

MINUTES CRAB TASK FORCE MEETING
August 19, 2010

Call to Order/Roll Call

The Crab Task Force meeting was called to order by Chairman Gary Bauer at 5:13 p.m.

A roll call was then made:

VOTING		NON-VOTING	
Gary Bauer	X	Rusty Gaude	X
Roy Meek		Mark Benfield	
Dennis Landry	X	Walter Keithly	
Pete Peterson		Ewell Smith	
Keith Watts	X	David Lavergne	X
L.J. Sandras	X	Vince Guillory	X
Pete Gerica		Melissa Daigle	X
Pat Templet	X	Jeff Mayne	X

A quorum of 5 voting members was present.

Adoption of Minutes and Agenda

L.J. Sandras moved and Keith Watts seconded that “the minutes and the agenda be approved as written” - motion carried (all in favor).

Public Input

Melissa Daigle announced the availability of “Louisiana Coastal Law” pamphlet and distributed copies to all LA Crab Task Force members present.

David Lavergne distributed copies of Louisiana Market Maker literature to all LA Crab Task Force members present. He mentioned that there had been “light” turn-out to date from Trade Adjustment Assistance Program letters that were mailed out. Program is for shrimpers who harvested in 2008, who could receive as much as \$12,000. They have until September 23, 2010 to register for the Program.

David also announced an upcoming survey and personal interviews for seafood processors. Letters will be sent out to give the processors notice. Participants will receive a \$50 gift card.

Keith Watts asked why there was no Trade Adjustment Assistance Program for crabbers. Rusty Gaude briefly explained how the Program came about. Gary Bauer suggested the Task Force discuss the possibility of developing a similar program for crabbers at a future meeting. Rusty offered for him and Melissa Daigle to investigate that possibility before the next meeting.

MSC Certification

Gary Bauer stated that the certification process continues to move forward. Contracts have been signed with Scientific Certification Systems (SCS). A portion of the cost had been donated by American Fisheries Fund. Rene LeBreton with Louisiana Seafood Promotion and Marketing Board (LSPMB) has negotiated contracts with SCS. Gary stated that at Seafood Promotion Board meetings there has been a push for all Louisiana seafood be certified as sustainable through a third party certification program. Keith Watts asked if the Deepwater Horizon Oil Spill would be a hindrance to the certification process. Gary responded that per an SCS representative, the oil spill would not have a negative effect on the MSC certification of the Louisiana blue crab industry. Also, SCS representatives will be meeting with Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries personnel in September 2010 to begin the final assessment. The process would still take approximately 18 months from that time.

Impacts of Deepwater Horizon on LA Blue Crab Industry

Dennis Landry stated that price for blue crabs is up, but sales were down. Keith Watts mentioned some buyers were not buying for fear of the “unknown”. It was mentioned from the floor that markets in Maryland were closing to Louisiana crabs. Dennis further stated that he felt media was hurting the industry. Gary Bauer voiced his disappointment with the FDA over the way crab tissue samples were handled when submitted for testing. Joey Shepard, LDWF Office of Fisheries Administrator, said that all crab tissue samples submitted to the FDA have passed both chemical and sensory testing, and the opening of state waters closed to commercial harvest may begin soon.

Gary mentioned he attended Governor Jindal’s press conference earlier that day where the Governor announced that Louisiana had received \$13 million from British Petroleum to be used for a post-oil spill seafood monitoring program.

Gary reminded everyone that if they had submitted a claim for BP payments, they would need to resubmit their claim to Mr. Feinberg’s group. A discussion of the claims process followed. Many suggestions were made for how to most effectively make a claim.

National Seafood Marketing Board

Gary Bauer stated that a National Seafood Marketing Coalition was started in Alaska after the Exxon-Valdez incident due to a large amount of imported seafood. Marketing for American seafood would be paid for by tariffs on imported seafood. Gary mentioned several organizations currently involved in this Coalition, and that Louisiana was involved in getting more organizations in the Gulf of Mexico region involved.

Next Meeting / Agenda Items

The Task Force requested that the next meeting be held in October 2010.

Suggested agenda items included Trade Adjustment Assistance Program for Louisiana crabbers and How to best market Louisiana blue crabs.

Adjournment

Keith Watts moved and L.J. Sandras seconded that “the meeting be adjourned” -- motion carried (all in favor).

The Crab Task Force meeting was adjourned by Chairman Gary Bauer at 7:08 p.m.