

Oyster Task Force Meeting
Tuesday, February 26, 2019, 1:00p.m.
West Bank Regional Library
2751 Manhattan Blvd.
Harvey, LA 70058

I. Pledge of Allegiance

II. Roll call and introduction of guests

Voting Members Present:

Shane Bagala
Dan Coulon
Byron Encalade
Jakov Jurisic
Mitch Jurisich
Brad Robin
Brandt Lafrance
Sam Slavich
Peter Vujnovich
Willie Daisy

Voting Members Absent:

Tracy Collins
Leo Dyson
Al Sunseri
John Tesvich

Non-Voting Members Present:

Carolina Bourque
Justin Gremillion
Major Edward Skena
Frank Cole in for Karl Morgan
Brian Lezina

Non-Voting Members Absent:

III. Jakov Jurisic motioned to approve the January 9, 2019 meeting minutes, 2nd by Shane Bagala. Motion carries.

Brad Robin motioned to add an item to the agenda under New Business, 'G. To Discuss Opening Lake Borgne for Bedding', 2nd by Jakov Jurisic. Motion carries.

Shane Bagala motioned to add an item to New Business, 'H. To Consider a Resolution that Would Oppose the Pacific Oyster Bill, House Bill 1098', 2nd by Jakov Jurisich. Motion carries.

Jakov Jurisic motioned to add an item under New Business, 'I. To Consider a Resolution of Support for HB No. 335, Which Would Require Food Service Establishments serving Imported Crawfish or Shrimp to Inform Patrons that the Seafood is of Foreign Origin, 2nd by Shane Bagala. Motion carries.

Peter Vujnovich motioned to approve the agenda as amended, 2nd by Jakov Jurisic. Motion carries.

IV. Treasury Report

Oyster Development Account

Remaining Fund Balance- \$356,268

Remaining Budget Balance- \$64,502

Oyster Tag Sales Total for the month of January 2019- \$257,004

Jakov Jurisich motioned to accept the treasury report as presented, 2nd by Shane Bagala. Motion carries.

V. Committee Reports:

A. Public-Private Oyster Seed Grounds Committee- No report

B. Enforcement Report-
Jan 3rd – Feb 8th

Region 4 (Iberia)

None

Region 5 (Cameron and Vermillion)

None

Region 6: (Terrebonne, Lafourche, Grand Isle)

Terrebonne

5-take oysters from an unapproved area (polluted)

3-take oysters closed season (sister lake)

3-take oysters illegal hours

32 sacks seized

Lafourche

3-take oysters illegal hours

Region 8: (Jefferson, Plaquemines, St. Bernard, Orleans, St. Tammany)

St Bernard Parish

24-Take undersized oysters from natural reef
2-Violate sanitary code (log book)
1-Fail to display numbers on top vessel
180 Sacks of oysters returned to water

Plaquemines

2-Fail to tag sacked oysters
2-Harvest oysters without oyster harvester license
2-Violate sanitary code (log book)
2-Violate sanitary code (refrigeration)
14 sacks of oysters seized

LDWF Enforcement announced that one drone was donated to enforcement and two more were on delivery, and a bid was awarded to train 10 pilots. LDWF Enforcement stated that they would provide the task force with an update and presentation upon the completion of the drone training

Brian Lezina entered at 1:20pm

The task force expressed concern with oyster violations in St. Bernard Parish that are not being carried out through the court system, stated that many cases are being pleaded to a lesser charge or thrown out all together

Jakov Jurisic motioned for the task force to write a letter to the St. Bernard Parish District Attorney's Office regarding the conviction of oyster violators, 2nd by Sam Slavich. Motion carries.

C. Legislative Committee- No report

D. Research Committee-

Dr. Melancon stated that over the next couple of months a lot of RFPs will be going out to the scientific community for different projects and many of these projects are related to oysters. Suggested that if the task force receives any requests for letters of support for these projects that they could send those to the Research Committee. The committee would plan to meet prior to the full task force meeting to review the RFP and proposed project and be prepared to brief the task force at the meeting to save time and give the task force a better idea of what the project is about.

E. Coastal Restoration Committee- No report

F. Marketing Committee- Jakov Jurisic was reappointed to the Seafood Promotion and Marketing Board as the Oyster Task Force representative; the OTF Marketing Committee plans to host their next meeting prior to the next OTF meeting

The OTF Aquaculture Committee requested to be included in the oyster marketing campaign and plans to participate at upcoming meetings

G. Health Committee- Justin Gremillion provided the task force with an update:

There are plans to open some of the gates of the Bonne Carre Spillway by February 27, 2019; LDH is working closely with LDWF regarding oyster relays; stated that LDH is now fully staffed with inspectors

Task Force requested that LDH outline the item required for oyster relay and email it to them

H. Professionalism Committee- No report

I. Aquaculture Committee-

Items the committee discussed at their last meeting:

- Standing item on the agenda- discussion of oyster seed supply issues
- Promotion of oyster aquaculture west of Cocodrie; seeking to expand the industry in this area
- Planned Mississippi River diversions as they affect the aquaculture industry- this item was deferred until fall or until the EIS is released
- Compiling a list of alternative oyster culture issues, LDH and LDWF enforcement related issues (i.e. moving seed)
- Aquaculture Committee members attending various oyster related meetings throughout the State to report back to the committee and relay pertinent information

J. Joint Task Force Working Group- No report

VI. New Business

A. The task force considered funding for the Summer Dermo Study

Dr. Jerome La Peyre the study can predict predicts mortality; 20 samples are collected from the public seed grounds from across the State.

The task force stated that the dermo study was beneficial when the seed grounds were productive. The study provided a guideline of where dermo existed and when to bed, but lately there isn't enough productivity on the public seed grounds at the moment. Suggested that sampling be done in different basins like Barataria and Terrebonne Basins, but not just on the public grounds in these areas, but also on the privately leased areas as well

Dr. Melancon stated that the current Summer Dermo Study only samples Subtidal oysters. Although at the moment, dermo is not an issue in intertidal oysters as much as in subtidal oysters, there is concern with certain intertidal areas becoming more susceptible to dermo due to sea level rise and subsidence levels affecting these areas. Intertidal oysters, particularly in areas where there is a lot of fresh water in the lower part of the bay systems, become spawners that help with recruitment into the bay. Asked that intertidal areas be considered for sampling in the event that there is lack of oysters available in the current designated sampling areas

Peter Vujnovich motioned to dedicate \$6,800 in funding to support the Summer Dermo Study, 2nd by Byron Encalade. Motion carries.

B. Brad Robin led discussion on moving the oyster industry to the Department of Agriculture and Forestry

An insurance bill was recently passed that would cover oyster fishermen, raising the question as to whether or not it would be beneficial for the oyster industry to move under the Department of Agriculture. Concern with LDWF not supporting the industries initiatives and feel as if the oyster industry would be better represented as farmers opposed to fishermen

Jakov Jurisic motioned to find the legislation that originally proposed to move the oyster industry over to the Department of Ag and find a legislator to carry it, 2nd by Willie Daisy. Motion carries.

Steve Sessums, from the Department of Ag and Forestry, suggested that the task force draft a referendum that would include everything that the task force is requesting from the Department of Ag and send it to Commissioner Strain

Dan Coulon suggested looking into the opportunities that are currently available to the oyster industry now that they are included in the farm bill and starting there

C. Willie Daisy led discussion on increasing penalties for fishing during illegal hours

Legislation would be required to increase these penalties, the task force moved this item to the OTF Legislative Committee for further discussion, plan to possibly propose this legislation during the 2020 legislative session

Willie Daisy moved that the task force received feedback and get more information on increasing penalties for fishing during illegal hours to possibly propose legislation during next year's legislative session, 2nd by Shane Bagala. Motion carries.

D. Brad Robin provided the task force with an update from the OTF Washington, D.C. trip and LA Alive event

Brad Robin suggested that the task force draft a thank you letter to St. Bernard Parish for inviting the task force to join them in the meetings on the Hill

The task force met with Congressman Scalise, Senator Kennedy, and Senator Cassidy's offices. Some of the items discussed were: the planned Mississippi River Diversion, Mardi Gras Pass, the closing of the MRGO

The task force also met with Chip Kline and Frank Newell to discuss the Mardi Gras Pass Project; went over the phases of the project. There are two phases that would cost a total of 23 million; the project would not completely close off the structure but would rather restore it back to its original functioning form. Received support and the task force needs to follow up with Plaquemines and St. Bernard Parishes to declare a state of emergency on behalf of the oyster industry. Requested that the task force keeps on the parish presidents in their areas to establish a state of emergency in this regard

Brad Robin motioned for the task force to write a letter thanking St. Bernard and Plaquemines Parish presidents for extending the invitation to the task force to attend the meetings on the Hill, 2nd by Jakov Jurisic. Motion carries.

E. Mitch Jurisich provided the task force with an update on the oyster lease moratorium lifting NOI

At the last LDWF Commission meeting where this item was up for consideration the landowners submitted comments prior to the meeting, but this did not give LDWF and the Commission time to review and consider these comments so the item was postponed

The task force requested to be sent the landowner comments and asked that LDWF notify the board of any changes made to the NOI

F. John Zack Lea led discussion on storm surge barriers and oyster industry expansion

The project is a proposal that is to be submitted to the CPRA for consideration. Project Proposal- Emergent terraces created from adjacent barrow areas. Terraces will be oriented to maximize storm surge dampening. Created barrow-canals will be dedicated to oyster production. Terraces will be positioned to control water flow through the canals to maximize oyster growth. Where possible, terraces will be connected to a source of saltwater to allow blending of salt and brackish water for maximum oyster production. Given appropriate permitting and financial incentives, the private- and NGO-sectors will participate in the construction and maintenance of the terraces/canals. Each added terrace should add a measurable increment of storm protection for communities and should stimulate additional taxable income to the State to help pay for the structures

The task force expressed concern with the project not being detailed enough to support and also saw concern with funding. The task force chose not to take action on this item at this time- stating that while the task force does support Mr. Lea in continuing his work on the project, they do not support the project as it currently is

G. Brad Robin led discussion on opening Lake Borgne for oyster bedding

Jakov Jurisic motioned for the task force to write a letter to the Secretary of Wildlife and Fisheries requesting to open, for bedding purposes, Lake Borgne Areas 1 and 2, and the portion of Area 25 that is currently open by the LDH, 2nd by Brad Robin. Motion carries.

Jakov Jurisic motioned to write a letter to the LDWF Commission requesting an agenda item for the next meeting for the commission to consider an increase in the incidental allowance of non-living material in bedding loads from 15 percent to 30 percent, 2nd by Shane Bagala. Motion carries.

H. The task force discussed proposed legislation relating to the importation of Pacific oysters for sale and consumption; it was requested that the task force support a resolution to oppose the legislation

The task force took concern with these foreign oysters finding their way into any of the Gulf waters

I. Acy Cooper, from the LSA and the LA Shrimp Task Force, led discussion on draft legislation that would require a seafood label of origin in restaurants, requesting that the Oyster Task Force write a letter of support in this regard

The task force suggested holding a Joint Task Force meeting to discuss the legislation amongst all task forces, and requested that the legislation be brought back to the task force once it is drafted for the board to consider a resolution

VII. Public Comment- Jakov Jurisic requested that DNR look into a leaking well

The task force asked LDWF if there was any update on the cultch planting recommendations; NOAA reviews cultch plant area proposals, asked that Carolina use her discretion and request to delay cultch plants in areas that may be affected by the opening of the Bonne Carre Spillway and the stage of the MS River

VIII. Next meeting set for Tuesday, April 16, 2019 for 1:00p.m. at the East Bank Regional Library, OTF Marketing meeting set for 10:00a.m., prior to the full task force meeting

IX. Jakov Jurisic motioned to adjourn, 2nd by Brad Robin. Motion carries.

Meeting adjourned

