement compliance, issues with oysters being labeled a sack and they aren’t sacks, concern for mislabeling on trip tickets

Jakov Jurisic motioned to send a letter to LDWF or LDWF Commission to request that sack, mini sack and bushel be included on tags, 2nd by Al Sunseri. Motion carries.

C. Legislative Report- no report, regular session has ended

D. Legal Report-

Jakov Jurisic stated that he heard from Joe Piacun and the legal contract is not ready but will have it ready by next week

E. Research Report- no report

F. Coastal Restoration Committee Report- no report

G. Marketing Committee Report- BMF had a meeting, making progress with website, talked about creating a personality and a face to the industry want to do little snippets of members of the industry and their background; asked that any industry members that are interested to reach out to Anna from BMF

H. Health Report-

 Justin Gremillion introduced, Jennifer Armentor, the new program administrator for seafood and mollusks at LDH; Still in the process for rulemaking for aquaculture, once the rules are written it will go through public comment and then it will go through the legislative committee; Earl Melancon stated that LA Sea Grant can assist; Sea Grant to meet with LDH

Al Sunseri asked if LDH would consider developing a plan for closures for tropical systems and different systems that come through; been seeing closures happen more quickly than it used to based solely on the tropical system and where it’s located rather than the wind, rain, etc., in the NSSP it allows for states to have their own plan in place to where you won’t have to make closures so quickly; Justin Gremillion stated that LDH does have something in place but the plan is a little rough, it’s a flow chart, plan to work on bettering this plan soon

Discussed dividing areas/ lines, redoing closure areas

I. Aquaculture Committee Report-

Discussed AOC Grant, applications are available at LAseafoodFuture.com; looking for two representatives for the selection committee; chairman requested two names who are willing to participate and he will appoint to the committee- committee suggested Faye Matthews

Dr. Lea and Tony Tesvich are interested in participating

Dr. Lea made an announcement regarding the Shellevator, looking for someone who would be interested in allowing the use of their pier

J. Joint Task Force Committee Report- no report

**VI**. New Business

A. The task force heard an update on Mardi Gras Pass

Mitch Jurisich led discussion, Plaquemines Parish has submitted a proposal, applied for permit to close Mardi Gras Pass, the application included phase 1 close pass, phase 2 develop a controlled structure, the funding for phase 1 is not that high, uses rock to stop the flow of the pass, project itself will take about $8 million, discussing funding sources, feel as though without any major hurdles should be moving through the permitting process pretty smoothly. The discussion was looking at a removal of a portion of the rocks in the MRGO, might be able to use these rocks to close Mardi Gras Pass, the contractors are ready and being bid on, the issue is currently funding, right now the main goal is to get the permit and expedite funding; Plaquemines and St. Bernard Parishes are 100% behind the closure

Al Sunseri suggested writing a letter to a few senators and a congressmen to ask for funding from the infrastructure bill

Al Sunseri motioned to write a letter to Senator Cassidy, Senator Kennedy and Congressman Carter requesting federal funding to aid in the closure of Mardi Gras Pass, 2nd by Sam Slavich. Motion carries.

B. Mitch Jurisich led discussion on the cooperative endeavor agreement between LDWF and Plaquemines Parish regarding the closure of Mardi Gras Pass

Had an agreement between LDWF and Plaquemines Parish regarding the closure of Mardi Gras Pass that went up to $200,000, believe that of that money only $145,000 was used in the engineering, since then realized that the agreement has expired, can LDWF get with Plaquemines Parish to renew, looking for additional funding

Cole Garret stated, would have to redo CEA with the Plaquemines Parish if it was specifically for that year or for that project may need another motion, will have more information for the task force by the next meeting

C. The board discussed submitting public comment on the fisheries disaster spending plan

Carolina Bourque stated that July 31st is the cutoff date for public comment on the fisheries disaster spending plan

Al Sunseri suggested that the task force write a letter to the LDWF to use the funding dedicated to the ‘Rehabilitation of the oyster grounds’ to close Mardi Gras Pass

Jakov Jurisic motioned to submit comment on the Fisheries Disaster Spending Plan requesting $8 million dollars of the funding go to closing Mardi Gras Pass, 2nd by Brad Robin. Motion carries.

Dr. Lea stated that what is ultimately needed is a long term plan for the flow of water for the whole coastal zone

D. Cole Garrett led discussion on the legislative update on oyster related bills

HB691- license restructure- the commercial licenses fees haven’t changed since 1985, oyster industry has been proactive and supportive in the restructure



There was another bill that would convert class 1 and 2 violations to civil penalties, the civil fines remain the same as they were before; Trawling over a marked oyster lease is now a class 2 penalty

Another Senate Resolution that passed was to study oyster shells and where they go and how do we get them back into the water

SR38- offer condolences on the passing of Mr. Buddy Daisy

E. Tershara Matthews provided a presentation on offshore wind development in the Gulf

Jakov Jurisic stated that he has an issue with these sort of windmills because there are all sorts of issues with them they are not exactly clean energy, burns a tremendous amount of oil concern about this being near seed grounds and also interference with birds and migration, and also a navigation issue, trawling for shrimp, pollution prevention

Tershara Matthews stated that the developments will be offshore and they are looking at migratory bird seasons and plan to turn them off during the time they are migrating, have navigation fairways already marked due to oil and gas industry, working with NOAA fisheries to get shrimp trawling data, have not had any issues with pollution

Mitch Jurisich stated that the biggest concern is with laying cables in oyster growing areas

Al Sunseri motioned to submit comment on behalf of to stay away from oyster leases in the State of LA and stay within corridors, 2nd by Peter Vujnovich. Motion carries.

F. The task force discussed participation in the 2022 LA Alive event

Al Sunseri motioned to support participating in the 2022 LA Alive event, 2nd by Brad Robin. Motion carries.

**VII.** Public Comment:

Dr. Zach Lea read the following letter that was submitted regarding the Mid-Barataria Sediment Diversion:

Public Comment submitted by John Dale “Zach” Lea, Sierra Club Member, 1500 S. Jackson St., Covington, LA, 985-272-3681, jdzlea@hotmail.com

During its July meeting, the Executive Committee of Sierra Club Delta Chapter voted unanimously to oppose the Mid-Barataria Sediment Diversion.
The freshwater flood created by the Mid-Barataria Sediment Diversion will damage if not destroy the oyster and brackish water shrimp industries in the area. Oysters are our “canary in the mineshaft.” If oysters are flourishing and edible, we know the environment is healthy for its human and wildlife communities. Oysters die if exposed to freshwater for longer than one month. The freshwater diversion will flood the zone for more than two months each year. Oysters and the wildlife and human communities that depend on them will disappear.
The Mid-Barataria Sediment Diversion is expected to create about 13,000 acres of freshwater wetland. Wetland is relatively poor storm protection in comparison to wetland protected by levees. An equal amount of wetland, protected by levees, could be built in the same zone for a fraction of the cost of the diversion. The leveed wetland area could become a wildlife reservation and would add the best storm protection possible for the money. The oyster, shrimp, bottlenose dolphins, and associated human communities downstream of the redesigned freshwater diversion would not be harmed.The Mid-Barataria Sediment Diversion does not restore for injuries caused by the Deepwater Horizon oil spill, as required by the Court order. A major negative impact of the spill was on Marsh Cordgrass which requires brackish-to-salt water for survival. The freshwater diversion would flood the area with a freshwater river 86% the size of the Missouri. The Marsh Cordgrass would not be restored. It would be further damaged along with the wildlife communities that depend on it.The Sierra Club promotes efforts to educate and empower people to protect and improve the natural and human environment.
Signed: John Dale "Zach" Lea, Ph.D. and David Stets, Sierra Club Delta Chapter Chair

**VIII.** The next meeting was set for Tuesday, August 24, 2021 for 1pm at the New Orleans Lakefront Airport

**IX.** Motion to adjourn by Brad Robin, 2nd by Peter Vujnovich. Motion carries.