

**MINUTES OF THE  
HUNTING & FISHING ADVISORY EDUCATION COUNCIL**

Meeting of October 13, 2005  
Department of Wildlife & Fisheries Headquarters – Baton Rouge, La.

**ATTENDEES**

Members of the Advisory Council in attendance included Will Courtney, Samuel Smith, Jerald Horst, Stephen Pellessier, Shane Crochet, Al Stirling, Dr. Donald Reed, and Paul Roberts for Nelson Roth and Jeff Poe.

**OPENING COMMENTS**

LDWF Secretary Dwight Landreneau welcomed members to the meeting. He indicated that the meeting would be conducted like a round table discussion.

**DIVISION REPORTS - Katrina/Rita Hurricane Update**

Secretary Landreneau gave a quick overview of Hurricanes Katrina and Rita. The Department now has to deal with the administrative aftermath of these hurricanes, still has displaced employees, and must take care of what is still going on in the rest of the state regarding natural resources. The Council was asked for their input/directions to help the Department in this area.

The Senate Select Committee on Natural Resources was informed at a recent hearing that the fish and wildlife resources of Louisiana are a \$7 billion industry in the state. Under that umbrella, the Department is responsible for 77,000 jobs in Louisiana that are associated with the resources managed by our agency. There is approximately \$284 million of sales and income tax revenues generated by people who depend on these resources for a livelihood. Recovery administrators need to realize that the fishing, hunting, and recreation are viable industries in the State of Louisiana.

Hurricane Katrina made landfall on August 29<sup>th</sup>. The week prior to landfall (August 22<sup>nd</sup> – 24<sup>th</sup>), the Department was preparing facilities and equipment for this storm. Evacuations were also conducted. The Department of Wildlife and Fisheries is the lead agency in search and rescue when it comes to water. All of the Department's boats and trucks that could be moved were put into strategic places for response to Katrina. On the afternoon of the 29<sup>th</sup>, approximately 60 rescue teams made up of Enforcement Agents staged in Baton Rouge and were prepared to head to New Orleans once winds died down. At approximately 4:00 p.m. that afternoon, the Department had boats launched at Clearview and I-10, which is where the flood water level had reached during Katrina. Later that day we were able to get into the Ninth Ward and Elysian Fields and I-10. During this period, approximately 30 boats were also launched in the Slidell, North Shore area, and St. Tammany and Livingston parishes.

The following morning, department employees began working at 4:00 a.m. and had an additional 150 boats. The same afternoon of the storm, fisheries and wildlife biologists were activated to assist in the search and rescue mission. Later on, we were joined by other first responders from

local parish sheriff's departments, EMTs, fire and rescue personnel, and civilian volunteers. Eventually, we had wildlife agents from other states to assist in the search and rescue mission. Over 21,000 people were evacuated during Katrina.

On September 20 we began boarding up facilities and staging again to prepare for Hurricane Rita. We had enforcement agents staged in Baton Rouge and another group staged at Woodworth. Hurricane Rita made landfall on September 24 and we began search and rescue efforts and moved our command posts to the LSU Rice Research Station in Crowley and the other in Abbeville. This was a different scenario than for Katrina. We worked very closely with the Sheriff's departments, National Guard and Coast Guard. We also had field biologists assist in the search and rescue efforts for Rita. Approximately 200 to 300 people were rescued in our efforts with Rita.

Once we accomplished the search and rescue missions for Katrina and Rita, we returned and worked closely with the Department of Agriculture to supply feed and water to stranded livestock. During the storms, the Department of Agriculture supplied fuel to the Department and I do not believe we ever ran out.

Our Department is responsible for approximately 1.5 million acres of habitat. Of the 60 wildlife management areas and refuges the Department oversees, Katrina and Rita impacted 12 wildlife management areas and refuges. Approximately 350,000 acres were affected by Katrina; however, Rita had an affect on over 600,000 acres on the coastline of Louisiana. The fiscal

impact to the Department was much more severe from Rita than Katrina. The following is an estimate of damages from both storms which was prepared by the Office of Wildlife:

- Forest Habitat \$28 million
- Marshlands \$149 million
- Infrastructure (roads, buildings, etc.) \$37 million
- Programs \$12 million

This estimated total of \$226 million includes damages from both hurricanes. The Office of Wildlife works very closely with the alligator industry, which received major destruction and damage. An estimate of damages to the alligator industry from these storms has been calculated at approximately a \$32 million loss. It is going to take about \$250 million just to jumpstart the Department and the industries we work with on the wildlife side.

The Office of Fisheries also sustained a tremendous amount of loss. The Slidell facility is completely gone, and the New Orleans office in the central business district is uninhabitable. Pointe-Ala Hache was destroyed, and most of the buildings at the marine lab in Grand Terre were destroyed also. There were numerous freshwater fisheries that were affected by the saltwater intrusion and poor oxygen supply. The estimate of damages to jumpstart the fisheries industry, which includes both recreational and commercial fishing, is approximately \$443 million; this does not include the total loss to the Department of Wildlife and Fisheries resources. If you add all of the variables and retail values, it is an estimated \$2.3 billion loss to the fisheries industry and the State of Louisiana. John Roussel and Parke Moore are both working very

closely with the congressional delegation to request funds to help restore these industries using federal funds.

The estimated \$443 million loss for the fisheries industry only accounts for damages from Hurricane Katrina; damage estimates have not yet been prepared for Hurricane Rita. The Office of Fisheries is still in the process of estimating those damages.

Mr. Landreneau was asked how does the \$250 million loss to the wildlife industry and the \$443 million loss to the fisheries industry compare to a typical year's worth of hunting and fishing license sales for the Department. Mr. Landreneau responded that as far as income to the Department, it is a potential loss of income. He stated that they have taken information from license sales and fees year-to-date and compared to that of past years and have estimated between \$20 to \$22 million in loss of revenue due to low license sales or commercial fishermen not renewing their commercial licenses; and as for the \$443 million, that includes infrastructure (boat ramps, buildings, fuel stations, ice houses, processing plants, etc.) both department wide and industry wide. Mr. Landreneau stated that license sales is our primary operating budget funding and has nothing to do with construction and physical plants. Those funds are either generated through federal funds, special trusts, or capital outlay. Mr. Landreneau was asked if the Department will have to layoff employees due to the drop in license sales. Mr. Landreneau informed the Council that an Executive Order has been signed by the Governor curtailing spending and hiring and that the Department is following that Executive Order. He said at this particular point in time, we are trying to avoid any furloughs or layoffs but may have to take drastic measures in the future.

Mr. Landreneau reported that the Department is also working with FEMA.

### **WOOD DUCK DATA**

INAUDIBLE

Mr. Robert Helm presented the Council with a video and a PowerPoint presentation on the wood duck banding program. Mr. Helm stated that the banding season ends on September 30 and the results for this year are not yet available. He believes the outcome will be similar to last year, which resulted in approximately 1,600 birds. Mr. Helm explained that the wood duck boxes are another part of the program which was initiated in the early 1990's. The number of boxes has increased dramatically since the program began, and we now have approximately 2,700 boxes that are being managed on our state wildlife management areas. During the banding season, boxes are checked at least once monthly by district personnel. It is estimated that we generate 14,000 to 15,000 wood ducks on the ground each year through this effort.

Mr. Helm was asked where Louisiana ducks go and when do they leave and he replied that most Louisiana wood ducks are residents, but we do have banding recovery from all over the country. However, most ducks remain in Louisiana. He stated we have a tremendous movement of outside birds that come into Louisiana; therefore, the net effect is that the Louisiana birds are buffeted during the hunting season because of the large number of migrate birds that arrive here in the south. Mr. Helm said the hunting on the resident birds is very minimal.

Mr. Helm reported that Kentucky, Tennessee and Florida have a special wood duck season in September because those states do not get many blue-winged teal. These states have a shorter duck season than Louisiana. They have a five day season to take wood ducks and teal. Those seasons are designed to take just the resident wood ducks before the migrant birds come in. They are allowed to take two wood ducks and two teal during the season, or four teal, but they must give up four days of the teal season to do this. Louisiana is the number one state that takes teal during the September season. Mr. Helm stated he doesn't believe Louisiana hunters are willing to give up those extra days and the extra weekend of hunting to add one wood duck to the bag. An extra wood duck in the bag during the regular season is a common request, and the Department has submitted this information to the federal government since they make the final decisions when it comes to waterfowl regulations. However, the federal government has not relented to that request due to the concerns of higher harvest rates based on banding recoveries. Mr. Helm reported that there was not much information available on mortality, but banding is the primary tool being used to calculate survival rates. Mr. Helm was asked whether banding returns have increased or decreased and he reported that banding returns have increased dramatically. He said it is up from 30% to 80%.

### **NATIONAL HUNTING & FISHING DAY**

Ms. Marianne Burke, Public Information Director reported that National Hunting and Fishing Day is an event that takes place statewide. The Department hosts four events around the state in Minden, Monroe, Woodworth, and Baton Rouge. These are all very large events. Woodworth

brings in about 800 to 1,000 people; Minden, Monroe and Baton Rouge have brought in as many as 3,000 people to these events. The event takes place each year on the fourth Saturday in September. The event was designed to show the appreciation for the original conservationists, which are our sportsmen who are hunting, fishing and enjoying the outdoors. We offer the public the opportunity to come in free of charge and experience hunting, shooting, fishing and educational activities. In Baton Rouge, we provide skeet shooting, archery, BB guns, canoeing, boating safety, and fishing contests for the children. We also have a large number of educational exhibits there. This year's event was scheduled for September 24, but was cancelled due to Hurricane Rita. It was rescheduled for October 22. Ms. Burke stated that the event has been held in Baton Rouge for 22 years and Monroe has been hosting the event for 25 years.

Ms. Burke was asked if there are any plans to expand the event and she reported that the event is expanding on its own. In Baton Rouge, the number of people attending is growing and people are coming in from surrounding areas such as Slidell and New Orleans. Ms. Burke stated that they are looking at areas that are getting more people in attendance than they can handle and establish new satellite areas to host the event.

Mr. Bo Boehringer informed the Council of the upcoming Discover Louisiana Hunting promotion scheduled on Thanksgiving weekend. He stated the Commission approved the seasonal dates for the next three years at its July meeting, and the promotional weekends will be on Thanksgiving weekend for the 2005, 2006 and 2007 hunting seasons. The goal is to promote that weekend and attempt to attract non-hunters or non-residents by giving them a weekend that they can hunt at no cost. The hunters will be allowed to hunt deer, rabbit, squirrel, or quail

during this event. This effort is a little different from the free fishing weekend which is available in June. Naturally, there is a safety concern here with firearms and novices that we are hoping to move into the woodlands and marshlands, so we have put in place the following safety features:

1. Require all Discover Louisiana Hunting permittees to take a Hunter Education certification course.
2. Permittee must hunt with a licensed Louisiana hunter accompanying them.

Mr. Boehringer reported that a Discover Louisiana Hunting website was designed for this promotional event so users can obtain their permit. Mr. Boehringer gave a demonstration of the website. The website is the ultimate information source; everything that is needed relative to signing up, frequently asked questions, phone numbers, etc. Mr. Boehringer reported that Discover Louisiana Hunting is a one-time only offer available to novice hunters/non-resident hunters.

It was asked if any other states had in place this sort of promotional event and Mr. Landreneau stated that Texas has something with the same initiative to encourage non-hunters to hunt by giving them a “free weekend” to try hunting. Our event is a little more in depth because we are asking a Louisiana licensed hunter to host these people without a license, and we are requiring a hunter safety component. Our event is the only program structured to attract people from all over the United States. It was asked if the Department would honor other hunter education

certification courses and Mr. Landreneau stated other hunter education courses would be honored.

### **QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS**

It was inquired if the enforcement reports can become more accessible and not to be treated as “top secret material”. The gentleman speaking stated in the past he had been promised the reports but never received them until he went to the Secretary’s level and requested them. He stated that he received the reports for approximately six months and his name was apparently removed from the list. He stated that if the reports are good enough to be presented at the Commission meeting he feels these reports should be accessible to the public, at least via the department’s website. Lt. Col. LaCaze responded that the report that is given to the Commission monthly is also given to the any members of the press/media that are present and request a copy. Lt. Col. LaCaze also stated that if anyone would like a copy of the report, all they have to do is to make a request and it will be set up for them to begin receiving the report.

It was inquired what was Operation Game Thief and Lt. Col. LaCaze informed the Council that Operation Game Thief (OGT) is private citizen’s group who provides reward funds for information leading to citation or arrest of wildlife violations. He stated that OGT tracks all information on any cases they pay rewards.

The next Hunting and Fishing Education Advisory Council meeting will be scheduled at a later date.

## **ADJOURNMENT**

There being no further business the meeting was adjourned.

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Dwight Landreneau

Secretary

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(The preceding constitute minutes of the Advisory Council Meeting and are not a verbatim transcript of the proceedings.)

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