

LA CRAB TASK FORCE MEETING MINUTES
Special Meeting - April 24, 2012

Call to Order/Roll Call

The Crab Task Force meeting was called to order by Chairman Gary Bauer at 14:03.

A roll call was then made:

VOTING		NON-VOTING	
Gary Bauer	X	Mark Benfield	
Peter Gerica	X	Carl Britt	X
Dennis Landry	X	Melissa Daigle	X
Roy Meek		Julie Anderson	X
Pete Peterson	X	Walter Keithly	
L.J. Sandras		David Lavergne	
Pat Templet		Jeff Mayne	
Keith Watts	X		
Trudy Luke	X		
Rodney Parfait	X		
Kim Alfonso	X		

A quorum of eight voting members was present.

Discussion of HB 538 and Required Action to Maintain MSC Sustainability Certification

Gary Bauer opened with a brief description of MSC and what it means to be certified as a sustainable fishery. Louisiana Blue Crab Industry was awarded sustainable status on March 11, 2012 making it the first blue crab industries in the United States to receive this certification. Gary further gave an explanation of the need for a mechanism to limit or halt harvest of blue crabs if crab populations were suffering or over-fished.

Cole Garrett, LDWF lawyer, began a presentation on revisions to the language that was written into HB 538. He assured the group that there was no intention to enact a crab season. There merely needed to be a means to regulate harvests if necessary in regard to sustainability of the resource. All reference to establishing a crab season was removed from the language of HB 538. Gary asked what the trigger would be that would bring about a harvest limit. LDWF Biologist Mark Schexnayder explained it would be about a two year process before an action could be taken. The legislation simply allows the Louisiana Wildlife and Fisheries Commission to take necessary action. Dennis Landry also asked what the trigger would be because crab harvest in his area is already 60% behind last year's harvest. Crab fisherman Kernny Comardelle commented that science shows that lower numbers of crabs was due to poor spawn, not over harvest. He also stated MSC has many fisheries dropping out and may be a disadvantage to the Louisiana blue crab industry if not allowed to harvest year round. Keith Watts added that MSC should at no time have control over how Louisiana manages its resource. Mark Schexnayder assured that LDWF would never abdicate its authority to MSC or anyone else. Keith added that LDWF already has authority to close a fishery and questioned what MSC needed additionally.

Comments from the floor concerned whether further consideration should be given to whether MSC certification should be pursued. Also, the additional legislation in HB 538 could make it easier for imported crabs to take a stronger hold.

Cole added that LDWF does in fact have authority to close a fishery, this legislation merely places that authority within the crab rule specifically.

Gary Bauer moved and Pete Gerica seconded that the Crab Task Force accept HB 538 as revised. Motion carried with a 5-3 vote.

Adjournment

Keith Watts moved and Pete Gerica seconded that the “meeting be adjourned” - motion carried (all in favor). The Crab Task Force meeting was adjourned by Chairman Gary Bauer at 16:07.