

**Oyster Task Force Meeting
Tuesday, October 14, 10:00am
New Orleans Lakefront Airport
6001 Stars and Stripes Blvd.
New Orleans, LA**

I. Pledge of Allegiance

II. Roll call and introduction of guests

Voting Members Present:

Mitch Jurisich

Brad Robin

Brandt Lafrance

Al Sunseri

Willie Daisy

Steve Pollock

Voting Members Absent:

Shane Bagala

Brandon Debarge

Jakov Jurisic

Sam Slavish

Matthew Slavich

Peter Vujnovich

Non-Voting Members Present:

Robert Caballero

Davis Madere

Kyle Balkum

Non-Voting Members Absent:

Bryan Wallace

Brian Lezina

III. Brad Robin motioned to approve the August 26, 2025 meeting minutes, 2nd by Willie Daisy. Motion carries.

Brad Robin motioned to amend the agenda to add Item J. To Discuss Approval of Letter of Support for Research Initiative, 2nd by Brandt Lafrance. Motion carries.

Brad Robin motioned to approve the October 14, 2025 amended meeting agenda, 2nd by Willie Daisy. Motion carries.

IV. Treasury Report

Remaining Fund Balance- \$558,399

Remaining Budget Balance- \$82,060

September Tag Sales – 88,800

Brad Robin motion to accept the treasury report as presented, 2nd by Brandt Lafrance. Motion carries.

- A. Public- Private Oyster Seed Grounds Committee- no report
- B. Enforcement Report- Captain Davis Madere provided the enforcement report

August 30th– September 16th 2025

Region 8: (Jefferson, Plaquemines, St. Bernard, Orleans)

Jefferson

- 1- RS 56:302.2A –Fail to have Commercial License in Possession

St. Bernard

- 1- RS 40:40 –Violate Sanitation Code (Waste Bucket)

- C. Legislative Report- Brad Robin stated that the task force is recommending to add a seat to the task force for a representative from the Louisiana Department of Agriculture and Forestry (LDAF). Gene Caviler stated that LDAF reached out to the Oyster Task Force after the Seafood Safety Task Force meeting to incorporate all seafood industries. LDAF is currently involved with shrimp and crawfish but they wanted to involve the oyster industry.

Brad Robin motioned to recommend a new non-voting membership seat to the task force for a LDAF representative, 2nd by Willie Daisy. Motion carries.

- D. Legal Report - no report
- E. Research Committee- Earl Melancon with LSU Sea Grant stated that microbiologist, Dr. Bliss Broussard, with Nichols State University is preparing a proposal to the Louisiana Board of Regents for research on biofilm on cultch and oyster reefs. She is requesting a letter of support from the task force to include with her proposal. Dr. Broussard will primarily be focused on the Terrebonne and Barataria estuaries. If she is funded by the board, her work will complement the efforts of the task force.

Al Sunseri requested a copy of Dr. Broussard's proposal. Earl Melancon stated that the proposal has not been made public and is still pending site selection. Earl Melancon stated that sites will not be designated until Dr. Broussard receives input from the oyster industry and LDWF. Earl Melancon stated that once the proposal is delivered to the Board of Regents he will request a copy to provide to the task force.

Al Sunseri asked if the proposal was in response to one of the task forces request in regards to "Red Book" and if Dr. Broussard would be using any information from LDWF. Earl Melancon stated that she most likely will use information from previous studies and she will also be collaborating with Sea Grant.

Mitch Jurisich stated that there was some discussion about the larvae not adhering to older shells and it is not as productive as fresh cultch material. Steve Pollock asked Earl Melancon if he was familiar with the research requirements for faculty members. Earl Melancon stated that Dr. Broussard is part of the graduate faculty and the research would be at least 70/30 with a graduate student involved.

- F. Coastal Restoration Committee – No report

- G. Marketing Committee - Anna Koehl stated that BMF's main focus for marketing has been on planning for Washington Mardi Gras and trying to get sponsors. Anna Koehl proposed a separate committee meeting to discuss the event in Washington on January 28, 2026. Anna Koehl stated that she will reach out to sponsor but she does have a confirmation from St. Bernard Parish. Anna Koehl stated that the restaurant is ready for the event. Anna Koehl asked the task force members to provide any relevant information to her to discuss or incorporate into the social media content. Al Sunseri asked if the hotels were reserved and Sonya Self confirmed that Hotel George was reserved for the task for members. Anna Koehl stated that she spoke with the designer for the invitations and they are going to reuse the design from last year which would go out before Thanksgiving. Al Sunseri suggested that the task force members plan a walk on the hill at the same time as previous visits. Anna Koehl stated that she could recirculate the white paper from last year for issues to discuss.
- H. Health Committee- Jennifer Armentor stated that LDH has a link to the November – February 2026 reclassification line on their website and a map showing is scheduled on October 16, 2025 at the Jefferson Parish Health Unit.
- I. Aquaculture Report- Steve Pollock stated that sales for AOC farms in Louisiana are up but had a significant drop due to information released on Vibrio. Steve Pollock stated that LDH and LDWF Enforcement have visited oyster farms across the state for educational outreach and there has been some improvement in farm operations. Steve Pollock stated there was a dredging incident on the west side of the state that led to fouling of wild oyster reefs, as well as AOC operations and in turn created losses on both state-owned and privately owned seed grounds. Steve Pollock stated that the commercial hatchery in Baton Rouge has produced just over 100 million petty villagers which was used to produce over 20 million seed for off-bottom oyster industries in Texas, Louisiana, Mississippi, Alabama, and Florida. Steve Pollock stated that there are now 7 competitors along the Gulf Coast but does not include academic institutions. Steve Pollock stated that some seed in Louisiana is coming from Alabama and Mississippi but seed is not allowed from Texas or Florida because of disease and genetic concerns. Steve Pollock also stated that the seed sold to Florida has to be Florida brood stock but that seed cannot be released into Louisiana waters. Steve Pollock stated that the hatchery in Baton Rouge is producing both diploid and triploid seed for purchase at a cost between \$12 and \$15 per 1,000.
- J. Joint Task Force Working Group- no report

VI. New Business:

- A. To Consider a Resolution on the LDH Regulation Preventing Off-Bottom Oyster Farmers and Harvesters from Selling to Traditional On-Bottom Oyster Dealers – Dr. John Dale “Zack” Lea, Coastal Development Projects

Dr. John Dale “Zack” Lea read the following resolution:

Resolution on the LDH Regulation Preventing Off-Bottom Oyster Farmers and Harvesters from Selling to Traditional On-Bottom Oyster Dealers

Whereas, the Louisiana Oyster Task Force is charged by the State Legislature under LA Rev Stat § 56:421 (2016) to study and monitor the molluscan industry and to provide recommendations that maximize benefits for the State of Louisiana and its citizens;

Whereas, the Task Force supports the full development of Alternative Oyster Culture;

Whereas, the primary objective of Louisiana Department of Health (LDH) regulations is to protect public health by minimizing the risk of disease transmission through live oysters;

Whereas, off-bottom cultured oysters present no greater risk of disease than traditionally harvested on-bottom oysters;

Whereas, traditional oyster dealers already perform the required handling procedures and maintain records in compliance with LDH standards to ensure the safety of on-bottom oysters;

Whereas, the LDH mandate requiring traditional dealers of on-bottom cultured oysters to obtain an Aquaculture (AQ) Certification and maintain separate records for off-bottom oysters imposes an unnecessary regulatory burden, discouraging traditional dealers from purchasing off-bottom oysters;

Whereas, the LDH regulation requiring Alternative Oyster Culture (AOC) farmers to obtain Aquaculture Dealer's licenses—requiring onshore coolers and commissaries---imposes an unnecessary burden that discourages citizens from entering the AOC business of producing AOC oysters;

Whereas, Off-bottom farmers in Mississippi and Alabama are allowed to sell directly to certified dealers, provided they follow NSSP guidelines. Unlike Louisiana, Mississippi and Alabama do not require farmers to hold separate dealer permits if selling to approved buyers.

Now, therefore, the Louisiana Oyster Task Force recommends that LDH revise its regulations to facilitate and encourage the sale of off-bottom oysters from permitted AOC farmers and harvesters—who do not hold LDWF Wholesale/Retail licenses or LDH AOC Dealer permits—to certified on-bottom oyster dealers. This regulatory adjustment would streamline market access for off-bottom oyster producers and support the continued growth and diversification of Louisiana's oyster industry.

Dr. John Dale "Zach" Lea stated that he was asking the task force to approve his resolution to ask LDH to modify their regulations for off-bottom farms to sell directly to traditional oyster buyers. Mitch Jurisich asked how many individuals were dealing with this program and Dr. John Dale "Zach" Lea stated that there may be only one.

Dr. John Dale "Zach" Lea stated that he is currently developing an oyster park for many small scale qualified oyster farmers. Dr. John Dale "Zach" Lea stated that with the current LDH regulations, all oyster producers must have their own cooler to place at the dock to process oysters but the requirement is inefficient. Dr. John Dale "Zach" Lea stated that instead of everyone having their own processing facility, farms can just sell to an established buyer.

Mitch Jurisich stated that oyster farmers need a cooler and a permit to properly operate. Jennifer Armentor stated that LDH requires all aquaculture farmers to be certified dealers and NSSP requires LDH to inspect the farm itself on the water and review operational plans that must be provided to the FDA. Jennifer Armentor stated that Dr. John Dale "Zach" Lea was issued a LHS37 health permit but he is not a certified dealer and cannot sell directly under his permit. Jennifer Armentor stated that Dr. John Dale "Zach" Lea must have an AQ dealer indication on his permit in order for LDH to determine the difference between an aquaculture oyster and a traditional harvested oyster if he sells to a regular shelf stock dealer.

Mitch Jurisich stated that instead of trying to change any laws or pass any resolutions, Dr. John Dale "Zach" Lea could try to obtain the AQ permit on his own. Mitch Jurisich stated that further research was needed before the task force could move on the item as presented.

Al Sunseri stated that all AQ, traditional, and AOC harvesters must comply with harvest requirements, time and temperature controls, and logbooks. Al Sunseri stated that Dr. John Dale "Zach" Lea would be able to sell to traditional certified dealers if he follows all the refrigeration logbook requirements just as any other harvester. Al Sunseri stated that some shell stock shippers are also AQ certified so they can sell as well but they cannot process onshore unless they were within the permitted area of the farm.

Steve Pollock asked if oysters could be harvester but stored in another cooler. Jennifer Armentor stated that LDH will inspect that truck and make sure if it's at temperature or keeps the correct temperature for the cooler records. Jennifer Armentor stated that there may be liability issues with using someone else's truck if during the inspection the cooler is not meeting the correct temperature. Steve Pollock stated that there should still be records in the log sheets of the transfer to the dealer. Steve Pollock stated that there should be an allowance for a dealer to pick up aquaculture oysters straight out of the water from the seller on their own boat.

Jennifer Armentor stated that the only problem is traceability on the tag. The original dealer needs to have an AQ status so that LDH can distinguish the difference.

Steve Pollock asked what is needed for an AQ designation. Jennifer Armentor stated that they would need HACCP training, complete time and temperature logs, and a working cooler.

Steve Pollock asked if it was a requirement in the NSSB for harvesters to have a cooler. Al Sunseri stated that the oysters must be in a cooler and meet the 45 degree requirement with the specified time frame.

Jennifer Armentor stated that LDH does not issue a harvester permit and they only issue dealer permits. LDH does not have a separate permit to distinguish reef fishing from aquaculture but there are different regulations for oysters harvested through aquaculture. Jennifer Armentor stated that they can issue the dealer permit but not certify the permit when it is issued.

Steve Pollock asked if the task force could consider par of Dr. John Dale "Zach" Lea's resolution regarding the need for a harvester to have a cooler. Jennifer Armentor stated that other certified dealers have the AQ distinction on their tags but Dr. John Dale "Zach" Lea does not and the AQ distinction because he is not certified.

Brandt Lafrance asked would be dealer how receives the oysters have to mark them as AQ in order to distinguish the difference. Jennifer Armentor stated that there would be issues with the shippers list because the AQ appears on the shippers list. Jennifer Armentor stated that the main problem that Dr. John Dale "Zach" Lea is having is that he is not certified and he is not selling to a certified AQ dealer.

Dr. John Dale "Zach" Lea stated that the buyer he wants to sell to is not interested in obtaining the AQ certification. Jennifer Armentor stated that they buyer can buy from other AOC sellers but cannot buy from Dr. John Dale "Zach" Lea because he is not certified.

Brad Robin stated that the buyer must comply with regulations and cannot bypass LDH. Dr. John Dale "Zach" Lea stated that producers in Grand Isle are selling directly to restaurants and have to be well regulated, as well as licensed. Dr. John Dale "Zach" Lea stated that he is

thinking about expanding his park which would require all harvesters to obtain a dealer's permit.

Al Sunseri stated that Dr. John Dale "Zach" Lea would have to be properly permitted and he would be responsible for all oysters on the farm and on the vessel. Dr. John Dale "Zach" Lea stated that he did not want to assume responsibility but he wanted everyone to operate as if they were operating their own oyster lease.

Al Sunseri stated that oysters are different because they are consumed raw and are some of the most regulated food with time and temperature requirements. Al Sunseri stated that regulations are stringent and people must abide by the rules.

David Williams stated that there may be issues with reducing the amount of control and he believes that the regulations should apply evenly so there are no issues.

Percy Dardar stated that he is working on getting his 18 dealer's permit and he is a licensed traditional dealer but he is unable to purchase oysters from Dr. John Dale "Zach" Lea. Percy Dardar stated that Dr. John Dale "Zach" Lea would need a cooler and a retail license and then he could purchase oysters from Dr. John Dale "Zach" Lea.

Mitch Jurisich stated that the item would be deferred until the next meeting.

- B. To Consider a Resolution to Promote the Expansion of the Louisiana Oyster Industry Through Increased Sales of Cooked Oyster Products – Dr. John Dale "Zach" Lea, Coastal Development Projects

Dr. John Dale "Zack" Lea read the following resolution:

Resolution to Double the Sales of Cooked Oysters within Five Years

Promote the Expansion of the Louisiana Oyster Industry Through Increased Sales of Cooked Oyster Products

Whereas, current oyster sales levels do not adequately support the growth, economic viability, and long-term sustainability of Louisiana's oyster industry;

Whereas, cooked oysters are not widely accessible in non-traditional foodservice environments, including athletic stadiums, farmers markets, mobile food vendors, and temporary restaurant pop-ups;

Whereas, cooked oyster products offer broader consumer appeal compared to raw oysters, providing an opportunity to engage new market segments and increase overall consumption of Louisiana oysters;

Whereas, oyster po'boys—featuring fried or Italian-style grilled oysters served on specialty French bread—are a convenient, portable culinary option ideal for informal walk-up foodservice settings;

Whereas, oysters harvested for cooking are subject to less complex post-harvest processing than those intended for raw consumption, and oyster products designed for cooking are more easily shipped to distant markets than live oysters;

Therefore, be it resolved that the Louisiana Oyster Task Force recommends the oyster industry adopt a strategic objective to double the sales of cooked oysters within the next five years by

promoting the development, marketing, and distribution of cooked oyster products in non-traditional outlets, venues, and events.

Dr. John Dale “Zach” Lea stated that he was asking the task force to set a marketing goal that focuses on expending the number of cooked oysters sold within 5 years and then doubling that goal within the next 5 years. Dr. John Dale “Zach” Lea stated that based on his calculations, the U.S. populations barely eats up to a dozen per year but we could set a goal for Louisianan’s to eat up to two oysters a day.

Mitch Jurisich stated that demand for oysters is down possibly because of the higher price of oysters and possibly because of the decrease in the number of breaders. Mitch Jurisich stated that the scope of the oyster industry has changed and processors look for smaller oysters now. Mitch Jurisich also stated that some of the restaurants are not buying as much oysters because they’re not getting the right products.

Al Sunseri stated that restaurants look at food cost and previously that cost was around 33% but now it’s around 20% because of because of increased costs across the board. Al Sunseri stated that restaurants have to look at the cost of oysters compared to what they can charge for the oyster and determine if it will be profitable enough to sell oysters on their menu.

Mitch Jurisich stated that Dr. John Dale “Zach” Lea should try to reach out to someone with the Louisiana Seafood Promotion and Marketing Board regarding the promotion of cooked oysters.

Nick Fantini stated that he does not see a lot of oyster products or promotion for oysters. Nick Fantini also stated that customers are misinformed about what they’re eating.

Mitch Jurisich stated that Item B. was withdrawn and should be brought before the Louisiana Seafood Promotion and Marketing Board.

C. To Hear a Presentation on SeaD Consulting Seafood Testing – David Williams, SeaD Consulting

Mitch Jurisich stated that he met Mr. David Williams at the Seafood Safety Task Force meeting and was intrigue with the testing on shrimp and asked if he would present something on imported oysters.

David Williams stated that SeaD Consulting just finished testing at the National Shrimp Festival and this year 100% of the items tested passed as compared to last year when only 80% passed. David Williams stated that at the Louisiana Shrimp and Petroleum Festival 80% passed last year and 90% passed testing this year. David Williams stated that the authenticity rate in Louisiana has dropped down very significantly and could possibly be because of the light shinned on restaurants. David Williams stated that SeaD Consulting has tested over 500 restaurants and has authenticity levels in multiple states which has increased regulations in some states. David Williams stated that there has been approximately a 30% increase in the price of shrimp in the last year and shrimpers are actually making an income.

David Williams stated that in the oyster industry the same amount of oysters that are used in cooking are being sold in the market. David Williams stated that one producer in Alabama who has not been affected by a hurricane in the last 20 years has only seen about a 14% decrease in 20 years. David Williams stated that there are two primary countries, South Korea and China, which are importing oysters. David Williams stated that SeaD Consulting has a rapid genetic test that can ID species. David Williams proposed that SeaD Consulting conduct research to actually identify the key markers of the *Crassostrea virginica* in order to go into the marketplace and

start finding out how many of these imported oysters are being sold in restaurants. David Williams stated that many people would not eat oysters if they found out they were imported from China or South Korea. David Williams posed the question regarding oyster labeling and stated that there currently could be an unknown amount of imported oysters being sold in different marketplaces. David Williams stated that under the proposal presented to the task force, SeaD Consulting would get validated samples of the oysters that are being imported to determine the genetic difference between the species through a double blind study of 40 samples.

Al Sunseri stated that he would disagree with trying to harm restaurants or the industry's customer base in Louisiana. Al Sunseri stated that he did agree that there are imported oysters in the marketplace but that not many may be in Louisiana.

Mitch Jurisich stated that he would like to focus on markets outside of Louisiana where oysters are being sold such as the big food chains like Red Lobster.

David Williams stated that SeaD Consulting does not publicly release the information of the restaurants that have imported oysters but they do promote the restaurants that are selling gulf seafood.

Al Sunseri stated that the U.S. has lost around three-quarters of the oyster shucking businesses since 2010 and the best thing to do is to begin processing oysters again.

Mitch Jurisich stated that there is a number of regulations now that require labeling of imported shrimp and crawfish but that is not the case for oysters. Mitch Jurisich stated that the task force will take the proposal under advisement and put the item on the agenda for the next task force meeting.

Robert Caballero asked David Williams if the testing will differentiate Pacific Oyster from Korea versus the West Coast. David Williams stated that the test is complicated but there is published research to identify grow-out locations of oysters.

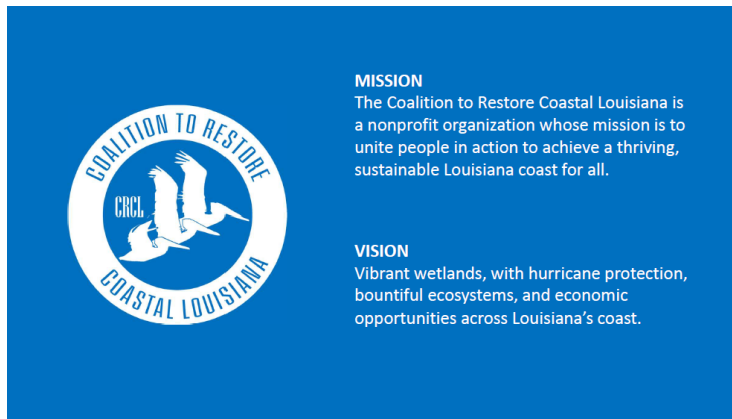
Brad Robin stated that he agrees that testing needs to be completed for imported oysters and that testing could help bring back more business.

D. To Hear an Update on the Coalition to Restore Coastal Louisiana Oyster Shell Recycling Program Restoration Project – Darrah Bach, Coalition to Restore Coastal Louisiana

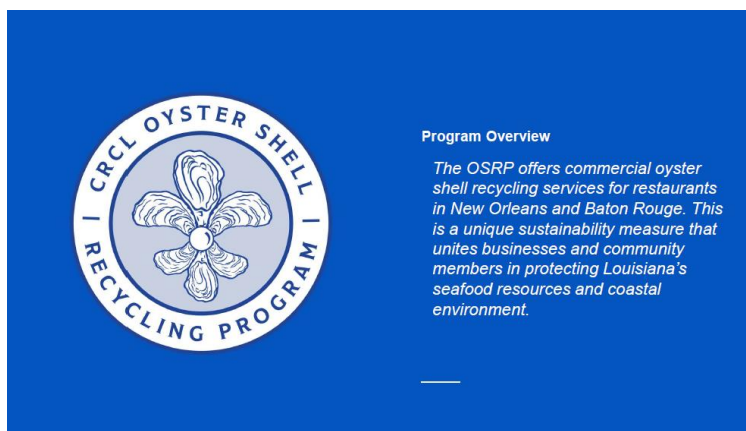
Darrah Bach with the Coalition to Restore Coastal Louisiana (CRCL) presented information regarding the CRCL's oyster shell recycling program.



Darrah Bach stated that the CRCL is an advocacy nonprofit for coastal restoration but also for major projects, policy, and planting trees.



Darrah Bach stated that the oyster shell recycling program started in 2014 as a way to address the oyster shell substrate and to bring attention to the importance of returning this valuable resource to the water.



Darrah Bach stated that the recycling program partnered with restaurants in New Orleans and Baton Rouge as of last year to provide a daily pickup service. Darrah Bach stated that that CRCL also provides marketing to showcase businesses commitment to sustainability. Darrah Bach stated that they contract with R&R Recycling in New Orleans and Coasterl Environment in Baton Rouge to pick up oyster shells that are brought to their property on the Viotel Canal.

Restaurant Participation Shell Pick Up Service Shell Curing and Processing



<https://youtu.be/d3AUNJYN0tq?si=7PuYa4TRJeTAuzE>

Darrah Bach stated that volunteers help with bagging up the oyster shells into aquaculture grade sacks that weigh around 30 pounds each. Darrah Bach stated that they work with different agencies, industry folks, indigenous trips, and community groups to identify areas along the coast that are experiencing a high level of erosion.

Staging and Transportation



Living Shoreline Reef Build Event



Follow Up Monitoring



<https://youtu.be/auPVLB9qwm?si=wsay9DGYsTxKluM6>

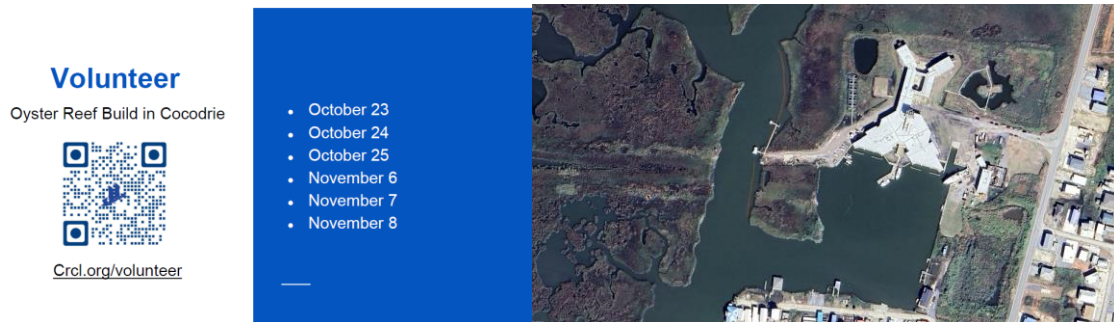
Darrah Bach stated that there are over 40 participating restaurants and they have recycled over 16 million pounds of shell since 2014. Darrah Bach stated that the participating restaurants receive a tax credit of one dollar for every 50 pounds of shell.



Darrah Bach stated that they currently have a surplus of oyster shell that can be used for some small-scale restoration projects and they are planning future restoration projects.



Darrah Bach stated that there are several upcoming volunteer events scheduled for the upcoming weeks.



Mitch Jurisich stated that he was initially opposed to the recycling program but realized that it was the best thing to do and he still sees the project in Bay Adam. Mitch Jurisich stated that it also helps the restaurants because it costs them to get rid of shells.

Brad Robin stated that he has seen the work that the CRCL does first-hand and he donates his equipment and time to CRCL. Brad Robin also stated that he will volunteer one of his barges for one of their large reef projects.

Dr. John Dale "Zach" Lea complimented the work of CRCL and would like CRCL to participate with his off-bottom oyster work. Dr. John Dale "Zach" Lea suggested that CRCL develop an internship program that would allow interns to come and learn about the aquaculture industry.

There was a question from the audience regarding the costs. Darrah Bach stated that the program has had a mix of funding from federal and state grants, private donations, philanthropic donations, and other fundraising efforts. Darrah Bach stated that the program is expensive but they are exploring ways to make the program more affordable.

E. To Discuss Laws and Rules Necessary to Process Off-Bottom Oysters Onshore Away from Growing Areas Leased from LDH and LDWF - OTF

Al Sunseri stated that there was an article in the New Orleans City Business regarding construction of an oyster processing facility by the Grand Isle Port Commission and Jefferson Parish for alternative oyster culture farmers. Al Sunseri stated that he contacted the executive director of Grand Isle Port Commission with concerns of certification for the facility. Al Sunseri stated that the facility has to be certified according to the National Shellfish Sanitation Program. Al Sunseri stated that he is not opposed to the construction of the facility but wanted to ensure that the proper rules were followed. Al Sunseri asked LDWF and LDH can an oyster harvester that is not certified as a shell stock shipper sell to anyone other than a certified oyster dealer in Louisiana.

Jennifer Armentor stated that AOC harvesters must sell to a certified aquaculture dealer.

Al Sunseri then asked if all oyster harvesters, both AOC and traditional, were required to keep a time and temperature logbooks stating what time the harvest started and what time their oysters were placed under refrigeration.

Jennifer Armentor stated that oyster harvesters are required to keep time and temperature logbooks except in the Calcasieu Lake area.

Al Sunseri stated that containers, i.e. sacks, boxes, totes, etc., of oysters that have been placed into refrigeration must be tagged by lot so that the time and temperature controls have been met and enforcements agents can be assured that the regulations have been followed.

Jennifer Armentor stated that is correct but some of the aquaculture harvesters may not. Jennifer Armentor stated that in the state's sanitary code, when oysters are moved from a harvest area or taken off the boat, which is the case of aquaculture, the oysters must be sacked and tagged.

Al Sunseri asked if the oysters could be processed.

Jennifer Armentor stated that they can reprocess the oysters and hose them because they are shell stock shippers.

Al Sunseri asked if this can be done without a facility.

Jennifer Armentor stated that it depends on exactly what they are doing and that not every shell stock shipper needs a building.

Al Sunseri stated that shell stock shippers that do not process oysters and that reship them from the boat in the containers, put them in a refrigerated truck do not need a facility. Al Sunseri asked if it was a requirement to have a facility if the shell stock shipper cleans, packages, sorts, sizes, and labels the oysters. Al Sunseri also asked can harvesters or shell stock shippers process oysters at the dock.

Jennifer Armentor stated the authority can decide, depending on their preferences, if a building is required for a re-shipper or a shell stock dealer. Jennifer Armentor stated that there are some LDH requirements that are not applicable to traditional harvesters. Jennifer Armentor stated that anytime an oyster is out of the water, LDH requires documentation and the process called desiccation which can last up to 24 hours must be documented in a log.

Al Sunseri asked if the process must be within the aquaculture farm.

Jennifer Armentor stated that yes the process is within the aquaculture farm and AOC harvesters also do a tumbling place when oysters are out of the water that helps shape the oysters and promote growth. Jennifer Armentor stated that process can happen on the boat or at the dock but it also requires another log called a tumbling log.

Al Sunseri stated that Title 56:431.2 states that areas permitted for alternative oyster culture shall not extend beyond the boundaries of the existing lease or the ownership of the water bottom.

Captain Davis Madere stated that AOC growers must follow the same regulations as other fishermen. Captain Davis Madere stated that once any oyster leaves the water and is handled it is considered harvested. Captain Davis Madere stated that if the oysters are in transport and are not tagged it poses a problem.

Al Sunseri stated that in traditional oyster farming, it was general practice to tag oysters over the area in which they were harvesters. Al Sunseri stated that culling, sorting, washing, or grading outside of a certified oyster facility on land cannot legally be done by shell stock shippers under HACCP, NSSP, or Title 51. Al Sunseri stated that processing of the oysters cannot take place on land unless you have a certified facility with a HACCP plan.

Jennifer Armentor stated that there are a number of AOC growers that remove their oysters from the cages, take them to the dock, hose them, tumble them, and record it in their log then put the oysters back in their cages. Jennifer Armentor stated that some growers have a lightweight tumbler on the vessel to help with grading and for the oysters to grow evenly.

Al Sunseri stated that the current AOC laws require that all processing takes place within the four corners of the AOC lease on the water. Al Sunseri stated that current AOC laws may need to be changed to allow processing on land. Al Sunseri stated that the current laws were developed to meet the National Shellfish Sanitation Program requirements.

Steve Pollock asked if the item could be scheduled for discussion during an aquaculture meeting.

Al Sunseri stated the goal of adding the item to the agenda was to ensure that state and federal regulations were followed for the processing facility in Grand Isle.

Steve Pollock stated that some individuals may not be aware of all of the regulations but it the job of the task force to help everyone informed.

Brad Robin recommended that the item be sent to a committee for additional discussion.

Earl Melancon stated that there is a quarter of a million dollars invested into building the facility that has already gone out for bids and the meeting for discussing the item should occur quickly. Earl Melancon state the Kirk Purell, who is an AOC grower in Grand Isle, is inviting the public to see his AOC practice on Wednesday, Thursday, and Friday at 251 Rose Thorn Lane.

Robert Caballero stated that under Title 56:431.2 and Title 76:535 the laws were specifically tailored for AOC permits that authorize activity to harvest and grow oysters on those permitted areas. Robert Caballero stated that those laws do not specify any other harvesting activities or any other LDH requirements.

Captain Davis Madere stated that the laws stated that AOC farmers must follow the same regulations as on-bottom fisherman but there is an issue once the oysters are removed from the water and then placed back into the water. Captain Davis Madere suggested that a meeting occur between LDWF and LDH to clarify some of the laws.

Al Sunseri motioned to notify the Grand Isle Port Commission and the Jefferson Parish Council for the planned construction of the facility for AOC processing regarding certification as a shell stock shipper.

Jennifer Armentor stated that the Grand Isle Port Commission would not receive certification as a shell stock shipper because for the HACCP requirement and the individual harvesters would have the certification,

Al Sunseri stated that there could be a manager at the facility that receives the certification and that the individuals have the HACCP so that they can process them on the boat and have them prepared once they take them on land.

Al Sunseri made a substitute motion to send a letter the Grand Isle Port Commission and the Jefferson Parish Council for the planned construction of the facility for AOC processing regarding certification of the facility as a shell stock shipper, motion 2nd by Brad Robin. Steve Pollock opposed the motion.

Mitch Jurisich request Al Sunseri to draft the letter on behalf of the task force.

Earl Melancon stated that the motion is very specific regarding the requirement for the certification of the facility and stated that he would assist with drafting the letter.

F. To Discuss Government Funded Grand Isle Oyster Processing Facility – OTF

Al Sunseri stated that the project sponsor for the facility would discuss the operation plan but suggested including representatives from the FDA and Keith Skiles from the Interstate Shellfish Sanitation Conference.

Jennifer Armentor stated that she would be unable to reach out to some of the representatives especially with the current government shutdown.

Steve Pollock stated that the item should be discussed at a subcommittee.

G. To Provide an Update on the Oyster Moratorium Lifting Process – LDWF

Louis Tempo stated that the moratorium of leasing started in 2002 and in 2020 LDWF lifted the moratorium. Louis Tempo stated that the moratorium was lifted in six phases with the first phase called “Phase Zero” and that phase was to address the applications that were in-house when the moratorium started. Louis Tempo stated that LDWF accepted the fees and applications for 35 applicants to process the leases and then the moratorium started. Louis Tempo stated that the applications along with the fees have been on hold for 20 years.

Louis Tempo stated that in 2021, 7 of the 35 applications were processed and turned into leases but 28 of those applications remained. Louis Tempo stated that the remaining 28 applications were difficult to process because of dual claim lands, because some areas were not state owned water bodies, and because some of the areas were incorporated into CPRA projects.

Louis Tempo stated that LDWF is currently focusing on three phases-Phase 0: In-house applications, Phase 1: Right of refusal for Avenal leases, and Phase 2: Land surrounding existing leases. Louis Tempo stated that LDWF is unable to move Phase 1 until Phase 0 is completed so the department is planning to cancel the 28 applications and refund the fees to the applicants.

Mitch Jurisich stated that if LDWF reaches Phase 2 there may be issues with dual claim of the leases.

Brad Robin stated that canceling the 28 applications may result in more litigation.

Brandt Lafrance stated that he agreed with canceling the 28 applications in order to move things forward.

Brad Robin asked Louis Tempo how many of the applications were dual claim.

Louis Tempo stated that about half of the 28 applications were dual claim, five of the application were CPRA, and about another five applications did not have by state-owned land in it. Louis Tempo stated that LDWF receives a number of calls relating to the expansion of leases.

Percy Dardar stated that his application is one of the 28 applications and he has been waiting for years for his application to be processed. Percy Dardar stated that it is unfair for him to have to start the process over again after waiting for almost 23 years. Percy Dardar stated that he was told that if a lease was dual claim then they would be allowed to submit a revision application but that is not the case here.

There was a question from the audience about how the state has the right to claim land. Mitch Jurisich stated that because of dual claim, the state has the right to claim the land. Mitch Jurisich stated that if the water is influenced from the tide of the Gulf of Mexico, it become an integral part of the Gulf of Mexico and then becomes state water.

- H. To Discuss and Consider Dedicating Funding to Host the Let the World Be Your Oyster Event to the LA Oyster Dealers and Growers Association- OTF

Mitch Jurisich stated that the item was deferred until the next meeting.

- I. To Discuss Current OTF Seat Vacancies and Possible Nominations – OTF

Mitch Jurisich stated that there are three vacancies.

Sonya Self stated that there are currently four vacancies on the task force because LDH does not have a designee.

Mitch Jurisich stated that the vacancies were from Farm Bureau, Oyster Dealers and Growers, and the Louisiana Oystermen's Association.

Mitch Jurisich stated that the task force should appoint Jennifer Armentor.

Jennifer Armentor stated that the Secretary of LDH has to make the appointment to the task force.

Gene Caviler stated that there may be a replacement named George Waguespack for the Farm Bureau vacancy.

Mitch Jurisich stated that he would have to get a list from Farm Bureau to verify the membership. Mitch Jurisich stated to defer the item to the next meeting and also try to see if nominees could be submitted.

- J. To Discuss Approval of Letter of Support for Research Initiative

Mitch Jurisich read the following letter of support.

I and the other members of the Louisiana Oyster Task Force (OTF) very much support your research efforts to develop baseline information concerning the establishment of biofilm on our natural oyster reefshells and on commercially planted cultch such as limestone and crushed concrete. At our meeting on October 14, 2025, the OTF commission members voted to support your efforts to establish this research program through your grant funding opportunity with the Louisiana Board of Regents.

Your research is timely. Over the past decade we have heard increasing alarms from the industry that something is happening within our estuaries that is diminishing oyster recruitment to our natural oyster reefshells and to older planted oyster cultch, both of which are used to enhance habitat and ultimately industry profits once the oysters are sold into commerce. Oystermen are seeing less recruitment on planted cultch that is a year or more old when compared to freshly planted cultch.

We don't know the reason why this is happening, but your research is a fundamental question that must be addressed as we work towards a possible solution.

At the OTF meeting on June 10, 2025, we prioritized the study of oyster biofilm development on aged vs. newly planted cultch. Our estuaries are constantly changing, and we are concerned that perhaps reefshell and other cultch types that have been planted and exposed for a time may not be attracting oyster larvae as in the past. Planting commercial concentrations of oyster cultch is an expensive endeavor and that cultch has to last several years for an oysterman to make a profit.

We ourselves are in discussions looking for some funds to address this biofilm concern. But the OTF and Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries have limited funds as we try to pool resources. Having the Board of Regents fund your proposal will significantly lighten our burden of finding adequate financial resources to compliment what you are proposing.

We are looking forward to collaborating with you. Sincerely, Mitch Jurisich.

Brad Robin motioned to accept the letter as written, 2nd by Willie Daisy. Motion carries.

VII. Public Comment

Steve Pollock stated that an aquaculture committee meeting was attentively set for Wednesday, October 22, 2025 in Baton Rouge at 10:00 AM.

VIII. Next meeting date set for Tuesday, November 12, 2025 for 10:00am New Orleans Lakefront Airport

IX. Brad Robin motioned to adjourn the meeting, 2nd by Brandt Lafrance. Motion carries.