

Artificial Reef Council Meeting

November 14, 2013 Louisiana Room

LDWF Headquarters, Baton Rouge, LA

Attendees:

Jerel Gihnot, TSB Offshore
Mike Parker, Parker ENC
Clint Rayes, Exxon Mobil
Thomas Bevon, FMOG
David Cresson, CCA
Eva Gravouillack, Stone Energy
Jason Sullivan, Stone Energy
Gary Siems, Stone Energy
Vic Agafitei, FMOG
Doug Peter, BSEE
Todd Cantrall, Freeport-McMoran
Clint Guidry, LA Shrimp Association
Tyler McCloud, LA House of Rep
Teri Larose, LDWF
John Underwood, Freeport-McMoran
Ann Taylor, LDWF Commission
Chris Auer, Crevalle USA

- 1) R. Pausina opened by mentioning that the department will plan to start scheduling council meeting more frequently and regularly in the future.
- 2) Council members introduced themselves to the audience.
- 3) Randy introduces Mike McDonough as new artificial reef coordinator.
- 4) Audience introduces themselves.
- 5) Meeting minutes from June 2011 are approved unanimously and without discussion.
- 6) M. McDonough provided a reef program update since the last commission meeting. R Pausina points out a tug that was accepted into the program that has moved over time. He mentioned that it has burrowed down and is moving less and less over time. M McDonough pointed out that pipelines could be ruptured by moving reefs, which is why monitoring is important. There are approximately 15 more inshore reefs added to the program since the last administration came on board. An audience member expressed confusion with the terminology of planning areas and reefs within the presentation. (presentation posted online)

Dave, CCA, asks about an update on the fishing location informally known as the Picketts

M McDonough answers that there is a meeting next week to discuss the Pickets with Apache.

- 7) R Pausina makes the distinction between the already developed inshore/nearshore artificial reefs and the inshore/nearshore plan that will be introduced later in today's meeting. Inshore and nearshore artificial reefs previously developed by the department have occurred where there has been very low user conflict. The inshore/nearshore plan discussion will be a formal document that will go out for public comment and will be approved by the council. It will be introduced later for the council to approve/disapprove whether or not to move forward with drafting such a plan.

An audience member asks if additional SARS will be added in the future.

R Pausina answers that there is currently no plan to expand the offshore permitted areas and he thinks there is plenty of room in the currently permitted areas. He adds that the department stopped accepting SARS in 2011 after Hurricane Ike and is currently not accepting any SARS.

M McDonough adds that area from the planning areas is subtracted to compensate for having developed SARS.

R Pausina elaborated that there is a net acreage of permitted reef area. When a SARS is approved outside of the permitted reef area, the SARS area is subtracted from one of the permitted areas so that there is no gain or loss.

- 8) Jim Cowan, LSU, presented his most current research on the artificial reefs. Studying rapid biomass assessment and community structure at a SARS site. Looked at lighted versus non-lit platforms. Hydroacoustics being used on platform to assess biomass. Played film showing Jacks in upper 30m of structure, snapper appear around 45m. Can assess numbers and biomass of fishes from the video.
- 9) Doug Peter, BSEE, National Artificial Reef Coordinator since June 2013. Policy overview from federal standpoint. In 2009 MMS came out with a policy that curtailed toppled platforms being accepted as reefs. In 2013, new policy concludes 2009 policy asking for the feds to get state/public coordination to see where Rigs to Reef should be going, at least from a federal standpoint. The moratorium on SARS has been lifted and future SARS proposals will be evaluated on a case-by-case basis. There will be engineering and environmental standards that must be met in order to participate in the Rigs to Reef program. There is no more 5 mile mandatory buffer between reefs. So, reefing in place can now be possible where appropriate. Timeline extensions past the idle iron timeline and other timelines in regulation can be granted to oil companies that are

pursuing viable reef options. BSEE prefers explosives not be used. Policy does not allow storm toppled platforms into Rigs to Reef.

Audience member asks who determines the viability of a reefing prospect.

D Peter answers that the federal government has an internal artificial reef review and they coordinate with BSSE and BOEM. If it is going to an established state artificial reef within a program, then there probably won't be a problem. They will be looking at companies that back out at the last minute just to get time extensions.

Jim Cowan asks what is BSEEs policy for placement of artificial reef structures near natural structures.

D Peter answers that he doesn't think there is a set distance but they do not want to adversely affect natural resources and habitat and will most likely establish a buffer.

J Cowan states that he has information about natural resource locations.

D Peter said he would be more than happy to take it and make a GIS layer.

Audience member asks if there will be different guidelines for deep water structures.

D Peters answers not to his knowledge.

10) M McDonough gives update on the SARS policy. BSEE lifted their moratorium and the department had also stopped accepting proposals after the October 2008 meeting. Original spirit of SARS program was to take advantage of historically important fishing locations such as Grand Isle 9 and South Timbalier 86. Ship Shoal 26 ("The pickets") is a current example of one of these locations. The shrimpers opposed the continual development of SARS and the department agreed to stop developing them and to reevaluate the policy. Mentioned the possible development of a SARS committee that could provide more specific guidance to the ARC that would provide guidance to the Artificial Reef Program, but at this time the Program does not accept SARS.

R Pausina sums up that SARS was created for special instances but after Katrina Rita and Ike there was an overwhelming number of structures that were trying to qualify for SARS.

An audience member asks for clarification – so the moratorium has been lifted but you're not accepting applications?

M McDonough answers that it has not been proposed or decided, so it is not over.

R Pausina says there technically no moratorium but we are not accepting applications. We were waiting for a policy change on the federal level, which has been made and that

is why we called the meeting, to update everyone on it. If there is great interest, we can put it on the next agenda to reevaluate.

Audience members say they are interested.

R Pausina suggested some letters be sent to the Program expressing interest and it could possibly be added to the next agenda.

11) M McDonough gives a brief overview of the deep water program within the department and introduces Freeport-McMoran. Guidelines for deep water program are that the overall water depth is 400 feet and clearance needs to be at most 200 feet. This structure would not meet the clearance requirements and the program would like input from the council.

D'elia asks if this is going to set precedence for future cases if approved.

M McDonough answers that it is something we should discuss, whether we would accept departures on a case by case basis or to develop different criteria for the deep water program.

D'elia recommends that if there are going to be a number of these instances then there should be a formal procedure for handling them.

R Pausina says that the program has guidelines but we are letting them tell their side of the story.

McMoran presents their structure and situation to the council. A video was shown with habitat on the structure at 477 feet of water. Site is in Ewing Banks 947. Presented damage, work that has been performed, current site conditions, cost to date, objective and proposed plan. Structure toppled in 2008, 70 miles offshore. 4 pile. Deepest and heaviest toppled structure to date in GOM. Structure was "pretty much in tact" when it fell over. In 2011, divers severed deck away and rotated and recovered it. Deck and production equipment has been removed. Marine growth and marine fish was shown on equipment that was submerged for three years. 97.8 million dollars have been spent on picking up equipment so far by McMoran. They state that are asking program to reef a jacket that is "completely clean" and that they want to leave well stubs and jacket only. 302' water clearance would remain. If jacket is left in place it would decrease risk of future divers and possible damage to nearby pipelines.

An audience member asks about the 200' depth limit.

Doug Peter answers that the current BSEE policy does not allow this structure to pass. It's not preapproved and they are concerned about its structural integrity.

Doug says there are concerns from the federal side and he wants to put that on the forefront.

R Pausina said that it is not an action item and cannot speak for the entire council, but he feels that it falls within the spirit of what SARS was originally established for and he does not think it would interfere with shrimping grounds or other user groups. He feels that there would be recreational benefits. He mentioned that there are federal hurdles but he feels they were developed to avoid ocean dumping and that isn't what this case is about. The department will continue to work with Freeport-McMoran.

D'elia stated that he would like the department to consider guidelines for exceptions.

- 12) R Pausina introduced the last agenda item, the inshore artificial reef plan. Originally the program was developed as an offshore program but we have been taking inshore and nearshore reefs on a case by case basis. When developing inshore projects we look for partners with a 1:1 match to build reefs with. R Pausina stated that he felt a formal plan should be developed for inshore and nearshore area reef development. He mentioned possibly establishing planning areas in these areas. Says there will be a draft plan put online for users to go over and take input to incorporate into the plan. Suitability mapping will come out first with all areas that are potential reef sites, it will be brought to the council, receive public input, and then go from there. He hopes after the holidays we can get back on

Audience member says that it sounds like it is going to be a lengthy process.

R Pausina says that he feels it could be in place by Summer of next year. Inshore reefs will still be developed in the meantime in areas that do not have user conflict.

Public comment from Clint Guidry – agrees that everyone should have input in the inshore plan.

R Pausina would like the council to reconvene early in the New Year. An agenda would be published online prior to the next council meeting to allow for comments and all presentations and minutes from today's meeting will be posted online on an Artificial Reef Council page. The inshore plan and suitable habitat maps will also be published on this site.

Live streaming is currently available for about 25 participants by invitation. Public streaming will be in a little over 2 weeks.