

**Summary of the Alligator Advisory Council Meeting  
February 23, 2012  
Louisiana Room  
Baton Rouge, Louisiana**

**Council Present**

Nathan Wall  
Errol Falgout  
Chad Courville  
Mike Benge  
Ronald Guy  
Gerald Savoie  
Dan Davis  
Tim Allen

**Council Absent**

Dwight Savoie

**LDWF Presence**

Noel Kinler  
Tanya Sturman  
Buddy Baker  
Bob Love  
Ruth Elsey  
Lance Campbell  
Jeb Linscombe  
Phillip Trosclair  
Edmond Mouton  
Connie Dunn  
Osborne Bahen

**Others**

Dr. Javier Nevarez  
Ted Joanen  
Micah Bujol- Circle M  
Judge Edwards-Vermillion Corp.  
David Hines- Cargill  
Shane Stelly- C.H.  
Dave Heinjee-BIVI  
Ron Carruthers- BIVI  
James Pellerin- BIBI  
Mark Glass- Georgia Farm  
Danny Berthelot  
Steve Hartly - USGS  
Marco Dermody  
Karen Wall  
Archie Domangue  
Craig Sagera  
Mathew Wall  
Mr. Wall  
Jeff Donald  
Jerome Caraguel- RTL  
Mark Shirley  
Dr. Robert Reigh  
Willie Core- Cargill

Chad Courville called for a moment of silence for Allen Wall, Lanny Ledet, George Bartmess, and Robert Campbell. Noel Kinler presented a plaque to Craig Sagera for Kevin Sagera.

Gerald motioned to approve the minutes from the October 11, 2012 meeting. Mike seconded. Motion carried unanimously.

**LSU Vet School Update- Dr. Javier Nevarez**

Noel asked the Council to approve a contract with the LSU Vet School to provide diagnostic services to the Department and the alligator industry participants. The payment of \$26,102 per year for three years (total cost of \$78,306) for this contract would come from the Alligator

Resource Funds allocated to the alligator department. This contract fee would not come from the Alligator Advisory Council budget.

**Nathan motioned to continue the LSU Vet School contract. Gerald seconded. Motion carried unanimously.**

LSU looked at West Nile Virus in wild and captive alligators. The PCR were all negative this year. Mycoplasma antibodies were checked. There were two low positives out of twenty. We need to spend more time looking into this, because it is still an issue in Florida. Anyone importing alligators needs to be very careful. The disease may not have been active here, but antibodies were found. Alligators were found with necropsy. One of them had exposed bones. It is important to consider animal welfare issues, even though survival may not be an issue with these animals. There were also some alligators, locally hatched, with severe dermatitis. There is a concern of survival as well as animal welfare with these alligators.

Mark Shirley asked if health certificates were required for alligators coming into Louisiana from Florida. Javier said that they should.

LSU compared four methods of euthanasia. They recorded brain activity before and after euthanasia. Immediate death could not be confirmed with cord severance alone. Immediate death occurred with pithing, penetrating and non-penetrating bolts. Spontaneous blinking could be seen after 30 minutes after cord severance in some alligator. Spontaneous blinking could indicate consciousness. They are still working to determine consciousness and will do some comparisons of post euthanasia and anesthesia brain activity. Further research will look at electrical stunning and immobilization.

Nathan asked if farmers had signed off on the new recommendations. Noel said that all the farmers had signed acknowledgement forms.

### **LSU Research Facility Update- Dr. Robert Reigh**

Dr. Robert Reigh from LSU showed photos of the building and the water tanks. Twenty-four tanks will fit in the wet lab and four tanks in the veterinary room. The tanks, pumps, and controls still need to be installed. There are \$40,000 estimated expenditures remaining in order to make the labs functional. The target date is September of this year, but this date is probably optimistic.

### **Alligator Market Outlook- Jerome Caraguel**

The alligator market looks good for 2012 and 2013. The alligator is dominating the exotic market. We need to give the manufacturers an expectation of steady supply and rather consistent prices. The large skins have a good position in the market, but the market demands quality. Only 40% of skins are sold to a brand market. Europeans do not purchase many exotic skins. Europe manufactures quality products, but they are sold in the U.S. and in Asia or to tourists in Europe. Tim asked if the concerns for animal welfare have subsided. Jerome said that he got a call last week from one of the largest watch strap companies. He will send them educational materials on animal welfare. He said that water consumption will also be an issue with European manufacturers.

### **CITES Update- Don Ashley**

We are still waiting on a reply regarding expedited permits. Don gave a brief update on the four working groups that he serves on with CITES. There is still concern about how some of the

animals sold as captive can really be captive, because the estimated cost of feeding exceeds the market price. The U.S. is behind on digital permitting. It should be a real time system. He went through his presentation about the alligator industry being a sustainable part of Louisiana's cultural history. He showed media excerpts such as "O Goes Faux." He is concerned about California going back the other way with the 2014 Sunset Clause. The Atlanta Airport display is still up even though the management authority also had some issues with the display. Don said that he is working towards another meeting with the LDWF and USFW Service. He has also been working on education about grades of skins. We need to work with universities and manufacturers to teach them about cutting alligator skins.

The Council discussed display options to promote the alligator industry at airports and tourists information bureaus.

### **Hog Program Update- Steve Hartley**

Steve Hartley is with the USGS. He has been tracking hogs and mapping their range. This system could warn landowners when hogs are roaming near alligator nests. He showed a map of one pig's movement tracked every hour. It travels in about a two mile area. You can see the time of date and the weather at each location marker. Tracking one hog can provide the location of many additional animals. This also allows for population, home range, distribution and habitat destruction studies.

Mike mentioned that they lost about 10% of their nests last year.

### **Swamp People Update- Chad Courville & Noel Kinler**

The Council passed a motion in October to contact the History Channel and Original Media. We received a letter back in November. A phone conference followed. They claimed that they do not instruct hunters to do anything that they wouldn't normally do. The pulling, tossing and fighting with alligators are not typical for alligator hunting. Chad asked if they had done any testing on public opinion. LDWF will follow up with educational materials of the marsh to market story. Mike suggested that hunting regulations should be tweaked to state that the harassment of the animal prior to shooting it is prohibited. Noel agreed to check into the wording of the regulations. Judge Edwards suggested that we try to get them to slip our story into the drama. We couldn't pay for that level of advertising. Chad is concerned that animal rights advocates will focus on this type of footage. Errol suggested that we bring our concerns to the advertisers as well. Nathan suggested bringing the hunters to a Council meeting and asking them to present the sustainable use information. Frank said that we could give them a little class about the sustainable use story.

### **Establishing Research Committee- Chad Courville**

Chad would like to consider a research committee of industry people to meet a couple of times per year to decide what the most important research topics are. Chad would like to see Mark Shirley, Mark Staton, Jerome, Caraguel, and Ted Joanen join this committee. Nathan said the feed company should have a representative and a landowner. Chad said he didn't want to exclude anyone. He'd like to solicit input from all areas of the industry. Javier said that some members of the industry will want to do research that scientists will not want to do. Chad said that he'd like to

see Javier involved as well. Tim said that he felt like the Council has been open to industry members coming forward with ideas.

Tim motioned to form the committee. Gerald seconded. Motion carried unanimously.

### **Alligator Program Update- Ruth Elsey**

The nest count has been in a little bit of an upswing after the drought in 2010. There were 352,281 eggs collected in 2011. Farm inventory has increased by about 100,000. Over 90% of the farm population is hatchlings and one year old alligators. Ruth reviewed current research and published papers. Recent reports of feral swine damage to the nests and the nesting habitat have increased. LDWF followed with a survey regarding hog damage and sightings. Over half of farmers reported loss.

### **Other Business**

Gerald said he gave out over 30,000 cards last year. He said he'd like to give away brochures with the marsh to market story.

Tony Howard said that there is a proposal coming before the Commission meeting next Thursday that will limit the use of snares. This will affect hog trapping.

Gerald motioned to send a letter to the commission stating that the Council does not think this rule change is appropriate at this time without further justification. Ronald seconded. Motion carried unanimously.

Ronald will work with Tanya to draft a letter, which Council members will review.

Shooting hogs from helicopters would give landowners another tool to control hog populations. The benefit to that is pretty high. Special permits could be issued to allow this. A legislative change could also be addressed. A law change would be for daylight hours only and for feral hogs only.

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