

Louisiana Feral Hog Management Advisory Task Force Annual Report 1 February 2017

Introduction

The Louisiana Feral Hog Management Advisory Task Force was created by House Concurrent Resolution No. 9 (Appendix I.) during the 2016 Regular Session of the Louisiana Legislature. This Resolution charged members of the Task Force “*with the responsibility to make recommendations with respect to issues pertaining to feral hog management efforts, including public awareness programs to the various state agencies charged with the responsibility for managing the feral hogs in this state, including the Department of Wildlife and Fisheries, the Department of Agriculture and Forestry, and the legislature.*”

Eleven individuals received letters dated 1 November 2016 informing them of their selection to serve on the Task Force. The letter was generated by Kenny Ribbeck, LDWF Wildlife Division Administrator, as the Task Force falls under the jurisdiction of the Department of Wildlife and Fisheries. In order to begin the business of the Task Force, LDWF set the initial meeting date for 30 November 2016 at 2000 Quail Drive, Baton Rouge.

Meeting – 30 November 2016

Ten members of the Task Force met for the initial meeting. The following is a list of actions that were accomplished at this meeting:

1. Selection of a Chair and Vice-Chair
2. Development of a set of By-Laws
3. Establishment of regular quarterly meeting dates – 12 January, 13 April, 13 July, 12 Oct. 2017
4. Appointed ad hoc committee to research hunter based options on WMAs
5. Delegated one Task Force member to investigate outreach options.
6. Delegated one Task Force member to investigate new hog trapping technology and report on transport regulations by LDAF.
7. Voted unanimously to include in the Annual Report to the Legislature, a recommendation that enforcement of feral hog transport with permit be universal to all enforcement agencies within the state of Louisiana and not just restricted to LDAF agents as per current LDAF rule.

Meeting – 12 January 2017

All members of the Task Force were present for the regularly scheduled meeting on 12 January 2017. The following is a list of actions that were accomplished at this meeting:

1. Final adoption of By-Laws/SOP (Appendix II.)
2. Ad hoc committee reported on feral hog hunting options on WMAs and made recommendations for inclusions in Annual Report
3. Report heard on feral hog trapping technology and on transport regulations from LDAF
4. Report heard on outreach options from LSU AgCenter
5. Finalized recommendations to be included in Annual Report due 1 February 2017

Expenditures as of 31 January 2017

The Louisiana Legislature, through HCR No. 9, instructed the Department of Wildlife and Fisheries to expend \$360,000 to fund activities related to feral hog management, education, research, and control during FY 2016-2017. Expenditures to date by LDWF are as follows:

High-tech Traps	118,080.00
Personnel	26,838.12

TOTAL	\$144,918.12

Task Force Recommendations as of 31 January 2017

Recommendation 1: Strengthen movement restrictions of feral hogs and expand enforcement of restrictions.

The LDAF has regulations (Appendix III.) in place pertaining to the transport of feral hogs in Louisiana. The Task Force recognizes these regulations are an excellent starting point, but suffer from two primary shortcomings. First, enforcement falls under the aegis of the 6 agents employed by LDAF who must cover the entire state. Second, any violation of these regulations is classified as a civil offense under the jurisdiction of the Board of Animal Health.

Members of the FHMATF recommend the Louisiana legislature adopt a more stringent version of regulations that mandate any violation be a criminal offense that is enforceable by any authorized enforcement agent in the state of Louisiana. Attached (Appendix IV.) is a document with potential verbiage for such legislation.

Members of the Task Force also recommend that the Louisiana legislature increase the fines associated with any violation of HB606 that was passed in the 2010 Regular Session of the Louisiana Legislature that prohibits free-ranging swine. The Task Force feels that the current fine structure is not a deterrent to the free-ranging of swine. The current fine structure is as follows:

- 1st offense = verbal warning
- 2nd offense = written warning
- 3rd + offense = \$25 fine

Recommendation 2: LDAF establish a 24-hour permitting system for the issuance of permits for the legal movement of feral hogs under LDAF regulations. Such permits would be valid for a period of 24 hours and transporters MUST declare the point of destination.

Included in the potential verbiage for feral hog transport legislation (Appendix IV.) is the following recommendation:

E. Anyone transporting live feral swine must first call (xxx)xxx-xxxx to receive a Feral Swine Movement Permit Number. Before the permit number is issued, the transporter must declare the destination of the transported feral swine. The Permit Number is only valid for 24 hours.

The Task Force recommends that an automated system similar to the one used by LDWF for validating white-tail deer tags be implemented for the issuance of movement permits.

Recommendation 3: Expand opportunities for the take of feral hogs on WMAs.

HCR No. 9 directs Task Force member to “consider hunter-based solutions” relative to the control of feral hogs in Louisiana. An ad hoc committee within the Task Force was appointed by Chairperson Tolson that consists of William Ard (La. Hog Hunters’ Assoc. Representative), Chip Vosburg (La. QDMA Representative), and Dearl Sanders (Bob R. Jones Wildlife Research Institute Representative). The ad hoc committee was charged with providing the Task Force with research on hunter based options on WMAs.

Even though hunting has shown to be ineffective in the control of feral hogs, the Task Force brings forth these recommendations that would expand the opportunities for hunters to take feral hogs on WMAs:

A. All feral hogs must be killed immediately upon take on WMAs. No feral hogs may be transported alive from WMAs.

B. All WMA feral hog seasons shall be determined by LDWF Wildlife Biological Staff based on human safety and impacts to other wildlife species.

C. Extend the number of days for hunting hogs with dogs on Boeuf, Pearl River and Richard K. Yancey WMAs.

Justification: Data provided by LDWF biologists reveal that these three areas accounted for 64% of hogs harvested on WMAs with hog-dog seasons. Additionally, LDWF biologists report all three as having increasing populations of feral hogs.

D. Consider an experimental hog-dog season on three large WMAs – Big Lake, Sherburne and Thistlethwaite – where LDWF biologists have reported high and increasing populations of feral hogs. In conjunction, develop a verification method to evaluate the effectiveness of hog-dog hunting on these WMAs.

Justification: High rates of agriculture depredation by feral hogs in lands surrounding these WMAs may warrant support from surrounding property holders.

E. Increase hog-dog hunting opportunities on WMAs through lottery hunts. To encourage an increase in harvest if lottery hunts are implemented, initiate a verification system whereby the more successful hunters (harvested hogs per hunter effort) would be given preference points on future lottery hunts.

Justification: Lottery hunts offer more oversight of the hunts by LDWF personnel.

F. Open still hunting seasons for feral hogs on all WMAs with feral hogs. Small WMAs in particular lend themselves to this form of hunting.

Justification: Still hunting removes the issue of dogs crossing the boundaries of WMAs onto private lands.

Recommendation 4: Cost-share feral hog control efforts on private lands through trap loan programs and/or cost sharing of USDA aerial shooting operations.

A. The Bob R. Jones Idlewild Research Station has high-tech traps that utilize remote cameras that interface with a cellular data network. They are willing to loan these traps to private landowners and provide instruction on their use if a cost-share agreement could be developed to cover the cellular data usage fees (approximately \$3840/year).

B. Purchase low-tech traps for each regional LDWF office that can be “checked out” by private landowners. Provide them with a handout on tips for increasing trapping success, i.e. trap location, bait use, etc.

C. Providing cost-share funds to offset the expense of aerial gunning by USDA Wildlife Services on private landowner cooperative projects would lower the cost per acre paid by private landowners and encourage more individuals to participate, thereby increasing the acreage covered.

Recommendation 5: All feral hog toxicants must be evaluated by LDWF to ensure imposition of minimal risk to other wildlife species prior to the registration and legalization of the toxicant for use in Louisiana.