

HUNTING AND FISHING ADVISORY EDUCATION COUNCIL
MINUTES

September 15, 2009

Woody Crews
Chairman

Baton Rouge, Louisiana

The following constitute minutes of the Hunting and Fishing Advisory Council Meeting
and are not a verbatim transcript of the proceedings.

Tapes of the meetings are kept at the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries

2000 Quail Drive

Baton Rouge, Louisiana 70808

For more information, call 225-765-2623

**HUNTING AND FISHING ADVISORY EDUCATION COUNCIL
MEETING AGENDA**

Tuesday, Sept. 15, 2009 - 1:30 p.m.

Louisiana Room

**Louisiana Dept. of Wildlife & Fisheries Headquarters
2000 Quail Drive, Baton Rouge, La. 70808**

1. Roll Call
2. Approval of Minutes of March 17 and June 16, 2009
3. Welcome and Opening Comments
Woody Crews, Chairman
4. Member Organization Overview: LA Wildlife Federation
Vance Gordon
5. Enforcement Division Report: August 2009 Case Reports
Lt. Col. Jeff Mayne
6. Tilapia Rapid Response Project Update
Mark McElroy, Office of Fisheries
7. Bonnet Carre Spillway: Impact of April 2008 Spillway Opening on Lake
Pontchartrain Fisheries
Brian Lezina, Office of Fisheries
8. 2009-10 Duck Season Forecast
Larry Reynolds, Office of Wildlife
9. 2009-10 Hunting Season Opportunities on Wildlife Management Areas
Randy Myers, Office of Wildlife
10. Set Next Meeting Date
11. Receive Public Comments
12. Adjournment

Hunting & Fishing Advisory Education Council Meeting Minutes – September 15, 2009

1. Roll Call

Members of the Hunting and Fishing Advisory Education Council that were in attendance were Vance Gordon, Andy Roberts for Nelson Roth, C.T. Williams, Mike Windham, Stephen Pellessier, Jeff DeBlieux, Woody Crews and Dr. Donald Reed.

Those not in attendance were Mike Rainwater, Will Courtney, Samuel J. Smith, Lyle Johnson, Shane Crochet, David Rousseau and Eric Sunstrom.

2. Approval of Minutes of March 17 and June 16, 2009

Approval proceeded when CT Williams arrived. Jeff D. has amendments to 6/16 minutes, subject to receipt of same, the minutes are approved.

3. Welcome, Comments

Stephen Pellessier offered event flier for review, promoting Fusilier Shooting Complex open house on 9/26/09.

4. LA Wildlife Federation overview presented by Vance Gordon: Affiliated with National Wildlife Federation, their mission is to work to conserve the state's wildlife resources. The LWF's history dates back to 1940 when the organization worked to establish the LA Wildlife and Fisheries Commission. The organization changed focus in 1960 to habitat conservation.

Among recent goals, LWF is proud of contributions made to re-open Elmer's Island for public use. The LWF office is located on North Acadian Thwy. in Baton Rouge and executive director is Randy Lanctot; visit the web site for more information.

5. Enforcement Division Reports: Jeff Mayne (followed Mark McElroy report in actual order of presentations)

August case report provided showing numerous fishing regulation violations; boating accident update provided.

Jeff handed out the Enforcement Division's new boating regulations sticker created as an outreach/public information piece to inform boaters of existing and new regulations in effect.

Jeff also pointed out that the new DWI law relative to boating brings penalties in line with roadway violation penalties.

Ques – CT: what is anticipated effect of new boating laws? Jeff - reduced deaths on the water. But effort was made to keep the new regs in line with increasing compliance and not overburden public and discourage boating participation.

6. Tilapia Rapid Response Project – UPDATE (Mark McElroy presented ahead of Jeff Mayne whose arrival was delayed).

Review: The tilapia species is very adaptive and can survive in poor quality water. That trait and the warm weather/water temperatures in south Louisiana make our environment ideal for tilapia survivability. Once reports started coming in from Plaquemines Parish, the Office of Fisheries began sampling effort to pinpoint the locations of the species in the Port Sulphur area. Follow-up surveys found the species in substantial quantities within what became the closure zone designated on May 5, 2009.

Planning then began and continued through early June 2009 to prevent local fisheries habitat takeover by the species. The multiple concerns in the closure area were areas holding water (ditches, bar pits, sub-surface drainage).

A coordinated public outreach effort was put in motion utilizing press releases, public meetings, radio talk shows, and a web site file made available through the LDWF web site.

LDWF brought in other conservation agencies and university research assistance to attack the problem. The decision was made to use Rotenone that would be applied in the first effort (June 9) from roadside truck sprayers, backpack sprayers, boat and also flushed through drain culverts by parish water trucks. That application was effective but follow-up surveys showed many tilapia had survived the first Rotenone distribution.

A second phase application began July 1 with increased saturation of Rotenone and proved to be more effective. That effort was followed by a re-stocking (currently underway) of the affected water bodies with predator fish and game fish. In the final phase of the plan, long term monitoring would be needed to determine the effectiveness of the eradication effort.

Question: Andy Roberts – what are the steps to ensure that this does not happen again?

Answer: Mark – close habitat monitoring and publicizing the cost/penalties to those who would be identified as sources.

Question: CT – Is there a concern about the Tilapia that may have gotten into the marsh? Through parish pump system?

Answer: Mark – tilapia were found near the pump outlets but not further out in the marsh, and LDWF feels that the high salinity and predators in marsh have kept them in check. Cold water can also keep the species in check, but tilapia are very adept at finding warm water.

Question: Don Reed: what was source? Answer: Mark – not yet determined.

Mark's final comments: LDWF has another new challenge for rapid response in the form of giant salvinia. Lake Bistineau in northwest Louisiana is the current focal point with meetings underway with officials along Red River all the way to Atchafalaya Basin. A long-term, affordable solution is needed.

Question: Woody C. request, can US Army Corps of Engineers report to the council on the effect of their efforts in aquatic plant control?

7. Status Report of the effects of the 2008 Bonnet Carre Spillway Opening on Lake Pontchartrain Basin Fisheries

Brian Lezina, Marine Division biologist: Provided an overview on spring 2008 opening of the water control structure that allowed Mississippi River water into the Lake. Spillway structures (160 or 350) were opened in stages, but even at the maximum flow established, it was not as great as 1997 (when 290 bays were opened) in terms of water flow through the gates.

Analytical approach: LDWF partnered with university researchers; 6 samples sites were set up around Lake Pontchartrain; year to year comparisons made; south shore water flow activity was noted with satellite imagery.

Findings: movement of fish eastward was noted due to higher salinity water; harvest success was noted to continue in east part of lake; Good levels of trout growth were noted.

Blue crabs: landings show peaks in July and August 2008; much higher harvest levels than 2007.

Brown and white shrimp: white shrimp (more freshwater tolerant) saw greatly increased harvest levels; shrimpers realized a boom based on harvest success.

Negatives: Algal blooms were noted in 2008, but not to extent of 1997

Summaries: Fish species in the lake basin adapted to fresh water movement (see summary sheet within presentation).

8. 2009-10 Duck Season Forecast

Larry Reynolds, Wildlife Division Waterfowl Study Leader, started with a review of the 2008-09 season. Last season harvest was up 17 percent from the previous season. Wood duck harvest was up 33 percent.

Last season habitat conditions: poor compared to conditions preceding this season.

This season: breeding populations and pond counts are up. Those findings resulted in approval of a 6-duck, 60-day season (2009-10) allowance for most popular species.

Geese: data indicates harvest will be difficult because there were not a good number of juveniles noted in counts. Good news for LA hunters, however, no special permit needed to hunt geese this season (any hunter with a waterfowl permit can hunt ducks and geese).

Survey results: show large fields of good habitat, especially in southwest; good submerged aquatic weed growth in southeast part of state; good food production on Catahoula Lake in central LA.

As always, weather and water conditions throughout the season are unpredictable.

Question: Jeff D. -- Mottled duck status?

Answer: Larry – LA mottled duck populations holding steady. Harvest levels have increased, however. Conclusion is that late migrating ducks escape hunters and resident mottled duck population takes greater hit.

Follow up questions:

How do USFWS season surveys work? Answer: Larry explained that they are mailed out and are a random harvest sampling technique.

How does LDWF persuade USFWS to loosen harvest restrictions on Black-bellied whistling ducks? Answer: Larry explained that it will be a detailed effort involving annual counts and state hunter bag checks, over several years, to gather sufficient data to present to USFWS for consideration. But that same process was used to improve harvest allotments of wood ducks in Louisiana and it could work again, depending on the findings.

9. 2009-10 Hunting Season Opportunities: WMAs

Randy Myers, Office of Wildlife, began presentation with overview of revisions made in 2009-10 Hunting Regulations booklet, newly re-designed.

Discussion of department offerings relative to specialized hunt opportunities: Youth Hunts, Physically-Challenged Hunter Hunts, Lottery Hunts, etc. The effort is being made to provide additional opportunities, especially on WMAs. Ducks hunts, for example, on some sites have blinds available, decoys in some instances. Youth Squirrel Lottery hunt (1) and Rabbit Lottery hunts (3) to be provided this season on WMA sites.

Physically-Challenged Hunter Hunts: LDWF working to improve access -- some hunt guidelines require that hunter is wheel-chair bound; ramps are provided at some sites to get hunter to blind.

Randy continued: Lottery hunts require applications to be submitted by designated deadlines.

Some changes: Crossbows in cocked and loaded positions are not allowed in vehicles/on 4-wheelers; hog hunting opportunities (with dogs) will be provided. Coastal WMAs will have opportunities for feral hunt harvest with shotguns (with slugs, buckshot).

Goal: Get youth involved and keep them interested.

Deer dog hunting update: US Forest Service proposal presented earlier in year calls for elimination of deer hunting with dogs on Kisatchie National Forest. Public comment period brought numerous comments. LWFC proposed 8-day season on Kisatchie with permit to be issued by USFS. USFS requested that LWFC remove permitting stipulations and that was granted. USFS agreed to allow 8-day season for one final season. Public comment is still being received by USFS through Oct. 1 of 2009.

Question/Vance Gordon – Did USFS agree to 8-day season with intent that this will be last season? Answer: Randy – Remains to be seen following public comment and consideration thereof.

Question/Jeff D. – is hunter ed deferral option now listed in Hunting Reg Booklet? Answer: Randy -- pointed out the listing within the resident and non-resident hunting license options.

Question/Woody C – is consideration being given for using Hunting Reg Booklet as marketing tool? Answer: Randy – certainly can be.

OTHER QUES:

Question/Woody C – is consideration being given to do away with Lifetime Licenses, which may be threatening revenue sources? Answer: Sect. Robert Barham – not formally, and the department would not want to do anything to discourage long-term participation.

10. Next meeting date set for December 8, 2009.

11. Receive Public Comments

Bo Boehringer: reminded council of National Hunting & Fishing Day on Sept. 26, good opportunity for member organizations to support LDWF outreach.

12. Adjournment