

**Oyster Task Force Meeting
Wednesday, May 20, 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

Al Sunseri
Brad Robin
Brandt Lafrance
Jakov Jurisic
Mitch Jurisich
Peter Vujnovich
Willie Daisy

Voting Members Absent

Brandon Lee Debarge
Dan Coulon
Matthew Slavich
Shane Bagala
Steve Pollock

Nonvoting Members Present

Brian Lezina
Bryan Wallace
Mike Garity
Kyle Balkum
Robert Caballero

Nonvoting Members Absent

Harry Vorhoff

- III. Approval of April 7, 2026 Meeting Minutes and the May 20, 2026 Agenda**
Peter Vujnovich motioned to approve the April 7, 2026 meeting minutes, 2nd by Brad Robin. Motion carries.
Brad Robin motioned to approve the May 20, 2026 meeting agenda, 2nd by Jakov Jurisic. Motion carries.

- IV. Treasury Report**

LOTF Financial Report & Oyster Tag Sales
FY 2026 budget: \$149,989
Remaining FY 2026 balance: \$20,519

Tag Sales

April: 123,600

Peter Vujnovich motioned to accept the treasury report as presented, 2nd by Brad Robin. Motion carries.

- V. Committee Reports**

- A. Public and Private Oyster Grounds Committee (Mitch Jurisich)**

Jurisich reported that there were no updates from the Public and Private Oyster Grounds Committee.

- B. Enforcement (Lt. Mike Garrity)**

Lt. Mike Garrity provided the enforcement report for the period referenced.

Region 4 (Iberia Parish)

No violations to report.

Region 5 (Calcasieu, Cameron)

No violations to report.

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

No violations to report.

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

One citation issued for buying or selling untagged oysters.

One citation issued for selling or buying oysters contained illegally.

One citation issued for failure to maintain required records.

One citation issued for taking or selling commercial fish without a commercial license.

One citation issued for sanitation code – logbook violation.

Seizures: 5 quarts of shucked oysters were seized and discarded.

C. Legislative (Brad Robin) - No report

D. Legal (Brad Robin/Jakov Jurisic)- No report

E. Research (Melancon)

Dr. Earl Melancon reported on a presentation by Dr. Shaye Sable. Dr. Sable's research, conducted in partnership with CPRA and LDWF, focuses on oyster recruitment, broodstock reef modeling, and hydrological conditions in Barataria Bay. Although the project currently examines conditions from 2014–2018 only in Barataria Bay, Dr. Sable indicated that future expansion may be possible. Discussion centered on larval transport, recruitment trends, brood reef planning, and industry involvement.

Jakov Jurisic moved that the Task Force maintain communication with Dr. Sable as the modeling project progresses. The motion was seconded by Brad Robin and approved by the Task Force. The motion carried.

Dr. Melancon also provided an update on proposed cultch-performance research led by Dr. Broussard. Although funding has not yet been secured, Dr. Broussard sought confirmation of the Task Force's support for the project. Members expressed their support and agreed that, given current funding limitations, assistance would be provided through letters of support and oyster stocks once funding is secured.

Finally, Dr. Melancon provided information on an upcoming June workshop focused on fishermen's observations, workforce development, seafood markets, and seafood innovation. Following discussion, the Task Force agreed to tentatively cancel the June meeting, pending any emergencies, in order to encourage member participation in the workshop.

F. Coastal Restoration (Capt. George Ricks)

Captain George Ricks reported that he had no formal coastal restoration updates. He noted that a mid-year conversion workshop related to the Caernarvon and Davis Pond areas is scheduled for June 23 and is not expected to be open to the public.

Ricks also reported that the Mississippi River is currently experiencing low-water conditions, which may increase salinity levels and affect surrounding coastal areas. Discussion followed regarding the potential conversion of the Caernarvon structure to a sediment-based operation and other sediment-management concepts that may be addressed during the workshop.

Ricks referenced a recent coastal event held at St. Paul's, noting that it had strong attendance and included presentations on ongoing coastal projects. Members discussed several active restoration projects, including progress on the Barataria Land Bridge project. Brian Lezina stated that, following completion of the legislative session and project planning efforts, additional updates on statewide restoration activities would be provided to the taskforce.

With no further discussion, the committee proceeded to the next agenda item.

G. Marketing (BMF)

Mitch Jurisich reported that Anna Koehl was unable to attend the meeting. Discussion focused on materials for the upcoming Louisiana Live event, and Jurisich indicated he would follow up regarding submission requirements and event participation.

Jakov Jurisic provided an update on previous efforts to contact representatives of the Seafood Board but reported that he had not received a response. Members discussed ongoing communication challenges with both the Seafood Board and Sea Grant and emphasized the importance of maintaining active engagement with industry partners.

Discussion also addressed concerns regarding the inactivity of the Market and Promotion Board. Members noted the importance of regular meetings, particularly in light of current market conditions and industry developments. Jakov Jurisic stressed the need for increased visibility and communication from the board.

Following discussion, members agreed to continue outreach efforts to the Seafood Board and other relevant organizations. The committee then proceeded to the next agenda item.

H. Health (LDH)

Jennifer Armentor reminded dealers that annual LDH permit renewals are due by June 30 and encouraged timely submission to avoid late fees. She also noted that annual dealer certification activities will occur from June 1 through September 30, including site visits and HACCP plan reviews. Armentor emphasized that permits must remain current to maintain placement on the ISSC shippers list.

Discussion followed regarding the status of the ISSC conference. Armentor reported that information regarding a 2026 conference remains uncertain. Members expressed concern that a conference scheduled during oyster season could limit industry participation. Armentor agreed to seek additional information and provide an update at a future meeting.

I. Aquaculture (Steve Pollock) - No report.

J. Joint Task Force Working Group (Mitch Jurisich)

Mitch Jurisich reported that he had no formal updates from the Joint Task Force. Discussion focused on the potential for increased cooperation between Louisiana and Texas oyster industries, particularly regarding shared market challenges and potential restrictions on imported oysters. Members discussed the possibility of forming a coalition to address common industry concerns. Jurisich acknowledged the suggestion and indicated it would be considered in future discussions.

VI. New Business

A. To Hear a Summary of the 2025-2026 Oyster Season – LDWF

Robert Caballero provided the task force with the current oyster season report listed below.

Table 1. Harvest estimates for the 2025-2026 oyster season on Louisiana's public oyster areas. Harvest estimates are based on either LDWF conducted surveys of oyster harvesting vessels during the oyster season or from daily harvest reporting requirement via eReporting application.

CSA	Area	Season Opening	Season Closure	Season/ Type	Days open to Date	eReporting Harvest	Boarding Report Harvest	Vessels Harvesting
1	POSG East of Mississippi river and North of MRGO	29-Sep-25	1-Oct-25	Bedding season	3	8,375 bbl	9,815 bbl	20
		3-Nov-25	13-Mar-26	Market harvest	131	76,470 sacks	81,911 sacks	105
	Lake Fortuna/ Machias	3-Nov-25	28-Nov-25	Market harvest	26	170 sacks	319 sacks	6
5	Sister Lake	29-Sep-25	29-Sep-25	Bedding season	1	550 bbl	3,660 bbl	18
		3-Nov-25	14-Nov-25	Market harvest	12	3,373 sacks	5,307 sacks	65
		10-Dec-25	29-Dec-25	Market harvest	20	9,403 sacks	9,698 sacks	47
		12-Mar-26	4-April-26	Market harvest	3/24	1,755 sacks	2,086 sacks	40
6	Vermilion/East and West Cote Blanche Bay/Atchafalaya Bay	8-Sep-25	1-April-26	Bedding season	206	0	0	0
		13-Oct-25	1-April-26	Market harvest	171	0	0	0
7	Calcasieu Lake	1-Jan-25	30-Apr-26	east side: Market harvest	120	266 sacks	1,309 sacks	8
		1-Nov-25	30-Apr-26	West Cove: Market harvest	181	0	0	0
Total Harvest for the 2025-2026 Oyster Season					Bedding Season	8,925 bbl	13,475 bbl	18*/38**
					Market Harvest	91,437 sacks	100,630 sacks	140*/187**

* Total vessels eReporting for a harvest season.

** Total vessels observed in boarding runs by CSA biologists.

All data presented are preliminary and subject to change.

Table 2. eReporting harvest summary for the 2025-2026 oyster season on Louisiana's public oyster areas.

LDH Area	Activity	Volume	Number of Vessels Harvesting	Harvest Trips
Zone 1	Bedding	0 bbl	0	0
	Sacking	1,460 sacks	11	49
Zone 2	Bedding	8,375 bbl	16	36
	Sacking	32,144 sacks	44	1,115
Zone 3	Sacking	42,866 sacks	80	1,461
Zone 4	Sacking	0 sacks	0	0
Zone 5	Sacking	170 sacks	5	10
Zone 19	Bedding	550 bbl	2	2
	Sacking	14,531 sacks	57	521
Zone 29	Sacking	266 sacks	3	27
Zone 30	Sacking	0 sacks	0	0
Grand Total	Bedding	8,925 bbl	18	38
	Sacking	91,437 sacks	140	3,183

Table 3. CSA Boarding run harvest summary for the 2025-2026 oyster season on Louisiana's public oyster areas.

CSA	LDH Oyster Harvest Area	Seed barrel totals to date	Market Sack totals to date	Total Vessels Market Harvesting	Total Vessels Seed Harvesting
CSA 1N	Area 1	1,690	9,852	.	20
CSA 1N	Area 2	8,125	26,852	.	
CSA 1N	Area 3	n/a	45,207	.	n/a
CSA 1N	Area 4	n/a	0	0	n/a
CSA 1N	Total	9,815	81,911	105	20
CSA 1S	Area 5	n/a	319	6	n/a
CSA5W	Area 19	3,660	17,091	86	18
CSA 6	Area 24-28	0	0	0	0
CSA 7 (East Side)	Area 29	n/a	1,309	8	n/a
CSA 7 (West Cove)	Area 30	n/a	0	0	n/a
Total		13,475 bbl	100,630 sacks	187	38

Table 4. Harvest reporting compliance summary for the 2025-2026 oyster season on Louisiana's public oyster areas.

Areas	Total Vessels eReporting	Total Vessels Observed*	Compliance
CSA-1 N	91	109	83.5%
CSA-1 S	5	6	83.3%
CSA 3	N/A	N/A	N/A
CSA 5	57	86	66.3%
CSA 6	0	0	0.0%
CSA 7	3	8	37.5%
Total	148	187	79.1%
* Data is utilizing observed and reporting vessels to get a true number of vessels harvesting, to report for observed vessels.			

Discussion focused on recent increases in public oyster harvest and the contribution of public grounds to overall statewide landings. Robert Caballero reported that public landings accounted for approximately 7.3% to 7.8% of total statewide landings in 2025 and noted that updated figures would be presented as part of the upcoming stock assessment.

Caballero stated that harvest levels have increased over the past two seasons despite relatively low production in recent years. Members discussed the role of Sister Lake, which opens every other year, and Caballero noted that its anticipated opening this year is expected to contribute to increased harvest.

Discussion also focused on factors contributing to improved harvest levels. Caballero attributed recent increases to favorable environmental conditions and improved stock sets resulting from recent wet seasons. He also noted that cultch material placed on private leases has benefited nearby public grounds. Members discussed the importance of cultch-enhanced reefs, with Caballero noting that much of the public harvest originates from established cultch plants, including Drum Bay, North Pontchartrain, and Sister Lake.

Caballero also provided an update on the cultch plant contracted in late March. Although environmental conditions have slowed growth, he reported that the area continues to show improvement in stock assessments and maintains viable oyster densities. Future openings will depend on the results of upcoming stock assessments.

B. To Discuss the Legislative Report from The Chesapeake Group – OTF

Mitch Jurisich provided an update on several bills considered during the 2025 Legislative Session. Jurisich reported that HB 652 and HB 653 had been signed into law. The legislation amends Oyster Task Force membership by adding a representative from the Louisiana Department of Agriculture and Forestry and ensuring that the United Commercial Fishermen's Association seat is filled by a representative from St. Bernard Parish.

Jurisich also reported that HB 588, relating to the Seafood Safety Task Force, was awaiting the governor's signature. Once enacted, the legislation would add a representative of the Seafood Safety Task Force to the Oyster Task Force. Jurisich noted that this addition would strengthen the Task Force's connection to statewide seafood-safety oversight, particularly regarding imported seafood.

Brad Robin asked whether the Department of Agriculture had sponsored legislation related to seafood enforcement or monitoring. Gene Cavalier responded by providing updates on several bills related to seafood safety, labeling requirements, recordkeeping requirements, and enforcement authority for illegal or unsafe seafood products. Cavalier noted that the Seafood Safety Task Force, now housed under the Department of Agriculture, meets quarterly and serves as a forum for addressing seafood issues across multiple commodities. Discussion also focused on legislation intended to strengthen seafood enforcement, improve product traceability, and enhance labeling requirements for imported and commingled seafood products.

Jurisich noted that once all Department of Agriculture-related bills are fully signed, the new member will be added to the Task Force. Members also discussed the bulk-tagging legislation and clarified that oysters may be transported in a single bulk container with one tag, but individual containers must still be tagged once processed and packaged for market.

Cavalier concluded by reporting that he had initiated contact with the newly established USDA Office of Seafood and encouraged members to review available marketing resources and grant opportunities. He noted that the office is newly established and that efforts are underway to ensure Louisiana's seafood industry is represented.

C. To Hear an Update on the LOOP Oil Spill – LA Dept. of Conservation and Energy

Kyle Balkum from the Department of Conservation and Energy provided a brief overview of the incident.



LOOP 104 HOSE INCIDENT OVERVIEW



- Spill caused by mechanical failure
- Source secured immediately and damaged equipment replaced
- Unified Command Consists of:
 - U.S. Coast Guard (USCG)
 - Louisiana Oil Spill Coordinator's Office (LOSCO)
 - LOOP LLC

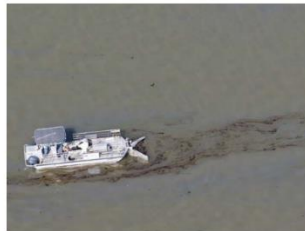


The map shows the Gulf of America with a red dot indicating the "Spill Location". Labels with arrows point to "Raccoon", "Whiskey", and "Trinity". A scale bar indicates 10 km. At the bottom, there is a footer with the text "LOOP 104 HOSE INCIDENT", "USDOC | NOAA | NMFS | NOAA Office of Response & Restoration", "Email Comments: or@noaa.gov", "Printed on 07/20/2016 by Jennifer Reed", and "ERMA | Gulf of America".

RESPONSE EQUIPMENT AND RESOURCES



- Large-scale deployment of response assets:
 - 100+ vessels
 - 650+ personnel
 - 30 miles of containment and absorbent boom
 - Aerial surveillance support:
 - Drone
 - Fixed wing aircraft
 - Helicopters
- No dispersants used



LOOP 104 HOSE INCIDENT

WILDLIFE OPERATIONS



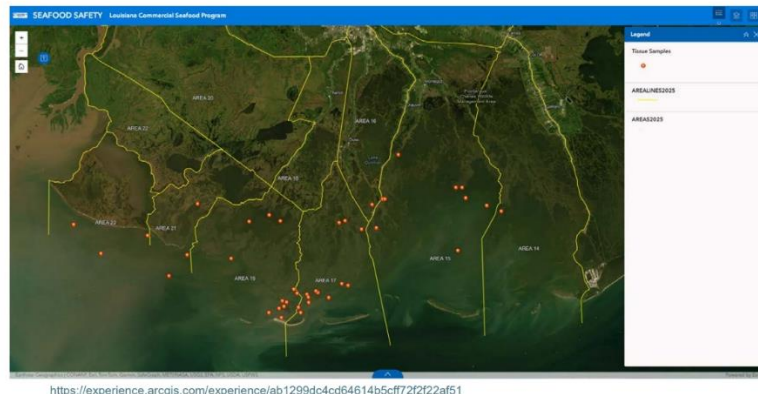
- Wildlife Monitoring, Collection, and Rehabilitation
 - Specialized wildlife response teams remain active daily
 - Local rehabilitation facility treating impacted wildlife
- Wildlife Agencies Involved:
 - Louisiana Dept. of Wildlife and Fisheries (LDWF)
 - U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS)
 - National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA)
- Wildlife Reporting Hotline
 - 1-985-368-9866

LOOP 104 HOSE INCIDENT

SEAFOOD SAMPLING IN RESPONSE TO THE INCIDENT



- On 03/14/2026 LA Department of Health (LDH) instituted a precautionary closure of molluscan shellfish waters in Area 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, and 21
- LDH worked in partnership with LDWF to collect and test tissue samples of:
 - Oysters
 - Shrimp
 - Crabs
 - Finfish
- Public reporting systems remain active for environmental concerns
 - <https://ldh.la.gov/bureau-of-sanitarian-services/molluscan-shellfish-program>

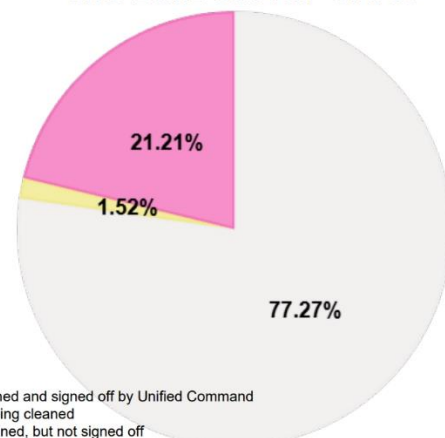


LOOP 104 HOSE INCIDENT

CURRENT STATUS OF RESPONSE AND CLEANUP



SHORELINE CLEANUP STATUS



White = shoreline cleaned and signed off by Unified Command
 Pink = shoreline still being cleaned
 Yellow = shoreline cleaned, but not signed off

*All lengths are approximate, reflect most recent available survey, and may be subject to revision.

LOOP 104 HOSE INCIDENT

Kyle Balkum provided an update on the LOOP oil spill response and reported that the estimated spill volume remains at approximately 750 barrels. Balkum reviewed ongoing cleanup efforts, including the use of macro skimmers, absorbent booms and snares, manual removal methods, and water flushing techniques to remove oil from affected marsh areas.

Discussion focused on potential impacts to oyster recruitment and other fisheries resources. Robert Caballero reported that LDWF continues to conduct monthly monitoring and has not observed any impacts to date but will continue evaluating spring recruitment data. Members also discussed reports of spat settlement and mortality in affected areas. Al Sunseri noted that while some areas have experienced good spat catches, reports of high mortality have also been received.

Members discussed the current status of affected harvest areas, and Mitch Jurisich confirmed that all areas remain open at this time. Jurisich stated that the Task Force would receive an additional update at the next meeting and that efforts would be made to coordinate with LOSCO for Marty Bienvenue to attend.

VII. Public Comment

Joni Tuck, representing Shell's pipeline division in New Orleans, informed the Task Force of the proposed Roam Pipeline project projected to begin in mid-2027 and conclude in 2030. Dr. Tuck stated that the project does not impact any oyster leases but wanted the fishery and Task Force to be aware of upcoming activity.

Jurisich then added an additional public comment item regarding the ocean acidification research group that presented at the previous meeting. He announced that the group will host a community workshop titled Louisiana's Changing Coast on June 16th at the Port Sulphur YMCA on Civic Drive, from 9:00 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. He stated that the workshop will gather community input and will include discussion relevant to shellfish, including deterioration of shell stock in oysters, crabs, and shrimp. Jurisich noted that the workshop may complement ongoing efforts to understand issues with spat settlement and could help establish a basis for multiple studies examining spawning failures and biofilm conditions.

Jurisich stated that the Task Force would defer setting the next meeting date and would circulate potential dates to members for consideration.

VIII. Adjournment

Peter Vujnovich motioned to adjourn, 2nd by Willie Daisy. Motion carries. Meeting adjourned at 11:34 a.m.