**Oyster Task Force Meeting**

**Tuesday, November 15, 2022, 1:00pm**

**LDWF Headquarters**

**2000 Quail Dr.**

**Baton Rouge, LA 70898**

**I.** Pledge of Allegiance

**II.** Roll call and introduction of guests

**Voting Members Present:**

Jakov Jurisic

Mitch Jurisich

Brad Robin

Brandt Lafrance

Sam Slavich

Peter Vujnovich

Willie Daisy

Steve Pollock

**Voting Members Absent:**

Shane Bagala

Tracy Collins

Dan Coulon

Ryan Mallory

Al Sunseri

Matthew Slavich

**Non-Voting Members Present:**

Justin Gremillion

Major Edward Skena

Karl Morgan

Brian Lezina

**Non-Voting Members Absent:**

Carolina Bourque

Harry Vorhoff

Jakov Jurisic asked that the board observe a moment of silence to honor the passing of Pete Cibilic

**III.** Peter Vujnovichmotioned to approve the October 11, 2022 meeting minutes, 2nd by Willie Daisy. Motion carries.

Peter Vujnovich motioned to approve the November 15, 2022 meeting agenda, 2nd by Brad Robin. Motion carries.

**IV.** Treasury Report

Remaining Fund Balance- $546,514

Remaining Budget Balance- $29,962

Tag sales for the month of October- 253,200

Peter Vujnovich motioned to approve the treasury report as presented, 2nd by Jakov Jurisic. Motion carries.

**V.** Committee Reports

1. Public-Private Oyster Seed Grounds Committee Report- no report
2. Enforcement Report

October 2nd- November 1st

**Region 4** (Iberia)

None

**Region 5** (Calcasieu and Cameron)

Cameron

2- Faillure to display numbers on vessel

**Region 6**: (Terrebonne, Lafourche, Grand Isle)

Lafourche

2-Fail to cull oysters in proper location.

1-Violate sanitation code (No numbers on tarp)

1-Violate sanitation code (Log book)

**12 Sacks seized**

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

Plaquemines

1-Violate sanitation code (refrigeration)

1-Fail to fill out tags correctly

1-Fail to maintain records-trip tickets

**43 Sacks seized**

**St. Bernard**

2-Violate Seed Ground Vessel Permit

4-Violate Sanitation code (refrigeration)

2-Fail to fill out tags correctly

1-No vessel license

**199 Sacks seized**

1. Legislative Committee Report- no report; intend to meet after the New Year with legislative proposals ahead of 2023 session; possible proposal on the unnecessary seizure and destroying of oysters
2. Legal Committee Report- no report
3. Research Committee Report- no report
4. Coastal Restoration Committee Report- no report
5. Marketing Committee Report- no report- Mitch Jurisich stated that the OTF got an extra spot for their commercial to air this past weekend. Jakov Jurisic stated that the SPMB is set to meet on 11/16/22 and he would report back on any action taken at the next OTF meeting
6. Health Committee Report- Justin Gremillion led the committee report- the committee met prior to the task force meeting and went over some ISSC proposals; next ISSC will be in Baton Rouge in March 2023; one of the proposals would see a reversal of the time/ temp regulations on green tags, it looks like there is an opportunity to change harvesting time and temp regulations from air to water temperature; this change would allow for an increase in time/temp harvest times on green tags, will send draft proposal to OTF to make an official proposal submission

Also discussed increase in time/temp harvest times for white tags. Does appear there is some wiggle room in the vibrio calculator to adjust the numbers, the use of this calculator is mandated for raw consumption oysters, If LDH were to adjust the numbers, the big difference would be in the summer months (May- October) would increase the time from 1 hour to 2 hours to refrigeration. This change would be well within FDA and ISSC. The approvals for this change could be done within the State, but would require the approval of the State Health Officer. The committee decided to bring this issue to the full task force for consideration, to officially ask the state health officer to consider making the changes to the numbers for time/temperature on white tags. If this change to white tags goes through the approval process and is approved by the State Health Officer and the Secretary of Health this would then go through the rulemaking process- we are looking at 6 months-1 year to be completed; the change would see the months of May- 6 hours to refrigeration, June- 2 hours to refrigeration, July-1 hour to refrigeration, August-2 hours to refrigeration, September-3 hours to refrigeration, October-5 hours to refrigeration; from time when the product is put into refrigeration until is reaches 45 degrees is still at 6 hours cooling time

Jakov Jurisic stated that is was mentioned earlier that the process to make the change to white tags would take 6months- 1 year, asked if there was any way to expedite this process? Justin Gremillion stated that there is an avenue to expedite which is through emergency rule but emergency rule is only used in instances where there is a treat to public health and this instance is not considered a public health emergency

**Jakov Jurisic motioned to request that LA Department of Health move forward, as soon as possible, with the appropriate approval process to increase the time/ temperature regulations on white tags, 2nd by Peter Vujnovich. Motion carries.**

Justin Gremilion stated that he will keep the task force updated on any changes as this moves through the process

Justin Gremilion stated that there is 1 case of reported vibrio illness within the state, no information yet still being investigated, will have more at the next meeting

1. Aquaculture Committee Report- the committee held a meeting prior to the full OTF meeting

Discussion items

* The committee heard a presentation from Scott Maurer on AOC gear choices, listed 8 types of gear along with the average cost to produce 100 oysters using each gear, also discussed life span and hurricane resiliency of gear types as well
* The committee heard a presentation from Ryan Anderson regarding the Grand Isle Mariculture Zones part 1 and part 2; the committee made a request that the OTF submit a letter to the Grand Isle Port Commission asking that the Port Commission enforce the 6-month equipment deployment clause contract for these lease in parts 1 and 2, also wanted to request adding comment in the contract about extenuating circumstances so that the 6-month period can be extended for certain circumstances- i.e. hurricane, illness

**Steve Pollock motioned to submit a letter to the Grand Isle Port Commission asking that the Port Commission enforce the 6-month equipment deployment clause contract for the leases in parts 1 and 2 of the Grand Isle Mariculture Zones, the letter should also request adding comment in the contract that would allow for an extension of time in extenuating circumstances, 2nd by Peter Vujnovich. Motion carries.**

Jakov Jurisic stated that he mentioned in a previous meeting that he would reach out to the Lt. Governor to request that he accompany the OTF on a trip to Vicksburg to meet with the Corps of Engineers to discuss the Mid-Barataria Sediment Diversion and the permit, stated that he plans to discuss this at the Seafood Promotion and Marketing Board meeting and will report back by the next OTF meeting

* The committee discussed the bond requirements for the shellevator gear type, specifically the bond requirments required by LDWF; the committee decided to take action by asking that the OTF support the elimination for the removal of the removal bond requirement for AOC gear

Steve Pollock motioned to write a letter to LDWF requesting that they withdraw the removal bond requirement for the AOC gear type, the Shellevator, 2nd by Jakov Jurisic. Motion does not carry after roll call vote- Jakov Jurisic, Brad Robin, Brandt Lafrance, Sam Slavich, Peter Vujnovich, and Steve Pollock all voting no.

Patrick Banks stated that a part of the rules is that the LDWF may require a bond, have this to prevent issues similar to what is going on with the derelict crab traps, LDWF would probably not support the removal of the bond but is willing to discuss further and bring it to the Secretary, this will not be LDWF’s recommendation. Initially you needed a bond to get the permit through the LDWF AOC program and another bond if you received a grant from the La Sea Grant AOC Grant Program- they were able to remove the double bond and now only one bond is needed, but do not see LDWF removing the bond all together. The bond is to prevent someone from walking out and abandoning their equipment in the water. The amount of the bond varies, the bond cost is determined by a 3rd party contractor who determines how much it will cost to remove the gear and LDWF uses the estimate that the permit applicant obtains from a 3rd party contractor

John Zach Lea stated that this removal should apply to all AOC gear and not just to the shellevator, clarified that he was requesting that the committee ask the OTF to request that LDWF drop bond requirements on all AOC gear, not just the shellevator

Patrick Banks stated that the bond is not just for abandonment of the equipment in place, but also the ability to remove the equipment if something were to happen where the equipment was blown in the marsh or covered in sediment this would cover the removal

Jakov Jurisic stated that he has an issue with this as the equipment may become a navigational hazard

Earl Melancon the way the grants are worded any equipment that cannot be picked up by hand or boat would require a bond, the bond is not just for an operational piece of equipment it is also for equipment that becomes damaged or sunk and can not be picked up by hand or a small winch. If a bond is already obtained from LDWF LA Sea Grant does not require and additional bond

John Zach Lea stated that they are going into a different type of business and oyster culture and all of these are considered a navigational hazard, any cage that floats on the surface is a navigational hazard, everyone that gets a CUP signs a contract that they will remove equipment after finished and the parish can take these individuals to court and request that the equipment be removed, there is no need to have another bond put on AOC equipment

* The committee discussed a list of 4 different appeals to the LA Sea Grant AOC Grant Program, plan to bring the appeals in full with response from Sea Grant to the Aquaculture committee at their December meeting and then those appeals, after committee discussion, will be taken up as a full agenda item at the December OTF meeting
1. Joint Task Force Working Group Report- no report

New Business

1. The board heard a presentation from Dr. Beth Stauffer on the low salinity tolerant oyster research

Low salinity-tolerant oysters - GS Model development progress

• Oyster populations spanning Louisiana that have been spawned in 2021 and 2022

• Samples from all populations shown included in initial genomic array testing- Data expected any day

• 2021 spawns underwent low salinity challenge experiment in summer 2022

Low salinity challenge experiment, summer 2022

* 45 days @ low salinity (2 ppt), elevated temperature (28°C)
* Total of 2,115 oysters spawned from 3 regions (Calcasieu, Terrebonne, and Eastern LA)
* Experiment was concluded when cumulative mortality reached ≥40%
* Mortalities recorded and tissues sampled throughout
* Remaining live oysters (survivors) were shucked and sampled for genomic analysis
* Currently waiting for genomic data and model development to be completed (winter 2022)

Next steps: operationalizing the GS Model

* Broodstock collected from populations across LA, targeting areas with high probability for tolerant traits
* Oysters non-lethally sampled and analyzed for low salinity tolerant genotypes
* Broodstock identified from GS model sent to hatchery for directed spawning
* After grow-out, deployment of selectivelybred oysters (LDWF input on locations)

Mitch Jurisich stated that he believes these oysters will not be able to spawn in low salinities, appreciates ULL keeping the OTF updated and they look forward to hearing more once more data is available

Brad Robin asked about the difference in environment with tide changes and current fluctuates, so the 45 days will be knocked down

Peter Vujnovich asked if they plan on increasing the temperatures more than 80 degrees because the estuary gets hotter and sometimes up to the 90s

The task force stated that they look forward to hearing more in the future once more data is available

1. The board considered 2023 ISSC Proposals

The proposal is to focus on green tags, it would go back to the old regulations that used water temperature instead of air temperature and that would restore green tags to what they were- 36 hours in the winter months and the proposal would also request an increase in the time/temperature matrix from 12 to 16 hours. This proposal would get sent to the ISSC committee and gets negotiated, not sure what the outcome would be; since the conference is set to be held in Baton Rouge will probably have a strong showing, suggested having a Health Committee meeting prior to the ISSC to come together with data,feedback and do our homework to be prepared to ask good questions and provide good answers for discussions on the issues. Justin Gremillion stated that he would have proposal ready this afternoon or first thing tomorrow would be up to OTF to submit the actual proposal

**Jakov Jurisic motioned to submit a 2023 ISSC proposal to restore green tags to the previous regulations which allowed for 36 hours to refrigeration in the winter months by using water temperature instead of air temperature, the proposal would also request an increase from 12 to 16 hours in the time/temperature matrix on green tags, 2nd by Brad Robin. Motion carries.**

C. The board discussed amending oyster tags

Willie Daisy led discussion on amending oyster tags- would like to add oysters, clams, mini sacks and sacks to the bottom of the tags to allow for the fishermen to just circle or check off these items instead of having to write this stuff in, would like for the next time these are printed allow for a check mark or circling of these items to take some of the paperwork away from the fishermen

Willie Daisy motioned to send this item to the Public-Private Oyster Seed Grounds Committee for further discussion and would also like to discuss trip ticket issues and changes, 2nd by Peter Vujnovich. Motion carries.

D. The board deferred the update on the 2021 oyster mortality event in Empire/ Port Sulphur area to a future meeting

E. The board discussed an oyster industry meeting with the Corps of Engineers, feel that this request for a meeting is falling on deaf ears, will get together with Capt. George Ricks to see if he has an avenue to set the meeting up as the deadline is coming, BMF is working on it and sent letter to the Corps about extending the comment period on the Final EIS for the Mid-Barataria Sediment Diversion and the request for an extension was rejected, general Howland

Patrick Banks stated that LDWF submitted a letter to Corps of Engineers on both projects (Final EIS on the Mid-Barataria Sediment Diversion and the Neptune Pass Project) and will get copies of those letters to OTF

F. Earl Melancon provided a financial update on the AOC grants

Status Report to Louisiana Oyster Task Force on Expenditures AOC Grant Funds Louisiana Sea Grant Program November 15, 2022 1 At the request of the Louisiana Oyster Task Force, information is supplied about how the $3 million dollars of grant funds have been allocated. The term of the project to the Louisiana Sea Grant Program (LSG) is from January 2021 through December 2023. Funding is from the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries (LDWF).

The following seven (7) pages explain the process. The following information explains how the $ 1.8M has been allocated and spent for the four (4) AOC grant types: Nursery Farms, Grow-Out Farms, Parks, and Hatcheries.

**Policy on Purchases that was Explained and Given to all Grant Awardees:** • Falsification of any information provided on the application, invoices, receipts, or reporting will be cause for disqualification from the program. • Equipment is considered any item that cost $5,000 or more while items under $5,000 are considered supplies (this is a state policy). • All supplies, cages, and consumables, as well as any approved equipment must be purchased new. • Equipment and supplies that will be eligible will be those standards that are being used in the industry today and will exclude experimental and novelty methods and equipment. • Purchases of items costing $500 or more will require a quote that is submitted by the 1st of each month to be considered for approval and not purchased until approved by LSG. • All items purchased under this program will need to be justified as a need for an AOC operation. LSG reserves the right to deny a request even if it meets the basic criteria listed when based on advice from the selection committee and the program advisors. This denial can be appealed to the OTF AOC subcommittee. • Items purchased must be utilized at that location. • Any purchases of equipment will need to adhere to federal guidelines. Reimbursement for labor costs associated with professional installation of equipment is limited to 15% of the total cost of equipment not to exceed $4,500. Exceptions to this limitation may be funded on a case-by-case basis. • A 1099 will be issued to all awardee participants for any funds received from an AOC contract. If IDF pays a vendor directly – at the request of the contractor – those funds will not be included in the 1099 issued to the contractor (as identified by the W9). • Approval by LSG to purchase equipment under this program does not constitute any certification, assurance, or guarantee. Improper use or operation can easily reduce the effectiveness of any equipment installed.

At the conclusion of the second-round call for applicants there was no one who requested consideration for a second hatchery. At the same time, there were two strong applicants for new parks. The program allows for movement of funds between grant types. Therefore, LSG requested to LDWF that $100,000 of the hatchery funds be reallocated to parks to allow for two (2) grants to be awarded instead of the original one (1). The remaining hatchery funds, $125,000, were reallocated to grow-out farms resulting in the increase in potential total awards from twenty (20) to twenty three (23).

Figure 1. (see attached presentation) The above pie chart shows the spent funds, $367,606, is from purchasing activities from first-round awardees. The Committed Funds, $1,067,394, is the remaining unspent funds to the first-round grantees plus the amount of funds awarded to the second-round of thirteen (13) farm grantees who recently signed their contracts in October 2022; it also includes the funds for the two (2) original parks, Cameron, and Grand Isle. The Committed Funds include the money in the second-round for the two (2) new Parks, one proposed in the Biloxi Marsh in St. Bernard Parish, and the other near Port Fourchon in Bay Dos Gris (Southern Belle Aquaculture Park). The Biloxi Marsh Park in St. Bernard Parish is a joint venture between the Two C’s Enterprises Inc. and the Meraux Foundation. The St. Bernard park will be called “Bahía De Los Sueños” (translated, “Bay of Dreams”). The Southern Belle Park is privately owned and operated by the Marcos Guerrero family and is presently operational with several of the second-round awardees within it. The money encumbered, $140,000, for the new St. Bernard Park will be awarded to three (3) grow-out farm grants in a future fourth-round call for applicants. The money encumbered for the Cameron Park, $225,000 will be awarded for five (5) grow-out farm grants from a pool of ten (10) applicants who applied in a recently completed third-round of funding for the newly established park in lower Calcasieu Lake. It is anticipated that the substantial majority of Committed Funds will be spent by spring 2023

Figure 2. (see attached presentation) The pie chart above shows the amount of funds, $367,606, that have been spent through October 2022. The amount spent is from the first-round grant recpients, which includes grants for four (4) nurseries, six (6) grow-out farms, two (2) parks, and one (1) hatchery. The majority of the money to date has been spent in the nursery/grow-out category and hatchery category.

Figure 3. (see attached presentation) The financial pie chart above shows the three million dollar ($3M) grant program’s distribution of funds. LDWF awarded the grant to LSG through LSU. LSG is located on the LSU Baton Rouge campus and all grant funds are administered by the University. To have the greatest flexibility in administering the grant funds to AOC oyster farmers and to streamline accounting, LSU, under the advisement of LSG, awarded a subcontract to the Iberia Development Foundation (IDF). In turn, IDF awards contracts to all AOC grant recipients. A cumulative breakdown for the 3-yrs expenditure for Administration (19.8 % = $641,000), Operational (12.9% = $387,000), and Outreach ($217,000), follows: • Administrative o 1 funded at full-time, 2 at half-time, 1 @ 20%-time, part-time students, including legal students, helping on hourly basis o 6 co-investigators directly involved with day-to-day needs with no pay on grant o Selection Committee members voluntary service at no pay • Operational o Sub-Contract to IDF for Administrative Duties (including audit, insurance, legal costs) = $180,000 o Indirect Costs (IDC) for LSU administration (off-campus rate 26%) = $120,000 o Travel (Field/Workshop mileage, Professional Meetings) = $72,000 • Outreach o AOC farmer meetings, workshops o Videography and graphic artwork, product branding, infographics, professional photography/graphic artwork, business training services

G. Haley Gambill new marine agent with LA Sea Grant with Terrebonne and Lafourche, the 2023 LA Fisheries Forward Summit will host an afternoon panel on different innovative opportunities or initiatives; will reach out to Mitch Jurisich but looking for specific people in the industry that may be of use on the panel, will send contact information to the task force please contact Haley Gambill with ideas or a person you might have in mind- the Summit is set for March 1, 2023,

**The board requested that Haley Gambill come back at the next OTF meeting to further discuss the specifics of the panel and discussion**

OTF to set up booth, do we need stuff? May need an agenda item for the next meeting, seafood festivival queen 100 bags,

**Jakov Jurisic motioned to add an agenda item under new business H. To Discuss and Consider funding the purchase of OTF promotional items, 2nd by Brad Robin. Motion carries unanimously.**

**Jakov Jurisic motioned to approve funding up to $2500 for the purchase of OTF promotional items to be used at various events throughout the year, 2nd by Brad Robin. Motion carries.**

The board suggested looking into purchasing pens, 1000 koozies, hand sanitizer, etc.

**Allison West stated that she will price out items and get prices and items list to task force before purchase**; need items in December before Christmas

**VII.** Public Comment

Karl Morgan announced that he will be retiring soon and recommended Sarah Roy as his replacement, the task force should get notice of replacement soon

Jakov Jurisic requested that the task force make a small donation to Cancer Society in memory of Pete Cibilic; Patrick stated that he would look into the legality of this

**Jakov Jurisich motioned to add an agenda item under New Business I. To Consider Funding to Send Sympathy Card and Flowers or make a Donation in Honor of Pete Cibilic, 2nd by Brad Robin. Motion passes unanimously.**

**Jakov jurisic motioned to fund purchasing a sympathy card and flowers or making a donation in honor of Pete Cibilic, 2nd by Brad Robin. Motion carries**.

**Patrick Banks said that he would look into the legality of this purchase and get back to the task force- after receiving guidance from LDWF legal it was determined that this purchase would not be allowed using OTF funding**

**VIII.** The board set their next meeting for Tuesday, December 13, 2022 for 1pm at the New Orleans Lakefront Airport. An Aquaculture Committee is set for 9:30am, followed by a Public-Private Seed Grounds Committee meeting for 10:30am

**IX.** Brad Robin motioned to adjourn, 2nd by Willie Daisy. Motion carries.