

MINUTES CRAB TASK FORCE MEETING
August 18, 2011

Call to Order/Roll Call

The Crab Task Force meeting was called to order by Chairman Gary Bauer at 16:49.

A roll call was then made:

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

A quorum of six voting members was present. Pete Gerica arrived at 17:07 - 7 voting members.

Adoption of Minutes and Agenda

Pete Peterson moved and L.J. Sandras seconded that “the minutes be approved as written” – motion carried (all in favor).

Pete Peterson moved and L.J. Sandras seconded that “the amended agenda be approved” – motion carried (all in favor).

Public Input

There was no input from the public.

Introduction of New Members

Kim Alfonso, prospective new member, hard crab fisherman from St. Bernard Parish

Rodney Parfait, newly appointed member, hard crab fisherman from Dulac area

Trudy Luke, newly appointed member, soft shell crab shedder from Dulac area

Dr. Julie Anderson, newly appointed non-voting member, LSU Sea Grant biologist

Louisiana Seafood Promotion and Marketing Board

Ewell Smith gave power point presentation on Strategic Plan of Louisiana Seafood Promotion and Marketing Board (LSPMB) which was approved July of 2011. Presentation outlined LSPMB’s mission and issues facing the seafood industry such as the Deep Water Horizon oil spill and imported and farm raised seafood. LSPMB was granted \$30 million dollars to enhance Louisiana seafood brand, restore markets, and strengthen the industry. LSPMB has built a team for this purpose which includes GCR & Associates for marketing and research, Graham Group for branding, and The Food Group for distribution. LSPMB has a desire to maintain transparency and accountability throughout

this process. Ewell outlined steps being taken to carry out this process. Actions will be evaluated and LSPMB will target the most effective marketing actions. A website has been created to keep everyone aware of activities and expenditures.

Dennis Landry asked a question regarding the dumping of Alabama crab meat into the Louisiana market. Ewell Smith responded that the plan calls for a means to combat these and other issues. Dennis questioned about mistakes on the LSPMB facebook page and how to make corrections. Ewell invited any and all suggestions for improvement. Gary Bauer mentioned having met with representatives from both Graham Group and The Food Group. He stated that these groups are working diligently as well as LSPMB.

Louisiana Wild Seafood Certification

Joey Shepard gave a power point presentation on the Louisiana Wild Seafood Certification. He stated the process began with the shrimp industry and has expanded. The program will help with dealing with import products. La. R.S. 56:578.15 grants authority to the Secretary of Louisiana Wildlife and Fisheries to create a means to certify Louisiana seafood products. A base level certification will certify that the product was locally harvested and contains no foreign imports. A premium quality labeling program is to follow. To be eligible, seafood must be harvested and landed in Louisiana by a Louisiana licensed and certified commercial fisherman. Premium quality eligibility will require professionalism training and product must meet more stringent qualifications. Methods of funding discussed included remaining Gustav/Ike funds and 10% of the artificial reef budget.

Dennis Landry suggested using larger escape rings in crab traps to improve product quality. Pete Gerica recommended mandatory drug testing for program participants. Trudy Luke mentioned there were problems with labels staying on packaging. Pete Peterson mentioned there may be some issue regarding eligibility of part-time fishermen for the program and some discussion followed. Joey Shepard concluded by asking for Crab Task Force support and soliciting continued input.

Pete Peterson moved and L.J. Sandras seconded that “the Crab Task Force support the effort of the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries to develop a two tier seafood certification program.” Motion carried, all in favor.

MSC Certification Update

Mark Schexnayder mentioned that representatives from Seafood Certification Services (SCS) were coming to Louisiana for an on-site visit on August 29, 2011. SCS has asked that the Louisiana blue crab stock assessment include certain benchmarks. This would allow for the halt of crab harvests if certain factors existed. Possible requirements that SCS would want were outlined and discussed. Mark gave examples of reference marks that may possibly be used to meet MSC certification requirements. Some discussion followed regarding possibly limiting the number of crab traps a fisherman could use or installing turtle exclusion devices (TED) in crab traps.

Gary Bauer reminded the Task Force that much work had been done toward the MSC certification effort. The Crab Task Force asked the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries to pursue this certification. The Louisiana crab industry is well ahead of any other crab industry, but can pull out if requirements are not acceptable.

Derelict Crab Trap Removal Program

Marty Bourgeois gave power point presentation outlining the Derelict Crab Trap Removal Program. Marty showed twelve locations of previous cleanups and the total number of traps that had been removed through the program, which now stands at 19,546. Marty pointed out the effort of volunteers in past cleanups and mentioned that volunteer effort would be important in future events. Locations for spring 2012 derelict trap cleanups will be in portions of St. Bernard and Plaquemines Parishes on February 25 - March 5, 2012 and in Terrebonne Parish March 17-26, 2012. A map of these locations was presented. The dates and locations for these derelict trap cleanups will have to be presented to the Louisiana Wildlife and Fisheries Commission at their September meeting. Dr. Julie Anderson asked to speak on Sea Grant's role in the spring 2012 derelict trap cleanup. Julie stated that the 2012 cleanups will be financed by grant money secured by LSU Sea Grant. They have a strong desire to revitalize the program. They are also looking for ways to improve volunteer effort by commercial crab fishermen, possibly

offering incentives for their effort. David Lavergne mentioned that the Crab Task Force did have funds allocated for this program as well.

Returns Above Specified Costs

Lee Buckner made a presentation on preliminary results of a study of crab trap returns. The objective of the study was to measure specific costs for crab fishing trips and then compare those costs to the revenue for these trips. Mr. Buckner used cost and revenue data to make a crab trap returns model. Using the study, Mr. Buckner would try to predict how fishermen can maximize their returns. Mr. Buckner stated there was further analysis of data to be conducted and final study results expected in September 2011. Through the study, Mr. Buckner has been able to determine which factors most effect returns from crab fishing trips. Mark Schexnayder asked if the results were calculated for individual fishermen. Mr. Buckner said this would be in the final results. Dennis Landry asked if this would allow fishermen to determine their returns based on different scenarios. Mr. Buckner acknowledged that the model could be used for that purpose. L.J. Sandras congratulated Mr. Buckner on his accomplishment.

Peelings to Pellets

Dennis Landry stated he had been looking for a way to deal with crab peelings after processing. He purchased a machine which ground the peelings left over after processing the crabs and produces pellets which consist of fifteen elements and are 78% protein. Possible uses for these pellets are poultry or other livestock food, composting material, fertilizer or chitosen which is used in bandaging. The process takes a smelly, stinky by-product and reduces it to a pasteurized, scent-free, bacteria-free, nonperishable storable product.

Julie Anderson recommended investigating this product as alternative crab bait. Mr. Luke and Rodney Parfait recommended that they would try the pellets for baiting crab traps and report results in a future Crab Task Force meeting. Pete Gerica recommended using the pellets for chum for commercial fishing. Mr. Luke recommended the addition of shrimp heads to the pellets as well.

Crab Education Day

Gary Bauer gave a brief overview of Crab Education Day to newly appointed Task Force members. Marty Bourgeois recommended choosing dates in October for the next Crab Education Day. Pete Gerica and Mark Schexnayder agreed. Marty stated that Gary should contact Ewell and Rene LeBreton with LSPMB to start the initial planning.

Other Business

Gary Bauer brought up issues with H-2B Labor Policies. Namely, the extreme increase in salary now required to be paid to immigrant laborers. One example given was nearly a 100% increase in minimum salary. Gary stated that it has always been nearly impossible to get local workers to pick crab meat and H-2B labor is necessary for him and others to maintain their crab processing businesses.

David Lavergne made a short presentation regarding available funds in the Crab Task Force marketing and promotion account and the Derelict Crab Trap Removal account. David outlined the amount of funds in each account and the amount of funds allocated for use.

Next Meeting/Agenda

Crab Task Force requested the next meeting be held in the first week of October at 13:30 p.m. Suggested agenda items included: enforcement of illegal crab sales, fuel cards for crab trap cleanup, use of air boats in crab trap cleanup.

Adjournment

Pete Peterson moved and L.J. Sandras seconded that "the meeting be adjourned" - motion carried (all in favor). Crab Task Force meeting was adjourned by Chairman Gary Bauer at 19:22 p.m.