

**Shrimp Task Force Meeting Minutes
September 23, 2025
Terrebonne Parish Council Chambers
8026 Main Street
Houma, LA 70360**

- I.** Pledge of Allegiance
- II.** Call to order
- III.** Roll call

Voting Members Present:

Rodney Olander
Andrew Blanchard
Acy Cooper
Kristen Baumer
Lance Nacio
Chalin Delaune

Voting Members Absent:

Randy Pearce
Alan Gibson
Jeff Drury
Phillip Tran

Non-Voting Members Present:

Bryan Wallace
Gene Cavalier

Non-Voting Members Absent:

Dr. Jack Isaacs
Captain Davis Madere
Peyton Cagle

- IV.** Acy Cooper motioned to approve the April 30, 2025 meeting minutes, 2nd by Lance Nacio.
Motion carries.

- V.** Acy Cooper motioned to approve the September 23, 2025 meeting agenda, 2nd by Lance Nacio.
Motion carries.

VI. Financial Report

Remaining fund Balance - \$539,683
Remaining Budget Balance - \$166,750

Andrew Blanchard motioned to approve the financial report as presented, 2nd by Acy Cooper Motion Carries.

VII. Federal Shrimp Permit Report

The board was presented with an updated copy of the Federal Shrimp Permit Report

VIII. New Business

Patrick Banks (LDWF) introduced Konner Lockfield as the replacement for Peyton Cagle as the LDWF crustacean biologist for the task force.

A. To Discuss Closing the 3-Mile Line in Coordination with the Inside Closures

Lance Nacio stated that the wording of Item A. under new business was not worded properly. The intention was to discuss shrimp management in the winter months. Lance Nacio asked Patrick Banks: "How many times in the past 30 years has the stretch of beach from Caillou Boca to Freshwater Bayou been left open?"

Patrick Banks responded and stated that he would have to review records to determine the number of times but it was left open last year. Patrick Banks stated that areas are closed based on shrimp count because it's illegal to possess shrimp smaller than 100-count and that is the metric that is used to close these areas. Patrick Banks stated that the biological data did not indicate the metric so the areas were not closed and the only other time the area was closed was in the late 80s.

Lance Nacio asked Patrick Banks another question: "Can you clarify the 100-count law and who does it apply to?" Patrick Banks stated that the law applies to fishermen in possession.

Lance Nacio asked a follow-up question: "Does it apply year-round or just a certain time of the year?" Patrick Banks stated that he would need to review the law to determine the exact dates but between October 15th through January 1st the law does not apply.

Lance Nacio asked "When was the last shrimp management plan done?"

Patrick Banks stated that LDWF staff are currently updating the plan.

Lance Nacio stated that in 1989 an in-house study on the effects of leaving the beach open resulted in a 30% reduction in overall landings. Lance Nacio also stated that managing for a 100-count shrimp threshold may not be feasible and overall landings drop when the area is left open.

Patrick Banks stated that the department will review landings, research the effects of leaving the area open, and present the information to the task force.

Rodney Olander asked if there was a set day of the week or month in which LDWF completed sampling.

Patrick Banks stated that sampling is based on weather and staff availability.

Rodney Olander stated that sampling days may need adjustments because if there is a front when the samples are taken then shrimp will be smaller and within a couple of days the size could increase 3 to 4 grades. Rodney Olander stated that this is necessary to increase prices and have a more marketable product.

Rodney Olander stated that he is not in favor of closing the area because the spring season is dictated by the river and is not dependent on the Gulf. Rodney Olander stated that there needs to be a process to open areas quicker or not even close them at all.

Patrick Banks stated that for the fall season, LDWF operates based on the 100-count metric to determine if the area should be opened or closed and this allows fisherman to be in compliance with the law.

Acy Cooper stated that the testing schedule for the season should be reviewed because some of the main fishing areas are closed when the shrimp is at a marketable size.

Patrick Banks stated that LDWF will review the testing schedule but testing is dependent on funding availability. Patrick Banks stated that testing is completed based on different conditions and additional sampling can be completed as funding allows.

Acy Cooper asked that if one area is over the 100-count metric does that affect the closing of other areas along the coast.

Patrick Banks stated that LDWF has been more precise with openings and closings and some zones have been split with different opening times. Patrick Banks stated that openings and closings don't have to be completed by a particular zone and could be adjusted based on the testing data.

Acy Cooper stated that the issue now are the closures based on current testing and LDWF should consider other factors for the closures.

Patrick Banks stated that LDWF can review the current experimental design to factor in other conditions.

Andrew Blanche asked Patrick Banks if he could provide some insight for the creation of the 100-count law.

Patrick Banks stated that the law was created in the 80s in response to product marketability for the canning industry but would take legislation to amend the law to fit with the current market.

Kindra Arnesen stated that the agenda item was very vague and if there was an issue with the wording of the item, LDWF should have sent out information for a correction. Kindra Arnesen stated that there was a petition with over 1,000 signatures completed for item A. to ensure that no fishing grounds or fishing rights were taken away from fishermen. Kindra Arnesen also stated that LDWF should increase testing and the task force should reach out to the legislative branch for increased funding for testing.

James Blanchard stated that sampling needs to factor in time and conditions. James Blanchard stated that he agrees with Rodney Olander that the river should be taken into account as well. James Blanchard stated that a number of commercial fisherman fish the 3-mile inside waters and are opposed to closing it.

B. To Discuss Artificial Reef Markings

Acy Cooper stated that there is an unmarked reef to the west in Lake Pelto in which some fishermen have sustained damage to their vessels from the reef.

Mike McDonough stated that the reef is possibly the Duncan/Baldwins Point Reef that was not marked because it is a non-traditional inshore reef which was constructed with ExoForms™. Mike McDonough stated that the department did not have any initial concerns about the reef interrupting shrimping activity. Mike McDonough stated that it was an oversight on the department's part not to consider the

impacts of the reef with shrimping activity but other users groups will want additional ExoForms™ reefs in more places.

Mike McDonough stated that the above-referenced reef site had not been accepted by the state and the information has not been to the National Ocean Service for publishing. Mike McDonough stated that moving forward the department will ensure that all user groups are included in the planning process for the inshore reefs.

Acy Cooper asked how many inshore reefs the department was planning to construction because he recalled that most of the approved reefs were offshore.

Mike McDonough stated that reef construction has changed in the last couple of years when the department signed a larger cooperative endeavor agreement. Mike McDonough stated that there is an information gap between the department and user groups when completing reef projects.

Acy Cooper stated that there is a lot of shrimping activity inshore and there is an issue if inshore reefs are not marked. Acy Cooper asked if the department could provide the task force with the designated areas for the reef projects before the projects are started.

Ron Orgeron stated that the LDWF website lists the GPS coordinates for the reef locations in a different format than the format used by many fisherman and asked if the department could adjusted the GPS formats to conform to the fisherman's GPS systems. Ron Orgeron also stated that vessels and gear have sustained damage from unmarked reefs.

Rodney Olander asked who is responsible for any damage done to shrimp boats.

Mike McDonough stated that the responsibility for damage to boats depends on whether or not it's chartered but the information must be sent to the National Ocean Service so that it is put on the navigational charts. Mike McDonough stated that the requirement whether to buoy a reef site is delegated by the Coast Guard.

Rodney Olander stated that moving forward that reef sites should be properly marked to prevent damage to boats.

Mike McDonough asked the task force members and the public about a format for the GPS coordinates for the commercial GPS systems.

James Blanchard stated that the GPS coordinates are formatted with the first two digits, two center digits, and some have four digits at the end while others have three digits.

Sherri Blanchard asked if there is a way for the task force to participate in meetings before reefs are approved to reduce the impacts of damage for vessels.

Mike McDonough stated that there are artificial reef meetings before offshore reefs are approved and proposals are sent to an artificial reef committee or an artificial reef council that gives approval for the projects. Mike McDonough stated that those offshore projects require the Shrimp Task Force approval but the process is different for inshore reefs.

Rodney Olander recommended that LDWF try to incorporate task force recommendations for reef approvals.

Acy Cooper asked about the procedure for getting approval for inshore reefs.

Mike McDonough stated that there is a two-part process in which CCA completes a cooperative endeavor agreement with the department and includes the areas for the reefs. Mike McDonough stated that the program makes recommendations on the submitted proposals which are then approved by the department.

Acy Cooper stated that the Shrimp Task Force is not being included in the decision making process but they were with past administration. Acy Cooper also stated that previously there were no inshore reefs but with the amount of fishing effort inside there are now liability issues.

Kristen Baumer asked if there is a requirement for the department to receive approval from the Shrimp Task Force for offshore reefs.

Mike McDonough stated that the planning areas were created from input from all of the groups, including the task forces but special artificial reef sites require approval from the Shrimp Task Force.

Kristen Baumer asked if there are any reasons why the same process cannot apply to the approval process of inshore reefs.

Mike McDonough stated that the best approval process would be through the Artificial Reef Council to get feedback from the task force and the community.

Acy Cooper asked if the department could provide the task force with maps of the proposed reefs.

Mike McDonough stated that the department could provide information for reef projects to the Shrimp Task Force.

James Blanchard recommended that the department properly notify the public regarding the reef projects and also use social media to disseminate the information.

Gene Caviler recommended that the department should also involve the other task force in the decision process for approving the inshore reefs.

Sonya Self stated that she would contact other fisheries task forces to see if they are interested in making recommendations for reef approvals.

C. To Discuss Shrimp Task Force Recommendation Process for Spring Shrimp Season Opening

Acy Cooper stated that during the commission meeting some of the information was not properly provided to the commission by Andrew Blanchard. Acy Copper stated that Andrew Blanchard did not expound on the recommendation process for the spring shrimp opening from the Shrimp Task Force to the commission.

Kristen Baumer recommended to provide the commission with a summary of the discussion from the Shrimp Task Force for the decision to set the opening dates.

Acy Cooper stated the task force should consider opening the season on set dates such as the third Monday of August or the third Monday of May. Acy Cooper stated that the openings for the seasons were changed for special seasons for the inside waters to harvest larger shrimp.

Rodney Olander stated that having set dates may work for some areas but not for all areas with the state. Rodney Olander stated that for some areas, specifically zone 2B west of the Atchafalaya River, around the third Monday of May the river would be too high to open.

Kristen Baumer stated that the task force should make sure that during the discussions the members clearly indicate if they are discussing harvesting brown shrimp or white shrimp. Kristen Baumer asked the department if there was an evaluation of decision made to open on a certain date.

Patrick Banks stated that he will reach out to LDWF staff to determine how the evaluation is completed and if there is a way to look at landings data count size.

Kristen Baumer stated that the evaluation could be used by the task force as a tool for the future to assist with making decisions for opening the season.

Lucy Pinell stated that when she spoke with Andrew Blanchard he supported not having an early opening of the May season but he supported an opposite date during the commission meeting.

D. To Discuss Shrimp Market and Price

Rodney Olander stated that with the current tariffs on imports and the amount of shrimp being pulled off the shelves the prices should be higher but actually fell 15 cents a pound.

Kristen Baumer stated that the price depends on the size of the product and processors are seeing smaller shrimp. Kristen Baumer stated that the smaller shrimp are harder to market and processors are not really purchasing smaller shrimp because it would sit in their inventory. Kristen Baumer stated that processors are seeing higher prices but for larger marketable shrimp.

Rodney Olander stated that right now some of the larger shrimp are still the same price as they were 4 or 5 years ago.

Kristen Baumer stated that 40-50 count shrimp that is peeled and deveined are equivalent to 70-90 count shrimp and processors are looking for more marketable sized shrimp.

Rodney Olander stated that prices have not fluctuated during the opening and closing and prices open at \$1 and then close at \$1. Rodney Olander asked what happened to the market for shrimp.

Kristen Baumer stated that more shrimp are being harvested than the amount that is being packed by processors for consumption. Kristen Baumer stated that prices have been significantly higher in the last two years and prices may remain higher due to traffics.

Acy Cooper stated that shrimp prices need to be advertised before the seasons open and before fisherman start harvesting because of the expenses to operate the vessels. Acy Cooper stated that sometimes the prices drop before the seasons open up.

Sandy Nguyen stated that there is a shrimp festival on October 18, 2025 and October 19, 2025. Sandy Nguyen stated that shrimp prices have been so low that shrimpers have been unable to survive and after expenses many fishermen have no income. Sandy Nguyen stated that the task force has not promoted the industry enough.

Lucy Pinell asked if prices were better with the SeaD testing.

Kristen Baumer stated that during COVID demand and sales dropped and continued to drop over the next two years. Kristen Baumer stated that prices have plateaued but the testing has helped and he supports continued testing.

Lucy Pinell asked if the task force could help with promoting gulf shrimp.

Chalin Delaune stated that funding for promoting comes from the Louisiana Seafood Promotion and Marketing Board that previously received funding from the Deepwater Horizon funds that were exhausted several years ago. Chalin Delaune stated that the board is now under the Lieutenant Governor's Office and does cross-promote with funds from the Department of Culture, Recreation, and Tourism.

Gene Cavalier stated that LA DAF now has funding for testing and promoting gulf seafood under the Seafood Safety Task Force. Gene Cavalier stated that LA DAF will now collect fees on imported seafood and through the Weights and Measures Division they have completed over 650 labeling inspections.

Lance Nacio stated that he spoke with Robert Kennedy regarding the imported shrimp and its effects on the domestic shrimp fisheries. Lance Nacio stated that he worked with the Southern Shrimp Alliance to provided information to Robert Kennedy that was discussed with President Trump. Lance Nacio provided the following summary:

Through a 10-year comparison of shrimp imports from 2014 to 2024, the U.S. imported 1.3 billion pounds of shrimp worth \$6.7 billion. In 2024, the U.S. imported 1.7 billion pounds of shrimp worth \$6.1 billion.

E. To Consider Funding for Board Member Travel to Washington, DC

Sonya Self stated that the invoice for the additional tickets is still pending. Sonya Self stated that she would verify the board member available for the event and forward the dates for the even.

Acy Cooper motioned to approve funding for board member travel to Washington, DC, 2nd by Kristen Baumer. Motion carries.

F. To Discuss and Consider Extending the SeaD Consulting Contract for Shrimp Testing

Rodney Olander asked Erin Williams if an extension was need on the current contract that expires in September and Erin Williams stated that was correct.

Acy Cooper asked if the testing was completed only at restaurants and if the contract extension would include testing at other locations like markets.

Erin Williams stated that testing has been completed at retailers with an adjacent deli.

Rodney Olander asked if the labeling law applies to fresh seafood.

Gene Cavalier stated that LDH handles fresh seafood at markets.

Kristen Baumer stated that any retail or any market that is selling any kind of shrimp should be labeled with information such as the method of catch, country of origin, wild-caught product, USA product, or farm-raised product.

Erin Williams stated that SeaD Consulting has gone into some markets and found that there are no label on the seafood. Erin Williams stated that many times on the labels there is just the word "Shrimp" with the price underneath and no indication of origin.

Gene Cavalier stated that if seafood is not properly labeled then it should be reported to LA DAF to forward to inspectors.

Rodney Olander asked if fresh markets fall under the same rules as the current labeling bill that would open door for SeaD Consulting to complete testing to verify if they are selling what they claim.

Christian Winslow stated that the current agreement with SeaD consulting is limited to restaurants and is a sole source contract that cannot be amended to change the scope.

Chalin Delaune motioned to approve the contract extension for SeaD Consulting, 2nd by Lance. Motion carries.

Christian Winslow asked if the current agreement would be extended for an additional 4 months and if the amount would be the same.

Rodney Olander stated that the terms would be the same as previously.

Acy Cooper stated that if SeaD Consulting has a press release, Louisiana Shrimp Task Force should be mentioned in the press release.

Christian Winslow stated that the last month of sampling is in September and no work should take place until there is an approved contract between the Shrimp Task Force and SeaD Consulting.

Acy Cooper stated that the public should be made aware of the findings from the SeaD Consulting testing and the information should be posted on the task force website.

Rodney Olander asked who is provided with the information from the SeaD Consulting testing.

Christian Winslow stated that the information is provided to the department and the task force can request to view the information.

Patrick Banks stated that the information can also be provided to other stated agencies, including LDH. Patrick Banks stated that the information is public information but the agreement with SeaD Consulting does not allow the company to publicly release the names of the businesses.

Erin Williams recommended not to publicly release the information because they only test certain restaurants and only certain menu items. Erin Williams also added that mislabeling can happen anywhere in the supply chain and there could be issues with the supplier and not the business.

Kristen Baumer stated if LA DAF or LDH was provided the information, could they complete an inspection to verify if there is a violation of the labeling law and then publish the information.

Lance Nacio stated that SeaD Consulting wanted to complete follow-up testing for some of the restaurants that were failing. Lance Nacio suggested that after completing secondary testing the restaurants should be given a chance to correct the issue.

Kristen Baumer asked if SeaD Consulting was sharing the results with the restaurants that allegedly failed.

Erin Williams stated that the information is not provided to the restaurants.

Patrick Banks stated that the information is provided to the department and the task force can request the information to contact the restaurants that failed.

Rodney Olander asked if the department would be willing to send letters to the restaurants that failed the SeaD Consulting testing.

Patrick Banks stated that the department could possibly send letters to the business but it would have to be in conjunction with LDH investigative section.

Kristen Baumer stated that restaurants should be given due process before the release of the information.

Acy Cooper stated that the information should be released on the Shrimp Task Force's website because public money was used to complete the testing.

Acy Cooper motioned that LDWF inform the restaurants and inform LDH that the restaurants failed SeaD Consulting testing. The motion was seconded by Lance Nacio. All in favor, none opposed. Motion carries.

Acy Cooper motioned to request that the results from SeaD Consulting testing be published on the Shrimp Task Force Website. The motion was seconded by Andrew Blanchard. *The chairman opened the floor for discussion.*

Lance Nacio stated that the restaurants should be notified before releasing the information.

Rodney Olander stated that the Shrimp Task Force can coordinate with LDWF to verify that the restaurants and LDH were properly notified before releasing the information on the website.

Patrick Banks stated that there would be liability issues with posting the information before the restaurants are notified of the results and a proper investigation takes place.

Acy Cooper motioned to request that the results from SeaD Consulting testing be published on the Shrimp Task Force Website. The motion was seconded by Andrew Blanchard. All in favor, none opposed. Motion carries.

IX. Public Comment

Acy Cooper commented on the TEDs regulations and stated that the appeal failed. Acy Cooper stated that the 5th District Court ruled against the appeal and the next request must be submitted by October 22, 2025.

Neal Dardar stated that he supports an early opening date for the season but stated that no one was ready for an earlier opening date. Neal Dardar stated that LDWF should also consider shrimp bait as a factor for opening the season.

Bryan Wallace stated that NOAA Fisheries is seeking public comment on suggestions to improve fisheries management and science outlined in the executive order on restoring American seafood competitiveness and the public commenting period will close on Tuesday, October 14, 2025. Bryan Wallace stated that the tariffs imposed on imported shrimp have not impacted the prices as much as it should in order for domestic shrimp prices to increase. Bryan Wallace stated that the labeling for most products is not visible enough to make a greater impact and labeling is still an issue because the country of origin can sometimes not be found on packages.

Kristen Baumer stated that labeling requirements on the state level should mandate that retailers selling imported shrimp must put the country of origin and the method of catch on the front of the packaging in a certain size font. Kristen Baumer stated that the current laws state only if the packing is misleading in the artwork.

X. Set Next Meeting

The next Shrimp Task Force meeting was set for Wednesday, December 10, 2025 for 10:00am at the Terrebonne Parish Council Chambers or Terrebonne Parish Library.

XI. Adjourn

Acy Cooper motioned to adjourn the meeting, 2nd by Kristen Baumer. Motion carries. Meeting adjourned at 12:33 PM.