

LOUISIANA WILDLIFE AND FISHERIES COMMISSION

MINUTES

APRIL 26, 2006

**TERRY D. DENMON
CHAIRMAN**

BATON ROUGE, LOUISIANA

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Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries
2000 Quail Drive

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AGENDA
LOUISIANA WILDLIFE AND FISHERIES COMMISSION
BATON ROUGE, LOUISIANA
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	Page
1. Roll Call	1
2. Declaration of Emergency - Setting of 2006 Spring Shrimp Season for Zone II (Mississippi River to Vermilion Bay)	1
3. Public Comments	7
4. Adjournment	7

MINUTES OF THE SPECIAL MEETING
OF
LOUISIANA WILDLIFE AND FISHERIES COMMISSION

Wednesday, April 26, 2006

Chairman Terry Denmon presiding.

Earl King
Frederic Miller
Wayne Sagrera
Robert Samanie, III

Secretary Dwight Landreneau was also present.

Commissioners Patrick Morrow and Henry Mouton were absent from the meeting.

Before beginning with the agenda, Chairman Denmon asked if any Commissioner had an announcement to make and none were voiced.

Declaration of Emergency - Setting of 2006 Spring Shrimp Season for Zone II (Mississippi River to Vermilion Bay) began with Mr. John Roussel stating this season was typically set at the May Meeting. The Department monitors conditions on the growing grounds on a weekly basis and based on last week's samples there was an indication the shrimp crop would meet the criteria used prior to the normal opening set at the regular meeting. With the meeting being held on May 4, the earliest the season could open would be May 8. Data collected through last week indicated the criteria would be met well before May 8. This is when the recommendation was made to schedule a Special Commission Meeting. Mr. Roussel expressed appreciation to the Commissioners for adjusting their schedules in order to have the meeting. Additional samples were collected the previous weekend to make sure the latest, most up-to-date information was available. The law that pertains to setting the season was reviewed by Mr. Roussel. He further explained that in Zone 2 there is a constraint that the season cannot open later than the third Monday in May. However, this would not be an issue this year with the unusual spring temperatures and rainfall which has a direct bearing on how the shrimp crop matures.

Mr. Marty Bourgeois began his slide presentation with a life cycle diagram of brown shrimp which relies on tidal and wind currents to drive them inshore into the estuaries. If growing conditions are favorable, these shrimp rapidly grow and develop into juveniles, followed by subadults and

eventually returning to the Gulf where they mature, spawn and complete their life cycle. Next slide was the annual Louisiana shrimp catch versus landings for 1976-2005. In 2005, there was 66.8 million pounds heads-off shrimp landed worth \$134 million dockside which represented the lowest annual landings since 1987. Then shown were Louisiana monthly shrimp landings for all species combined comparing 2004, 2005 and long-term mean; Louisiana 2005 shrimp landings for brown, white shrimp and seabob; annual Louisiana shrimp landings comparing 2005 brown shrimp (21.4 million pounds) versus long-term mean (31.8 million pounds) and 2005 white shrimp (40 million pounds) versus long-term mean (31.8 million pounds); annual shrimp gear license sales; brown shrimp landings by count size from 2000-2005 versus long-term mean and 2005 Louisiana brown shrimp landings by river basin. Then Mr. Bourgeois turned the presentation to hydrological conditions and these slides included: monthly southeast Louisiana rainfall for 2005 and 2006 versus long-term mean; monthly Mississippi River discharge for 2005 and 2006 versus long-term mean; south Barataria Bay monthly water temperatures and the deviations from 68°F versus long-term mean; south Barataria Bay daily water temperatures from February 1 through April 23, 2006 versus long-term mean; south Barataria Bay April 2006 daily water temperatures; north Barataria Bay monthly salinity and its deviations from 10 ppt for 2006 versus long-term mean; April 2006 tidal range for Barataria Pass predicted versus 2006; April acreage greater than 10 ppt for 1967 to 2006 (2006 figure 2.3 million acres); brown shrimp catch per effort in 6 foot trawl samples taken in Barataria Bay for April 2006 work weeks versus 2005 and the 3 highest and lowest landing years; brown shrimp mean size in 6 foot trawl samples from Barataria Bay comparing 2006, 2005 and the 3 highest and lowest landing years; 2005 Louisiana brown shrimp landings by Basin; catch per unit effort in 6 foot trawl samples for Zone 2 for the current work week; brown shrimp mean size in 6 foot trawl samples for Zone 2 by major bay systems; brown shrimp percent size frequency distribution for Zone 2 between 1993 and 2006; a map of Louisiana shrimp management zones; growth projections for work week 16, April 16-22, to which Mr. Bourgeois noted this was what drove having the special meeting. On May 1st, 55 percent of the brown shrimp population was larger than 100 count per pound; but additional data changed the projections. Using work week 17 data, 42 percent of the shrimp was larger than 100 count per pound on the first Monday of May and at 68 percent on May 8. The last slide shown was the predicted May 2006 tidal ranges.

Following the presentation, Commissioner Samanie asked for the actual cross over date when the 50 percent criteria was met. Mr. Bourgeois stated that on Thursday, May 4, the technical criteria would be satisfied with 51 percent of the brown shrimp population greater than 100 count. Commissioner Samanie then commented, with the hurricane debris situation, would there be much difference in having a noon opening versus a 6 AM opening. Col. Winton Vidrine felt a noon opening would be advantageous for law enforcement. Chairman Denmon then opened the meeting for public comments.

Mr. John Ratcliff, representing Mr. Bruce Drury from Venice, stated Mr. Drury was opposed to an early opening due to the fact there is no support. He then asked if there was any study done directed toward the shrimper and there being a decline in license sales. Mr. Bourgeois stated the

decrease in license sales was due to the change in license structure and the trend was driven by the economics in the fishery. It was possible that part-time shrimpers did not find it economically profitable to continue. Another fact was that trip ticket data indicated the number of shrimping trips declined significantly. This resulted in those remaining in the business getting a “larger piece of the pie”. Mr. Ratcliff stated that Mr. Drury would have to go from Venice to Lafitte to get ice, fuel and other supplies since there are no support systems in his area. The shrimpers need an extra two weeks or more before opening the season. Commissioner King stated that in 1986 and 1987 the record license sales was caused by a severe oil field decline and a lot of those fishermen went into shrimping where they could make a living.

Mr. Gerard Thomassie, owner and operator of Louisiana Shrimp and Packing in Golden Meadow, stated based on the presented information and the criteria to be followed, the earliest the season could open would be May 8. One reason for the meeting, according to Mr. Thomassie, was that market conditions indicate processors are in need of small shrimp to keep a firm hold on the market. He agreed that the support system was not available since the hurricanes. Mr. Thomassie added that he was against an early opening and did not feel waiting an additional week would be a problem. He then felt that given the four days between May 4 and May 8 and the 12 percent increase in the crop was not enough of a push to put the concerns of the industry and infrastructure as a whole aside.

Ms. Rita Duplantis read a letter from the Pastor of Holy Family Church in Dulac, Louisiana appealing the Commission to open the season any day after May 1. The blessing of the boats in Dulac would occur on April 30 and if the season opened on May 1, that would impact the number of participants in the activity.

Ms. Virginia Verdin, representing Holy Family Church, stated she was the chairperson for the boat blessing. She felt everyone looked forward to this one day to gather together as a family and noted one day would not hurt the shrimping business. Some of the fishermen from Dulac were not ready to begin fishing, commented Ms. Verdin. Pointe-aux-Chenes was also having their boat blessing on April 30. She asked the Commission to open the season later than May 1st.

Mr. Gary Duncan, Venice, stated that the four shrimp docks and three ice houses were not ready to help the shrimpers. People from his area as well as Mr. Duncan were trying to get their boats ready and would not be ready until maybe May 14. He again begged the Commission to leave the shrimp season closed until May 14.

Mr. Peter Gerica, President of Lake Pontchartrain Fisherman’s Association and Louisiana Seafood Management Council, agreed with everything Mr. Duncan stated. In his area, the blessing of the boat would occur by trailering one boat to St. Louis Cathedral since there were no safe waterways. He felt the processors needed to have compassion and not open the season until as late as possible. The only place for ice or fuel from the Mississippi-Louisiana State line to Delacroix Island was in Lafitte. There are no infrastructures ready and again he asked for the latest possible opening date.

Mr. Juston Schouest stated he lives on Vermilion Bay and noted his boat was ready but the people and ice plants were not ready for an early season. He thought there should be a late opening and did not think it would hurt the shrimp. In fact, it would probably make for bigger and better shrimp. Mr. Schouest knew that the season had to open soon to prevent it from hurting the August season and suggested sometime between May 8 and May 15. As far as the noon opening, Vermilion Bay does not have night trawling, and this would give them only half of a day to shrimp. He then asked the Commission to consider everyone's problems and to postpone opening at least until May 15.

Mr. George Barisich, President of United Commercial Fisherman's Association, thanked the Commission on behalf of those that survived for giving them the opportunity to comment on the issue. He stated he has been traveling around giving shrimp away to dispel the toxic issue and to show that the shrimp are plentiful and good to eat and to gather support for a supplemental bill that may help the fishermen. As far as the shrimp season, Mr. Barisich noted most of St. Bernard Parish facilities were still in shambles. The latest opening possible would be advantageous for them. Commissioner Sagrera stated his home and business was highly impacted and understood where the fishermen were coming from. He then asked how long would it take people to get together and wondered if waiting one or two weeks would make it better. Commissioner Sagrera stated he was frustrated, not at the fishermen, but from trying to help the people. He then asked if they should penalize those that were ready to help those that were not ready? Mr. Barisich stated it was not because they were not trying that they were not ready, things hinged upon what the Federal Government did. Commissioner Sagrera stated it made it very difficult for a decision to be made when there was no set timetable. He added that by delaying it one or two weeks and finding that the fishermen were still not ready accomplished nothing.

Mr. Dean Blanchard stated he would have an ice machine operating by May 8 and noted others were only days off from being ready. He then asked that the season open no earlier than May 8. Mr. Blanchard then asked why the criteria dropped from May 1 to May 4. Mr. Bourgeois stated a front was a factor as well as recruitment. Mr. Blanchard stated a front passed through and it pushed the criteria date from May 1 to May 4 and if they would sample again, it would push the date back to May 8. He again asked that the season open on May 8.

Mr. Gary Duncan stated that everybody has been devastated by the hurricanes and people are scattered all over the country. He noted some residents were just now able to get back to Venice to work on their equipment. Mr. Duncan added that they need all the time they could possibly get before the season opened. Every day it costs him \$60 to \$70 per day to run back and forth from Harvey to Venice to work on his boat. Again, he asked to open the season on May 14 or May 15.

Hearing no further comments, Chairman Denmon asked the pleasure of the Commission. Mr. Bourgeois noted that if the Commission took action to open Zone 2, let the state outside waters currently closed to shrimping be included in the action. The Chairman then asked if the Department had any further recommendations. Mr. Bourgeois reiterated that the technical criteria would be

satisfied on May 4. Commissioner Samanie stated he really hurts for those people that were not ready to shrimp, but there were a lot of people that are ready and want to work. He then followed the Department's recommendation and made a motion to open the shrimp season for Zone 2 on May 4 at 12 noon. Commissioner King seconded the motion. Commissioner Miller commented that he came to the meeting from Hackberry, Louisiana where he lost his camp and boat. People in that area were devastated, but they were trying to put their lives back together and wanted to go to work. The people in southwest Louisiana were further along than what they were in January. Commissioner Miller agreed that there were shrimpers ready to work and that the shrimp were ready and the resource would not wait. He added that he would support the motion. Hearing no further comments, the motion passed with no opposition.

(The full text of the Resolution and Declaration of Emergency are made a part of the record.)

RESOLUTION

2006 Spring Shrimp Season Opening
adopted by the
Louisiana Wildlife and Fisheries Commission

April 26, 2006

WHEREAS, the traditional management criteria used by the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries in recommending the opening dates for the spring shrimp season in inside waters are based on the population of brown shrimp in each shrimp management zone reaching such a size that 50% or more of the brown shrimp are 100 count per pound or larger, and

WHEREAS, current biological data project that 50% of the 2006 brown shrimp population in inside waters will meet the 100 count per pound management criteria in Shrimp Management Zone 2 by May 4, 2006, and

WHEREAS, on January 5, 2006 the Wildlife and Fisheries Commission had closed to shrimping that portion of the State's Outside Waters south of the Inside/Outside Shrimp Line as described in R.S. 56:495, from the eastern shore of Freshwater Bayou Canal at 92 degrees 18 minutes 33 seconds west longitude to the Atchafalaya River Ship Channel at Eugene Island as delineated by the River Channel Buoy Line.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, that the Wildlife and Fisheries Commission hereby opens the spring shrimp season in inside waters in Shrimp Management Zone 2 at 12 noon, May 4, 2006, and that portion of the State's Outside Waters south of the

Inside/Outside Shrimp Line as described in R.S. 56:495 from the Atchafalaya River Ship Channel at Eugene Island as delineated by the River Channel Buoy Line to the eastern shore of Freshwater Bayou at 12:00 noon, May 4, 2006.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Wildlife and Fisheries Commission hereby authorizes the Secretary of the Department of Wildlife and Fisheries to close any portion of Louisiana's inside waters to protect small white shrimp if biological and technical data indicate the need to do so, or enforcement problems develop.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, a Declaration of Emergency setting the 2006 Spring Shrimp Season in Shrimp Management Zone 2 is attached to and made part of this resolution.

Terry D. Denmon, Chairman
Wildlife and Fisheries Commission

DECLARATION OF EMERGENCY

Department of Wildlife and Fisheries
Wildlife and Fisheries Commission

In accordance with the emergency provisions of R.S. 49:953(B) and R.S. 49:967 of the Administrative Procedure Act which allows the Wildlife and Fisheries Commission to use emergency procedures to set shrimp seasons and R.S. 56:497 which provides that the Wildlife and Fisheries Commission shall fix no less than two open seasons each year for all or part of inside waters and shall have the authority to open or close outside waters, the Wildlife and Fisheries Commission does hereby set the 2006 Spring Shrimp Season in Shrimp Management Zone 2 to open as follows:

Shrimp Management Zone 2, that portion of Louisiana's inside waters from the eastern shore of South Pass of the Mississippi River to the western shore of Vermilion Bay and Southwest Pass at Marsh Island, as well as that portion of the State's Outside Waters south of the Inside/Outside Shrimp Line as described in R.S. 56:495 from the eastern shore of Freshwater Bayou Canal at 92 degrees 18 minutes 33 seconds west longitude to the Atchafalaya River Channel at Eugene Island as delineated by the River Channel Buoy Line, all to open at 12:00 noon, May 4, 2006.

The Commission also hereby grants authority to the Secretary of the Department of Wildlife and Fisheries to close any portion of the State's inside waters to protect small white shrimp if biological and technical data indicate the need to do so, or enforcement problems develop.

Terry D. Denmon
Chairman

Under **Public Comments**, Chairman Denmon announced that Ms. Ashley Lauren Vidrine, granddaughter of Col. Winton Vidrine was attending the meeting for the purpose of collecting data for a paper. Also attending the meeting was the Chairman's Assistant, Ms. Sharon Barefield.

Mr. John Roussel mentioned that the shrimp season for Zones 1 and 3 would be set at the Regular May Commission Meeting.

There being no further business, Commissioner Miller made a motion to **Adjourn** the meeting and it was seconded by Commissioner King.

Dwight Landreneau
Secretary

DL:scf