

HUNTING AND FISHING ADVISORY EDUCATION COUNCIL

MINUTES

December 7, 2010

WOODY CREWS
CHAIRMAN

BATON ROUGE, LOUISIANA

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AGENDA
HUNTING AND FISHING ADVISORY EDUCATION COUNCIL
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DECEMBER 7, 2010

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MINUTES OF THE MEETING
OF
HUNTING AND FISHING ADVISORY EDUCATION COUNCIL

Tuesday, December 7, 2010

Chairman Woody Crews presiding.

Vance Gordon
Alexander Perret
Daryl Carpenter
Mike Windham
Lyle Johnson
Stephen Pellessier
Jeff DeBlieux
Donald Reed

Council Members Nelson "Snoop" Roth, Mike Rainwater, Samuel Smith, Shane Crochet, David Rousseau, and Eric Sunstrom were absent from the meeting.

Hearing no comments or corrections from the Council on the **Minutes of September 21, 2010**, Chairman Crews announced the Minutes were approved.

For the **Welcome and Opening Comments** agenda item, Chairman Crews introduced a new Council Member, Mr. Daryl Carpenter of the Louisiana Charter Boat Association and asked that he introduce himself. Mr. Carpenter, owner and operator of Reel Screammers Guide Service out of Grand Isle, stated he has been in the business for 9 years. He was elected President of the Charter Boat Association the day before the Deepwater Horizon oil spill occurred.

Chairman Crews then asked Secretary Robert Barham if he had any comments. The Secretary commented that the Department will be facing challenging times in about 18 months with a multi-million dollar situation. The big end of the problem will be salaries. He was told from the Governor's administration that there would be no new license or fee increases. The Department was looking at a CPI computation. Also, Secretary Barham noted that the public has requested a date of sale license rather than a July 1

to June 30 year. He then asked the Council members to ask their groups to think of this concept. Chairman Crews appreciated the lead time for this discussion. Mr. Pellessier asked why July 1 when "the Department would fall off the cliff". Secretary Barham stated that was the beginning of a new fiscal year. He added that the Department would be fine for fiscal years 2010-11 and 2011-12 but not so good for fiscal year 2012-13. Mr. Carpenter asked how much of the problem was due to the lack of license sales from the BP incident. Secretary Barham stated this problem was due to changes in the law; mainly the Department will have to contribute 30 percent more for the retirees. Lt. Col. Jeff Mayne added it also includes group insurance, inflation and other contributing factors. Mr. Gordon asked if lifetime license sales were impacted and the Secretary answered no, this was not a huge part of the problem. Lt. Col. Mayne stated that funds from lifetime license sales were put into a trust and the Department may need to dip into that trust in order to finance some of the agencies operations. Secretary Barham commented that there was no need to give away any licenses such as the disabled or senior citizen licenses. Another problem was the Wild Louisiana Stamp which allows access to the WMAs, but the public should be required to buy a hunting or fishing license. If a stamp is sold, the Department does not receive funds from the federal government as they do when a license was sold. Chairman Crews understood what the problem was but did not have a solution. Lt. Col. Mayne stated he would provide copies of the legislation as it was developed. Chairman Crews again asked for as much lead time as possible for the Council to discuss and possibly act. Mr. Windham felt the Department was losing money on the senior license. Mr. Jimmy Anthony explained how the sale of one license could generate more money for the Department. Secretary Barham explained that the environmentalists were the ones that wanted the stamp as opposed to having to buy a license, but he mentioned those sales were not helping the Department or the WMAs where this group likes to venture onto. Mr. DeBlieux asked what other stamps were sold and Secretary Barham stated the Wild Louisiana Stamp was the only stamp that was not associated with a license. Another strategy to help with the problem could be consolidating licenses, commented Secretary Barham. Mr. Carpenter asked if the federal match was for each license sold and Mr. Anthony stated it was not the number of licenses sold but how many people the license was sold to. Chairman Crews thought there were 2 categories for federal match, hunting and fishing and he was told that was correct.

Dr. Donald Reed provided an **Organization Overview: LSU Ag Center**. He began stating that the LSU Ag Center was one campus under the LSU system. The mission for the Ag Center was research and extension. The Ag Center has several departments under it such as the School of Renewable Natural Resources, Dairy Science, etc., which allows some professors to have joint appointments. The Ag Center has about 20 research stations statewide and Dr. Reed noted he works at the Jones-Idlewild Station in Clinton. Staff at these stations also have joint appointments, they do both research and teaching at the main LSU campus and research and extension through the Ag Center. The last component under the Ag Center was the agents and specialists getting out and meeting the public. Budget was a big concern for the Ag Center and one reason was the fact they do not have any students since the teaching component falls under the main campus which can pass increases on to the students. Their mission was accomplished through publications, workshops, field days and seminars. Dr. Reed, working as a wildlife specialist, stated wildlife field days are a big event for them which include speakers from the Department of Wildlife and Fisheries, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, other universities, land managers, other wildlife graduate students, and extension personnel. Topics that the speakers generally talk on were food plots, a survey on the different scents and mineral blocks that may be used as an attractant for deer, information provided on Chronic Wasting Disease and field data material on when breeding occurs and why the seasons are set as they are, hunter safety, aging and how to cut a deer, preserving and storing a harvested deer. Another big topic was on feral hog and trapping varmints in general. Other programs besides deer included mourning doves, planting sunflowers, Milo, millet, corn and what legal options a hunter has while hunting. Dr. Reed, located at the Jones-Idlewild Station, has a captive deer herd with a holding shoot which gives a good location for other organizations, universities or private land owners the opportunity to provide a wildlife program. Chairman Crews asked if there was a website for more information and Dr. Reed stated the web address was www.lsuagcenter.com. Dr. Reed stated he was housed in Clinton but was a statewide specialist. Mr. Johnson asked if it would be possible to schedule a deer event if there was a big group. Dr. Reed answered yes; just contact them ahead of time. The station was open 8 a.m. to 5 p.m.

Before going further with the agenda, Chairman Crews stated he started working with Mr. Mark Schexnayder about 15 years ago at Grand Terre, then he moved to the Louisiana Cooperative Extension Service for the Jefferson Parish and has recently moved back to the Department. He then asked Mr. Schexnayder to give the Council an idea of his duties. Mr. Schexnayder stated he serves as the Fisheries Oversight Director and explained the duties he would oversee.

Lt. Col. Jeff Mayne handled the next item, **Enforcement Division Report: Boating Safety Course Compliance**, and stated that they have been handling boating education requirements such as life jackets, DWI's and increasing the age for someone to have boater education. The old law stated that anyone born after January 1, 1988 had to have boater education, but with the new law, the age was moved back 4 years in order to operate a motor of 10 horsepower or more. The significance in the 4 years was that the majority of accidents occur with individuals within the 25 to 35 years of age. In a graph shown, states that have had boater education 10 years or less has a fatality rate of 6.8 deaths per 100,000 boats and states with education for 20 years or more that number drops to 3.67. Since 2003, approximately 40,000 people have had boating education with 5,000 trained last year and about 7,000 this year. The major component for taking the course was online which was offered by Boater Ed for a fee of \$15. The Department was working with Boat U.S. for a free online course. Louisiana has about 1 student trained for every 9.6 boaters and 88 percent of all boat crashes involved people that did not have any boater education. Next shown was a graph on the number of citations and warnings issued for boater education. This year, the Department was looking at simplifying statutes related to reckless and careless operations to mirror highway regulations. Since Lt. Col. Mayne took on the boating education responsibilities, boating accidents involving alcohol has dropped by almost 50 percent. He then commented that Louisiana may look into registering non-motorized boats for a nominal fee. Mr. Carpenter stated that the statute on boating education fails to recognize the Coast Guard licenses. Lt. Col. Mayne mentioned that with the Coast Guard license you learn different things than what was learned from a recreational boating class. To be recognized, the state would have to recognize the Coast Guard license or the NASBLA would have to recognize it nationally. Mr. Carpenter stated they fish the marshy areas and can go around a bend and come quickly upon a person in a kayak. He suggested having a red flag on the kayak

which could possibly save lives. Chairman Crews felt the Department should be proactive. Mr. Carpenter stated they need something to make them visible to boaters. Mr. DeBlieux asked how much longer before the free course with Boat U.S. would be available and Lt. Col. Mayne stated they were working on the criteria now.

The next item, **Office of Fisheries: Tilapia Control in Plaquemines Parish** began with Dr. Tom Lorenz stating he works at the University of New Orleans. In Port Sulphur, about 2 years ago hybrid tilapia and Rio Grande cichlids were found in a 7 mile stretch of canal. The hybrid tilapia are fish that are cold and salt tolerant. A map of the sample sites was shown and Dr. Lorenz stated that at one site as many as 12 adults were captured. Treatment was with rotenone and application was by backpack, boat and roadside truck sprayer. The main treatment occurred in June but happened also in late June and July to make sure. Monitoring was conducted by universities, state and federal agencies and Dr. Lorenz felt they were successful in not only killing the tilapia but also the Rio Grande cichlids and a few native fish. Restocking the canal came from the Atchafalaya and the Bonnet Carre and included bowfin, catfish, alligator gar, sunfishes, and largemouth bass. In December 2009, 2 tilapia and Rio Grande cichlids were found in the drainage canal. The January cold temperatures provided some problems for these fish so that they would become disoriented and possibly not survive. At the beginning of 2010, the University of New Orleans and Nicholls State began monitoring the canal, other canals and marsh areas in the event the fish showed up in places they were not initially. Electrofishing, seines, gill nets, traps were the methods used in monitoring the areas. In October, one tilapia was found in the southern portion of the original range, then four were found by electrofishing in the northern portion and 6 more were found when shocking. Results of the rope seine data showed that all of the restocked fish were very successful in reproducing as well as the Rio Grande cichlids. Staff from Nicholls State was looking at the stomachs of gar to determine what they are eating and others were examining the diets of bass as well. Items they have found from the stomachs were lots of fish, crawfish and detritus. Chairman Crews asked if there was any data to show what the best predator species to combat this fish was and Dr. Lorenz noted that they know largemouth bass and gar eat them. But one problem was that they reproduce and grow fast which will make keeping up with them a chore. This project has been a huge endeavor and Dr.

Lorenz felt it was a tremendous success. Can these fish be kept down was a question that he felt another year or two was needed before that could be answered. Mr. Bo Boehringer knew that the area was closed to fishing and wondered if it had been reopened and Mr. Joey Shepard answered it was all open. Chairman Crews asked who was responsible for checking and Dr. Lorenz stated the Department of Wildlife and Fisheries is funding him and Nicholls. Chairman Crews asked Dr. Lorenz if he would come back and report the results and he was told yes. Mr. Windham asked if the canal system was under pump and he was told it was all being pumped into the marsh. Then Mr. Windham wondered if there was a way to lower the water levels to get a maximum kill. Dr. Lorenz thought it was a good idea but knew there may be some submerged culverts that the fish could get into.

Whooping Crane Re-Introduction Project began with Mr. Robert Love stating he has been working with the Department for 30 years as well as being a consumptive user of wildlife and fisheries for his entire life. After working as a wildlife biologist, Mr. Love worked as the land acquisition biologist and now works with the Coastal and Nongame Resources Division. The Coastal and Nongame Resources Division serves as the stewardship of the coastal marsh which was about 650,000 acres (White Lake, Rockefeller, Marsh Island, State Wildlife, Atchafalaya Delta, Pointe-aux-Chenes, Salvador, Timken, Pass-a-Loutre and Biloxi), houses the Habitat Section, Scenic Streams Program, Ecological Investigations, Endangered Species, Nongame, Natural Heritage Program and Mineral Resources Program. The whooping crane has been on the endangered species list since 1967. There are 15 species of cranes in the world, 11 of them are threatened or endangered with the whooping crane being the most threatened. There are 2 species of whooping crane, the sandhill crane and the whooping crane. Historically the whooping crane occurred as a resident population in the prairie region of Louisiana. It stands about 5 feet tall, weighs about 16 pounds, is white with 7-8 foot wing spans and was a real trophy. The cranes will be put on the White Lake Wetlands Conservation Area with unregulated hunting. Habitat loss was the primary reason for the loss of the whooping crane. The birds nest in fresh marshes and generally lay 2 eggs, with only 1 surviving, and will eat anything such as fish, shrimp, frogs, snakes and crawfish. There are 550 birds (400 in the wild and 150 in captivity) that survived the winter of 2010. Of the 400 in the wild, about 270 migrate from Northwest Territory to Aransas, Texas and the other 110 originate in central Wisconsin and fly to Florida and other

Atlantic marshes. In order to down list this bird to threatened, Mr. Love felt 25 nesting pairs was needed and put in the Chenier Coastal Plains since this has expansive habitat and a minimum number of overhead power lines. The Department was working with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to establish a self-sustaining, non-migratory wild population in southwest Louisiana. This project will be an experimental, non-essential population (NEP). At this point, Mr. Love explained NEP. The Department was proposing to release and monitor 9 to 11 juvenile whooping cranes in the first winter. If successful, additional releases of birds will occur. The whooping crane is a long lived species, 25 to 30 years in captivity. The whooping crane will be put on White Lake first since this is where the last population was and they hopefully will stay in southwest Louisiana. White Lake was a premier waterfowl area with a 5,000 acre refuge and the historic refuge and rice makes this such a good place. Mr. Love noted the Department has worked with Dr. Sammy King with the School of Renewable Natural Resources on food habit studies. Next, a picture of the pen was shown. The final approval from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service hopefully would be received with the birds expected in February. The technique used to train the whooping cranes to migrate south by following an ultralight aircraft was described by Mr. Love. Chairman Crews asked if there was an overlap in sandhill cranes population where the whooping cranes may be and Mr. Love answered yes and the whooping cranes would follow the sandhills. He then noted the birds get along well with cattle and they would be outfitted with satellite transmitters. The Department has been awarded a Wildlife Conservation Society grant for \$156,000 based on publication of the Service's final rule. The crane has a very loud voice. A bill passed during the last legislative session allows for an endangered species license plate and the Department wants to put the whooping crane on it. Mr. Pellessier asked if DDT was a problem and Mr. Love said no, it did not get into the interior marshes. Dr. Reed asked if the cranes would remate if they would lose their first mate and he was told yes. Mr. DeBlieux asked, with this being a NEP population, a private landowner would not have any restrictions and Mr. Love stated that was correct. He felt this could be a large ecotourism potential.

Mr. Larry Reynolds began his agenda item, **2010-11 Duck Season Update**, stating he was the head of the Waterfowl Section and was asked to give a progress report on the season. As stated by Secretary Barham and Chairman Crews the season so far has been

good. He began by reviewing the biological situation going into the season and noted 41 million ducks reported on the breeding survey which was 21 percent above the long term average; there were 8.4 million mallards, up 12 percent from long term average; and 6.7 million ponds, 34 percent above long term average. Goose populations showed almost 710,000 white-fronted geese in Saskatchewan which was up 22 percent. Also, there was a much earlier ice out and greatly improved breeding conditions which will make reproduction much improved. There were good habitat conditions in southwest Louisiana but there were dry agricultural fields in that same area. Southeast Louisiana was outstanding with the freshwater diversions running at maximum after the oil spill occurred. There were good habitat conditions at Catahoula Lake, but it was very dry across central and northeast Louisiana. Mr. Reynolds then talked about the Migratory Bird Habitat Initiative which was to provide additional habitat in 8 states using WRP, WHIP and EQUIP. Landowners share was paid by Ducks Unlimited in Texas, Louisiana, southern Mississippi and southern Alabama. There was an extremely high interest in this program except for duck hunters in south Louisiana since this program was to keep ducks from migrating to them. Mr. Reynolds noted he was on the first conference call for this initiative and knew that their goal was to keep birds from migrating to the oil. He added that it would not happen since gadwall, blue-wings, redheads, scaup, and ring-neck will not stop for shallow-flooded agricultural habitat. With knowing this initiative would not work, Mr. Reynolds commented he was just one voice among the Mississippi Flyway Council and the Gulf Coast Joint Venture. With the Department participating in this habitat initiative, Mr. Reynolds felt they could better reach out to people that would not flood their plains to provide real gains in habitat. Ducks Unlimited drew a line from Liberty, Texas to Alexandria, Louisiana to Mobile, Alabama and only worked south of that line. DU also provided the 25 percent landowner share for this initiative. This resulted in 50,000 acres in Louisiana and 28,000 acres in Texas on a first come-first serve basis with the Grant. The NRCS also funded habitat in Missouri, Arkansas, Mississippi, Alabama, Georgia and Florida which is what upset our hunters. Louisiana actually got 193,000 acres of shallow-flooded habitat through WHIP, EQUIP and WRP. At this point, Mr. Reynolds explained how the surveys are conducted. The survey this year was different due to the oil spill; lines were added to southeast Louisiana to do damage assessment. The population estimates for November showed 1.62 million ducks, 20 percent higher than last year.

There were 491,000 birds in southeast Louisiana which was much higher than those recorded in the last 3 years; 209,000 birds were in Catahoula Lake (highest number counted since 1999); the same number of ducks were in northeast Louisiana as compared to 2009; and fewer ducks in northwest Louisiana. Again, Mr. Reynolds noted habitat conditions in northeast and northwest Louisiana were dry. From a paper published in 1984 that looked at banding distribution of mallards found that when it was wet and warm, the distribution of recovered banded mallards shifts north but when it is cold and dry, it shifts south into central Louisiana. Species composition showed 466,000 blue wings which was down from last year but three times the November average; 3 times the number of pintails and mallards compared to last year; and the largest concentration of ducks were in the Caernarvon, Delacroix area, the mouth of the Mississippi River, Rockefeller Refuge and extreme southwest Louisiana. Hunting success was much better than last year and generally good along coastal Louisiana, spotty in southwest Louisiana for ducks but good for goose hunting, excellent opener on coastal WMAs, mixed reports from northeast and central Louisiana, and the opener on Catahoula Lake was slow but improved quickly. Then showed were the numbers per hunters on 4 coastal WMAs for 2007, 2008 and 2009 which were bad. Then for 2010, the numbers per hunter were 3.7 for Atchafalaya Delta, 4.0 for Pass-a-Loutre, 2.6 for Pointe-aux-Chenes and 1.4 for Salvador. Mr. Reynolds expected to see more ducks in the second survey and have a good second split.

Following the presentation, Mr. DeBlieux stated there have been reports of wood ducks in the marsh that have never been before and Mr. Reynolds added that he and his son were on Lacassine and only saw wood ducks. Mr. Gordon asked if there was still a problem with blue and snow geese in prairie Canada and Mr. Reynolds stated the problem was still there. He added that since the Conservation Order, the increase in these geese has stopped, but there are still huge numbers. Mr. Windham asked if the birds migrate and there is no food supply, where would the birds go and Mr. Reynolds explained why he thought they would go west.

Under the agenda item, **Sector Separation**, Chairman Crews stated that the Gulf Council has separated resource allocations for commercial and recreational. He felt the commercial take of the resource was to sale but the recreational take was for consumption, not for resale. Within the recreational group,

there are the sport fishermen and charter boats. Chairman Crews understood there was a move to separate the sport fishermen and the charter boats to further allocate the resource. He felt the Council should look into this matter either as a Council or within each represented organization. CCA had weighed in with concerns on sector separation of research allocation. He then asked if the Department had an opinion on this issue. Mr. Joe Shepard stated that for the Department, sector separation was a non-issue, but was a political-social way of managing the resource. There was no need for sector separation if there was no reason to separate the two fisheries. Mr. Shepard added that sector separation was not anything new, it was used in commercial fisheries. Chairman Crews asked if the Department was driving sector separation inside Louisiana and Mr. Shepard answered no. Mr. Carpenter noted this was a federal waters issue. Mr. Shepard mentioned that the Department does not do the separations, the Legislature or Commission would have to act to separate the recreational fisheries. Chairman Crews then asked what was driving this issue. Mr. Shepard stated that the Gulf Council has talked sector separation for a long time. He felt this was a different mechanism that could be used instead of setting a season which closes when the quota was met. What the recreational fishermen were more opposed to was the way things were allocated. Chairman Crews wondered if this could be discussed at the next meeting. Mr. Carpenter stated the Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council manages the federal waters (3 miles off the Louisiana coast) has been telling the recreational sector (which includes the charter boats) they need better data. The Council cannot get an accurate count on how many people are using the resource. Several plans have been attempted but the recreational sector has resisted. The overall sentiment of NOAA with this administration has been to restrict access. Mr. Carpenter felt sector separation was being backed by the restricted access. He explained that he does not like sector separation since it may lead to allocations. The plus side to sector separation was that a certain group from the charter boats went to the National Marine Fisheries Service and agreed to more regulations if a dedicated quota was given to them. This is why sector separation came about. Mr. Carpenter added that this would put more regulations on the charter boats but more regulations would mean they would have real time data. Chairman Crews realized that this Council was related to the Department of Wildlife and Fisheries and this issue was about federally sanctioned issues and may not be appropriate for the forum.

There were no **Public Comments** heard.

The Council set the **Next Meeting Date** for Tuesday, March 15, 2011 beginning at 1:30 PM.

Chairman Crews **Adjourned** the meeting.