

MINUTES CRAB TASK FORCE MEETING
September 01, 2009

Call to Order/Roll Call

The Crab Task Force meeting was called to order by Chairman Gary Bauer at 4:35 p.m.

A roll call was then made:

VOTING		NONVOTING	
Gary Bauer	X	Rusty Gaude	X
Pete Gerica		Mark Benfield	X
Dennis Landry	X	Walter Keithly	
Roy Meek		Vince Guillory	X
Pete Peterson	X	David Lavergne	X
L.J. Sandras		Jay Diaz for	X
Keith Watts	X	Jeff Mayne	
		Melissa Daigle	X
		Rene LeBreton for	X
		Ewell Smith	

A quorum of four voting members was present.

Adoption of Minutes and Agenda

Keith Watts moved and Pete Peterson seconded that “the minutes and the agenda be approved as written” -- Motion carried (all in favor).

Public Input

There was no input from the public.

MSC Certification

Gary Bauer gave an update of the MSC Certification progress. The process has “hit a snag”. Gary had been contacted by Bob Trumble with Marine Resources Assessment Group (MRAG), who had been evaluating the application for certification of the LA Blue Crab Industry. Mr. Trumble advised Gary that MRAG declined to continue their evaluation of the application because of the estimated time it was going to take to reach MSC certification with the amount and types of data available. Gary had identified another group who would continue the evaluation process. Gary had spoken with a representative of Scientific Certification Systems (SCS). SCS had moved the Red Crab Industry through the entire MSC Certification process in approximately 14 months. Gary further offered to contact SCS, as well as other groups to get time and cost estimates for the evaluation process. Keith Watts asked MSC certification would benefit the industry. Gary responded that all LA Blue Crab products could be labeled as certified, thereby separating it from imported crab products and possibly opening additional markets. Keith stated that he wants to be assured that commercial crab fishermen would see benefit from the certification process.

Crab Education Day

Rene LeBreton gave a brief recap of preparations for the 2009 LA Crab Education Day. The date of Friday, October 9th has been set for the event. Rene advised that Ms. Sue King, Senior Staff Member for the House Natural Resource Committee, estimated that most legislators would be in town for the LSU football game that same weekend. It was announced that the meal for the event would be held at Todd Schaefer’s Family Restaurant. There was a brief discussion of shirts for Task Force members and possible hand-outs for legislators present at the event.

A discussion about the current Crab Task Force budget and funds available ensued. It was stated that the LA Crab Task Force had budgeted \$4,750.00 for the 2009 LA Crab Education Day event. Also, the LA CTF had \$72,411.00 in their Promotion and Marketing Account and \$117,977.00 in the Derelict Crab Trap Removal Account. Keith Watts asked about the possibility of transferring monies from the Derelict Crab Trap Removal Account to the Promotion and Marketing Account. Vince Guillory submitted that legislation currently mandates the amount of money to be placed in the Derelict Crab Trap Removal Account and that new legislation could be introduced during the next legislative session to have those monies or a portion thereof added to the Promotion and Marketing Account.

LA Crab Task Force vacancies

Ms. Pat Templet, a Blue Crab Processor from Pierre Part, LA and Mr. Billy Landry, a Blue Crab Processor and Shedder from Vermilion Parish were in attendance. Keith Watts recommended that both be recommended to LDWF Secretary Robert Barham for appointment to the LA Crab Task Force. With these appointments, all processor and shedder positions on the Task Force would be filled, leaving just 5 commercial fishermen positions vacant. The 5 remaining vacant positions should be filled with one fisherman from east of the Mississippi River, one fisherman from west of the Atchafalaya River, and 3 fishermen from the area between these two rivers.

Marketing and Promotion Activity

Rene LeBreton announced that there would be a hearing on October 16th to determine if CTF's request of \$55,000.00 to be used toward MSC Certification would be approved. Ms. Karen Foote recommended to the Task Force that this might be a good opportunity to discuss increasing their operating budget.

Pete Peterson moved and Keith Watts seconded that "the LA Crab Task Force increase their annual operating budget to \$11,000.00 for the 2010-2011 fiscal year." -- Motion carried (all in favor).

Dennis Landry stated displeasure that there may be members of the LA Seafood and Promotion Board who are purchasing seafood from outside the state or even outside the country. He further stated that as a point of interest, the Crab Task Force should be aware of this and that people on the board to promote Louisiana seafood should deal exclusively with Louisiana products.

Gary again mentioned that the Task Force would be represented at the Boston Seafood Show and should make an effort to be represented at future promotion events. Rene stated that there was no available booth space, but space could be used in the oyster and shrimp booth areas. The Task Force needs to decide on representatives attending the event. Dennis said he planned to have a tank of live blue crabs for display. Also on display will be fresh product and possibly cooked product.

Out of State Crab Shipper's License

David Lavergne stated that 110 of the Crab Shipper's licenses had been sold this licensing year. Gary Bauer asked if there would be a notification of the Crab Shipper's license mailed out with license renewal letters. David said that one notification had been mailed out earlier in the year and that another could accompany the next renewal letters mailed out by LDWF.

Derelict Crab Trap Removal Program

Vince Guillory gave a short overview of current activity within the Derelict Crab Trap Removal Program. The program is now in its 7th year, and a total of over 17,000 abandoned crab traps have been removed from Louisiana waters. There was no planned closure dates during the past year, but LDWF employees had removed 800 abandoned traps during that time period. A presentation is to be made to the Louisiana Wildlife and Fisheries Commission at their next meeting on September 3rd. The next closure is recommended to begin on February 27, 2010.

Dennis Landry moved and Pete Peterson seconded that "the LA Crab Task Force endorse the Derelict Crab Trap Clean-up to begin on February 27, 2010 to the Louisiana Wildlife and Fisheries Commission." -- Motion carried (all in favor)

Marty Bourgeois stated the need for volunteer effort to make the closure successful. Mark Benfield mentioned that he may have some students that would be available to assist in the effort. Marty further expressed concern that the program might be lost if public interest isn't generated. Gary Bauer recommended the possibility of a monetary award for persons collecting the most traps during the closure.

Other Business

David Lavergne mentioned that the first round of checks from the Cooperative Research and Gustav/Ike program were being sent out this week. Keith Watts expressed concern over how the criteria for eligibility were derived. David stated that the 2nd set of payments should begin in 2 – 3 weeks and would be dispersed in batches of 100. David further announced that fishermen surveys could be filled out through 30 September 2009 and that there were workshops being offered, as well as satellite offices for South Central Planning and Development Commission.

Mark Benfield mentioned that he had recently received an email from someone asking if blue crabs were moving into more freshwater environments.

Next Meeting / Agenda Items

The task force requested that the next meeting be held in the first week of November. Suggested agenda items included Crab Education Day, MSC certification of the LA Blue Crab Industry, and Marketing and Promotion activities. Gary Bauer recommended for the next agenda that the Crab Task Force discuss the possibility of crab fishermen being able to obtain "crop insurance". Also, the LA Dept. of Agriculture and Forestry was asked by legislation to pay special attention to seafood imported from China, checking for safety of their products. Rene LeBreton reminded everyone that HB551 created a task force to monitor seafood imported from overseas. Gary recommended that the Crab Task Force investigate possible legislation to have Venezuela named as an area to watch out for.

Dennis Landry announced that his son's wedding would be October 3rd, and "Ya'll are all invited!"

The meeting was adjourned by Chairman Gary Bauer at 6:56p.m.