

## **Artificial Reef Council Meeting- November 27, 2018, 1:30 pm**

Joe L. Herring Louisiana Room, LDWF Headquarters, Baton Rouge, LA

### Council Members:

Chris D'Elia, Dean of the College of the Coast and Environment, LSU

Robert Twilley, Executive Director of Louisiana Sea Grant

Patrick Banks, Assistant Secretary of the Office of Fisheries, LDWF

### Attendees:

John Lopez, Lake Pontchartrain Basin Foundation

Kevin De Santiago, Lake Pontchartrain Basin Foundation

David Cresson, Coastal Conservation Association

Jason Duet, LDWF

Conner Gilbert, LDWF

1. Patrick Banks welcomes everyone and introduces himself as chairman of the Council; other Council introduce themselves.
2. The Council approves the agenda
3. The Council approves the minutes from the June 2018 meeting.
4. Mike McDonough gives an update on the offshore and nearshore components of the Program. Louisiana's coastline is the boundary between inshore and nearshore; 100' water depth between nearshore and offshore. 76 established offshore reef sites; 48 planning area; 18 Special Artificial Reef Sites; 8 Deepwater. 398 platform jackets, 8 drill rig legs, 40 APC's, 1 jackup rig, 1 tugboat; 7 structures this fiscal year. Six permits for reef sites, one proposal for deepwater. 30 permits for jackets; 33 in permit process. Contract to survey 39 reefs with multi-beam; work done, awaiting results. Nearshore: 6 existing reef sites; permits for 2 new (contract awarded—Art Reef Fund), 2 enhancements (Rec Use funds). Expecting permit for two reefs in SM-233. Permit has been slowed by being in sand resources area and questions from NOAA Fisheries. Ashley Ferguson give inshore update. Sweet Lake reef enhancement was complete in Calcasieu in July 2018. 9600 tons concrete in 2012, added 1700 tons limestone. Rec Use (NRDA): \$6M for 11 reef sites—9 inshore, 2 nearshore. Funding in place; awaiting final environmental compliance. East Calcasieu and California Point awarded to CCA (cooperative endeavor agreement), remaining will be out for solicitation in early 2019. There are \$550K Rec Use for monitoring. Preliminary questionnaire to gauge public's use of reefs, particularly those to be enhanced with Rec Use. One before enhancement; one after. Robert Twilley asks about 'mailout'; A. Ferguson responds that we will literally mail the survey to saltwater-fishing, license-holders, based on boat type (help from Socioeconomics section). Biowest has surveyed (multi-beam) all inshore reefs,

awaiting deliverables. Compliance monitoring plus get bottom types (useful to future development). Images make good outreach materials.

5. Request for Industry Information and Quotes: further relationships with non-profits and increase potential projects. Received proposals for 7 reefs: 2 from CCA (mentioned above), 5 from LPBF. LPBF proposed new reefs: action item, Council approval. P. Banks states that the LPBF sites are in the Public Oyster areas, so they will provide protected broodstock reefs. Oyster Task Force had some consternation over loss of fishing area, but recognize value of broodstock reefs. A. Ferguson added that LPBF provided data showing that areas were favorable to oyster growth. There was internal discussion with Oyster Program and the administration per these sites; other groups were in favor of sites. While OTF was opposed, concerns were not specific in a way that the Program could respond to or adjust for. Marking was one concern; USCG has indicated these sites will likely need to be marked. R. Twilley asks about marking and the permit process. A. Ferguson answers that permit has not been applied for, but Program can pre-coordinate with USCG for likelihood of marking. R. Twilley asks further about monitoring. A. Ferguson answers that that Rec Use funds are specifically for monitoring the Rec Use reefs. P. Banks asks whether we have Art Reef money for monitoring. A. Ferguson answers that we do. R. Twilley asks how we decide what investments to put into monitoring. A. Ferguson answers that those decisions were made before she became Inshore reef biologist, but LPBF is very active in monitoring their reefs. Each of the LPBF will be permitted at 10 acres to allow for future enhancement. Lake Borgne site has a relic shell pad, 50 reef balls. Other sites will be limestone and 30 reef balls. Program has enhanced shell pads in Lake Pontchartrain. P. Banks asks whether Commission has to approve restriction on oyster harvest. Yes. Summary: LPBF sites are most likely to finish first. Art Reef funded, \$155K. Rec Use reefs with CCA next \$400K each. Later in 2019, the remaining Rec Use reefs, via the bid process. A. Ferguson reiterates that Program is asking approval to create the LPBF reefs. P. Banks opens floor for public comment: none. A motion to approve carries
6. M. McDonough states that Program has been hearing from anglers in southwest LA, had a lot of help from Commissioner Chad Courville. Southwest LA has been ‘blindspot’, so it’s been helpful to have communication. Able to get a proposal and a lot of feedback from local anglers. M. McDonough lists the Nearshore Planning Areas from west to east (drawing attached). Primary concern in creation of the Planning Areas was not to affect shrimping industry negatively. Two of SM-233 blocks are relatively high effort; this Planning Area had been suggestion by angler. There has been some difficulty in permitting the two Ship Shoal nearshore sites and the two South Marsh Island nearshore sites. They are all in “sand resource” blocks managed by Bureau of Ocean Energy Management (BOEM) and Coastal Protection and Restoration Authority (CPRA). Coastal restoration with sand resources is a high priority, which limits reef development in those areas. Program is proposing to subtract two blocks from the SM-233 Planning Area, and create a new Planning Area with blocks Vermilion 119 & 124. Both of the new blocks are lower in shrimp trawl effort, and move out of the sand resources area. SM-233 will keep the block in which there are currently proposed reef sites. Fifteen letters of

support from anglers who had targeted the platforms that used to stand in these blocks. An updated dataset from NMFS has shown effort has stayed lower in “new” blocks compared to blocks to be removed: 23.75 & 9.75 average per year, old; 7.5 & 5, new. There are still two standing platforms in blocks to be removed. M. McDonough summarized where the letters of support had come from. CCA provided one. Positives included: access out of Freshwater Bayou, diving, economics: supporting local marinas. There was concern over loss of habitat, and all letters mentioned successful red snapper fishing. Commissioner Courville had spoken with approximately 150 anglers who were in support of the proposal. It would be helpful to move out of sand resource areas (the dynamic seems to have been: shrimp don’t settle over sand, so shrimpers don’t shrimp over sand, so picking areas of low effort led to a lot of overlap with sand resources. H/t: Ed Chesney). Also addresses Program’s difficulty in getting specific proposals from anglers. P. Banks asks for clarity: Program is proposing no increase in acreage, just shift? And proposed area has lower shrimp effort, favored by anglers. Existing area is sand resource area; new area is not. Standing platforms—if they were decommissioned, okay for SARS? M. McDonough: yes, but the acreage we can get in sand resource areas makes them bad candidates for SARS—not much room for enhancement. R. Twilley asks if there is reef potential in the proposed areas. M. McDonough explains that Program would have to deploy material. C. D’ Elia asks about public comment. M. McDonough answers that Program has not gone to Shrimp Task Force. M. McDonough states that if Council wants, the Program will make public-outreach effort. P. Banks states that Shrimp Task Force meets pretty regularly. (Discussion, hard to make out). P. Banks opens the floor to public comment. Connor Waldman speaks, has fished and dove sites in proposal. Very few platforms left of all that had been in area. Able to fish for many species in area: grouper, red snapper, mangrove snapper, ling. Now many of the platforms have been removed. Hurricane Rita took out a lot of the platforms in area. Not much left to fish. Small boats have trouble. Explosive removals kill a lot of fish. Jackup barges leave large depressions that hold fish. P. Banks asks whether the proposed change moves the whole Planning Area. M. McDonough answers that the SM-233 Planning Area is currently 3 blocks, asking to move two blocks. Block to remain has two proposed reefs. R. Twilley asks where the habitat will come from if there are no remaining platforms. M. McDonough answers that Program will have to deploy material. David Cresson of CCA speaks. Mentioned CCA’s letter of support for this proposal, CCA’s involvement in development of Nearshore Planning Areas. Thanked Department for its efforts. Feels there’s been good cooperation shrimping industry on development, understands need to take proposal to shrimpers. Spoke to R. Twilley’s question about reefing potential—would it be possible for conditional approval, pending shrimper buy-in? Material of opportunity available to go out soon—may lose out on material and funding with long approval process. M. McDonough suggests that he could make a permit request, but wait to submit it upon Council approval of Planning Area shift. Could have everything done before weather improves, when work could actually begin. P. Banks states that he would like for staff to begin the permit process and likes D. Cresson’s suggestion for a conditional approval, pending no-objection from the Shrimp Task Force. Were Shrimp

Task Force to object, Council could re-convene to make a final decision. Can do legal review if necessary. C. D' Elia is not opposed to idea. P. Banks directs M. McDonough to be clear with Shrimp Task Force that we need a motion. C. D' Elia asks D. Cresson whether he has spoken with Shrimp Task Force; D. Cresson answers that he has not, but they've worked together over the years. Mentions again that materials of opportunity aren't available forever, important to take when available. Funding time sensitive as well. C. D' Elia asks about weather. D. Cresson mentions a reef finished this time last year. Not an issue. Jim Thom, former construction manager from oil and gas, speaks; has attended Council meetings previously. Points out the high number of platforms that have been removed. Reef programs from Texas and Florida used to ask him for platforms being removed. Louisiana has lagged in encouraging artificial reefs in shallow waters. Feels areas taken by artificial reefs will be miniscule compared to area taken by platforms. Talked about two platforms had hoped to reef in place. Hired Chuck Wilson to do video survey—there were a lot of organisms. All of the red dots represent a loss. Site planning is just a drop in the bucket compared to what was removed. Discussion among Council members about how to accomplish: agreement that they want to hear from Shrimp Task Force, could re-convene if necessary, but want to hear from Shrimp Task Force why if they object. A motion to approve the Planning Area change pending no objection from Shrimp Task Force carries. P. Banks asks for further public comment.

7. C. Waldman(?) wants to reiterate the loss habitat and loss of animals. Has seen rare species on platforms. Fishing and diving platforms a way of life. Nowhere else like the Gulf of Mexico. P. Banks mentions he's heard concern from anglers, a researcher about loss of habitat in removal of platforms. P. Banks expressed appreciation for the letters, the public comment, Commissioner Courville's presence & support. Commissioner Courville thanked staff, Assistant Secretary Banks.
8. No further business
9. Meeting adjourned.