**Oyster Task Force Meeting**

**Wednesday, November 7, 2018, 1:00pm**

**2021 Lakeshore Drive, STE 210**

**New Orleans, LA 70122**

**Roll Call:**

**Voting Members Present:**

Tracy Collins

Dan Coulon

Jakov Jurisic

Mitch Jurisich

Brad Robin

Brandt Lafrance

Sam Slavich

Peter Vujnovich

Willie Daisy

**Voting Members Absent:**

Shane Bagala

Leo Dyson

Byron Encalade

Al Sunseri

**Non-voting Members Present:**

Carolina Bourque

Justin Gremillion

Major Edward Skena

Frank Cole in for Karl Morgan

Brian Lezina

**Non-voting Members Absent:**

Motion to approve the September 25, 2018 meeting minutes by Jakov Jurisic, 2nd by Tracy Collins. Motion carries.

Amend agenda to move item E under new business to item A,

Motion to approve the November 7, 2018 meeting agenda, motion passed unanimously

Financial Report:

Fund Balance-$332,427

Budget Balance- $68,205

Motion to accept the financial report by Jakov Jurisic, 2nd by Peter Vujnovich. Motion carries.

**Committee Reports:**

**A. Public-Private Oyster Seed Grounds Committee:**

Mitch Jurisich stated that he was not included on the email chain to discuss new language for the oyster lease moratorium NOI; asked that LDWF bring the proposed changes to the board for their consideration prior to taking the NOI to the LDWF Commission

**B. Enforcement Report:**

Edward Skena provided the task force with the enforcement report

**Sept. 14 - Oct. 26**

**Region 4** (Iberia)

None

**Region 5** (Cameron and Vermillion)

Vermillion:

1-Harvest oysters from unmarked lease

1-Failure to display proper number on vessel

1-Violate sanitation code (vessel sanitation log)

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

Lafourche:

8 – take oysters from an unapproved area (polluted)

5 – harvest oysters illegal hours

2 – violate sanitary code (log book)

1 – violate sanitary code (vessel refs – tarp)

40 – sacks of oysters seized and returned to the water

Terrebonne:

8 - unlawfully take oysters from a private lease

8 - fail to have written permission

10 -sacks of oysters seized and returned to the water

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

Jefferson:

1-Violate Sanitary Code (Improper Tarp)

1-Fail to Display Number on Vessel

Seizures

30 Full Sacks

2 mini Sacks

Plaquemines:

3-Violate Sanitary Code (Harvester log Sheet Requirement)

7-Unlawfully Take Oysters From Unleased State Water Bottoms

2-Violate Sanitary Code (Refrigeration)

1-Violate Oyster Cargo Regulations

1-Violate Court Ordered VMS

2-Fail to Have Written Permission

2-Unlawfully Take Oysters From Private Lease

1-No Harvester License

Seizures

80 Full Sacks Seized

85 Mini Sacks

St. Bernard:

2-Violate Sanitary Code (Refrigeration)

1-Unlawfully take oysters from un-leased state water bottoms

Seizures

68 Full Sacks

52 Mini Sacks

Update on enforcement drone purchase: Col. Hebert is currently working on the necessary steps to process the purchase of the drone; RFP

Total bedding citations reported to date as of opening day- in St Bernard 9 citations were reported, 3 of which were warnings, and in Jefferson 2 reported citations were issued, 1 of which was a warning

Request for feedback from enforcement regarding the breaking down of sacs and timing of when you are allowed to break them down on the water

**C. Legislative Report:**

No report

**D. Research Report:**

No report

**E. Coastal Restoration Committee Report:**

Dan Coulon provided the board with an update from the last committee meeting

OTF Coastal Restoration Committee Recommendations:

1. Request for the Oyster Industry Adaptation Working Group to consider expanding its membership to include input from members of the Oyster Task Force and representatives from the oyster industry from different areas of the state, Farm Bureau, and the Seafood Promotion and Marketing Board

2. To increase political influence and representation for the industry; proposed dedicating a special committee to this cause, and utilizing the assistance of the Farm Bureau’s programs and offerings

3. The committee discussed some ways to clean up the environment, which included closing Mardi Gras Pass, and support to create new as well as conserve the existing barrier islands

4 Request for LDWF to present and provide feedback on the current status of Bayou la Mocque (spelling?)

5. To continue to support and work with the Oyster Industry Adaption Working Group

6. The committee discussed the possible closure of all crevasses that are between Bac du Soleil and east Pointe a la Hache

The board unanimously accepted the Coastal Restoration Committee report and the recommendations as presented

**F. Marketing Committee Report:**

The Oyster Task Force plans to participate in the 2019 LA Alive Washington, D.C. event- requested for those members interested in attending this year’s event to notify Allison West at awest@wlf.la.gov

 LA Seafood Promotion and Marketing Board met on October 29, Jakov Jurisic has agreed to present an update from that meeting at a future task force meeting

The marketing committee plans to host a meeting in the near future

**G. Health Report:**

Justin Gremillion addressed the task force with the health report- DHH is currently conducting an investigation into the recent death caused by vibrio vulnificus; there are currently 6 cases of vibro, 4 of which are vibrio parahaemolyticus, and 2 are vibrio vulnificus, no pattern has been detected, but the investigation is on going

**H. Professionalism Report:**

No report

**I. Aquaculture Committee Report:**

Steve Pollock addressed the board with an update from the Aquaculture Subcommittee meeting- the committee is currently going through the process of proposing a list of committee members for the Oyster Task Force’s consideration; the OTF recommended Byron Encalade as a member

**J. Joint Task Force Working Group:**

No report

**New Business:**

**A.** Carolina Bourque led discussion on the 2018 oyster bedding season and enforcement- The commission was presented with the recommendation to allow 30% of non-living material; a 15% allowance of non-living material was passed

The board expressed concern with setting a standard of measuring 15% of non-living material, with inconsistencies in the sampling process, and with the enforcement of such

Earl Melancon stated that he worked on a publication that went out sometime in the mid 90’s that dealt with the bedding industry. The work included feedback from 8 different boats over a three-year time frame doing multiple loads. The fishermen, having 20-40 years experience, were bedding on Independence Island, Middle Bank Reef, and on hard areas and did not want any kind of shell. After working with these men, who didn’t want any shell, over three years it was found that there was always a yield of about 20-25% of shell on average. Mr. Melancon stated these were results of the nature of how the dredge works and that a 15% non-living material limit would almost make it impossible for a fisherman to fish. Mr. Melancon agreed to send the OTF the publication as it may be useful to bring to the Commission for their consideration in this matter

**B.** Mitch Jurisich addressed the task force with discussion on the setbacks and misconceptions of the oyster industry. The board discussed a press release put out by CCA titled, ‘Calcasieu Oyster Reef on a Comeback After Removal of Dredges.’ The board expressed concern for the public’s perception of the oyster industry

Mitch Jurisich motioned that the task force request to present an oyster industry status update to the LDWF Commission at their next meeting and asked that this be brought to the commission prior to the oyster moratorium NOI being presented, 2nd by Jakov Jurisic

Jakov Jurisic proposed an amendment to the motion, adding that the task force request a special meeting of the commission to hear the task force’s presentation

 Jakov Jurisic withdrew his amendment to the motion

John Tesvich left the meeting and appointed Mitch Jurisich as the acting chair for the remainder of the meeting

Mitch Jurisich withdrew his motion

Jakov Jurisic made a motion for the Oyster Task Force to request adding an item to the upcoming LDWF Commission agenda to present on the status of the oyster industry and asked that the presentation be done prior to the oyster lease moratorium NOI being brought to the Commission, 2nd by Peter Vujnovich. Motion carries.

**C.** Andrew Whitehurst from the Gulf Restoration Network provided an update on the Pearl River Project; requested the OTF’s help in touring the Army Corp’s Secretary around the Lower Pearl in the instance that he would come in town

The task force agreed to write a letter to the Army Corp’s Asst. Secretary for Public Works, R.D. James to oppose the dam and lake development project

**Pearl River “One Lake” Project - Update 2018**

Timeline of Significant Events

2013 September St. Tammany Parish Council Passes First Resolution against Lake Project

2015- January, Miss. Commission on Marine Resources passes resolution against lake project.

**2016 September- La. Oyster Task Force writes letter to La. DNR secretary Harris requesting full Coastal Zone Consistency Review of project, and asks Army Corps to reject the damming project.**

2017 October: Press Tour in Honey Island Swamp for Washington/St. Tammany Parish La. Govt. officials and legislators. News stories in BR Advocate, N.O. Times Picayune.

2017- November presentation about One Lake Project to Joint Legislative Lower Pearl River Ecosystem Task Force.

2017- La. House and Senate introduce Senate Concurrent Resolution 5 against the One Lake project.

**2018- La. Legislative Resolution SCR 5 Passes**

2018- Jan – April: 11 other resolutions are passed by governments downstream. 4 Miss Counties, 1 more La. Parish (Wash.), 3 La. Towns (Bogalusa, Pearl River, Slidell), 3 Miss. Towns (Monticello, Columbia, Pass Christian)

**2018. July- September. Rep. Scalise (La.) and La. Delegation were able to strengthen the funding language for this project (Pearl River Basin Demonstration Project) in America’s Water Infrastructure Act of 2018. Project cannot have engineering and design proceed without Army Secretary’s record of decision. Lower Pearl is better protected by language about impacts and mitigation.**

Important Actions against the One Lake Project

**Oyster Industry actions**– Miss CMR (2015) Resolution, Chairman J. Tesvich to La. DNR Secretary Harris (2016) Letter for Coastal Zone Review

St. Tammany Parish Resolution and Comment Letter 2013.

Washington Parish and Bogalusa resolutions 2018, then opposition resolutions snowballed to a total of 14. Every Parish and County downstream of Columbia Mississippi is on record against the project.

**Senator Hewitt and La. Lower Pearl River Ecosystem Task Force (Hewitt, Mizell, White)**

USFWS and St. Tammany Engineering Comment Letters against project

Congressman Bennie Thompson (MS) announcement/ letters of inquiry

**Sen. Cassidy/ Rep. Scalise/ Rep. Graves did difficult work to strengthen WRDA language**

Roadmap of Next Decisions on One Lake Project by Corps of Engineers- according to the project sponsors – Rankin Hinds Pearl River Flood and Drainage Control District

By December 2018: address comments and revise DEIS into a Final Environmental Impact Statement.

By summer 2019: present Final Environmental Impact Statement for public comment.

**By end of 2019: AASCW, (Secretary R.D. James) decides whether to approve project and issue a Record of Decision on the Final Environmental Impact Statement.**

**D.** Brian Lezina provided the task force with an update on the fishing industries adaptation working group meetings

The working group was the formalization of discussions being had throughout the coast, the basic mission is to identify and evaluate strategies to adapt to a changing coast, especially utilizing the knowledge of the industry. Membership consists of representatives from WLF, CPRA, Sea Grant, and other representatives from each respective fishery

Objectives:

1. Identifying issues facing the industry relating to the adaptation to a changing coast; asking what are the problems?

2. Identify any information that can be made available to include timelines that would be helpful in addressing those issues

3. Identify and discuss our restoration and protection efforts including the timing of projects

4. Identifying strategies that are available to industry that will assist in all of the aforementioned objectives

5. Identify funding sources if necessary to help the industry fully utilize the strategies of all of the above objectives

A report is to be presented to CPRA’s board on December 12 to get the ball rolling on some of these objectives, deliverables and after that meeting there are discussions of hosting regional meetings

The board requested that the Adaptation Working Group inform and seek the support of the Oyster Task Force prior to taking any action

 **E.** The task force heard an update on the Gulf Hypoxia Action Plan and Louisiana’s State strategy:

Louisiana is one of the states who have signed the Gulf Hypoxia Action Plan, which is supposed to achieve a 20% reduction in nutrient (nitrogen, phosphorus) loading to the Gulf of Mexico by 2025 ([https://www.epa.gov/sites/production/files/2015-07/documents/htf-goals-framework-2015.pdf](https://www.epa.gov/sites/production/files/2015-07/documents/htf-goals-framework-2015.pdf%22%20%5Ct%20%22_blank)).

The La Oyster Task Force passed a resolution in 2017 in support of these goals and Louisiana's work to reach them.

The state of La had developed a Nutrient Management Strategy prior to the Gulf Hypoxia Action Plan setting its new target and goal (<https://deq.louisiana.gov/page/nutrient-management-strategy>). The state is now updating that strategy and seeking input from stakeholders.

Jakov Jurisic motioned for the task force to write a letter to support reducing the Gulf hypoxic zone, 2nd by Peter Vujnovich. Motion carries.

The task force requested feedback on current farming practices being used to combat the hypoxic zone

**F.** Tracy Collins led discussion on planting cultch in Hackberry Bay, asked that LDWF look into ideas for this area, requested feedback by the next meeting on Hackberry Bay and any upcoming plans/ areas that the department may be considering for shell plants in the future

The board requested feedback on the results from bedding season

Jakov Jurisic motioned for the task force to send their recommendations to LDWF on cultch plant areas east of the River, 2nd by Peter Vujnovich

Peter Vujnovich withdrew his second to the motion

Jakov Jurisic made a motion to send recommendations to the department with regards to cultch plants east of the River and Sister Lake, 2nd by Brad Robin.

Peter Vujnovich made a substitute motion for the task force to send their recommendations to LDWF concerning cultch plant areas across the state, 2nd by Tracy Collins. Motion carries.

**Public Comment:**

Cathy Broussard with the National Ag Statistics Service, the 2017 census of agriculture was just completed and they will be taking another look. In December they will be conducting a census of aquaculture that will go from December to January for data collection and will provide a benchmark. The census can be done online or by mail and more information can be found at [www.nass.usda.gov/AgCensus](http://www.nass.usda.gov/AgCensus)

Licensing will be in the New Orleans office on November 27-29 from 8am-3:30pm to purchase/ renew commercial licenses

~~Next meeting set for Monday, November 26, 2018 for 1:00pm in New Orleans;~~

**The next meeting date was later changed to Tuesday, November 27, 2018 for 1:00pm in the UNO CERM Building located at 2045 Lakeshore Drive, RM 216 New Orleans, LA 70122. The OTF Marketing Committee also plans to meet prior for 10:00am.**

Motion to adjourn the meeting by Jakov Jurisic, 2nd by Tracy Collins. Motion carries.