

ALLIGATOR ADVISORY COUNCIL

AUGUST 2, 2017

LDWF

NEW IBERIA, LA

ATTENDANCE

Council Members Present

Ronald Guy
Randy Moertle
Vic Blanchard
John Currier
Mike Bengé
Gerald Savoie
Craig Sagrera
Al Marmande

Council Members Absent

Barry Wall

LDWF Present

Secretary Jack Montoucet
Damon Morris
Eric Ledet
Alvin Landry
Buddy Baker
Edmond Mouton
Tanya Sturman
Amity Bass
Ruth Elsey
Jeb Linscombe
Mike Dupuis
Jennifer Manuel
Catherine Norman

Others Present

Noel Kinler
Ted Joanen- Miami Corp
Nathan Wall- Walls Gator Farm
David Wolf- Walls Gator Farm
Archie Domangue- Apache
Chad Courville- Miami
Serge Castagne- RTL
Greg Linscombe
Millie B Williams- LSU Aquaculture Research
Mark Shirley- LSU AG
Christy Plott- American Tanning
Billy Broussard- Vermillion Land
Dirk Benedict- LSU
Dr. Jack Losso- LSU
Frank Ellender
Charlie Pettefer
Dwight Savoie
Johnny Price
Archie Domangue
Tim Allen
Errol Falgout
Javier Nevarez- LSU
Sidney Guidry
Dean Roberts- Stream Companies
John Fallon- Audubon Nature Institute
Jim Dozier- Kering
Mathew Wall-- Walls Gator Farm
Joseph Autin
Daniel Edgar- Seafood Promotion Board

APPROVAL OF MINUTES FROM THE PREVIOUS MEETING

Motion made by Craig Sagrera to approve the minutes from the April 4, 2017 AAC meeting. Randy Moertle seconded. Motion carried.

WELCOME TO NEW MEMBERS

Mike Bengé introduced Craig Sagrera, who is a new farmer representative, and John Currier, who is a hunter. He also noted that Randy Moertle was appointed for a new 6 year term.

Mike Bengé introduced Kristal Breaux, the Cameron Fur Queen, who attended the meeting.

Mike Bengé introduced Secretary Jack Montoucet. Mr. Montoucet spoke briefly about his background in the alligator industry and his vision for working with the industry in his role as Secretary.

Mike Bengé introduced Chad Courville, Chairman of the LDWF Commission.

ELECTION OF OFFICERS

Vic Blanchard motioned to appoint Mike Bengé as chairman. Craig Sagrera seconded. Motion carried.

Randy Moertle motioned to appoint Vic Blanchard as vice chairman. Al Marmande seconded. Motion carried.

NUISANCE ALLIGATOR PROGRAM CHALLENGES

Edmond Mouton explained that the Department had changed the policy regarding how much a nuisance hunter is allowed to charge. Hunters can charge \$50 per call. LDWF is looking at how Florida manages their nuisance program. Florida takes about 20,000 nuisance calls annually whereas Louisiana takes only about 3,000. LDWF is also considering paying nuisance hunters per call, but they are still in the early stages of this process. Florida pays \$30 per call.

The Council, Department staff, and the public discussed various approaches to addressing this issue. Vic Blanchard requested that LDWF and a committee of nuisance hunters come back to the next AAC meeting with an update and some suggestions.

IMPLICATIONS OF THE FLORIDA ALLIGATOR FARM CHARGES TO THE ALLIGATOR INDUSTRY IMAGE

After arrests were made on a Florida alligator farm, there have been some concerns by luxury brands regarding illegal activity within the industry. Buddy Baker said that a positive spin can be put on a story like this, because enforcement handled it well. Louisiana also has the law enforcement capacity that can root out the problems, investigate them, and carry them to convictions.

After some discussion on how to manage the industry image, Mr. Montoucet suggested that this is a job for a contractor under an RFP.

Daniel Edgar suggested that there is money from the Seafood Promotion Board that could go to alligator marketing.

IMPACTS OF TROPICAL STORM CINDY ON ALLIGATOR EGG PICK UP

Edmond Mouton said that judging from the pick up on some of the Wildlife Management Areas (WMAs), the egg collection numbers were down this year. The nest density surveys are down 12%. Gerald Savoie asked if the Department could send a letter out to farmers stating that nests counts are down so that the farmers can share it with the landowners.

Javier Nevarez predicted that West Nile Virus may be a problem this year due to the tropical storm because the environment is prime for mosquito populations. He suggested that the farmers be aggressive about spraying for mosquitos.

CHINESE DELEGATION VISIT

Edmond Mouton said that LDWF would bring a group from an island off of the Southeast coast of China around Louisiana to see how the industry works. They will also meet with Dr. Liu and tour the LSU facility to see what she does here and what she has done in Beijing.

DEVELOPMENT OF A MARKET FOR MEDICINAL ALLIGATOR PRODUCT

Edmond Mouton introduced Dr. Jack Losso and Dirk Benedict with LSU. They are investigating avenues of taking the biomedical research further into development of products. Edmond Mouton also mentioned that this topic was added to the Marketing Request for Proposal (RFP).

PRACTICABILITY OF ENROLLING LOUISIANA ALLIGATOR MEAT INTO THE CERTIFICATION PROCESS

Dr. Damon Morris from the LDWF Office of Fisheries discussed the possibility of certifying the alligator as sustainable. He has developed a process for sustainability certification for other species in the state. Shrimp and blue crab have been certified. The oyster industry is going through the process now. They are considering this process for crawfish and alligators. There would be a cost involved.

The certification process looks primarily at the management program of the species.

REPORT FROM CITES ANIMALS COMMITTEE MEETING

Buddy Baker said that things were pretty quiet related to crocodylians at the CITES meeting. Because there was a spike in harvest, American Alligator was on the list of potential species to be reviewed by Significant Trade Review. The state group prepared information to address these concerns and were able to keep alligator from going through that review process.

The Snake Working Group reviewed documents related to Non-Detriment Findings. The interest in the Snake Working Group by the Crocodylian Specialist Group and the American Fur Resources Council is related to traceability. Buddy Baker has been following these discussions closely to ensure that this does not result in excessive requirements to other species.

The Captive Bred and Ranches Specimens Working Group had some concerns about mislabeling wild caught specimens as captive bred specimens for export. Nile and Siamese crocodiles were identified by the World Conservation Monitoring Center as candidate for review, but the Animals Committee chose to focus on other species. The International Alligator and Crocodile Trade Study (IACTS) will continue to monitor these species.

THE FUTURE OF LOUISIANA'S WILD HIDE MARKETABILITY

Wild alligator skins are no longer selling well. Edmond Mouton mentioned the Department is looking at many different avenues to address this. The Marketing contract, which could result from the current RFP, will address this issue as well. The Department has been meeting with luxury leather brand industry members and has also been exploring the biomedical field as a potential untapped market.

Buddy Baker talked about the impact on local communities as an important aspect of the sustainable program. The marketing strategy needs to be bigger than the Council can afford alone. He believes that luxury brands should also commit dollars to the marketing program.

WORK WITH FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE (FWS) TO STRAIGHTEN OUT ALLIGATOR HIDE SHIPPING ISSUES

Edmond Mouton said that there had been some problems with the master file system with the Fish and Wildlife Service. It was a result of a series of clerical errors. LDWF worked with FWS via phone conference, and there have been improvements since the call.

STATUS UPDATE FOR THE REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS (RFPS)

RFPs generally take eight or nine months. The RFPs are in the Office of State Purchasing (OSP). Once they are approved by OSP, then they will be published. A committee will review the proposals. Potentially contracts could be in place by early next year. Edmond noted that the IACTS contract is currently active.

Mike Bengé asked for volunteers to sit on the committee. Al Marmande, Vic Blanchard, and Barry Wall will sit on the RFP committee.

OVERVIEW OF RULES, STATUTES, REGULATIONS, AND PROCEDURES USED TO ALLOW IMPORT AND EXPORT OF LIVE ALLIGATORS

Edmond Mouton handed out a copy of the current regulations.

LDWF has been monitoring issues related to importing live alligators and subsequent disease issues. Javier Nevarez explained that chlamydia has recently been found on some Louisiana farms that houses alligator imported from Florida. It is important to have a health certificate on alligators imported from other states. Dr. Nevarez also stated that it is important to have clear documentation of the chain of supply for imported alligators.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Buddy Baker said that the Crocodile Specialist Group (CSG) is soliciting funds and that he would like to encourage anyone present to consider contributing to the CSG, because they are Louisiana's biggest partner on the international scene.

Motion made by John Currier to adjourn. Randy Moertle seconded. Motion carried.
