

Alligator Advisory Council Meeting

May 1, 2013
LDWF, New Iberia

Council Members Present

Gerald Savoie
Ronald Guy
Tim Allen
Nathan Wall
Chad Courville
Mike Benge
Archie Domangue
Errol Falgout

Council Members Absent

none

LDWF Present

Noel Kinler
Buddy Baker
Bob Love
Ruth Elsey
Edmond Mouton
Tanya Sturman
Lance Campbell

Others Present

Ted Joanen
Dr. Reigh
Allan Ensminger
Jeb Linscombe
Ryan King
John Currien
Jeff Donald
Craig Sagrera
Frank Ellender
Kevin Sagrera
Tony Howard
Johnnie Price
Charlie Pettefer, Jr.
Andre Neto
Dan Davis – (at the beginning, then left)

Motion made by Tim Allen to approve the minutes from the February 28, 2013 meeting. Nathan seconded. Motion carried unanimously.

Report and Recommendation from the Proposal Evaluation Team

Noel gave some comparisons of the two proposals and explained the grading and the qualifications. The Proposal Evaluation Team recommends contracting with Ashley and Associates. Noel gave a budget update and went over the proposal cost per task. Nathan asked if Don Ashley was working for the python industry. Don Ashley explained that he is conducting a study that includes python, because CITES officials were concerned with python not having traceability and sustainability. Nathan was concerned that Don Ashley didn't participate in alligator sessions at CITES but had participated in python sessions.

Don said that he had participated in two out of the three crocodilian sessions, and that he knew how the votes would turn out in the session he didn't attend. He assured the Council that he was aware of conflicts of interests and that he did not feel like this situation qualified as a conflict. Don said that he is able to travel more because of the snake trade working group, which will benefit the Council and the alligator industry as well. Nathan asked about a business deal that Don was involved with. Gerald said that he didn't think that Don should be representing any single farmer in business because he works for Louisiana as a whole. Gerald believes that this is a conflict of interests. Nathan said that he felt like Don was competing with Louisiana farmers by dealing with eggs and hatchlings. Don said that he was trying to help a farm in Florida reestablish itself; Don was acting as a consultant. Don said that he needs other sources of income in order to sustain his business. Noel said that a similar issue came up in 1998. At that time the issue was associated with the new alligator co-op. The Council requested the board of ethics to review the issue. Noel passed out a copy of the decision by the board of ethics. Nathan suggested that the current issue is different enough that perhaps the board of ethics should review the current situation. Tim said that he is comfortable with moving forward as long as there is a separation between Council work and trips and other business.

Noel said that a clause would be added to the contract. Errol said that the Council does not have the budget to cover the proposal as it is written. Tim asked Don for some direction in lowering the budget. Chad asked if he would consider doing what they have asked them to do for less than he has proposed. Chad said that there are the options of cutting a task, reducing a task, or taking an across the board percentage reduction in price.

Motion made by Nathan Wall to reduce the proposal by 15% overall. There was no seconded.

Motion made by Tim Allen to approve the contract at a reduction of 10% overall. Errol seconded.

Motion carried with one opposed. The opposing vote came from Nathan Wall.

Bob Love asked that the Council try to hold to the current budget for the next three years so that the fund can build back up.

Chad said that he would like all contractors to disclose other sources of income so that we can stay ahead of any conflict of interests' issues.

CITES Update

Don Ashley gave an overview of issues discussed and voted upon at the last CITES meeting. He said that they had worked for two years on the personal effects issue. It has passed. Columbia wanted to down list the American Crocodile in a specific region. It didn't pass, but Don feels like it would have passed if it had been presented as a ranching option. Trade restrictions remain in areas where CITES have not found the trade verifiable. Don is still working on streamlining the export permits.

Captive Breeding Research Consideration

Ted Joanen requested \$10,000 from the Council each year for 5 years for a fatty acid study in eggs. Hatching rate in captivity is about 50% whereas in the wild it is 85%-90%. Research has shown that farm eggs were missing a fatty acid (fish oil). The funding would all go the ULL for analysis of the eggs. Gerald agreed that it would be beneficial to farmers to be able to get alligators to produce eggs on farms. Nathan also agreed that a breeding program would allow an increase in production. Ruth summarized prior research done at Rockefeller regarding captive breeding. They had compared diets and vitamin supplements. Over time, productivity decreased and egg infertility increased. They looked at stress hormones. They built larger pens. They built pens which housed only one male and one female so that there was no competition. The clutch size was stable, but the fertility was poor. They found out that some fatty acids were missing. They hand fed vitamin E, fish oil, and selenium to the females. The results were poor. They then tried a varied diet. Other issues may be water quality, male infertility, or obesity. Ted believes that it is very unlikely that the cause is male infertility. He also said that feed is more sophisticated today. Frank said that he thought water quality is an issue that should be looked at. Errol said that the water quality outside of his pens is more stagnate than the water inside the pens.

Tim asked if the Council could approve a 5 year contract or if we are limited to 3 years because of Louisiana Office of Contract review requirements. Tim also asked if there is a conflict of interest if the research will be done at the farm of one of the Council members.

Noel said he had some scientific process issues of feeding at different stations within a large pen. The alligators may be feeding from various feeders. He believes that feeder groups should be segregated. They also need baseline data on Errol's eggs. He said that we need to know how long the vitamins are viable in the air and heat. Financially, we need to know what is included in ULL's fee. Noel feels like these issues need to be addressed prior to funding. The funding could come from the alligator program budget.

Noel said that we cannot contract beyond a 3 year period. Any contract of \$20,000 would have to go to the office of contract review. It is too late to put a contract together for the egg season this year. Gerald said that he and Nathan would fund it for the first year. The Department agreed to meet with Ted Joanen and Mark Staton to review the current proposal in detail. Additionally the Department agreed to review results from this year, prior to considering funding the project I future years.

Alligator Program Update

Noel said that they had shipped out 264,000 farm and wild skins collectively so far this year. We are on track for a very good production year and for a very good revenue year. Noel mentioned that an RTL representative, Andre, is here and that they have donated skins to the product development program. RTL gave a tannery tour to Dr. McRoberts' students.

Member Appointments

Gerald, Mike and Ronald have been reappointed to serve a full term. Dan Davis has stepped down due to be appointed to Louisiana Wildlife and Fisheries Commission, and a new member should be appointed by the next meeting to fill this vacancy.

Other Business

Chad reminded everyone to get their ethics paperwork in. He asked Tanya to send out a reminder as well.

Noel said that there are bids advertised for eggs on public lands.

Chad said that he would like to see the Council have some input into the types of products that Dr. McRoberts' students are developing.

Gerald is concerned about opening up a wildlife management area to the public for frogging. Kevin said that it was also an issue for surrounding landowners. Noel said that someone could show up at the Commission meeting tomorrow at in Baton Rouge and participate in public comment on the issue.

Motion made by Gerald Savoie to draft a letter to the Commission to ask that the Commission not open the wildlife management area at Salvador to public frogging. Errol seconded. Motion carried with five votes for, two against and one abstaining. Gerald for, Ronald against, Tim abstained, Nathan for, Chad for, Archie for, Errol for, Mike against.

An update on the feeding project at the LSU Ag Center was presented by Dr. Ray.

Motion made by Mike Benge to adjourn. Nathan seconded. Motion carried unanimously.