

**Oyster Task Force Meeting Minutes
Wednesday, February 12, 2019, 1:00pm
New Orleans Lakefront Airport
6001 Stars and Stripes Blvd.
New Orleans, LA**

I. Pledge of Allegiance

II. Roll Call and introductions of guests

Voting Members Present:

Shane Bagala
Dan Coulon
Byron Encalade
Jakov Jurisic
Mitch Jurisich
Brad Robin
Brandt Lafrance
Sam Slavich
Willie Daisy

Voting Members Absent:

Tracy Collins
Al Sunseri
John Tesvich
Peter Vujnovich

Non-voting Members Present:

Denise Kinsey in for Carolina Bourque
Gordon Leblanc in for Justin Gremillion
Major Edward Skena
Frank Cole in for Karl Morgan
Theryn Henkel in for Brian Lezina

Non-voting Members Absent:

III. Jakov Jurisic motioned to approve the January 7, 2020 meeting minutes, 2nd by Willie Daisy. Motion carries.

Shane Bagala motioned to approve the February 12, 2020 meeting agenda, 2nd by Sam Slavich. Motion carries.

IV. Treasury Report

Remaining Budget Balance- \$105,288
Remaining Fund Balance- \$464,984
January Tag Sales- 65,000

Jakov Jurisic motioned to approve the treasury report as presented, 2nd by Willie Daisy. Motion carries.

V. Committee Reports:

A. Public-Private Oyster Grounds Committee Report:

The joint Legislative/ Public-Private Oyster Seed Grounds Committee discussed and proposed the following recommendations-

- To waive lease rental fees for leases affected by the 2019 flooding- the committee recommended looked into rental fee reimbursements from the federal fisheries disaster assistance instead of waiving lease rental fees
- Discussed making changes to the Public Seed Ground Vessel Permit Fee; the committee recommended making a \$25 vessel seed ground permit retention fee, would have to be done through legislation. A retention fee option would be put into place instead of dropping the fee altogether; the committee would like to move forward with drafting legislation and will work with LDWF to draft a bill and bring to an author
- The committee also discussed reimbursement of Public Seed Ground Vessel Permit fees through disaster assistance
- Discussed the marking requirements on oyster lease signs and poles, recommended that the task force work with LDWF to implement some in house changes instead of legislation
- Committee decided to hold off on discussion on increasing fines and penalties related to oyster theft; recommended working more with local district attorney's offices to follow through on convictions and discuss issues
- The committee lastly discussed a resolution requesting CPRA to provide plans for the oyster industry in the coastal master plan- Senator Hewitt has agreed to work with the task force on this issue. The committee is currently waiting to hear back, but Jakov Jurisic is going to follow up with Senator Hewitt to see if any progress has been made

Jakov Jurisic motioned to approve the recommendations of the Joint Legislative/ Public-Private Oyster Seed Grounds Committees, 2nd by Shane Bagala. Motion carries.

Willie Daisy suggested increasing penalties on night fishing, currently night fishing is a class 4 violation and could go up to a class 6

Earl Melancon stated that there is opportunity for the industry to provide input and feedback to the Governor's Advisory Commission on Coastal Restoration. The advisory commission is receptive to hearing from stakeholders in terms of coastal restoration and how it's going to impact communities and natural resources

February 28, 2020 is the bill pre-file deadline

B. Enforcement Report

December 28th – January 31st

Region 4 (Iberia)

1-Violate sanitation code (refrigeration)

1-Transport without required license

6 sacks seized

Region 5 (Calcasieu and Cameron)

2-Take oysters unapproved area (polluted)

3-Take oysters from an unapproved area (drone)

1- Violate Comm. Actions, fail to tag and log book

1- Violate Calcasieu Lake Oyster Regulations (Tong/Dredge)

12 sacks seized

Region 6: (Terrebonne, Lafourche, Grand Isle)

Terrebonne

1 arrest warrant issued for take oysters from an unapproved area (drone used)

Charges filed in US District Court for violating LACY ACT on one company in Terrebonne
Joint operation with WLF Enforcement, NOAA, and FDA

Lafourche

2-Take oysters from unapproved area (polluted)

1-Refrigeration violation

1-fail to traceable oyster records

1-fail to complete trip tickets by fisherman

2- log book violations

8 sacks seized

Region 8: (Jefferson, Plaquemines, St. Bernard, Orleans, St. Tammany)

St. Bernard

None

Plaquemines

1-Violate Sanitary Code (No Tarp)

2-Violate sanitary code (vessel regulations – no human waste receptacle)

1-Harvest Oysters W/O Oyster harvester License

1-Take Commercial Fish W/O Commercial License

8-Sacks Seized

Mitch Jurisich thanked LDWF Enforcement for working hard in the Calcasieu and Cameron Parishes to catch violators, these areas are receiving more attention than they have in the past with the use of drones

Willie Daisy requested that enforcement come to the next meeting to provide a presentation on drones

C. Legislative Committee: no report, refer to Joint committee with the Public-Private Oyster Seed Grounds Committee report

D. Legal Committee- Jakov stated that Brad Robin, Brandt Lafrance, Willie Daisy and Jakov Jurisic met with an attorney that was very productive; planning to host a legal committee meeting prior to the next OTF meeting

E. Research Report- no report

F. Coastal Restoration- no report

G. Marketing Report- the Seafood Promotion and Marketing Board will host a breakfast for legislators on Tuesday, March 17 from 7:30am- 9:00am at the LT. Governor's Apartment at the Pentagon Barracks in downtown Baton Rouge, LA

Samantha Carroll, of the SPMB, stated that if task force wanted a chef for their booth at the LFF Summit to prepare an oyster dish that the SPMB could set up a chef to come

G. Health Committee- Gordon Leblanc stated that on Thursday, February 14, 2020 there would be a map showing at the Jefferson Parish Health Unit. The showing will include March, April, May, and August classification for this year

H. Aquaculture Committee- No report

I. Joint Task Force Working Group- no report

VI. New Business

Jakov Jurisich motioned to move item A. under New Business to item C., 2nd by Sam Slavich. Motion carries.

A. To hear an update on the Federal Fisheries Disaster Relief

Patrick Banks provided an update on the Federal Fisheries Disaster- all of the economic impact information that was available has been provided to NOAA at their request, there have been several federal fisheries disasters declared in 2019 by the Federal Government and approved by the Secretary of Commerce. There has been an appropriation of \$165,000,000 from Congress to address all of the fisheries disasters declared in 2019 throughout the country. Currently LDWF is waiting on NOAA to indicate Louisiana's allocation of that money. Once the money is allocated, LDWF will sit down with the industry to best determine a spending plan and to outline the best way to utilize the money

Mitch Jursich stated that it has been known that the reimbursements may be going off of loss of revenue instead of loss of product. If this is the approach used, actual revenue losses will not be seen until 2020

Patrick Banks stated that NOAA looks at revenue loss to declare a fisheries disaster. Since the disaster has already been declared, LDWF no longer needs to prove a 35% threshold of loss revenue to achieve a disaster declaration. It's a fair point to talk about future revenue loss and in LDWF's economic impact statement to NOAA future revenue loss is mentioned. NOAA's response to LDWF regarding future revenue loss was that they have to consider revenue loss as it stands today and the state can reapply next year if it is shown that revenue loss and impacts have continued into 2020

B. Jakov provided the task force with an update from the OTF Washington, D.C. trip

Tuesday, January 21, 2020- Task force members met with- Senator Cindy Hyde Smith- meeting didn't happen due to Senate Trail, but did meet with Senator Hyde Smith's staffers, offered if any help is required or needed from the OTF that they are there to help

Wednesday, January 22, 2020- Met with Senator Cassidy to discuss the flooding and fresh water diversions and Senator Cassidy stated that he would need to get them in the room with CPRA to hear both sides, also met with Congressman Ralph Abraham, requested to see if he could get the OTF a meeting with the President, also met with Congressman Scalise's office- OTF felt like they have been visiting Scalise's office for years and do not see any efforts come out of the meetings. Also met with the Corps of Engineers and discussed the Bonne Carre Spillway and fresh water diversions; Met with Department of Ag and Forestry and discussed flooding issues and establishing the oyster industry as farmers, currently waiting to hear back from Dept. of Ag

Thursday, January 23, 2020- the task force members attended the Louisiana Alive event which was a huge success, shared the booth with the Shrimp Task Force and Lt. Governor and Senator Hewitt both paid the booth a visit

Brad Robin motioned to write a thank you letter to thank Guy McInnis- St. Bernard Parish President, Captain George Ricks, and Mike Bayham for their assistance in setting up meetings for the oyster industry in Washington, D.C., 2nd by Jakov Jurisic. Motion carries.

- C. Margaret Henderson led discussion and a presentation on potential federal remedies related to the fisheries disaster

Cole stated this would be a contract for professional services would need to follow Procurement Law, budget authority

Margaret Henderson provided the task force with background on her industry experience and how she might be able to help the advocate for the industry

Jakov Jurisic stated that the OTF needs to take another D.C. trip by May to continue driving in the industry's issues

Dan Coulon stated that he would like Margaret Henderson to look into securing some additional funding for the oyster industry in D.C.

Jakov Jurisic motioned to add an item to the agenda, under New Business- item D. To discuss the negotiating process with legal counsel and Margaret Henderson, 2nd by Brad Robin. Motion carries.

- D. The task force discussed the negotiating process for entering into contract with legal counsel and Margaret Henderson

Jakov Jurisic motioned to enter into contract negotiations with Margaret Henderson of Henderson Strategies, 2nd by Brad Robin. Motion carries.

Jakov Jurisic motioned to enter into the contract negotiating process with Joe Piacun for legal counsel, 2nd by Shane Bagala. Motion carries.

These items will be handled through the legal committee, Jakov Jurisic will try to set up a meeting prior to the next OTF meeting

- E. The task force received an update on the Ed Lallo contract

The contract is currently complete Ed Lallo and Thomas Hymel have been working with LDWF to complete the contract, they both have recently approved of the contract and it is now circulating signature approval by LDWF personnel. The contract is for 12 months and begins in March 2020 and outlines that Ed Lallo:

- To produce two articles each month for Gulf Seafood News and distribute the articles to the following:
 - Subscriber list
 - Gulf News Media
 - National Media
 - Gulf Congressional Delegation
 - Louisiana Legislators
 - Other State Legislators
 - Bloggers
- To promote the produced articles on the following social media platforms:
 - Facebook
 - LinkedIn
 - Twitter
 - Instagram
 - Other requested platforms
- To perform site analytics:
 - Google Analytics
 - Jetpack
 - Slimstat
 - MonsterInsights

Mitch Jurisich asked that the industry supply any information and feedback for article content

VII. Public Comment

Shane Bagala stated that some task force members have not been attending multiple meetings in a row, would like to add an item to the agenda for the next meeting to discuss absences. Dan Coulon suggested reaching out to the board members now to see if there is an underlying issue

John Zach Lea stated that he would like the task forces help in collecting emails for members of each respective oyster association. Dr. Lea is seeking to reach out to members of each oyster association to request that they support the effort to pass a resolution that CPRA provide plans for the oyster industry in the Coastal Master Plan

Representative Mack Cormier stated that he is 100% behind the seafood industry and he is going to corral the new legislators to try and put a stop to diversions

VIII. Next meeting set for Wednesday, March 4, 2020 for 1pm at the Terrebonne Council Building located at 8026 Main St., Houma, LA; the task force also set a Legislative and Legal Committee meeting prior to the full task force meeting beginning for 10:00am

IX. Jakov Jurisic motioned to adjourn, 2nd by Willie Daisy. Motion carries.

Meeting adjourned at 3:36pm.