

Oyster Task Force Meeting
Wednesday, November 12, 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
Steve Pollock
Peter Vujnovich
Sam Slavich

Voting Members Absent:

Shane Bagala
Brandon Debarge
Jakov Jurisic
Matthew Slavich
Willie Daisy

Non-Voting Members Present:

Robert Caballero
Davis Madere
Kyle Balkum
Brian Lezina

Non-Voting Members Absent:

Bryan Wallace

III. Brad Robin motioned to approve the October 14, 2025 meeting minutes, 2nd by Brandt Lafrance.
Motion carries.

Brad Robin motioned to amend the agenda to add Item E. To Discuss Approval of Contract Renewal for Eric Sunstrom, 2nd by Peter Vujnovich. Motion carries.

Brad Robin motioned to approve the November 12, 2025 amended meeting agenda, 2nd by Peter Vujnovich. Motion carries.

IV. Treasury Report

Remaining Fund Balance- \$569,174
Remaining Budget Balance- \$80,738
October Tag Sales – 150,000

Peter Vujnovich motioned to accept the treasury report as presented, 2nd by Brad Robin. Motion carries.

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

Region 4 (Iberia)

Region 5 (Calcasieu and Cameron)

Cameron

- 1 – Violated sanitation code (waste bucket)
- 1 – Violated sanitation code (log book violation)

Seizures:

40 sacks

Region 6: (Terrebonne, Lafourche, Grand Isle, St. Mary)

Terrebonne:

- 4- 56:433.1 / 159.1 | Violate seed ground vessel permit regulations
- 2- 40:4A / 183.1 | Violate Sanitation Code (log book)
- 2- 56:326.3 / 031.0 | Not Abiding by Commission Rules & Regulations (Fail to report catch on public seed grounds)

Seizures:

22 sacks

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

Plaquemines

Seizures:

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- No report
- D. Legal Report - No report
- E. Research Committee- No report
- F. Coastal Restoration Committee – No report

G. Marketing Committee – Mitch Jurisich stated that he is working with Anna Corin Koehl to finalize issues with the DC trip. Mitch Jurisich as if anyone know of any corporations that would like to sponsor please reach out to them.

H. Health Committee – No report

I. Aquaculture Report- Steve Pollock stated that tag sales dropped from the months of August and September and asked if this was due to Vibrio.

Mitch Jurisich stated that the drop could be attributed to market demands.

Steve Pollock stated that he was on the Board of Directors for ISSC on October 16th and they voted unanimously to remove the AQ designation on tags. Steve Pollock stated that several states are having issues with tracking when AQ is added to the tag and moved forward with removing the AQ designation after the shellfish shipper puts the number on the tag.

Steve Pollock stated some states are unfamiliar with the use of the word “AOC”. Steve Pollock stated that throughout the United States and other nations around the world, they are referred to as aquacultured oysters and not Alternative Oyster Culture (AOC) oysters. Steve Pollock stated that he will be pushing for a change to conform to the rest of the world and rename AOC oysters to aquacultured oysters.

Al Sunseri stated there was a reason why AOC was used at the time which was to distinguish the traditional oyster industry from alternative methods and there were no other states using other methods. Al Sunseri also stated that Texas uses the word “Mariculture” to describe their off-bottom oyster activities. A member of the audience stated that there are different rules for each of the terms and the name should be changed.

Mitch Jurisich stated that changing the name to aquaculture would change what they are doing.

Steve Pollock stated that at the NSSP level there is a specific area in the chapter for agriculture and definitions therein.

Al Sunseri stated that culturing of oyster in the state of Louisiana has been going on for over 150 years and there is confusion between mariculture and aquaculture to some degree.

Steve Pollock stated that a few people discussed bulk tagging during the meeting. Steve Pollock stated that he spoke with LDWF and LDH regarding bulk tagging and the use of a single, usually white tag. Steve Pollock stated that certain language in the NSSP allows a harvester to bring in a boat of oysters all under the one tag but the harvesters must still adhere to the same time and temperature restrictions. Steve Pollock stated that using a single tag for AOC, which involves bringing oysters to shore, tumbling those oysters and putting them back out, is not ideal. Steve Pollock stated that instead of using tags that are meant to be used to move those oysters directly to market bulk tagging could be an option and oyster could be re-tagged as they are individually sacked at the processing facility. Steve Pollock stated that he spoke with LDH and confirmed that this could be an option for the handling of the oysters, tumbling them, and putting them back in the water. Steve Pollock also stated that they could have a white tag that

says bulk and they will have a logbook detailing when they took the oysters from the farm and moved them back to the shore.

Al Sunseri stated that bulk tagging could not be used for cages but could be used if all the oysters are placed into one container.

Steve Pollock stated that page 83 of the NSSP states that bulk tagging may be used for multiple containers when transported in a pallet, a tote, a net bailer, or in a single boat or vehicle.

Jennifer Armentor stated that LDH has had issues with bulk tagging and a retail inspector observed a pallet of oysters with one bulk tag which violated retail requirements because harvesters can not sell directly to retailers with just one tag.

Al Sunseri stated that historically the task force agreed to continue with the use of tags per unit because of the tag sales.

Mitch Jurisich stated that there have been some enforcement issues with re-tagging the oysters and some sacks that were green tags but then changed to white tags.

Major Davis Madere stated that one of the issues is determining the proper enforcement agency, LDWF or LDH. Major Davis Madere also stated that any changes should be confirmed with FDA so that we do not lose our certification. Major Davis Madere asked if there would be instances in which an on-bottom harvester would sell in bulk.

Mitch Jurisich stated that there was push from some processors to sell mats of oysters by weight.

Jennifer Armentor stated that Florida's bulk tag contains a number of units under the bulk tag.

Steve Pollock stated that the bulk tags would be used for handling and not for marketing and that would have to be confirmed if a harvester is stopped by enforcement.

Al Sunseri asked what would happen if a processor only uses 10 of the sacks that contained 20 sacks under the bulk tag.

Mitch Jurisich stated that bulk tags should be used for handling and not for selling.

Steve Pollock stated that under NSSP the bulk tag could be used for selling the oysters but the task force could decide to only use the bulk tag for handling.

Mitch Jurisich asked what rules are followed when the oysters are placed back into the water.

Major Davis Madere stated that is the concern of enforcement.

Jennifer Armentor stated the FDA requires that oysters can be out of the water for up to 24 hours but then they must be placed back in the water for a minimum of 14 days. Jennifer Armentor stated that LDH has logs to record the time that the oysters have been out of water, when they were replanted, and when was the final harvest.

Dr. John Dale "Zach" Lea stated that we should not aquaculture farming operations with excessive regulation because most farmers have a need to handle their oysters.

Steve Pollock stated that the task force can chose how to proceed but essentially it must follow LDH and NSSP rules and the task force must also consult with the FDA. Steve Pollock proceed to read the following information found on page 83 of the NSSP Guide:

(7) Bulk tagging of a lot of shellstock during transport from harvest area to the dealer facilities.

(a) When shellstock are harvested from one (1) harvest area on a single day by a single harvester or aquaculture leaseholder, multiple containers may be utilized on a wrapped pallet, in a tote, in a net trailer, in a single boat, vehicle, conveyance or other container and the unit tagged with a single tag in accordance with the requirements of Section .02 F.

(b) In addition to the information required in Section .02 F. the unit tag shall also include:

(i) A statement that "All shellstock containers in this lot have the same harvest date and area of harvest"; and

(ii) Number of individual containers in the unit or an estimate of the total weight, volume or count.

A member of the audience stated that the industry has to carefully choose whether to use processing or workstation. The member from the audience also stated that the industry is developing here and globally and the choosing those words correctly will affect who ISSC regulations are applied.

Al Sunseri stated that the terminology of workstation brings up the question if a harvester can market oysters from a workstation or if the workstation is strictly for cleaning and then replacing the oysters back in the farm.

Steve Pollock stated that the task force would need to discuss the option of bulk tagging more in-depth.

Dr. John Dale "Zach" Lea stated that Louisiana can make rules that meet the NSSP but the rules do not have to exceed the requirements.

Nick Fantini stated that there are a lot of people who are not familiar with the terminology and some of those people are ones who actually handle the oysters. Nick Fantini also stated that consumers are also unfamiliar with terms like boutique, crafters, or AOC oysters.

Mitch Jurisich stated that the bulk tagging discuss should go to a subcommittee meeting.

J. Joint Task Force Working Group- no report

VI. New Business:

A. To Discuss and Consider a Contract Amendment to the Beuerman Miller Fitzgerald (BMF) Contract to Host the Let the World Be Your Oyster Event – OTF

Jason Froeba stated that the contract amendment is need to clarifying information on the end for LDWF in order to complete reimbursement requests for the event. Jason Froeba stated that previously purchase requests were coming from BMF to task force members and then task force members were requesting reimbursement form LDWF. Jason Froeba stated that specific language would be added to the contract to allow BMF to submit the purchase requests directly to LDWF and then receive reimbursement.

Mitch Jurisich stated that he attended a phone conference with BMF and LDWF to discuss handling the funds for the event but also asked what would be the amendment.

Jason Froeba stated that the amendment would add information for the specific events that the task force is sponsoring.

Al Sunseri asked if the amendment would include the number of events or the events separately.

Jason Froeba stated that the contract does have to be specific and the task force for can pass a motion for each event and could also allocate X amount of funds to the event.

Mitch Jurisich stated that instead of going through the LA Oysters and Dealers Association, the funds would be routed through BMF to simplify the reimbursement process.

Al Sunseri motioned to approve a contract amendment for BMF to provide a single expense for the Let the World Be Your Oyster Event and the Louisiana Live Event, 2nd by Brad Robin. Motion carries.

Eric Sunstorm stated that Anna Corin Koehl emailed him about reaching out to some members of Congress, scheduling meetings, and walking the hill. Eric Sunstorm stated that he doesn't have specific contacts but the OTF can reach out to someone with the STF for contacts.

Al Sunseri stated that in the past the OTF hired an individual to schedule the meetings with members of Congress.

B. To Discuss and Consider Funding for SeaD Consulting Seafood Testing – David Williams, SeaD Consulting

David Williams stated that the proposal for funding would allow SeaD Consulting to identify unique pieces of RNA to separate the native Louisiana species and compare it against the other species that are imported. David Williams stated that the *gigas* oysters are Pacific oysters, there is another one called *angulate* and one other subspecies of the *gigas*. David Williams stated that SeaD Consulting would need to get samples of those other species and compare the piece of RNA that is unique to the *Crassostrea virginica*. David Williams stated that one the unique RNA is identified, SeaD Consulting would test the RNA against other species using a 14-sample double blind test with 40 samples. David Williams stated that after the sampling test are complete, SeaD Consulting would then develop their specific test. David Williams stated they would then complete a media release for different restaurants to identify if the restaurants are serving imported oysters.

Robert Caballero asked of the proposal for \$29,500 was to develop a RNA test. Robert Caballero stated that the proposed test doesn't build on the Florida State University's gill microbiome testing that was cited.

David Williams stated that the proposed test is a separated test set.

Robert Caballero stated that proposal to develop the testing would involve going to different countries of origin to get control samples but the proposal doesn't actually include the restaurant monitoring in the state. Robert Caballero stated that the proposal does include a press release saying that once the test is developed, SeaD Consulting can test for imported oysters in the state.

David Williams confirmed that the proposal does not include any actual monitoring of local restaurants at this time. David Williams stated that he is probably 98% sure that SeaD consulting can develop a test. David Williams stated that he does not recommend starting monitoring until the test is 100%.

Steve Pollock asked if there would be limited testing of restaurants.

David Williams stated that at this stage the proposal is just research and development and not actually going into restaurants.

Steve Pollock asked what would be the cost of the next step if the first stage is around \$29,000.

David Williams stated that the cost would match up to what SeaD Consulting is doing with the Shrimp Task Force. David Williams stated that the only difference might be locations and the costs is around \$17,900 per testing a month. David Williams stated they are currently testing 24 random restaurants and will take pictures of the menus.

Steve Pollock asked if it would have to be a contractual agreement set at \$17,900 per month.

David Williams stated that the task force may only want to test certain months but would have the option not to test every month. David Williams stated that SeaD consulting could perform testing free of charge at one of the oyster festivals along with a press release under the research and development proposal.

Steve Pollock asked if there were any other sources of funding for the development of the test and if he has reached out to any other groups for funding for the same project.

David Williams stated they he has not reached out for funding the proposal.

Mitch Jurisich asked if the Shrimp Task Force received funding from the Seafood Promotion Board.

David Williams stated that he is not sure how the Shrimp Task Force funded their testing. David Williams stated that he will get permission to send the information from the Shrimp Task Force so that the Oyster Task Force can see the long-term impacts.

Christian Winslow stated that the funding for the Shrimp Task Force testing is from their dedicated funding sources similar to the Oyster Task force. Christian Winslow stated that the Shrimp Task Force initially had a 4 month contract for testing.

Al Sunseri asked if all of the testing was completed in Louisiana.

Mitch Jurisich stated that SeaD consulting doesn't want to target Louisiana but they want to target the oyster markets such as Las Vegas. Mitch Jurisich stated that the task force would like to target areas where a lot of Louisiana oysters wind up and areas where there was a market for Louisiana oysters. Mitch Jurisich stated that he received a picture of Boudreax Oysters in Houma that had breaded oysters from China.

David Williams stated that the half-shell market in Las Vegas is now being targeted by Korean oysters.

Mitch Jurisich stated that this is one of the issues that could be discussed during the Louisiana Live event.

David Williams confirmed that the proposal is only to develop the testing protocol.

Robert Caballero stated that he wanted to make the task force aware that the proposal was only to develop the test and that there was no guarantee in the contract of the test being developed and that there was no sampling that would take place in Louisiana.

Steve Pollock asked if SeaD consulting had any idea or a prediction of what percentage would be *gigas* from their list of imported species.

David Williams stated that *gigas* is one of the subjective volumes but the Korean oyster is being shipped in large volumes. David Williams stated that pacific American oysters are being shipped to Korea for processing and breading and then being shipped back to America.

Steve Pollock stated that he has some concerns that the task force could potentially target west coast and Canada oysters as foreign oysters.

Brandt Lafrance stated that the goal is to protect Gulf oysters and identifying the source would be a good starting point.

Mitch Jurisich asked if SeaD consulting find sample packages labeled as products of foreign origin in order for the task force to determine the degree of the problem before funding the proposal to develop the test.

David Williams stated that he can request 50% of the money initially and he will go out to collect samples and develop the test at the same time. David Williams stated that SeaD Consulting could review import data and identify where and how much imports would come into the country.

Al Sunseri motioned to defer this until the task force is presented with rewritten proposal, 2nd by Brad Robin. Motion carries.

Mitch Jurisich stated that the issue with foreign grown oysters is the lack of FDA regulations and how are they sampled and monitored. Mitch Jurisich also stated that issues arise if there is an outbreak and a recall of oysters. Mitch Jurisich stated that imported oysters are not being tested.

David Williams stated that SeaD Consulting would not test for contaminants but they will perform microbiology testing.

Al Sunseri stated that a handful of other countries are listed on the interstate certified shellfish shippers list, which includes South Korea, Canada, Mexico, and Chile, and they go through different testing but they have to follow the NSSP. Al Sunseri stated that products from China are cooked and go through a separate section of FDA and are not tested in the same manner or meet the same restrictions.

C. To Discuss a Draft Letter to the Grand Isle Port Commission and the Jefferson Parish Council Regarding the Certification of the Planned Oyster Facility in Grand Isle – OTF

Steve Pollock stated that the motion to send a letter was voted on but was not a unanimous vote. Steve Pollock stated that the letter was drafted by Al Sunseri and sent to the task force members but he thought it would be a good idea to discuss the draft letter and its contents.

Al Sunseri stated that the motion was to draft the letter for editing and the letter was sent on October 23. Al Sunseri stated that he believes it is inappropriate to discuss the draft of the letter during the meeting. Al Sunseri stated that he believes it is out of order to discuss the draft meeting.

Steve Pollock asked if there was a deadline for sending the letter.

Al Sunseri stated that typically what happens once the task force makes a recommendation to send a letter, it's completed prior to the next meeting.

Mitch Jurisich stated that he did not approve the letter because he wanted to focus more on LDH with this issue. Mitch Jurisich stated that he spoke with Cole Garret and the task force can make recommendations that might not have the support of the department. Mitch Jurisich stated that he also spoke with Weldon Danos regarding the facility.

Al Sunseri stated that he became aware of the facility construction 2 week prior to the last meeting in October. Al Sunseri stated that wanted to make sure that the rules are being followed and that the product meets the health and sanitation practices for consumers of raw oysters.

Mitch Jurisich stated that the facility will only be for AOC farmers that are in Grand Isle and will all be HACCP certified. Mitch Jurisich stated that the farmers would come in, tumble their oysters, wash them, and then bring them back out. Mitch Jurisich stated that on the other side of the facility, farmers would wash the oysters, sack them, and then put them in the cooler to go sell. Mitch Jurisich stated that there will be no sales at the facility and the facility will be used as a workstation. Mitch Jurisich stated that the farmers will be handling the oysters and not processing them. Mitch Jurisich stated that the same thing is done on the boat.

Al Sunseri stated that oysters are not processed on the boat but they are harvested.

Brad Robin stated that one of the differences is that on the boat they use the water that is already out there as opposed to the water at a facility. Brad Robin stated that this issue should have gone to a committee to discuss this with LDWF and LDH. Brad Robin stated that it was expensive for him to purchase the coolers to operate on his boat and he would like to ensure that everyone is following the correct rules.

Steve Pollock stated that the facility has already been approved by LDH but it not yet permitted.

Mitch Jurisich said that the facility will not be used for processing the oysters but only for shipping them. Mitch Jurisich stated that the facility is for leaseholder at the park which is about 10 farmers and it is not a public facility. Mitch Jurisich stated that Al Sunseri proposed that someone go out and monitor the facility.

Al Sunseri stated that he would not be opposed to the facility but he would want to ensure that the facility meets health standards. Al Sunseri stated that he once had contracted shuckers at

his facility but his designation was taken away after one year because it was under one facility. Al Sunseri stated that with one responsible party things must be done appropriately.

Mitch Jurisich stated that washing oysters with fresh water happens at almost any processing plant and the tap water should not be an issue. Mitch Jurisich stated that he supports the facility as long as it is confined to the people in the park. Mitch Jurisich stated that he would like to defer the item to the subcommittee.

Al Sunseri agreed to defer the item to a subcommittee with input from LDH and LDWF.

Steve Pollock stated that the letter in its current form is unacceptable to be sent to another commission in the state of Louisiana. Steve Pollock stated that several other members of the task force reached out to him but did not agree with some of the statements in the letter. Steve Pollock also stated that the task force does not have the authority to tell the commission what they must do but the task force can make a recommendation to them. Steve Pollock stated that he would like to make a notice of intent to move to rescind the motion accepted at the October 14th Oyster Task Force meeting.

Robert Caballero stated that according to Robert's rules, the task force did vote to send out the letter at the last meeting and any motion that would be made should include the status of the letter.

Steve Pollock motioned to suspend the delivery of the letter to the port commission until the conclusion of the next Oyster Task Force meeting.

Mitch Jurisich stated that he will defer the item.

Al Sunseri stated that he recommends having a meeting with LDH and the proper enforcement agencies to develop an agreeable strategy.

- D. To Discuss a Recommendation to LDH to Revise Its Regulations to Facilitate and Encourage the Sale of Off-Bottom Oyster from Permitted AOC Farmers – Dr. John Dale “Zach” Lea, Coastal Development Projects

Dr. John Dale “Zach” Lea read the following statement:

The role of government is to enact laws and regulations that defend the rights of citizens while encouraging wise use by collective resources. In the case of Louisiana's oyster industry, this means assuring public health without imposing unnecessary restrictions that hinder the full potential of our collectively owned oyster resources. However, there regulations or policies being enforce by the Louisiana Department of Health (LDH) add nothing to ensuring public health while discouraging the maximization of public benefits from our oyster resources.

Dr. John Dale “Zach” Lea stated that he would like to discuss the LDH regulations preventing off-bottom farmers and harvesters who don't hold a LDA oyster shell stock dealer permit from selling to traditional on-bottom oyster dealers. Dr. John Dale “Zach” Lea stated that he does not currently hold a permit. Dr. John Dale “Zach” Lea stated that the role of the Oyster Task Force is to monitor the oyster industry and call for changes in government regulations or policies that discourage the maximization of benefits from Louisiana's collectively owned oyster resources. Dr. John Dale “Zach” Lea stated that he is asking the Oyster Task Force to call on LDH to remove

regulations that prevent traditional oyster buyers from buying from off-bottom oyster farmers and harvesters.

Steve Pollock stated that he thinks it would be a mistake to change the regulation and rules that are currently in place.

Dr. John Dale "Zach" Lea stated that he is developing an oyster park with 20 to 30 oyster producers that is about 5 minutes from where certified, licensed oyster dealers buy oysters. Dr. John Dale "Zach" Lea stated that by forcing off-bottom farmers to qualify as dealers would be like forcing them all to have processing facility.

Steve Pollock asked Dr. John Dale "Zach" Lea how he would get the oysters to the dock to sell them if he doesn't have a shell stock shipper permit.

Dr. John Dale "Zach" Lea stated that a traditional harvester would bring the oysters to the dock and they would be loaded into the cooler.

Peter Vujonich stated that it would be placing the responsibility on the transporter and would not have the identification of the farmer that could trace back to the farmer.

Dr. John Dale "Zach" Lea stated that the law says if he sells his oysters to a dealer he must have a trip ticket.

Peter Vujnovich asked Dr. John Dale "Zach" Lea if he could sell his oysters similar to traditional harvesters.

Dr. John Dale "Zach" Lea stated that because the oysters are aquaculture he cannot.

Mitch Jurisich asked what is the cost to obtain a permit in order to sell to a dealer.

Dr. John Dale "Zach" Lea stated the license cost \$550.

Jennifer stated that AOC farmers can actually sell to an oyster dealer that has an AQ certification

E. To Discuss Approval of Contract Renewal for Eric Sunstrom

VII. Public Comment

Steve Pollock stated that an aquaculture committee meeting was attentively set for Wednesday, December 3, 2025 in Baton Rouge at 10:00 AM.

VIII. Next meeting date set for Wednesday, January 7, 2025 for 10:00am New Orleans Lakefront Airport

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