

Alligator Advisory Council Meeting

November 2, 2016

LDWF

Baton Rouge, LA

Council Members Present

Ronald Guy
Randy Moertle
Vic Blanchard
Dwight Savoie
Mike Bengé
Barry Wall
Gerald Savoie
Al Marmande
Errol Falgout

Council Members Absent

LDWF Present

Buddy Baker
Edmond Mouton
Tanya Sturman
Amity Bass
Jeb Linscombe
Mike Dupuis
Yolanda Martin
Angela Guidry
Daniez Henry
Randy Myers

Others Present

Pam Ashley- Ashley Associates
Noel Kinler
Andre Neto- CCP
Archie Domange- Apache Land
Ted Joanen, Miami Corporation
Serge Castagne- CCP
Javier Nevarez- LSU
Diana Coulon- LSU Ag
Michael Perel- France Croco- Kering Group
Viscusi Gian Marco- Caravel- Kering Group
Herve Guian Andeau- Kering Group
Helen Crowley- Kering Group
Christine Lippai- Kering Group
David Wolf- Walls Gator Farm
Nathan Wall- Walls Gator Farm
Matthew Wall- Walls Gator Farm
Amanda Dillard- Walls Gator Farm
Don Wall- Walls Gator Farm
Marco Dermods- Acadian Ostrich Ranch

Motion made by Vic to approve the minutes from the August meeting. Al seconded. Motion carried.

Welcome Remarks from the Secretary

Secretary Melancon greeted the council and said that he was happy to work with the alligator industry. He said that when he started with the Department that there were audits going on, but none of this has affected the alligator industry. He said that he would like to appoint Buddy as the ex officio member of the Council on behalf of the Department.

CITES Conference of the Parties (CoP)- Buddy Baker

Buddy reported on his representation of the Department and the alligator industry at the recent CITES Conference of the Parties (CoP). Buddy works with other state Fish and Wildlife Agencies under the umbrella of the Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies (AFWA) to represent the interests of Louisiana as well as the interest of all other state Fish and Wildlife agencies while at the Conference of the Parties. Prior to the CoP he notified the other AFWA team members that he would necessarily be spending more time representing the Louisiana alligator industry at this CoP, Buddy reported that the other team members understood and agreed to cover the other areas. Buddy reported that animal rights groups continue to utilize CITES to eliminate trade. He showed a photo of a street blocked off by demonstrators at the CoP. The animal rights groups are also involved in the CITES process on the inside. As a state wildlife agent, Buddy cannot directly negotiate a treaty. He is there as an NGO, just like the animal rights groups, to influence the US Fish and Wildlife Service and other countries on how they vote.

The first issue regarded Responsible Ecosystem Sourcing Platform (RESP), which is proposing new traceability technology for wildlife products. Associated with this is a movement towards tracing wildlife products to the final consumer level. Currently we don't trace alligators that far, because there is no conservation benefit. Crocodylians have a long standing tagging system that works, and Buddy, along with the CSG, opposed changing the crocodylian tracing system. There was a favorable outcome with this issue, which deferred the issue to a Working Group on traceability of wildlife and products.

There were four crocodylian proposals that Buddy recommended that the US delegation support on the basis that they are biologically sound proposals with community benefits. Three of the four proposals passed.

There was a significant amount of conversation about community involvement in decision making. Canada was very active in support of this issue due to the importance of community involvement on recent polar bear issues at CITES. Buddy reported that input from the Inuit community at the last CoP had a large impact on maintaining the polar bear's status on Appendix II. A working group is being established to determine how to engage rural communities more in the CITES process. Louisiana also supports community involvement as it relates to alligator trade support.

There were some issues related to trophies as personal effects. Alligator sport hunting depends on these personal effects for transferring alligators across borders. Canada and the U.S. agreed to continue allowing personal effects for trophies between the two countries.

Buddy reported on a few proposals affecting the status of US wildlife species on CITES appendices. He also reported on his attendance at nightly FWS debriefings. In Buddy's opinion we have to be there in order to influence U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. If we aren't there, then other NGOs, such as animal rights groups, will have greater influence on them. Buddy reported on side events on the snake trade and sustainable use meetings.

Buddy met with WCMC about the IACTS reports. Since we are between contracts, we could contract with them directly so that we don't miss an IACTS report while we are in this process.

There is a growing concern about the trend towards CITES wanting contribution to positive ecological benefit before a species can be downlisted or delisted. This is outside of the context of CITES which simply requires a non-detriment finding. He reported that the states will be watching this trend closely.

Gerald asked which species of crocodylians were downlisted, and he wanted to know if they had a detailed report for how they were going to be sustainable. Buddy said that they did have a detailed report. The CoP questioned some of these proposals in the past, because they didn't believe that there was significant enforcement in place to ensure the management. This year the CoP supported them. The Madagascar downlisting failed, because CITES didn't believe that they could enforce the management.

Disease and Animal Welfare Updates- Dr. Javier Nevarez

Javier is available to perform training upon request for the new slaughter regulations. He can also review any alternative methods upon request. He can also do the training in Spanish for the workers. The approved methods are the severance of the spinal cord immediately followed by pithing, penetrating with a captive bolt, and a non-penetrating captive bolt. The use of captive bolt is highly encouraged because it is considered more humane and results in a faster death. Javier showed pictures and some information on the captive bolt guns. The first gun is appropriate for alligators up to four feet. The second unit is very heavy duty and can be used for any sized alligators. It is a single charge only and is therefore slower. The placement for using the captive bolt is right behind the eyes. The non-penetrating gun will fracture the skull, so the penetrating captive bolt gun may be more appropriate for those wanting to sell the skulls.

He went over the technique of pithing. Javier thinks it is important to keep the cutting and pithing option available in case there are issues with availability of captive bolt guns and parts or in case there are delays with customer service with maintenance issues.

Other welfare issues that may come up in the future are water quality and air quality.

Javier has seen some chlamydiosis in alligators. It will run its course in one or two weeks, and there are much fewer deaths than West Nile Virus. Chlamydiosis spreads easily, so alligators should be quarantined. It has been resistant to antibiotics. The disease may contaminate the meat and may affect humans. It has been difficult to grow these bacteria in cultures.

There is a vaccine available for West Nile Virus.

Regulation Changes- Edmond Mouton

Edmond presented a brief update on the regulation change to reduce the return rate for alligators from 12% to 10%. It passed the Commission vote unanimously. It is now out for another comment period. He provided a schedule for the Council members as to the steps for it to become law. He expects that it will stay on track and become a rule in time to go into effect for the 2017 season.

LSU Promotion of Grade 3 Amendment – Edmond Mouton

Edmond reported that Dr. McRoberts had prepared a presentation showing that they were working on some accessories. This is a two year contract that will terminate in February 2018. Edmond requested the Council's consideration on a no-cost amendment to shift the emphasis of the contract. There will be no more money involved, but there are three added tasks that cover accessories. Edmond pointed out that these added tasks relate to accessory promotions such as Western items, purses, wallets, and other accessories such as satchels that would appeal to younger customers. They had done a lot with garments, but the Council had indicated that accessories would be more appropriate for grade three skins. Gerald said that he thinks that most grade three skins are large skins and are not appropriate for small accessories. Buddy said that the amendment came out of a conversation at a council meeting in Lafayette. The amendment was drafted at the Council's request, but the Council does not have to approve this amendment. Gerald suggested cancelling the contract, because we do not have grade three materials to do accessory items. Randy said that he had initiated the conversation because he was thinking of saddles and items that could be made out of large skins. Texas western wear uses a lot of leather. Gerald said that motorcycle seats are also a possibility.

Buddy introduced the legal staff. Yolanda Martin, Chief Council for LDWF, advised that the agenda item is on the consideration of the amendment not for cancelling the contract.

Gerald stated further that this contract is not doing anything for the industry. Randy asked how we can promote the leather and not specific products. Gerald pointed out that the Kering Group has several members in the audience who have experience with that type of promotion. Gerald said that wild skins are used in Asia and in Mexico.

Ronald said that he makes products from wild skins and the products move. People are interested in gun holsters and belts. Gerald said that Mark Staton has a lot of experience with wild skins and products. Edmond said that they had invited Mark Staton, but he is dealing with rebuilding after the flood and couldn't come today. Randy said that he thinks there is a market for wild skins here in the United States. Al said that working on motorcycle stuff like chaps, jackets, and seats seems like a good place to start. He suggested that Dr. McRoberts make some of these products and donate them to a famous motorcycle racer, who would be seen by a lot of other motorcyclists.

Nathan Wall said that Gerald is correct. This contract is not bringing any value to the market. There are three tanneries represented by staff in the room, and he suggested that we hear from them.

Dave Wolf said that he agrees with Gerald's assessment. The scale size will not work for these products.

Motion made by Ronald to accept the amendment as presented. Vic seconded. Motion failed with five members against and four members for. Ronald, Al, Randy and Buddy voted for. Vic, Dwight, Errol, Gerald, and Barry voted against. Mike, as chairman, abstained from voting because his vote was not needed to break a tie.

Other Business

Buddy introduced some of the guest in the audience including the new Assistant Secretary of the Office of Wildlife, Randy Myers. Buddy also introduced the representatives of the Kering Group which represents luxury brands in Europe. The Kering Group is currently in Louisiana to ensure that the alligator products that they are purchasing are produced as environmentally and humanely as possible. Helen Crowley from Kering's sustainability department spoke to the Council. She participated in the CITES meeting and focuses on sustainable trade.

Executive Session Met

Other Business Continued

Dwight made a motion to develop a contract for producing the IACTS report. Yolanda advised the Council that they cannot make a motion for an item that was not on the agenda. Mike said that we can add the item to the agenda for the next meeting. Mike asked if Buddy would comment on the status of the staff proposal for dealing with the various tasks in the scope of the technical representative RFP. Buddy responded that staff could have their report to the Council within two weeks. Jan Kellet said that she would check with the Office of State Procurement to determine the possibility of developing a contract for one portion of the original RFP. Mike suggested meeting on the first Wednesday of December, and the Council agreed to reconvene quickly after Jan and Buddy got back to them with pertinent information on how they can proceed.

Motion made by Dwight to adjourn. Al seconded. Motion carried unanimously.