

**Summary of the Alligator Advisory Council Meeting
February 23, 2011
Louisiana Room
Baton Rouge, Louisiana**

Council Present

Johnny Price
Nathan Wall
Kevin Sagera
Chad Courville
Tim Allen
Dan Davis
Mike Bengé
Gerald Savoie
Ronald Guy

Others

Don Ashley
Pam Ashley
Glenn Delaney
Dr. Jack Lasso
Ewell Smith
Danny Berthelot
Marilyn Ensminger
Allan Ensminger
Ted Joanen
Archie Domagne

Entered late, during agenda item number three.

Entered late, at agenda item number four.

Council Absent

none

LDWF Presence

Noel Kinler
Tanya Sturman
Buddy Baker
Bob Love

Johnny motioned to move agenda item five to after agenda item nine in the meeting. Dan seconded. Motion carried unanimously.

Mike motioned to approve the minutes from the November 11th meeting. Tim seconded. Motion carried unanimously.

Alligator Skin Evaluation Project- Dr. Jack Lasso

Dr. Jack Lasso explained the project that he has been working on at LSU. They are comparing feeds and the skin collagen and keratin profiles. They are relating biochemical tests to physical tests. They are looking at mineral and protein profiles. Copper is very important in protein promotion and varies by feed. Some feeds are missing proteins, so the animal does not have sufficient amino acids to promote healthy skin collagen. They extract collagen from the alligator and work up an amino acid analysis. The next part of the project is to compare the strength of the skin and compare it to the collagen results.

The project was scheduled to end in July, but they are requesting a six to seven month extension. Chad asked if LSU will make recommendations for feed choices. Dr. Lasso said that there are already differences noted in feed. It is not necessary to wait until the end of the project to discuss that.

Washington D.C. Education Report- Glenn Delaney

Glenn Delaney gave a brief update on legislation in D.C. Feral swine population is growing and the larger animals are causing habitat damage, putting alligator nests at risk. They began work on legislation to begin work on collecting data about habitat damage. They expected the legislation to pass easily. It ended up being grouped with a number of other bills and the package of bills failed.

The Nutria Control Program has maintained its funding, but the government is struggling with funding. It is not clear how much money CWPPR will be left with after budgets are worked out.

The Louisiana delegation has been well educated. There will be another fly-in in March.

Funding appropriation forms have been submitted for alligator disease research, alligator research facility, and the feral swine pilot program. Congress has since banned earmarks for two years, while they reconsider how to make this policy transparent to the public. APHIS will still have a budget. We don't know if APHIS will be able to fund alligator research without the congressional budget. Glenn and Noel are working on a proposal to APHIS to continue this funding for 2011.

Noel explained that we are operating on 2010 money right now. He intends to pursue other avenues to get these projects funded.

Jeff Landry is a new congressman from the 3rd district. He loves to hunt and fish and considers himself an "alligator guy." He is on the Committee on Natural Resources and is on a Subcommittee on Fisheries, Wildlife, Oceans and Insular Affairs.

Congressman Cedric Richmond is new from the 2nd district.

John Fleming is a doctor from Minden from the 4th district and is Chairman of the Subcommittee on Fisheries, Wildlife, Oceans and Insular Affairs.

Louisiana will lose one Congressional seat through the census. There is talk of combining the 3rd and 7th districts. These districts are currently held by Landry and Boustany.

Glenn said that he is available to pursue funding through other federal sources.

Washington D.C. RFP- Noel Kinler

Noel explained that the RFP for the educational project last year got hung up in the process. After months of working with the Office of Contract Review, LDWF was allowed to contract with Glenn. We have developed an RFP with the same scope of services as the one that went out last year. It will be advertised for three years. The Council will need to appoint some members to serve on a review committee. Then the Council will vote on a contract when it is ready, probably in May. Mike, Kevin and Dan will serve on the review committee.

Swatch Group Visit Update- Noel Kinler

Noel received a message about a video distributed in Europe about animal well-fare, leather goods and improper tagging. The video showed alligator skins. Watchstrap manufacturers in Europe were very concerned that this video would be detrimental to their business. A delegation of watchstrap manufactures visited Louisiana and met with LDWF staff, learned about the alligator program and visited some farms in Louisiana and Florida. The delegations donated funding to LSU for a euthanasia study, so that we can use the best method with the least amount of suffering in harvesting alligators. The farmers requested a list of recommended practices that include animal husbandry and euthanasia practices. The document covers animal welfare from the time that the egg is collected to the time that the animal is returned to the marsh or euthanized.

Chad asked if this document would include recommended practice for handling alligators in the wild. Noel said that it was strictly a farming document. Chad suggested that we consider following up with a wild document in the future.

Chad suggested that the Council send a letter to the Swatch delegation thanking them for their input. Noel suggested that the Council also thank the tanneries for donating skins to LSU.

Tim asked if we could back up to agenda item number two and get some input from Noel. Javier took some skins to analyze them. He determined that there was weakness in the skin that was not related to disease. Dr. Lasso has undertaken to analyze and compare the feed composition to the strength of the alligator skin. Javier pointed out that this is a blind test. Javier and Noel know which skins were raised on which foods, but Dr. Lasso does not have this information.

Alligator Rule Change Proposal- Noel Kinler

One tannery requested permission to cut alligator skins into pieces to make it easier to sell lower quality hides. There is currently no regulation that would allow for a hide to be cut in the raw. It would be beneficial for the tannery to be able to send flanks to one tannery and belly skins to another tannery. This required that LDWF change their definition of alligator skin and add regulations pertaining to how the skins could be cut and how to guarantee collection of tag fees. Noel would like for the Council to make a motion to support the rule change.

Tim asked Noel to explain how they would keep track of tagging after the skins are cut. He also asked if this process will require additional staff. Noel explained that the Department would put secondary tags on the cut pieces, and that even though it would require an extra trip to the tannery he didn't expect to need extra staff. The tag fee will be collected at the time the first piece ships.

Noel went through other rule changes. These included allowing non-resident landowners to apply for tags, application deadlines, how to destroy skins of no value, deletion of three alligator limit for non-residences, forbid cutting alligator from the line, and making provisions to replacing lost alligator tags for farmers.

Dan motioned to support these proposed rule changes that will be presented at the April Commission Meeting. Mike seconded. Motion carried unanimously.

LSU Research Facility Update- David Morrison

Dr. Morrison said that we are very close to the money needed to raise this facility. Landowners, farmers, feed companies, tanneries and private individuals have donated. They originally thought that they'd need \$180,000, but material costs have decreased and the current projected cost is \$140,000. They hope to have a completed facility by the end of the calendar year. LSU AgCenter will pick up maintenance on the facility once it is finished.

Consideration of LSU Experimental Statistics Contract- Noel Kinler

LDWF has a contract with LSU Experimental Statistics to provide data analysis for certain projects. Half of the contract is paid out of Alligator Resource Funds. It will be \$30,000 per year and would come out of the alligator program budget. The other half comes from Rockefeller Trust Funds.

Dan motioned to approve the LSU Experimental Statistics Contract. Tim seconded. Motion carried unanimously.

Technical Representation Report- Don Ashley

CITES supported universal tagging with a 100% vote. CITES hosted their first round table for business at the last session. The Economist is looking at a wide range of industries to rate how environmentally friendly the industries are. The alligator industry rated very high in this analysis. There was no discussion to separate wild and farm. The wild alligator was rated as the most eco-friendly. They look at energy conservation, waste water, and other eco-issues.

Don quickly went over the major issues that he is working on. The number of Siamese crocodiles being exported from South East Asia is alarming.

Don gave a report to the Swatch group and went over several of the slides that he showed them. He showed a number of negative advertising slides and said that he believes we need to be more proactive in developing a positive advertising campaign.

Don showed PETA video about alligators, snakes and lizards. Don is concerned about videos like this making it difficult to address the California legislation in 2015. Kevin and Chad agreed that positive education is important, but as far as the Council is concerned, the funding is not there now. It is something that should be discussed further.

Tim asked what the Council had done to address US Fish and Wildlife's airport display. Don suggested that LDWF get this on the agenda when the meet with USFW this spring. Buddy said that we could initiate a discussion at the spring meeting.

Other Business

Gerald is racing bikes and has alligator on the bike and the logo, "Racing to save our wetlands." He has the opportunity to put out brochures at a tent. 30,000-60,000 people attend these races. Chad suggested that we create an outreach committee.

Nathan motioned to adjourn. Gerald seconded. Motion carried unanimously.