

Oyster Task Force Meeting April 7, 2015

UNO Advanced Technology Center

Meeting called to order at 1:08 p.m

Introduction of guests and roll call

Voting Members Present

Al Sunseri

Brad Robin

Brandt LaFrance

Byron Encalade

Dan Coulon

John Tesvich

Peter Vujnovich

Buddy Pausina

Sam Slavich

Shane Bagala

Wilbert Collins

Willie Daisy

Voting Members Absent

Jakov Jurisic

Non-Voting Members Present

Mark Schexnayder

Chad Hebert in for Lt. Col. Sammy Martin

Karl Morgan

Chip Kline

Kyle Graham

Non-voting members absent

Lance Broussard

See attached meeting sign-in sheet for guests

Motion by Peter Vujnovich to accept minutes, second by Wilbert Collins. Motion adopted.

Randy Pausina mentioned that the Calcasieu Task Force is organizing again and he has encouraged them to attend the meetings.

Motion to approve agenda as presented by Al Sunseri, second by Wilbert Collins.

Tag sales for March were 684,026. Remaining fund balance is \$339, 215 and budget balance is \$259, 525. Motion by Al Sunseri to accept the financial report, second by Wilbert Collins.

Buddy Pausina said that the public/private oyster grounds committee did not meet, but they were assigned the issue of incidental harvesting of clams. Mark Schexnayder said that this issue is being handled outside of a committee.

Enforcement Report-Feb 26- April 1, 34 oyster cases, west of river seized 244 sacks that were returned to the water, east of River 21 citations for undersized oysters on opening day in Lake Borgne area.

There have been some additional enforcement agents hired.

John Tesvich went over the items discussed in the legislative committee

House Bill 116 by Rep. Gisclair, out of the three actions the committee recommends to watch, oppose or support. This bill had some concerns about allowing building of structures without any coastal use permit also questions on how you would document oysters being harvested within 100 feet of the bulkhead. Recommendation for HB 116 was to watch and possibly amend with the author. Motion by Al Sunseri to accept the committee's recommendations, second by Dan Coulon. Motion adopted.

Bill 341 by Rep. Garofalo- committee recommends to support the legislation, Al Sunseri moved to support the committee's recommendation. Second by Pete Vujnovich. Motion adopted.

Bill 579- by Rep. Garofalo- the committee had some issues with the proposed legislation. Recommendation of the committee was to study it and look at making amendments to the bill. Issues with severance tax and increase on leases being too much in two years. Motion by Al Sunseri to send this bill back to the legislative committee and try to reconvene since the session begins next week. Second by Dan Coulon, motion adopted.

House Bill 680 by Rep. Leopold- the committee had some issues with this legislation and the committee recommendation was to not support the bill as written. Motion by Al Sunseri that the task force support the committee's recommendation. Second by Sam Slavich. Further clarification was given on why the committee disapproved. Motion adopted.

John Tesvich presented a resolution regarding the state's master plan and a working coast, that traditional legal harvesting of commercial seafood will not be disparaged or prohibited by the CPRA. Copies were distributed to the members. This motion was passed by the legislative committee. Motion to reject the resolution by Kyle Graham, second by Byron Encalade. Al Sunseri made a substitute motion that the chairman of the OTF work with CPRA to develop a resolution that could be something both parties could agree too. Dan Coulon second. Substitute motion by Wilbert Collins to support the resolution as presented, second by Sam Slavich, motion adopted.

Research committee meeting minutes were distributed in the member packets and are attached to these minutes. State currently uses 6.47 pounds of meat per Louisiana sack of oysters. LDWF 6-year study from 2002-07 found that on average meat weight was 7.9 lbs per sack.

Recommendation 1- that the oyster task force ask that LDWF or some entity should do a study to see if the meat/weight conversion should be updated and report their findings back to the task force.

Patrick Banks presented the task force the severance tax information collected from 1997-2013. In 2013, \$19,683 was collected. This goes into LDWF conservation fund and is not earmarked for oyster related spending. Tax increase was favored among many of the members as long as it went directly to oyster related activities.

Recommendation 2- Recommend that OTF request LDWF develop a management plan that would include items such as license restricting, severance tax restructuring and uses for money gathered through increased fees or taxes that would directly benefit the oyster industry.

Motion to adopt the first recommendation by Buddy Pausina, second by Willie Daisy. Al Sunseri asked that it be done over a 12- month span, from different areas in the state. Motion adopted.

Motion by Buddy Pausina to accept Recommendation 2, second by Sam Slavich. Randy Pausina recommended that we update the oyster strategic plan with these new issues. Motion adopted.

Karen Profita addressed the task force and requested the same amount that was allocated to them last year \$48,085 (this was later confirmed in the budget as \$45, 712). Dan Coulon suggested that Karen Profita reach out to Farm Bureau to make sure we are coordinating with them. Al Sunseri asked that Karen Profita work with the two oyster representatives on the seafood promotion and marketing board to come up with a plan and an amount and they can come back to them at the next meeting.

Al Sunseri said that in January 2014 there was supposed to be certification of oyster dealers done in accordance with NSSP and it has not been done, Al Sunseri asked that we write a letter to DHH to request this. John Tesvich said he will call DHH about this and follow-up with a letter if necessary.

Patrick Banks presented an updated report on the public seed grounds, that presentation is attached to the minutes.

Buddy Pausina addressed the group, and submitted his resignation. Mitch Jurisich will be taking his place on the Oyster Task Force.

John Tesvich passed out the letter from Mr. Kline to Secretary Barham regarding the recent opening on the public seed grounds. Motion by Al Sunseri to not take any action on the letter, second by Brad Robin. Motion adopted.

John Tesvich said that he asked Ashley Roth to look into a promotional/educational video similar to the one that was created in the 60-70s and this film could be presented to the various committees across the state, what it means to be an oysterman and what it means for Louisiana. Al Sunseri made a motion that the task force support creating a 30 minute film for up to \$30,000. Rene LeBreton said that 30 minutes may be too long so maybe do a smaller piece that they can take with them. Karen Profita with LSPMB said that they have some footage that would be available to use. Dan Coulon asked that we highlight coastal restoration. Al Sunseri, Dan Coulon, Mitch Jurisich, Brad Robin and Pete Vujnovich will sit and discuss the framework for the video. Rene LeBreton will help serve on the committee. Motion adopted.

Al Sunseri made a motion that the task force support D.C. Mardi Gras, second by Brad Robin. A budget will be distributed later. Motion adopted.

Mr. Ernst asked that discussion on size limits for oysters be an agenda item for the next meeting. Also something on the license of prior offenders so that the agents know if people are supposed to have VMS or not without having to go look it up.

Seafood Board Legislation Reception on April 21, 2015

Next meeting set for Tuesday, May 5, potentially in LA Room at 10 a.m. Legislative committee will meet before that. Motion to adjourn by Al Sunseri, second by Dan Coulon.

Meeting adjourned at 3:23 p.m