

Louisiana Finfish Task Force
Wednesday, January 8, 2020, 10:00am
LDWF Headquarters
2000 Quail Drive, Baton Rouge, LA

I. Call to Order

II. Roll Call and introduction of Guests

Voting Members Present:

John Walther
Daryl Simon
James Pelas
Acy Cooper, III
Daniel Edgar
Adam Guillory
Stuart Billeaud
Houston Hoover

Voting Members Absent:

Wayne Rollo
Jay Trotter
George Huye
Ben Graham
Steve Rockwieler
Senator Robert 'Bret' Allain
Representative John Stefanski

Non-Voting Members Present:

Jason Adriance
Major Donald Salpietra in for Edward Skena
Jack Isaacs

Non-Voting Members Absent:

Justin Gremillion

Motion by Daniel Edgar to adopt change to agenda, 2nd Adam Guillory. Motion carries.

III. Houston Hoover motioned to approve the August 14, 2019 meeting minutes, 2nd by Daniel Edgar. Motion carries

IV. Stuart Billeaud motioned to approve the January 8, 2020 meeting agenda, 2nd by Daryl Simon. Motion carries.

V. New Business

A. The task force discussed adding a processor seat to the Finfish Task Force

Daryl Simon led discussion stating that other boards have processor seats representing the industry and he would like to have one representing the finfish industry

Daniel Edgar stated that he thinks having a processor represented on the board would be very beneficial, as a processor plays an important role in the industry and can provide important feedback

Thomas Hymel with Sea Grant stated that the board will later on be discussing inland fisheries. There is a whole world of commercial fishermen, catfish, buffalo, etc., in the central part of the state. Thomas suggested that the task force consider adding a seat to the board for this section as well- whether it be a commercial fisherman or a processor.

Richard Fischer with the Charter Boat Association stated that he would suggest having a representative of the charter fishing industry on the board

Kindra Arnesen suggested that a requirement for holding the processor seat should require a certain percentage of what is being processed be finfish and not other species. There are certain requirements for commercial fisherman- 51% of their income has to come from commercial fishing and there should be some criteria for the processor position as well.

The task force discussed adding seats for: a processor, a charter boat representative, inland fisheries representative, and a non-voting member from Sea Grant to the board

Thomas Hymel stated that he will be looking for an inland fisheries representative to add to the board and when he finds someone interested he will send them to the Finfish Task Force meeting to introduce themselves and at this time have the board consider adding a seat for an inland fisheries representative

Daniel Edgar motioned to add a processor seat, a LA Charter Boat Association representative of the charter fishing industry as voting members to the Finfish Task Force, and also add a non-voting member representing Sea Grant, 2nd by Daryl Simon. Motion carries with two oppositions- Acy Cooper, III and James Pelas.

B. Acy Cooper, III led discussion on mullet season and harvest options

Acy Cooper, III stated that the industry is hearing that there is an enforcement issue when it comes to mullet fishing at night

At the last meeting the task force discussed the two following options as possible additions to the current mullet season- Open harvest on nights and weekends OR open harvest only on weekends

Daniel Edgar stated that he would rather add nights to the current season, also that he feels comfortable requesting nights but not nights and weekends

Adam Guillory stated that he would want to hear some feedback on the impacts the changes of harvesting at night vs. the day might have on the stock of the fishery. Expressed concern that adding night fishing to the current regulations might double effort and impact stock

Jason Adriance stated that the new mullet stock assessment will be presented to the LDWF Commission in February, but over the last few years the stock has been in good shape

James Pelas stated that over the last few years the number of commercial mullet fishermen has gone from 1500 to currently around 80 fishermen

Kindra Arnesen stated that she used to fish mullet year round and there was a tremendous amount of effort at that time compared to now. Stated that while the industry definitely wants nights, the reason that they are trying so hard for weekends is because there are usually two fronts a week during that time of the year. A lot of times when a front comes through that time of week, they will miss a whole run of mullet. The industry needs to pay close attention to the stock assessment that is about to come out and keep in mind that there has been a high river. Plaquemines is one of parishes that lands the most mullet, so we need to make sure the high river is factored in for the last two consecutive years. Suggested that if mullet fishermen are not going to be able to fish weekends, that there be a compromise and at least add Sunday nights, giving up Saturday night and Sunday during the day- that way mullet fishermen are not interfering with as many recreational fishermen. If nights are added to the current mullet season and weekends are not included, Kindra Arnesen suggested that Sunday nights be added to offset any weather issues the industry may face during the week nights.

Rusty Gaudet stated that, 'since the task force is discussing adjusting the time of harvest, that the board should be aware that before Katrina there was a residual mullet task force that thought about doing a project that would enhance the quality of the mullet flesh market by giving the fishermen a little bit more of an option to catch some of the pre-spawn animals. We were waiting for the FTF to get established and settled and feel as though we are in the position now to make a suggestion to the legislature and are looking for an endorsement from the Finfish Task Force to look at the possibility of broadening the harvest window to include pre-spawn fish, where we could start to participate a bit in the mullet flesh market. Sea Grant has the equipment to do the analysis of the flesh with all of the high fats of the pre-spawn animals rather than the spawning animals that have everything dumped into their gonads. As many know, the spawning fish is literally not worth eating, it's almost a worthless byproduct to bait. The roe is pretty cheap right now but the gutted body is almost worthless in itself and it's equally worthless to eat.' Suggested that the Finfish Task Force consider looking at the

opportunity for enhancing the mullet flesh market here in Louisiana. States to the east are having a very good market on mullet flesh. Katrina took the wind out of our sails and nothing has really been done since. The Finfish Task Force will eclipse the Mullet Task Force that was meeting pre-Katrina. If we are going to address the mullet situation by adjusting the days/nights of harvest, it would be my suggestion that the Finfish Task Force do a letter of endorsement for exploring the enhancement of the mullet flesh market

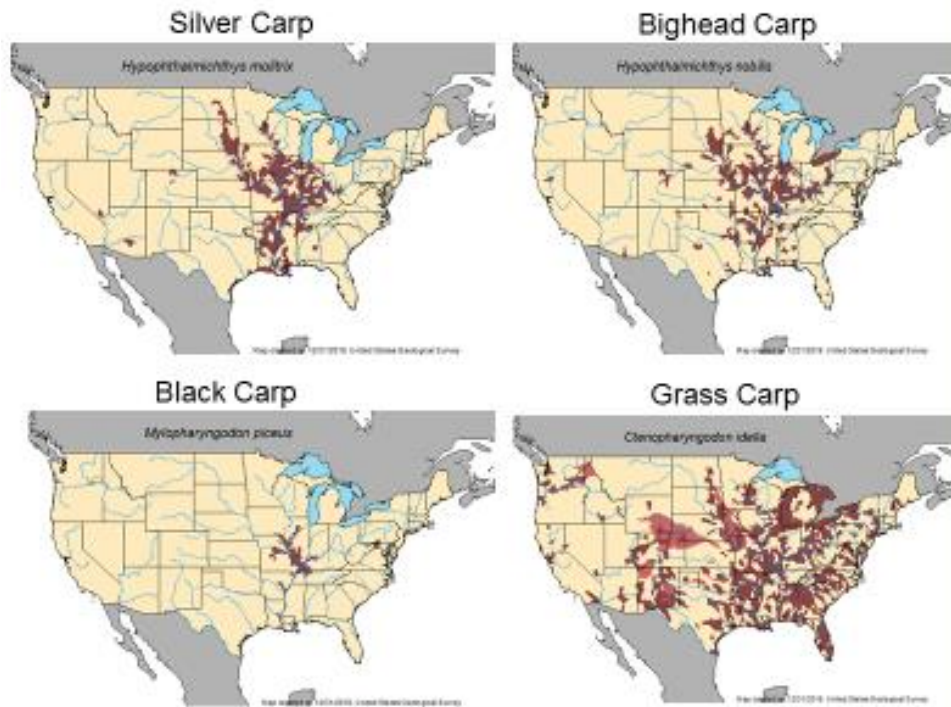
Rusty Gaudet stated that the idea is to get a scientific permit to harvest a little bit pre-season and have a pool of pre-spawn fish that the analysis of the flesh can be done on. During this time we can look at the fat content and all of these things and we can always get spawn fish during the regular season to do the same thing on them and then we can compare the two and make an analysis to take to the legislature to request a little bit of a window to catch pre-spawn fish that are hands down much better to eat

Daniel Edgar motioned to request a study to allow Sea Grant to do research on developing mullet as possible food fish, 2nd by Adam Guillory. Motion carries.

Acy Cooper motioned to recommend changing legislation to expand the mullet season to allow night fishing during the current established season, 2nd by James Pelas. Motion does not carry. Four to three vote.

C. Rob Bourgeois provided the task force with a presentation on the impacts of Asian Carp in LA waterways and their possible spread to saltwater waterways

Current Range of Asian Carps in USA



Reported locations of Asian carp in LA coastal waters: Vermillion Bay, Cote Blanche Bay, Drum Bay (St. Bernard Parish), dead carp reported on Holly and Rutherford Beach area.
The locations were either very near to fresh water inputs or they were high MS River discharges

Reporting Asian carp to LDWF ANS/AIS Coordinator

ANS Hotline: 225-765-3977

ANS Email: aquaticinvasives@wlf.la.gov

-Above are the best ways of reporting ANS sightings to LDWF

-Sighting of new locations is verified

-Pictures of specimen, coordinates and contact information make it easier for us to confirm identification

Daniel Edgar stated that he has a company from Alaska interested in setting up in his factory to have a market for Asian carp creating fish meal

The Federal policy is you can't create markets for invasive species

D. Julie Lively led discussion on the commercial inland fishery and the issues they face

*get Julie's presentation

E. Mike McDonough provided a presentation on the removal of decommissioned oil rigs and how they affect the offshore fishery

*get presentation and add here

F. The task force discussed the usage of strike nets in the commercial finfish industry

James Peltas stated that commercial fishermen need a strike-net season, strike net any commercial fish, would like to use the same means as fishermen north of the intercoastal; stated would like to do something similar to mullet permit, would like to limit it to guys who have been doing this for a while

Since the year 2000 the trout population has been in a rigid decline

Changes to the usage of strike nets would require a legislative change; 17 people currently have trout permits

60-70 active gill net license holders in the state of LA

Asking for an increase in the mesh size to target larger commercial species

Discussed possibly introducing an experimental gear to introduce the new equipment

Would like to put this on the agenda for the next meeting to continue discussion

G. Jason Adriance led discussion on the upcoming 2020 finfish stock assessments

Four assessments are being presented to the LDWF Commission at their February meeting. The four being presented are: drum, mullet, flounder and southern sheepshead. In 2020 LDWF is going to try and look at a red drum assessment; stated that he can also present the information to the FTF after the Feb Commission meeting

The information can be found online at:

VI. Public Comment

Julie Falgout provided the task force with the 2019 findings report from the LA Seafood Future

Tom Hymel announced that the Summit will have a 2500 fuel card and a few hundred dollars in shopping gift cards as door prizes

Kindra Arnesen stated that she hasn't seen anything come out of the TF, thanked members for their service

Chrystal Olander Big D's Seafood, asked who represented the finfish regarding the federal fisheries disaster

VII. Hear future agenda items

Acy Cooper- the alligator farmers in MS had an issue with CA banning them, same issue with sharks, meat had to be attached to fins to be transferred through the state

Daniel Edgar now that FDA is at all of the catfishing processing minimum size is on all of hoopsnets but mesh size will catch a smaller fish than that. Would like LDWF to answer few questions about the possibility of increasing the mesh size

Speckled trout stock assessment- Houston Hoover would like to hear a presentation at the next meeting

VIII. Next meeting TBD

Adam Guillory motioned to adjourn, 2nd by Danile Edgar. Motion carries.