**Shrimp Task Force**

**September 21, 2022, 10am**

**LDWF Headquarters**

**3rd Floor Conference Room**

**2000 Quail Dr.**

**Baton Rouge, LA**

**I.** Pledge of Allegiance

**II.** Roll call

**Voting Members Present:**

Rodney Olander

Acy Cooper

Jeff Drury

Andrew Blanchard

Alan Gibson

Chalin Delaune

**Voting Members Absent:**

Lance Nacio

Phillip Tran

Kristen Baumer

Randy Pearce

**Non-Voting Members Present:**

Peyton Cagle

Edward Skena

Gene Cavalier

Jack Isaacs via Webinar

**Non-Voting Members Absent:**

Justin Gremillion

**III.** Andrew Blanchard motioned to approve the August 3, 2022 meeting minutes, 2nd by Alan Gibson. Motion carries.

**IV.** Andrew Blanchard motioned to approve the September 21, 2022 meeting agenda, 2nd by Alan Gibson. Motion carries.

**V.** New Business

A. The board discussed the state of the shrimp industry

Acy Cooper led discussion stating there has never in the history of this industry been a price this low, this year India is in line to bring in 2 billion pounds by themselves. US only consumes 1.6B, why are we allowing importers to bring in more than the country consumes. We are having this issue and product with illegal antiobiotics are coming into the state, calling the special meeting to tell the concerns of where the industry is today, we need every senator and representative to help the industry to make headway in Washington, D.C. to fix the issues and if not we will lose the industry very quickly, we are a billion dollar industry in the state of LA, the state cannot afford to lose us, small shrimp are going for .50/lb, diesel is $4.20/gallon, want a collective effort from the State and federal government to help with these issues

Alan Gibson stated that everyone has heard the industry speak on a united front about the imports and nothing being done in Washington, D.C., need help from the State to at least help the industry get to DC to push the issue. Some of the things you see reflected in the prices- some of the bigger guys have started buying some of the imports at the price but to get the price they had to buy 40,000 pounds or more, people have been stock piling the cheap shrimp and no longer have the freezer space, losing sales because of cheaper imports and the other issue is cold storage, customers aren’t buying and there is no place to store the shrimp, asked for a different system- bond system, in the next few years if something doesn’t change rapidly you will be looking at a dwindling/ almost non-existent industry

Rodney Olander entered the meeting

Acy Cooper stated that we are going to lose the industry, around 2014 when white spot disease on imported shrimp came about the local shrimp sky rocketed the industry boomed, when the issue was figured out it went back down

Chalin Delaune entered the meeting 10:22am

Rodney Olander stated that the industry has been going to Washington for years, look at the board we are all approaching retirement age, there are no young fishermen to come in and take over, need the government to start fighting for the industry need money for the industry, no one in Washington wants to fight for the industry we need the state to step in and fight, the state needs to be more involved and going after more grants

Alan Gibson stated that one thing in D.C. that always comes up- we go back to the tariffs and under the Deficit Reduction Act they repealed the Byrd Amendment so there is no more money being distributed to the industry, but there is still tariff money being collected as its collected it sits in customs for x amount of days and then goes into the general fund, if there is money there why can’t we find a way to get fuel subsidies back to the industry to help offset some of the costs. We fought to have this tariff in place to assist the industry, met with some other legislators on the east coast and talked about reducing imports with a quota and we were told they would not support us, the issue happened when China decided they were not going to take any more imports with covid and Ecuador and Indonesia diverted the product to the US; subsidizing farmers of imported product

Acy Cooper stated that we have to show the public what they are eating in these imports, we are not successfully demoting imports and promoting local seafood

Andrew Blanchard stated that ASPA owns the Wild American Shrimp Program and they do promote American wild caught shrimp and money was funded by BP after the oil spill years ago and we have done a tremendous job of promoting wild American shrimp, promote recipes and try to target more of the American consumer

Alan Gibson stated that the only thing to bring this industry back to life is a quota

Chalin Delaune stated that some short term relief, because nothing gets done overnight, even though we have been fighting these issues for years, but what we have immediately on the horizon that could help alleviate some of these low shrimp prices is the hopeful purchase of shrimp from the Department of Agriculture, at the undersecretary’s desk for approval, several congressmen and reps have sent in letters of support for this, if this takes place we should see some relief in shrimp prices as well, highly recommend that the Governor’s office write a letter of support as well, if we can have the Department of Ag as mandatory buyer of domestic shrimp as least it’s a stepping stone; the ultimate goal is to get it as a frequent purchase that is done every year (Department of Agriculture’s Food Nutrition and Assistance Program)

Andrew Blanchard stated that casinos and military are supposed to buy domestic, this has been addressed several times and nothing has been done

Acy Cooper stated that if they abided by the laws we wouldn’t even have an issue, here to ask Patrick Banks and LDWF to meet with the Governor to address these issues, the industry needs help now

Alan Gibson stated that another issue the industry is facing is importers fighting for market share

Andrew Blanchard stated that ASPA has been spending money on the industry, funding the sunset review, funding the shrimp sustainability certification, etc.

Patrick Banks stated that he has been speaking with the congressional staff and also been speaking with the Governor’s office about these issues, LDWF is always willing to go to D.C. with the industry

Acy Cooper asked LDWF to get with the Governor and the President to enforce the current laws on the books

Andrew Blanchard stated that the LRA needs to be on the industry’s side, even if they just bought 50% of the captured shrimp that would help tremendously

Alan Gibson stated that between the LDWF Secretary and the Governor there needs to be a representative at the task force meetings from the Governor’s office

Chalin Delaune stated that there are anti-dumping orders in place and Ecuador is not one, there are four other countries that have anti-dumping laws in place; next year is the Sunset Review and the Department of Commerce has already determined that if these anti-dumping orders were revoked that dumping would continue or increase in the market. Now this is going before the International Trade Commission (ITC) to determine if these anti-dumping laws were revoked would it cause material injury to the industry, which we all know it would, this isn’t self-initiated by the ITC, ASPA funds this review, around $1.5M, the other thing that ASPA has been working on, there was a congressional appropriation for $90M to the FDA specifically for a new shrimp program to increase inspections on shrimp, The FDA signed a confidentiality agreement with Ecuador where they share more information which basically allows more validation that the shrimp that is coming in is safe, ASPA being a non-profit cannot distribute money to the industry

B. Acy Cooper led discussion on hiring a lobbyist

Acy Cooper stated that the industry needs representation in Washington, D.C. and in the state as well

Brian Shinault, CEO of American Strategic Partners, stated that he has been working with LDWF legal and is very passionate about the industry and the issues- being from Louisiana, will cost somewhere around $70,000 annually, will work with the task force based on law and policy the best they can to accommodate any procedures, policy or law; would look at all the issues and objectives and work on them at the same time, do have a grant division and can look into opportunities that could be there, can work with the Department of Agriculture to make a permanent or yearly agreement to keep the purchase of domestic shrimp

Alan Gibson expressed concern with the budget and payment, need to look into how much the task force is budgeted and if there is enough in the budget for this payment

Brian Shinault can work at the federal level and the executive branch

Duncan Kemp stated that generally for the state hiring a lobbyist is prohibited, but it is allowed for the executive branch, would advise that communications with LDWF legal continue

The task force plans to pursue this contract subject to the confines of the law

Chalin Delaune stated that lobbying may be the wrong terminology, liaison may be a better term, the proposal should include not just working on the federal level- could have to work with NGOs and other organizations, consider this when drafting the contract

Duncan Kemp stated that the DOA can remove any contract that is for lobbying purposes, there is precedent that has been set with the alligator industry

Brian Shinault is set to meet with LDWF legal to further discuss the draft contract, to set up a meeting for early next week

The contract has to go through a process- drafted, reviewed, LDWF internal review and approvals, then OSP review and approval, after this the contract is set

C. The task force already covered this discussion under Item B.

D. The task force considered designating a STF representative for the Natural Resources Committee meeting

Acy Cooper stated that the task force needs a rep to speak on their behalf at this meeting

Chalin Delaune motioned to designate Acy Cooper, Jr. as a representative to speak on behalf of the Shrimp Task Force at the Natural Resources Committee meeting, 2nd by Rodney Olander. Motion carries.

E. The board discussed the public fishermen’s meeting

Acy Cooper stated that they are putting together a meeting in Houma; Representative Clay Higgins has been stepping up and doing a lot for the industry, will let everyone know who is going to attend, can’t stress how important it is for the public to show up, need a show of force, will notify the public of everything

Thomas Olander stated that he has been working to get the delegates together, trying to get the most delegates there, it’s almost impossible to do but trying to get it done, Representative Graves and Higgins should be there, coastline state reps, CPRA rep, NOAA rep, think we will see some success on it and think the representatives attending will go back to D.C. with a fighting spirit

Will let the task force know the date and location of the meeting once it is set

F. The task force discussed amendments to HB335

Acy Cooper stated that would like to give authority to LDWF to check for violations and to increase the violation

It would be an administrative change, does not require legislation, Acy Cooper is set to meet with LDH to further discuss the issue; Need to work on language to change Title 56

Task force expressed concern with LDWF Enforcement being spread too thin to enforce this sort of thing, LDH is already going to these establishments, task force might look into changing the violation from non-critical to a critical violation which would prompt the sanitation officer to come back

**VI.** Public Comment:

Alan Gibson thanked the fishermen and community for attending the meeting

Suggestion to discuss shrimp size at a future meeting, catching small shrimp

Enforcement Contact- 1-800-442-2511- dispatch for shrimp or fisheries enforcement complaints ask for incident number, new system where you can track what is happening with the complaint

**VII.** The next meeting is set for Wednesday, November 2, 2022 for 10am at LDWF headquarters – 2000 Quail Dr. Baton Rouge, LA

**VIII.** Rodney Olander motioned to adjourn, 2nd by Alan Gibson. Motion carries.