**Oyster Task Force Meeting**

**Tuesday, May 30, 2017, 1pm**

**2021 Lakeshore Drive, STE 210**

**New Orleans, LA 70122**

**Voting Members Present:**

Dan Coulon

Byron Encalade

Jakov Jurisic

Mitch Jurisich

Brandt Lafrance

Al Sunseri

John Tesvich

Peter Vujnovich

Willie Daisy

**Voting Members Absent:**

Shane Bagala

Brad Robin

Sam Slavich

**Non-Voting Members Present:**

Mark Schexnayder

Gary Lopinto in for Justin Gremillion

Mark Valentino in for Leo Dyson

Steve McManus in for Chad Hebert

Frank Cole in for Karl Morgan

Brian Lezina

Jakov Jurisic made a motion to approve the April 18, 2017 meeting minutes by, 2nd by Dan Coulon. Motion carries.

Motion by Al Sunseri to amend the agenda to add items under ‘New Business’ -*F. ISSC conference notification and request of TF members’ participation and item G. Discussion of HB 156- The closing of Calcasieu and Sabine Lake to oyster harvesting to hand tonging only.* Also, to amend the agenda to address item B under new business first, 2nd by Jakov Jurisic Motion carries with unanimous vote.

Motion to accept the amended agenda by Al Sunseri, 2nd by Jakov Jurisic. Motion carries.

Financial Report:

Oyster Development Account- Fund Balance- $ 456, 604; Budget Balance- $ 224,790

Public Oyster Seed Ground Development Account: Balance- $ 3,129,576.05; Budget Appropriation- $2,447,327.00

Jakov Jurisic made a motion to accept the financial report, 2nd by Dan Coulon. Motion carries.

**Committee Reports:**

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

Mitch Jurisich addressed the TF with the Public-Private Oyster Seed Grounds Committee report

Committee Discussion Items:

* Oyster Seed Grounds Vessel Permit Training- Committee recommends holding off on the training requirements until December, to look into how many permits expire and how many are renewed after this year. They will use the permit feedback to then recommend setting a cap and moving forward with creating training requirements
* Oyster Lease Acquisition Program- the committee presented a letter to the task force to recommend changing the harvest efficiency ratio from 70% to 95%, and also include spat oysters into the definition of Marketable Oysters
* Draft Oyster Lease Moratorium NOI tabled until next meeting

Jakov Jurisic made a motion to accept the letter and recommendations from the committee for the Oyster Lease Acquisition Program, 2nd by Brandt Lafrance. Motion passes with one abstained- Al Sunseri

Brandt Lafrance suggested a formal letter from the chairman in support of the recommendation and sent to CPRA prior to June 1, 2017.

**Enforcement Report:**

Steve McManus addressed the TF with the enforcement report

April 18 – May 18

Region 5: (Cameron, Vermilion)

No citations issued.

Region 6: (Terrebonne, Lafourche, Grand Isle)

6 – Take Oysters from unapproved area

2 – Violate sanitary code (log book)

60 Sacks of oysters seized and returned to the water

2 Scrapers seized

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

2 – Violate sanitary code (refrigeration)

2 – Violate sanitary code (log book)

2 – Unlawfully take oysters from state water bottoms

113 Sacks of oysters seized and returned to the water

**Legislative Committee:**

No report

TF requested a follow up on the resolution to close the Bohemia Salinity Control Structure/ Mardi Gras Pass

George Ricks stated that he would check on an update

**Research Report:**

Steve Beck addressed the TF with an update on the RFP regarding research that will look into the historical ecology as well as the socioeconomics of the area east of the Mississippi River

John Tesvich requested having an independent entity perform the research due to the timing and added burden on the Department

Byron Encalade expressed support for John’s recommendation

**Coastal Restoration Report:**

No report

**Marketing Report:**

Task Force Washington, D.C. Visit Recap: During the week of May 15-19, the Oyster Task Force traveled to Washington, D.C. to host their annual, ‘Let the World Be Your Oyster’ event and Walk the Hill meetings. Unlike previous years, this year the event was held in May. The overall consensus was favorable to continuing the event during this time in the future.

While in D.C., task force members met with the Louisiana congressional staff, congressmen, Corp of Engineers, EPA, Department of Agriculture, National Fish and Wildlife Federation, and NOAA

Al Sunseri suggested that the task force vote to do the event at the August 2017 meeting so that there is enough time to process travel and plan the event for 2018

**Health Report:**

Gary Lopinto addressed the TF with the health report

Reminder to oyster dealers that June 1 starts the annual recertification period; this is an evaluation year for the Louisiana

**Sustainability Report:**

No Report

**Professionalism Report:**

No report

**Aquaculture Report:**

Dr. Supan addressed the TF with the aquaculture report

TF enacted on Expansion of the Grand Isle- HB614 passed House and waiting on the Senate

HB474- addresses the Alternative Oyster Culture Permitting as it applies to private land and also lists the required suitability map- has passed the House and is expected to pass the Senate

**Joint Task Force Working Group Report:**

No report

**New Business:**

Kodi Guillory (CPRA) provided the TF with a presentation and update on the Mid-Barataria Sediment Diversion Project

John Tesvich expressed his concern with the sediment diversions and the affects it will have on the oyster industry. Wanted to know what the State plans to do for the people and businesses that will be affected/ displaced by the diversions? Stated that the OTF is for coastal restoration, dredging, and long distance pipe lines

Al Sunseri stated that oyster spawning usually takes place in the spring and fall months, asked that CPRA look into the projected affects the diversions will have on oyster spawn-ability in the proposed areas and to include the findings in the EIS-economic impact statement.

Also requested that feedback on River water quality be including in the EIS and scope meetings. Requested that the feedback include the levels of chemical, bacterial, and viral contaminants being introduced to the Basin through the MS River as well as how far those contaminants will spread.

Steve Beck addressed the TF with a presentation on the Public Oyster Seed Grounds 2016/2017 Season Summary and supplemental information

John Tesvich suggested having a committee meeting to discuss shell budget

Byron Encalade recommended looking at moving cultch material (clam shells, etc.) out into needed areas to cut costs

Al Sunseri suggested turning to an outside source to manage and better predict the shell budget; asked that the TF be involved in the management plan and strategy, possibly dedicating a committee to this cause

John Tesvich stated in closing that there are other things that the department can be doing to combat the crisis that the oyster industry is under. Proposed looking into salinity, and other reasons regarding fixing and addressing the issue that is causing the oyster crisis

Beth Walton addressed the TF with an announcement of the Gulf of Mexico Shellfish Initiative

The TF considered a draft resolution for the state’s continued work on the Gulf Hypoxia issue, presented by Doug Daigle

Al Sunseri made a motion to defer the draft resolution for consideration until the next meeting to give the TF time to look at the draft and make changes, 2nd by Dan Coulon

John Tesvich addressed the TF to consider funding to close the Bohemia Salinity Control Structure

Plaquemines Parish has approved paying $30K of the engineering fees, $34K is still owed to him by the Parish and his estimate for finishing the project, which includes a detailed survey of the waterway, would be an additional $154,860

It would be a cooperative effort with Plaquemines Parish to fund the engineering work. The funding amount would be $188,860 to fund the engineering work to finish the first phase of the closure

Al Sunseri stated that the intention of the TF at the last meeting was to utilize the funds from the Oyster Seed Account and the Oyster Development Account to close the structure the fastest way possible, and stated that he opposed spending the money on an engineer. Suggested that the TF reach out to the Corp of Engineers to be apart of expediting a solution to close the structure- look into the original act that started the structure, WLF, Plaquemines Parish Council, and Corp of Engineers

John Supan suggested contacting Jim Wilkins from Sea Grant legal and let him advise the TF on what the legal capabilities are

Jakov Jurisic made a motion to fund the closure, setting a cap of $200,000 funding from the Oyster Development Account to Plaquemines Parish to cover engineering costs and the first phase of closing the Bohemia Salinity Control Structure, 2nd by Brandt Lafrance. Motion carries with one opposed – Al Sunseri

Al Sunseri made a motion to fund Oyster Task Force and ex-officio members’ travel, conference registration fees, and ISSC membership to attend the 2017 Interstate Shellfish Conference in October, 2nd by Jakov Jurisic. Motion carries unanimously. Notify the members that proposals are due by June 15.

John Tesvich suggested putting the 36-hour refrigeration requirement back in place during the winter months, what would have to be changed in the model-ordinance to allow over night trips

Health Committee meeting to be called before the ISSC proposal deadline- June 15

Jakov Jurisic stated that he would like to propose changing the dates of the conference

Mark Valentine, of the Calcasieu Task Force, addressed the TF with discussion of House Bill 156- to close the east and west of Lake Calcasieu and Sabine Lake to a hand tonging only oyster harvesting season

Asking for the TF’s support in opposing the bill and sticking to the original limits and regulations. The bill has passed through the House and is currently with the Senate

Jakov Jurisic made a motion to oppose House Bill 156, 2nd by Peter Vujnovich. Motion carries.

John Tesvich stated that if this action cannot be stopped to support amending the bill

Task Force members stated that they would send letters of opposition to HB-156 to their respective representatives and Senator Norby Chabert

The next meeting was set for Tuesday, August 1, 2017- New Orleans, Public-Private Oyster Seed Ground meeting set prior to the TF meeting for 9:30am in New Orleans

Jakov Jurisic requested adding a U.S. and LA state flag to the OTF meeting space

Motion to adjourn by Dan Coulon, 2nd by Jakov Jurisic. Motion carries.