

## Alligator Advisory Council Meeting

October 16, 2013  
LSU Aquaculture Center  
Baton Rouge, LA

### Council Members Present

Ronald Guy  
Chad Courville  
Dwight Savoie  
Errol Falgout  
Tim Allen  
Nathan Wall  
Al Marmande  
Mike Bengé

### Council Members Absent

Gerald Savoie

### LDWF Present

Noel Kinler  
Bob Love  
Ruth Elsey  
Buddy Baker  
Tanya Sturman  
Lance Campbell

### Others Present

Ted Joanen  
Dr. Robert Reigh  
Danny Berthelot  
Johnny Price  
Javier Navarez

Motion made by Nathan to approve the minutes as amended from the June, 2013 meeting. Errol seconded. Motion carried unanimously.

Motion made by Tim to keep the same officers. Errol seconded. Motion carried unanimously.

### Swamp People Update

Noel said that the producer of Swamp People, Adam, wants to maintain a good relationship with the Department. They discussed concerns that the Department had, and the producer was receptive to these issues. The producers are very careful not to show an alligator being shot in the head or a lot of blood in the boat. They also do not broadcast the skinning process. Noel said that he would like to see some of the species and habitat management issues incorporated into the program. This season has already been filmed, but Noel expects to see some of these ideas incorporated into the next season. Adam invited Noel to a staff meeting in order to educate the other producers about the alligator program. Overall, it was a productive meeting. Chad said that we are in a better position today with the Swamp People than we have been in the past. Buddy Baker said that we need to simplify the message into just two or three points. He believes they will be more likely to use the information, if the producers don't have to sift through it themselves.

## **Swiss T.V. Report Update**

Noel passed around an internet article. Noel said that the program aired on Swiss t.v. on a show similar to 60 Minutes. The title of the piece was "The Dark Side of Luxury Leather," and focused on raising alligators in the dark without a day-night rhythm. The journalist was not given access to alligator farms in Louisiana. The episode showed him pulling photos and information off of the internet as his resources. There seems to be no negative reaction to the industry as a result of the show. It came across as a sensationalist piece.

Javier looked at stress hormones due to raising alligators in the dark. Tim suggested synthesizing the data we have in case we need it in the future, but he doesn't think we should respond now since there appears to be no public interest.

The reporter has been charged with criminal trespass, and the reporter may come back to stand trial. Nathan said he liked to see the charges dropped to keep him from coming back and filming the trial. Al agreed.

Chad said that the Department did an excellent job in handling this situation. Buddy Baker said that the reporter could not find a weak link, because the industry held together. Nathan said that he feels like the Department has the farmers' backs.

Chad suggested sending information to the manufacturers. Tim said that we are already giving manufacturers information. Noel agreed, but he said the issue now was a biological one, a question of raising alligators in the dark.

## **Educational Video**

The concept of an educational video has been on the table for years. Noel, Buddy and Chad met with some producers from LPTV. A lot of questions were raised. Who would the audience be? Do we want to focus on the entire marsh to market story? Noel proposed the idea of a 30 minute show on the general program that would air on public television and also a shorter technical video.

Mike liked the idea of a 30 minute PBS segment. Tim asked if the film would address issues such as raising alligators in the dark. Javier said the audience may be the general public outside of Louisiana. This could prevent PETA from getting traction with the public in more liberal areas. A positive documentary about the industry could serve to educate the general public and legislators. Nathan said that he isn't interested in bringing the farming industry to a national audience. Right now, people don't have a concept of alligator farms. Ronald agreed.

Chad said that he'd like to have a more detailed video for legislators and manufacturers. Mike said that we want to focus more on alligator returns than on egg collections. Javier said that if we had a video that we could give to a Swiss watch strap manufacturer, they could pass it on to local media when they started asking questions. Greg Lutz said that the industry has complete control over what is scripted into this video. Mark said that the Southern Regional Aquaculture Center has some information on alligator farms posted online. Chad said he like to have that information pulled until we update the message.

Chad said that he likes the idea of the Department having a documentary that they can hand to a reporter. As it is, the Department has to drop everything to address reporters' questions. Buddy said that the video needs to be appropriate for an international audience.

Motion made by Tim to form a focus committee to answer the questions posed by Noel about a target audience and essential topics and to have the committee report back to the Council at the next meeting. Errol seconded. Motion carried unanimously.

### **Alligator Program Update**

Noel gave a quick update on egg collections and wild harvests. The numbers are not finalized, but they are pretty close. Just over 500,000 eggs were collected. Projected releases are estimated at 51,013. The egg harvest this year is up about 85,000. Farm inventory should exceed 600,000. The Alligator Resource Fund has already generated \$932,910 this year. Noel said that the industry is in good shape at the moment.

### **LSU Alligator Research Facility Update**

Cargill presented a check to the Research Center for over \$80,000, which was generated by the Gator Bait program in which farmers opt to donate a portion of the feed sales to the Research program.

### **Other Business**

Ted Joanen said that Cargill and Mark Staton developed a new feed, which is currently being analyzed. They should have some information on it at the next meeting.

Bob Love said that Chevron has worked with the Department on whooping cranes. They are currently doing a public relations event at games during half time. The Department will be able to incorporate facts and photos about the alligator industry into the game program.

Noel said that during the last legislative session that the purchasing and human resource departments have been merged with DNR. The IT Department is updating the programming for data bases.

The Federal government shut down has affected the exporting of alligator hides. New CITES permits are not being generated. Those involved in the master file program can still move skins.

Chad welcomed Al as a new Council member.

Chad thanked Dr. Reigh for hosting this meeting.

Nathan said that he'd like to see the Department regulate how alligators are euthanized. Noel said that he'd put it on the agenda at the next meeting and would encourage farmers to attend that meeting.

Motion made by Mike to adjourn. Ronald seconded. Motion carried unanimously.