



LOUISIANA DEPARTMENT OF
WILDLIFE & FISHERIES

2026 CONSERVATION ROUNDTABLE AGENDA

March 5, 2026
Baton Rouge
Crowne Plaza



ROUNDTABLE AGENDA

OPEN DOORS/REGISTRATION		10:00 - 11:00 AM
Speaker	Room	Time
Opening Remarks: LDWF Secretary Tyler M. Bosworth Keynote Speaker: David Dellucci	Premier III	11:00 - 11:45 AM
LUNCH		11:45 AM - 12:45 PM
BREAKOUT SESSIONS BEGIN		12:45 PM
Session	Room	Time
BREAKOUT SESSION 1		12:45 - 1:45 PM
Port Wonder: <i>Home of LDWF's Nature and Science Center</i>	Riverboat	
Saltwater Electrofishing Technology: <i>Enhancing forecasts of stock conditions</i>	Natchez	
Enforcement Roundtable: <i>Accreditation update, tech. modernization, and public safety</i>	Creole Queen	
Black Bear: <i>Review of 2025 and plans for 2026 hunting season</i>	Samuel Clemens	
Alligator Program: <i>Seasonal Updates</i>	Mississippi Queen	
BREAKOUT SESSION 2		2:00 - 3:00 PM
Trip Ticket Electronic Reporting: <i>LA Wallet QR code connection to Trip Tickets</i>	Riverboat	
Black Bass Management Plan: <i>Using stakeholder and angler input as guidance</i>	Natchez	
Fisheries Outreach & Education: <i>Building connections to fisheries resources</i>	Creole Queen	
WMA Forest Management: <i>WMA Forest Management in light of depressed markets: our philosophy and vision</i>	Samuel Clemens	
Black-bellied Whistling Ducks in Louisiana: <i>Status and Opportunities</i>	Mississippi Queen	
BREAKOUT SESSION 3		3:15 - 4:15 PM
SEAMAP Sampling: <i>Enhancing knowledge of marine fisheries and ecosystems</i>	Riverboat	
Commercial Oyster Electronic Reporting: <i>Public oyster seed ground reporting</i>	Natchez	
Volunteer Program Modernization: <i>Connecting people with a purpose</i>	Creole Queen	
Rockefeller Refuge: <i>Update on hurricane recovery, restoration, research, and outreach</i>	Samuel Clemens	
Wetlands Reserve Easements (WRE) Restoration & Management: <i>LDWF's role in WRE restoration/management</i>	Mississippi Queen	
COCKTAIL HOUR AND GIVEAWAYS		4:30 - 5:30 PM
Sponsored by the Louisiana Wildlife and Fisheries Foundation. Win a shotgun, fishing pole or duck decoy during cocktail hour (must be present to win).	Premier III	

Port Wonder

Andy Scalisi, *LDWF Biologist Manager*

The Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries Nature and Science Center at Port Wonder in Lake Charles offers a fun, family-friendly experience celebrating Louisiana's rich aquatic heritage. Featuring more than 15,000 gallons of freshwater and saltwater aquariums, a 2,900 gallon touch tank, interactive exhibits, a fishing game, and an ADA-compliant fishing pier along the Lake Charles Boardwalk, the center immerses visitors in diverse native species that make Louisiana unique. By showcasing LDWF's programs through hands-on learning and community engagement, it fosters environmental stewardship and appreciation for Louisiana's natural resources.

Saltwater Electrofishing Technology

Chris Schieble, *Biologist Director, Fisheries Division (LDWF)*

For over 40 years the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries (LDWF) has relied on monthly seine sampling across the state utilizing a standard fifty-foot bag seine to monitor statewide young-of-the-year and juvenile indices of abundance. Louisiana's important stock assessment species in young-of-the-year and juvenile life phases are underrepresented in traditional fishery-independent (FI) sampling methods, in particular seine sampling. The marine bag seine survey is currently the primary FI gear used to sample estuarine finfish in the young-of-the-year /juvenile life stages along marsh edges. The effectiveness of standardized seine sampling in producing unbiased estimates of relative abundance of certain species has become unreliable due to Louisiana's coastline and estuarine marsh edge changing at an accelerated pace. LDWF has designed a standardized quantitative monthly electrofishing survey utilizing 16 established LDWF estuarine seine sampling locations in the Barataria estuary deploying the novel Infinity Stingray high salinity electrofishing vessel. The sampling methodology at each sampling location consisted of three 90 second electrofishing replicates (270 total seconds per sample) collected monthly over the past six months. Standard seine samples were also collected at each station allowing monthly side-by-side comparisons of catch rates and variability in catches across these gears and stations through December 2025. When compared to seine catch rates, electrofishing samples showed substantial increases in catch rates for all assessment species, with the exception of Gulf Menhaden. Mean catch per unit of effort (CPUE) and percent standard errors indicated a significant difference between the seine and electrofisher (Spotted Seatrout $\Delta = 1422\%$, Red Drum $\Delta = 2182\%$, Sheepshead $\Delta = 3150\%$, Flounder $\Delta \leq 5000\%$, Black Drum $\Delta = 325\%$). The expected benefits of this sampling methodology will be to provide a robust time-series of relative abundance of young-of-the-year/juvenile life stages that correlate to observed fishery and survey catches in later life stages, which should allow for better estimates of year class strength with less uncertainty in LDWF stock assessment models. The addition of these types of indices of abundance will allow fishery managers the ability to forecast future stock conditions with more certainty to proactively manage these stocks.

Enforcement Roundtable

Dean Aucoin, *Wildlife Enforcement Major*

Ryan Faul, *Wildlife Enforcement Captain*

Accreditation

The Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries Enforcement (LDWF) Division is seeking national accreditation through the North American Wildlife Law Enforcement Accreditation (NAWLEA), with formal review scheduled for April 22, 2026, during the Southeastern Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies Chiefs Meeting in New Orleans. If approved, Louisiana will become only the third state in the nation to earn NAWLEA Accreditation, joining Florida and Alabama. The process requires compliance with more than 70 nationally recognized standards governing written directives, operations, training, supervision, and accountability—standards developed specifically for conservation law enforcement professionals across North America.

This multi-year, agency-wide effort has included a complete modernization of written directives, extensive documentation development, training validation, and on-site assessments conducted by independent NAWLEA evaluators. Seeking accreditation reflects the Division's commitment to clear policy, consistent training, structured oversight, and ethical operations—strengthening public trust and reinforcing professional conservation law-enforcement services across Louisiana.

Technology Modernization

Over the past several years, the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries (LDWF) has continued to modernize its operations and enhance interactions with the public and our state partners. In the past year, LDWF successfully integrated its Computer-Aided Dispatch (CAD) system with the Louisiana State Police (LSP). This integration has significantly improved coordination, enabling both agencies to manage operational details and day-to-day interactions more efficiently.

Additionally, LDWF continues to enhance its reporting systems and data analytics capabilities. These improvements strengthen our ability to analyze patrol trends, allocate resources effectively, and make informed operational decisions based on real-time data.

Public Safety

In recent years, LDWF Law Enforcement personnel have been called upon by state partners to support major public safety operations across Louisiana. Our officers, who are highly trained and equipped to handle large-scale events, routinely assist with crowd management and security operations.

These events include high-attendance gatherings such as Mardi Gras celebrations, the Bayou Classic, and New Year's events, among others.

Through continued collaboration with our state partners, LDWF remains committed to enhancing public safety, ensuring effective interagency cooperation, and providing professional law enforcement services throughout the state.

Black Bear

John Hanks, *Biologist Program Manager, Large Carnivore (LDWF)*

Concern over low population numbers resulted in the Louisiana black bear being given protection under the Endangered Species Act in 1992. The federal protection afforded to the subspecies helped facilitate the restoration of Louisiana black bears and their habitat in parts of their historic range. Increased bear numbers and quality habitat allowed Louisiana black bears to be delisted in 2016. In 2024, Louisiana Department of Wildlife & Fisheries opened the first black bear hunting season since the 1980s. The 2024 hunt was great success; an expanded lottery hunt was held in three different bear subpopulations in 2025. In this presentation, we will cover the biological and administrative considerations, along with potential obstacles, in holding the hunt. Results of the hunt, lessons learned and future plans for the 2026 season will be discussed.

Alligator Program

Jeb Linscombe, *Biologist Program Manager, Alligator (LDWF)*

For over 50 years LDWF has conducted an annual aerial alligator nest survey in the Coastal Zone where 90% of Louisiana's alligator population exists. Data is compiled and used to produce a population estimate as well as harvest allotments. In recent years LDWF has begun an initiative in central and north Louisiana to better estimate populations outside of the coastal zone. Over the past decade there has been a significant downturn in the wild alligator hide market subsequently resulting in a lower wild harvest in Louisiana. In recent years Louisiana's alligator harvest has recovered back to normal levels in 2024 and 2025. Additionally LDWF has made a concerted effort to make significant increases in both lottery and private tag allotments.

Trip Ticket Electronic Reporting

Nicole Smith, *Biologist Program Manager, Fisheries Data Management (LDWF)*

The LDWF Trip Ticket program began in 1999 and introduced an electronic PC data entry system in 2000. That PC system is now obsolete and outdated. LDWF is in the process of building a new modernized electronic trip ticket reporting system. While this new system is being built, LDWF wanted to focus on improved license reporting. To obtain this goal, commercial licenses were incorporated into LA Wallet as a means of transmitting active status license data that could be scanned using a QR code from the new electronic trip ticket system. A demonstration of that process will be presented.

Black Bass Management Plan

Zane LeBlanc, *Biologist DLC-B, Inland Fisheries (LDWF)*

The black bass species of Louisiana, Largemouth Bass (*Micropterus nigricans*), Florida Bass (*Micropterus salmoides*), and Spotted Bass (*Micropterus punctulatus*), are among the state's most valued recreational fishing resources. In recognition of this importance, the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries initiated development of its first Stakeholder Driven Black Bass Management Plan (BBMP) in 2025. This ten year comprehensive plan is designed to strengthen LDWF's black bass management efforts. The BBMP is being developed using three primary sources of information. First, a Stakeholder Working Group composed of anglers, industry partners, and others connected to the resource provides structured input through facilitated meetings and discussions. Second, the Statewide Black Bass Angler Survey collects detailed information on angler demographics, behavior, satisfaction, and management preferences. Third, LDWF Inland Fisheries staff will use scientific data alongside their professional expertise to evaluate bass populations, assess habitat needs, and address emerging management challenges. These inputs will inform the final plan initiatives, objectives, and management strategies. The BBMP guiding document is scheduled for completion in 2026, with early initiatives beginning immediately after adoption. The long term goal of the BBMP is to establish a coordinated and transparent management framework that engages anglers, incorporates their perspectives, and supports sustainable black bass populations statewide.

Fisheries Outreach & Education

Heather David, *Biologist Manager, Education and Outreach (LDWF)*

The Fisheries Outreach and Education Program supports state fisheries management goals by connecting science-based information with communities through hands-on fishing education and public outreach. This presentation highlights the program's core initiatives, including youth fishing clinics, family fishing events, educator workshops, and skill-based instruction that integrates regulations, conservation principles, and responsible angling practices. By pairing practical fishing skills with fisheries science, the program strengthens environmental literacy and fosters long-term stewardship. Attendees will gain insight into how LDWF creates meaningful opportunities that enhance public trust and promote the wise utilization of fisheries resources.

WMA Forest Management

Donald "Duck" Locascio Jr., *Biologist Program Manager, Forestry Program (LDWF)*

The Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries Forestry Program manages approximately 545,695 acres of department-owned forested Wildlife Management Areas across the State. Forest management objectives for these properties are to improve wildlife habitat, provide quality wildlife oriented recreational sites, and

grow quality timber. Timber harvest is the most practical way to manipulate forest habitat for the management of wildlife. Until recently, approximately 6,000-8,000 acres of timber were harvested each year on WMAs to enhance timber and wildlife habitat for both long-term and short-term benefits. Changes in timber markets have greatly limited conventional management of these properties and LDWF has begun to utilize non-traditional means to continue to manage its forestlands for wildlife.

Black-bellied Whistling Ducks in Louisiana

Jason Olszak, *Biologist Program Manager, Waterfowl (LDWF)*

The black-bellied whistling duck has undergone a relatively rapid range expansion at the northern margins of its hemispheric range in the last two decades. It is now a common year-round resident of Louisiana and thus presents residents with emerging challenges and opportunities related to its growing abundance. Various life history aspects of this species that influence how, when, and why additional recreational opportunities have been justified and adopted will be presented, including a preview of the structure of upcoming 2026 October hunting season for black-bellied whistling ducks.

BREAKOUT SESSION 3

3:15 PM TO 4:15 PM

SEAMAP Sampling

Zach Zuckerman, *Biologist Program Manager, Research and Assessment (LDWF)*

Recreational and commercial fisheries contribute substantially to the Gulf of America's regional economy, with nearly 20% of all US commercial landings and 35% of all US recreational catch being made from Gulf waters as of 2022. Regional fisheries management requires cooperative effort by multiple jurisdictions. To accomplish this, the Southeast Area Monitoring and Assessment Program (SEAMAP) was developed as a State/Federal/university program for the collection, management, and dissemination of fisheries-independent (FI) data for the Southeastern United States. Consisting of three regional units (Gulf of America, South Atlantic, and Caribbean), SEAMAP conducts long standing FI surveys to provide data on annual abundance, distribution, and biomass for the monitoring and assessment of fish and shrimp of recreational and commercial importance to the US. The Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries participates as a partner in SEAMAP-Gulf of America, contributing to multiple FI surveys utilized for the management of reef fish, shrimp, coastal migratory species, and sharks. In addition, LDWF biologists participate in working groups at multiple levels, providing input to ensure that management concerns and data needs specific to Louisiana's habitats are met as part of ongoing SEAMAP surveys. Here, we describe in detail the sampling efforts that LDWF makes towards Gulf-wide regional fisheries surveys, as well as provide a brief case study on how State-level involvement can influence regional FI surveys in the Gulf. The use of data disseminated by SEAMAP for use in Federal and State stock assessments demonstrates the utility of this cooperative sampling program, with implications for Louisiana's recreational and commercial fishers.

Commercial Oyster Electronic Reporting

Nicole Smith, *Biologist Program Manager, Fisheries Data Management (LDWF)*

In 2023, LDWF moved to a new electronic reporting system to track commercially harvested oysters on the state's public oyster reefs. The goal of this endeavor was to increase the availability, quality and accuracy of real time data. This new system allows commercial fisherman to easily report harvest without having to phone or email in their required reports. Electronic reporting gives managers' real-time access to the data from harvesters, eliminates language barriers from verbal harvest reporting, reduces transcription errors from collecting and disseminating data, and reduces the work load on our Enforcement dispatch center.

Volunteer Program Modernization

Michelina DelGizzi, *Education Consultant, Education and Outreach (LDWF)*

The LDWF Volunteer Program Modernization initiative establishes a consistent, department-wide framework for engaging, supporting, and recognizing volunteers across programs and regions. This presentation outlines how LDWF is strengthening volunteer recruitment, onboarding, training, and data tracking while ensuring alignment with agency policies, risk management standards, and conservation priorities. By modernizing systems and clarifying roles, the program enhances volunteer experiences, improves operational efficiency, and expands LDWF's capacity to deliver education, outreach, and on-the-ground conservation efforts. Attendees will gain an understanding of how a unified volunteer approach connects people to meaningful service while advancing LDWF's mission statewide.

Rockefeller Refuge

Phillip "Scooter" Trosclair, *Biologist Program Manager*

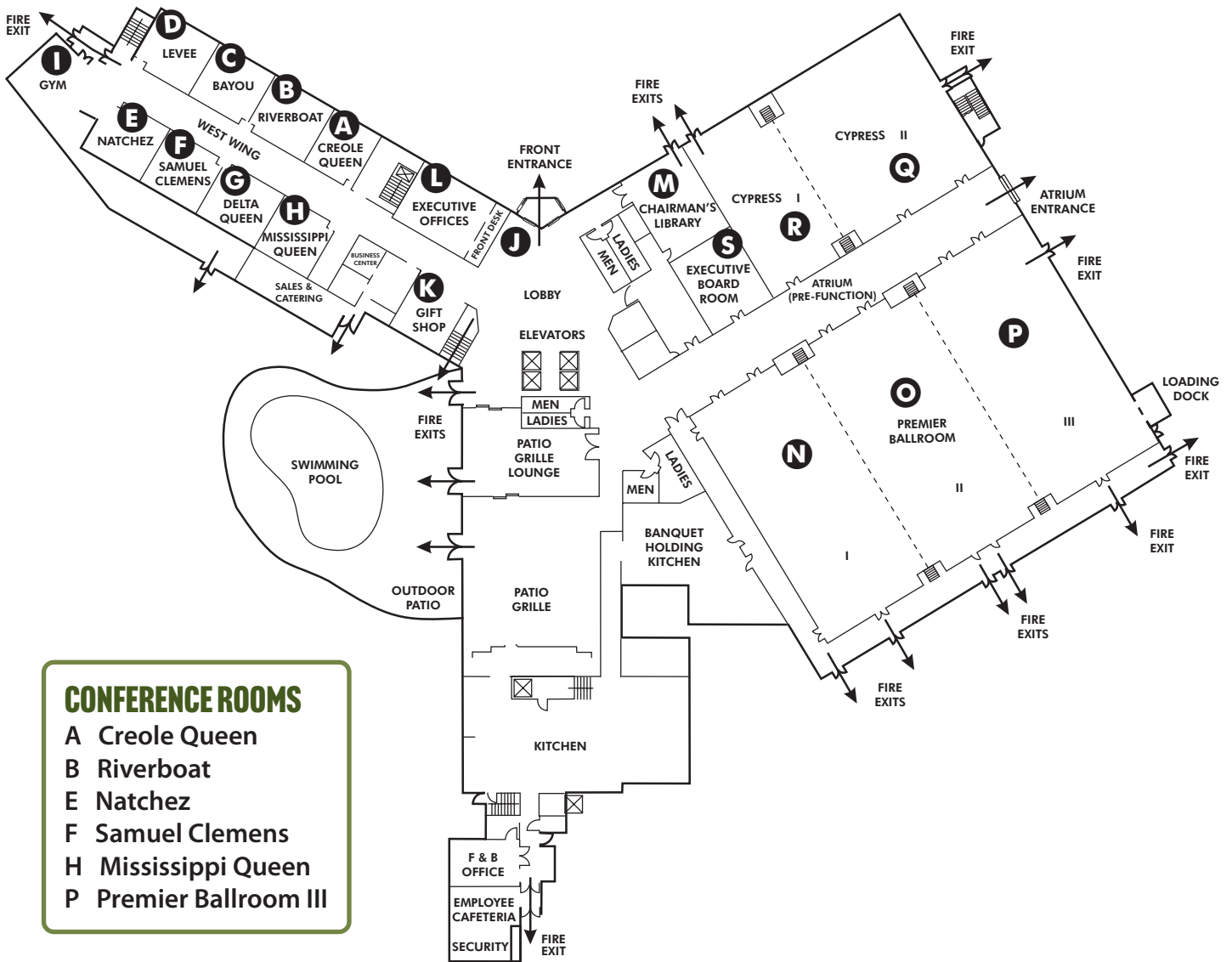
Paul Link, *Research Program Manager, Rockefeller Wildlife Refuge (LDWF)*

Rockefeller Wildlife Refuge in Cameron Parish is one of the most productive coastal habitat systems on the northern Gulf Coast. It supports fisheries, provides vital wildlife habitat, and protects Southwest Louisiana communities from storm surge. The 2020 hurricanes caused severe damage, including levee erosion, saltwater intrusion, vegetation loss, damage to facilities, and destruction of water control structures. Ongoing recovery efforts are restoring levees and infrastructure, habitat management capabilities, and recreational opportunities. Long-term sustainability requires additional investment. Projects such as shoreline stabilization, hydrologic improvements, marsh terracing, and mitigation banking aim to reduce erosion and salinity, while offsetting wetland loss and protecting prior investments. Additional shoreline protection and water management infrastructure remain unfunded but are critical to maintaining habitat productivity and storm protection benefits. Rockefeller Wildlife Refuge has a rich history of wildlife and fisheries research. Staff are currently leading a State Wildlife Grant project studying movement ecology of brown pelicans and reddish egrets on restored and unrestored islands and planning a bobcat ecology study. Staff are also initiating a waterfowl food biomass study across Rockefeller Wildlife Refuge's managed and unmanaged marshes as well as investigating the efficacy of utilizing drones to survey winter waterfowl. Ongoing research focuses on waterfowl movement ecology, use of habitats, and disease research. Focal species include black-bellied whistling ducks, blue-winged teal, northern pintails, mallards, mottled ducks, greater white-fronted geese, and lesser snow geese. Collaborations with talented researchers from a variety of state, federal, university, and non-governmental organizations are key to success with our ambitious goals.

Wetlands Reserve Easements (WRE) Restoration & Management

David Breithaupt, *Biologist Administrator, Habitat Stewardship Branch (LDWF)*

Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries (LDWF) partners with the Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) on delivering restoration and management activities on lands enrolled in the Wetland Reserve Easement (WRE) program. Through this collaboration, LDWF biologists perform annual monitoring, delivery of technical assistance to landowners that manage these tracts, and may participate in the implementation of restoration practices associated with wetland management or forest stand improvement. LDWF biologists will outline the agency's role in these activities as well as our interactions with other partners that are engaged in the same work. We will also share examples from complete and ongoing projects to illustrate the effectiveness of this partnership and highlight successful conservation outcomes on private lands.



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THOUGHT OF THIS EVENT



LAWFF COCKTAIL HOUR AND GIVEAWAYS

4:30 - 5:30 PM | PREMIER ROOM III

SHOTGUN | DUCK DECOY | FISHING POLE **Must be present to win**

