

**Oyster Task Force Minutes**  
**Tuesday, December 12, 2023, 10:00am**  
**New Orleans Lakefront Airport**  
**6001 Stars and Stripes Blvd.**  
**New Orleans, LA 70126**

I. Pledge of Allegiance

II. Roll call and introduction of guests

**Voting Members Present:**

Jakov Jurisic

Mitch Jurisich

Brad Robin

Brandt Lafrance

Al Sunseri

Matthew Slavich

Sam Slavich

Willie Daisy

Peter Vujnovich

**Voting Members Absent:**

Shane Bagala

Tracy Collins

Dan Coulon

Brandon DeBarge

Steve Pollock

**Non-Voting Members Present:**

Robert Caballero

Tim Fox in for Edward Skena

Kyle Balkum

Isabel Englehart in for Harry Vorhoff

**Non-Voting Members Absent:**

Brian Lezina

III. Brad Robin motioned to approve the September 20, 2023 meeting minutes, 2<sup>nd</sup> by Jakov Jurisic. Motion carries.

Brad Robin motioned to approve the October 24, 2023 meeting minutes, 2<sup>nd</sup> by Jakov Jurisic. Motion carries.

Jakov Jurisic motioned to approve the December 12, 2023 meeting agenda as presented, 2<sup>nd</sup> by Brad Robin. Motion carries.

#### IV. Treasury Report

Remaining Fund Balance- \$578,677

Budget Balance- \$68,050

November Tag Sales- 187,200

#### V. Committee Reports:

A. Public Private Oyster Seed Grounds Committee- No report

B. Enforcement- Tim Fox provided the enforcement report

October 15- November 27th

##### **Region 4 (Iberia)**

None

##### **Region 5 (Calcasieu, Cameron, Vermillion)**

###### **Cameron**

1- 56:304A Take and/or poss. Commercial Fish w/o vessel license

1- 56:424E(1) Take oysters from unapproved area

###### **Seizures:**

**7 sacks**

###### **Vermillion**

1-56:449E Possess less than 10% untagged oyster sacks

###### **Seizures**

**1 Sack**

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

###### **Terrebonne**

3- 40:4A Violate sanitation code (logbook)

1-56:304A take commercial fish without commercial license (vessel License)

3-56:433.1 Violate seed ground vessel permit

7-56:424 A(1) Violate commission action on state seed ground(untagged sacks)

1 56:424A(1) Violate commission action on state seed ground(sacks on seed ground first day)

2-56:424A(1) Violate commission action on state seed ground(overlimit)

1-56:435 Use illegal dredge

###### **Seizures:**

**134 sacks returned to water**

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

###### **St. Bernard**

1-RS 40:4A Violate Sanitation Code (Refrigeration)

5-RS 56:433 A Take Undersized oysters from a Natural Reef

2-RS 56:449A Fail to Fill Oyster Tags Correctly

1-RS 56:424 A(1) Violate Commission Action on Seed Ground (Fail to Call In)

- 1-RS 56:435 Use Illegal Dredge On Seed Ground (Diving Board)
- 1-RS 56:449 F Fail to tag oysters upon Leaving Seed Ground

**Seizures:**

**93 Sacks**

**Plaquemines**

- 2- RS 40:636 Misbranded/ Adulterated Seafood
- 1-RS 56:449 Fail to Fill Oyster Tags Correctly
- 1-RS 56:449J Fail to keep Traceable Oyster Records
- 1-RS 56:306.5 Failure to maintain records
- 1-RS 56:303.7 Failure to complete trip tickets
- 1-RS 40:4A Violate Sanitation Code- Refrigeration
- 1-RS 56:303 A(1) Take Comm Fish W/O Comm Licenses
- 1-RS 56:303.6 A(1) Take Oysters W/O Oyster Harvester License
- 1-RS 40:4A Violation Sanitation Code (Tarp)
- 3-RS 56:424B Fail to have Written Permission

**Seizures:**

**7 Sacks and 3 Gallons**

Task Force discussed the seed ground vessel permit and gear license fees, Willie Daisy stated that he has seen some issues with people fishing with a non-resident license on a resident permit.

Peter Vujnovich stated that if you have a LA registered vessel and a LA registered captain with a harvesters license, the gear license can transfer to him. If it's an out of state license the gear license does not transfer in this instance.

The Seed Ground Permit is tied to the vessel, but the gear license is tied to the individual, the task force stated that the issue is the gear license should be tied to the vessel and not the individual, need to look into the legislation and see if this is already sorted out. Asked to take this issue up on the next meeting agenda for further discussion

C. Legislative Committee- no report

D. Legal Committee- no report

E. Research Committee- no report; introduced Dr. Jeff Plumlee new LA Sea Grant fisheries extension specialist

F. Coastal Restoration Committee- no report

G. Marketing Committee- Anna Koehl provided a marketing update, Oyster Task Force Facebook page overview- (last 28 days- as of December 8) 6,195 post reach; 775 post engagement; 7 new page likes; 23 new page follows; 790 followers; 616 likes

Courtney Cash with BMF stated that 25,000 people in the New Orleans, interest targeting were household income over \$25,000 who were interested in food, cooking, etc., 1600 opens 25% open rate anything over 10% is considered a success, 591 clicks

Al Sunseri stated that there is an issue with the packaging and labeling of oysters; largest grocery chain in LA mislabeling oysters, Dept of AG to bring this up to the program manager; would like to send a letter to Commissioner of Ag and Forestry, secretary of LDH and secretary of LDWF; mentioned posting on the oyster page about the seasonality of oysters, when to buy oysters and what to do with the product during different times of the year

H. Health Committee- no report

I. Aquaculture Committee- no report

J. Joint Task Force Working Group- no report

## VI. New Business

Robert Caballero provided an oyster season update

Below is a comprehensive update for the Oyster Season. Daily reporting estimates are up to 12/10/2023 and biologist board run estimates are up 12/08/2023.

### Daily Reporting

Below is the table with the daily reporting data. It appears that some of the phone reporting converted over to the eReporting application. Also, the eReporting application has many of the out of state vessel permit users. Total reporting compliance across the state is estimated at 75%, by comparing total harvest vessels observed by biologists versus total vessels complying with daily reporting. Of the 147 vessels daily reporting, 82% are phone reporting and 27% are using the new eReporting app.

<b>Total Vessels Reporting</b>	<b>147</b>	<b>75%</b>
<b>Total Vessels Observed</b>	<b>195</b>	
<b>Total Vessels Phone call</b>	<b>121</b>	<b>82%</b>
<b>Total Vessels eReporting</b>	<b>39</b>	<b>27%</b>

### POSG East of Mississippi river and North of MRGO

6,306 sacks reported harvested through daily reporting requirement. Biologist boarding run estimates put the harvest around 10,467 sacks. There is a 40% difference in daily reported harvest versus boarding run harvest estimates for this area. Most of the harvest has taken place in LDH areas 2 & 3, in the northern Biloxi Marsh area. Total harvest for the area has reached 38% of the total Shell Budget Thresholds, however two reefs have exceeded the individual reef harvest thresholds. 3-Mile Pass and Shell Point cultch plants have exceeded their 50% Fishery Management Plan harvest threshold and Shell Budget harvest thresholds. DE for closure of these two reefs was put in and closure of these reefs occurred ½ hour after sunset on 12/03/2023. Daily reporting compliance by harvesting vessels is complied by comparing total harvesting vessels observed by biologists versus total vessels complying with daily reporting. The oyster season compliance estimates so far are at 74% of the vessels reporting and 77% of harvested sacks reported.

### POSG East of Mississippi river and South of MRGO

1,607 sacks reported harvested through daily reporting requirement. Biologist boarding run estimates put the harvest around 2,978.5 sacks. There is a 46% difference in daily reported harvest versus boarding run harvest estimates for this area. All of the Harvest for this area is coming off the clutch plant in Lake Fortuna. Total harvest for the area has reach 21% of the total Shell Budget Thresholds. Daily reporting compliance by harvesting vessels estimates so far are at 80% of the vessels reporting and 70% of harvested sacks reported.

### **Sister Lake**

24,632 sacks reported market oysters harvested through daily reporting requirement. Biologist boarding run estimates put the market harvest around 34,921 sacks. There is a 29.5% difference in daily reported harvest versus boarding run harvest estimates for this area. Most of the harvest came from northern side of the lake and the cultch plants around mid-lake. Sister Lake was open for 20 fishable days and historically is managed through repeated smaller openings. LDH closure lines have extended into Sister Lake, closing some of the more productive northern reefs from November-February. Daily reporting compliance by harvesting vessels for the oyster season averages are at 61% of the vessels reporting and 62% of harvested sacks reported.

Market-size oyster levels are good for a re-opening, OTF requested a Lenten season opening, after discussions with CSA Manger of this area, LDWF is considering a late February or early March second opening.

### **Vermilion/East and West Cote Blanche Bay/Atchafalaya Bay Public Oyster Seed Grounds**

While this area is open, no fisherman has been seen during boarding runs or reported harvesting outside of the LDH closure lines. Also, no fishermen have applied for relay permits to access the oyster resource in this area.

### **Calcasieu Lake (West Cove)**

1,165 sacks reported harvested through daily reporting requirement. Biologists boarding run estimate put the harvest around 1,617 sacks. There is a 28% difference in daily reported harvest versus boarding run harvest estimates in this area. Most of the Harvest for this area is coming from the Rabbit Island area. Total harvest for the area has reach 2.4% of the total Shell Budget Thresholds. The oyster season reporting compliance estimates so far are at 54% of the vessels reporting and 56% of harvested sacks reported; on days observed by biologists. These percentages are lower than expected due to non-compliance early in the season. There have been several complaints by fishermen in this area including: hook mussel density affecting marketability of oysters and handling time for harvest. Also, one fisherman would like the tonging laws changed to allow hand dredges.

**Daily Reporting Harvest estimates by Louisiana Department of Health Shellfish Harvest Area**

	Area 1	Area 2	Area 3	Area 4	Area 5	Area 19	Area 30	Grand Totals
Sacking	30	4356	1879	41	1607	24,632	1165	33,710
Seed bedding						1,800	N/A	1,800
bedding vessels						9	N/A	9
sacking vessels per area	1	42	29	1	26	101	14	214

**2023-2024 LDWF Oyster Season Summary**

CSA	Area	Season Opening	Season Closure	Season/type	Days open	Harvest Calls/ eReporting (sacks)	Boarding Report (sacks)
1	*POSG East of Mississippi river and North of MRGO	13-Nov-23	1-Apr-24	Market Harvest	28	6,306	10,467
	POSG East of Mississippi river and South of MRGO	13-Nov-23	1-Apr-24	Market Harvest	28	1,607	2,979
5	Sister Lake	10-Oct-23	30-Oct-23	Market Harvest	20	24,632	34,921
		9-Oct-23	9-Oct-23	1 day bedding season	1	1800 bbl	3,650
6	Vermilion/East and West Cote Blanche Bay/Atchafalaya Bay Public Oyster Seed Grounds	9-Oct-23	9-Oct-23	1 day bedding season	1	0	0
		13-Nov-23	1-Apr-23	Market Harvest	28	0	0
7	Calcasieu Lake	1-Jan-24	30-Apr-24	***East Side: Market Harvest	0	0	0

		15-Oct-23	30-Apr-24	**West Cove: Market Harvest	57	1,165	1,617
				<b>Sack Totals</b>		<b>33,710</b>	<b>49,984</b>

Fishermen from the Calcasieu area are seeking to discuss with the task force the possibility of changing legislation to allow for dredging in the area, may be something for discussion at a future meeting

Closed areas in Drum Bay have to be closed for two years probably will be open next season, cultch plants are done quarterly

B. The task force heard a marketing proposal and considered funding for a WWLTV/Tegna OTF segment

Sandy Garcia provided the proposal:

**8-week Louisiana Made campaign with inclusion of your :30 spot in the Super Bowl**

CAMPAIGN SUMMARY



- 301x :30 LA Made, LA Proud messages on WWL-TV, WUPL and NewsWatch15 Including your LA Made spot in either Pre-Kickoff or Post Gun of Superbowl LVIII on February 11, 2024
- Branded Facebook post and boosted schedule
- Message on LA Made section of WWLTV.com and LA Made vault on YouTube
- Production of all broadcast and digital assets
- 130,000 Targeted Streaming TV Impressions

**Total Promotional Value: \$100,000**  
**Total Investment: \$42,500**



Al Sunseri proposed doing a 4 week campaign for \$21,250, 4 weeks

Al Sunseri motioned to dedicate \$21,250 for a WWLTV/Tegna oyster marketing campaign to air on WWLTV; if needed would also like to put in a BA-7 to get the Oyster Development Account reimbursed on the backend for this particular promotion, 2<sup>nd</sup> by Brad Robin. Motion carries.

C. Jason Froeba provided an update on fisheries disaster funding

The application process opened on December 5<sup>th</sup>, still have funding available, \$38,200,000 available when the program started, as of today have about 1414 applications, have about \$1.2M in funding left, still accepting applications, want to exceed the number of applications, 58% of applicants are receipts only, when amendments of the spend plan gets approved at NOAA LDWF will post the plan

D. The board heard a presentation and considered funding to create oyster industry YouTube snippets

Video segments, budget and schedule, original proposal was for 5-7 minute segments, after hearing the boards comments the budget was closet to \$15,000 per segment talked about ways to reduce that budget for the task force, one option was creating smaller more digestible segments and at the same time be more cost efficient, Louis and Jay went back and looked at 2-3 minute videos 4 more segments at \$9,000 per segment or fewer than 4 segments would be \$12K/ segment 2-4 month time frame, videos are meant to be informational

Al Sunseri reach out to some of the foundations who work with WYES to produce something similar to this, there was something similar to this done for seafood a long time ago, these sorts of things are long lasting but to have something new need to work with a foundation to pay for this

E. Anna Koehl led discussion on Washington, D.C. marketing items

Jakov Jurisic motioned to approve up to \$5,000 in funding for the purchase of marketing and promotional items for the Oyster Task Force trip to Washington, D.C. in January 2024, 2<sup>nd</sup> by Brad Robin. Motion carries.

F. Jakov Jurisic motioned to defer item F. To Consider Hiring Oyster Task Force Legal Counsel to a future meeting, 2<sup>nd</sup> by Brad Robin. Motion carries.

#### **VII. Public Comment**

Gene Cavalier, USDA modifying the deadline for crop insurance, Earl Melancon to research and look into this to see how the industry can get involved

Jakov Jurisic stated that 4-5 meetings ago he attempted to add an agenda item, the addition of the item to the agenda did not pass, would like clarification on amending the agenda and what is needed, Allison West to bring copies to the next meeting of Open Meetings Law and Robert's Rules

**VIII.** Next meeting set for Tuesday, February 6, 2024 at the New Orleans Lakefront Airport at 10:00am

**IX.** Jakov Jurisic motioned to adjourn the meeting, 2<sup>nd</sup> by Brad Robin. Motion carries.