

**Oyster Task Force Meeting
Tuesday, June 10, 2025, 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

Sam Slavich

Willie Daisy

Voting Members Absent:

Shane Bagala

Dan Coulon

Brandon Debarge

Jakov Jurisic

Al Sunseri

Matthew Slavich

Peter Vujnovich

Steve Pollock

Non-Voting Members Present:

Patrick Banks in for Robert Caballero

Davis Madere

Kyle Balkum

Bryan Wallace

Brian Lezina

Non-Voting Members Absent:

III. Brad Robin motioned to approve the May 6, 2025 meeting minutes, 2nd by Brandt Lafrance. Motion carries.

Brad Robin motioned to approve the June 10, 2025 meeting agenda, 2nd by Brandt Lafrance. Motion carries.

IV. Treasury Report

Remaining Fund Balance- \$549,948

Remaining Budget Balance- \$106,142

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

April 25th – May 30, 2025

Region 5: (Vermillion, Cameron)

Vermillion

RS 40:4A Violate Sanitation Code (Refrigeration) RS 40:4A Violate Sanitation Code (Log Book)
25 Sacks seized and RTW

RS40:4A Violate Sanitation Code (Refrigeration)
50 Sacks seized and RTW

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

- 1- 56:424 B Failure to have written permission.
- 1- 56:424 A Unlawfully take oysters from state water bottoms.
- 6- 40:4A Violate sanitation code (log book)
- 4- 56:424 F Fail to cull oysters in proper location.

Seizures: 96 sacks

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

St. Bernard

- 4- RS 56: 306 – Buy/Sell Fish without Wholesale License
- 12- RS 56: 306.5 – Fail to Maintain Records
- 12- RS 56: 306.6 – Fail to report Commercial Fisheries Data
- 1- RS 34:851.20 A - Fail to display Valid Certificate Decal

- C. Legislative Report- no report
- D. Legal Report- no report
- E. Research Committee- The Research Committee met this morning and requested that LDWF and LA Sea Grant to develop a methodology study to look at biofilm on cultch to determine the issue with aged cultch vs new cultch, will be looking at this over the next month or so, would like some cost analysis and bring this back to the full task force at the next OTF meeting

Brad Robin motioned to move forward with receiving a funding estimate for a methodology study on biofilm on cultch material, 2nd by Brandt Lafrance. Motion carries.

- F. Coastal Restoration Committee- Captain George Ricks provided an update, May 21st Chairman Gordy Dove provided a presentation at the Senate Transportation, Highways, and Public Works Committee meeting and stated that the Mid-Breton Diversion project will be terminated, also gave a few issues under review one of those being the mitigation funds, which we have said were inadequate all along, also discussed 7 lawsuits and litigation underway in this regard, \$564M spent on the diversion project so far, one CPRA meeting LT Gov. Billy Nungesser stated that the money spent on these diversion projects was criminal, \$564M of precious money was wasted on this project that is not moving forward

Mitch Jurisich stated that hats off to Kimberly Buck for all of her efforts, most of the equipment has been sold for the Mid-Barataria Sediment Diversion, expressed an issue with the way the trailers were built and the waste of funding, the trailers were like a resort, this money should be going to the coast

- G. Marketing Committee- Anna Koehl stated that they are currently considering funding and planning for the the Let the World Be Your Oyster event
- H. Health Committee- Jennifer Armentor provided an update stating that there was a Health Committee meeting held prior and the oyster relay rules were discussed, cannot make changes to relay rules currently, it is encouraged that if you anticipate any sort of event that might affect harvest to go ahead and apply for relay have to keep what's in the code to meet the State's FDA requirements, an updated health report was provided to the task force; John Veazay wanted to pass on a note that if you use infrared guns to check temperatures on oysters, these must be kept in the cooler, if it's kept outside in the heat will not properly read the cooler for an accurate reading
- I. Aquaculture Report- no report
- J. Joint Task Force Working Group- no report

VI. New Business:

- A. The task force discussed weights and measures enforcement in oyster gallon containers

Mitch Jurisich led discussion stated that a few restaurants complaining when they buy oysters from producers there are not a whole lot of oysters in the gallon container, going to strictly weight, may need to go to more marketing measures

Gene Cavalier stated that these gallon containers need to be sold by fluid volume OR net drain weight, cannot have a weight and a volume of measurement listed, net drain weight it by far the most accurate and easiest option, going to net drain weight soon

Jen Armentor stated that this issue has been brought to her attention and they are working towards changing the labeling to drained weight, 8oz and 16oz will still be allowed but it will be strictly by weight

Ante Tesvich stated that the East Coast has really been ramping things up, think they have been taking a portion of the Louisiana market, don't ship a whole lot of AL and FL oysters, the East Coast has a lot of public oyster grounds that they are able to sell at a lower price, stated that he supports the sales and marketing of Louisiana oysters, need help from distributors; Plan to take this up with BMF and the Marketing Committee

Gulf South Atlantic has an oyster trail, different restaurants that highlight different oyster dishes and promotions, something like this can help promote the oyster industry

John Zach Lea stated that there is a dealer in Miami that will sell your LA oyster online they are like \$1 per oyster but cost around \$50 to ship

- B. The task force discussed terminating funding for research on a low salinity oyster

Patrick Banks stated that the initial contract was \$5M/ year for three years and the agency was not interested in funding it any longer, ULL was able to convince the legislature to appropriate \$5M towards the project to finish it out for the last two years, funding is no longer coming from CPRA or LDWF flood disaster funding, now coming out of legislative funds, at the end of the day it will end up being \$20M total for the project, the board asked that if LDWF sees this project getting any more funding to let the Oyster Task Force know

- C. The board discussed a proposal permitting oyster harvesters to switch from white to green tags on the boat in emergency circumstances

Ante Tesvich led discussion, right now white tags you have one hour to refrigeration, if your cooler is at 46 degrees technically they do not qualify to be a white tag oyster any more, if enforcement boards your vessel and your white tag oysters don't meet the requirements, but these oyster might qualify to be a green tag, if boats have a cooler issue treated as adulterated but this would still qualify the oysters to fall into a green tag, to avoid disposing of these oysters would like to be able to switch from a white tag over to a green tag avoid disposal of oysters, need LDH and LDWF enforcement to work something out

Davis Madere stated that if you have a cooler issue, when a fishermen goes out he has to declare which tags he is fishing, currently the regulations do not allow you to change the tags on the water, from an enforcement perspective changing the rules to make this allowance may increase the chance of contaminated product going onto the market

Mitch Jurisich suggested what if the fishermen calls in and notifies enforcement of a cooler issue and the changing of tags, would like this allowable? Davis Madere stated that this might be something that can be done but would need to see who would field these calls and what would the process and rules look like

Jen Armentor stated that this may be listed in a HAACP plan and corrective action, if you go to receive and you get the log and the log is incorrect the dealer can correct the tag, would have to be able to prove this, the dealer can make correction upon receiving the product, the issue is with LDWF enforcement and if the fishermen is stopped on the water, currently there is no HAACP plan for boats

Davis Madere stated that he would have to sit down with his higher ups and see if this can be done and allowable, will meet with Col., LDH, and see what can be done, will come back to the next meeting with more information

Brad Robin stated that they are looking to call in when an issue arises and then head back in and ask that enforcement meet you there and you would not change the tag or log until they reach the dock, LDH and enforcement said this may be a solution would have to look into it

D. The board considered funding for the 2026 LA Live event

Brad Robin motion to dedicate \$15,000 for an Oyster Task Force booth at the 2026 LA Live event, 2nd by Sam Slavich. Motion carries.

VII. Public Comment:

Brad Robin stated that the task force was invited to Washington, D.C. to participate in the NOAA Seafood Celebration with Sea Grant to promote LA oysters, 15 vendors, product got there safe this year, 1000 people attended in three hours, shipped up 6, 8lb gallons and requested a medium oysters, brought a pirogue up to display the product, had a prime location at the event, Secretary of commerce came by and made a second round, thanked Sea Grant for inviting them, sold 1000 tickets and it sold out in five minutes

John Zach Lea, Montegut Oyster Park, offering to help people lease this land, have a farm called Zach's Off-Bottom Oyster Farm, only three other oyster parks, four total, would like the task force to do something to publicize that this park is there and available for leasing, make a public resolution to support the development of the oyster park

VIII. Next meeting date set for Tuesday, July 29, 2025 for 10:00am New Orleans Lakefront Airport

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