Crab Task Force Meeting

Tuesday, April 26, 2022, 1:00pm

Terrebonne Port Commission

1116 Bayou Lacarpe Rd.

Houma, LA 70363

**I.** Pledge of Allegiance

**II.** Roll call

**Voting Members Present:**

Eric Blanchard

Chalin Delaune

Laquita Meek

Joey Edgar

George Jackson

Al Cassagne

Rodney Parfait

Britney Breaux

**Voting Members Absent:**

Sheb Callahan

Trudy Luke

Pete Gerica

Dannon Lacoste

**Non-Voting Members Present:**

Rusty Gaude in for Julie Lively

Peyton Cagle

Jack Isaacs

Bryan Marie

**Non-Voting Members Absent:**

Melissa Daigle

**III.** Chalin Delaune motioned to approve the December 8, 2021 meeting minutes, 2nd by Eric Blanchard. Motion carries.

**IV.** Eric Blanchard motioned to amend the agenda by adding an item to new business, D. To Discuss and Consider Writing a Letter to LDWF Commission to Consider Making Changes to the Recreational Crabbing Regulations, 2nd by Chalin Delaune.

Chalin Delaune motioned to approve the agenda as amended, 2nd by Al Cassagne. Motion carries.

**V.** Financial Report

Remaining Fund Balance- $396,814

Remaining Budget Balance- $37,515

Eric Blanchard motioned to accept the financial report as presented, 2nd by Al Cassagne. Motion carries.

**VI.** New Business-

1. The task force discussed and considered funding the first Gulf RFM Audit and fourth MSC surveillance audit

Peyton Cagle stated that the blue crab fishery, the commercial trap fishery, is currently certified sustainable through both the Audubon Gulf RFM and MSC programs. The fishery continues to hold certifications for both standards, each year, for four years, an audit is required and on the fifth year you have to go through an assessment. The CTF, under the LDWF, has taken ownership of these certifications. This coming November, the RFM first audit is due and MSC fourth surveillance audit is due. We received a price quote for the audits and it is going to cost somewhere between $25-$35,000.

Joey Edgar motioned to approve spending up to $35,000 to fund the first Audubon Gulf RFM audit and the fourth MSC surveillance audit, 2nd by Chalin Delaune. Motion carries.

1. Michaela Mayers provided a presentation on trip tickets and crab grading



The industry expressed some concern on how the trip ticket section labels the reporting on trip tickets vs how the industry actually reports

Chalin Delaune stated that some of the grading seems redundant, sole intent is to make sure the industry and LDWF’s needs are met; if you eliminated 11 and 12 and make 3 a female crab this might clear some of the confusion up

Michaela Mayers stated that she will take this information back to LDWF and see if anything can be done, there may be an issue with historical data

1. The board discussed seized traps and crab trap identification

Laquita Meek stated that men had stolen traps in Larose and one of the officers working the case suggested that if there were something on the commercial fishing license that could be used to identify who the traps belonged to they would be able to return them to the rightful owner instead of making them go to court to get the traps back;

LDWF enforcement stated that this would need to go through LDWF Commission or possibly through legislative change; a judge has to sign a court order to release cages back to the fishermen

Chalin Delaune suggested sending a letter to the LDWF Commission and DA’s Offices stating that the task force supports returning cages

Chalin Delaune motioned to write a letter to the district attorney’s offices showing support for returning seized cages to the rightful owners, also to submit a request to LDWF Commission to write a letter in support as well, 2nd by Al Cassagne. Motion carries.

1. The task force discussed and considered writing a letter to the LDWF Commission to consider making changes to the recreational crabbing regulations

Eric Blanchard stated that recreational fishermen should have to abide by the same rules that commercial fishermen have to abide by, specifically a 5” minimum and no virgin females

Peyton Cagle stated that in the established bylaws for this task force there is only one rule that would fall into this category of recommending enforcing changes to recreational harvest regulations and that would be to enhance the stock. Stated that given the results of the most recent stock assessment; the current stock assessment has showed continual improvement; estimate that recreational landings are 4.3% for stock assessment round up to 5% of total landings of crab

The task force decided not to take action on this item at this time since the stock assessment was favorable

1. Britney Breaux led discussion on running another fishermen’s crab traps

Britney Breaux asked if there were any rules/ regulations surrounding fishing another person’s traps

Davis Madere stated that the law does not provide for this instance; need something to verify that everyone is properly licensed and enforcement will usually call the fishermen who owns the traps, a notarized letter giving permission for one fishermen to run another fishermen’s traps with the date, etc. will usually suffice, recommended giving gear license to person running traps for the day

1. Britney Breaux led discussion on crabbing without a gear license

Britney Breaux stated that there is a loop hole for people to sell crabs without having a gear license, because they are a commercial fishermen and they do not require a gear license on trip tickets, it is then left up to the docks to get all the additional information and make sure the fishermen has their gear license, then if the dock says they can’t buy from them they just go up the road to the next dock. Making a change to the trip tickets to add the gear license would require legislation

Task force requested that LDWF Enforcement provide feedback on whether or not the buyer would be held liable for buying from someone who does not have a gear license

1. The task force discussed night time crabbing in Terrebonne Parish

Joey Edgar stated that he does not agree with nighttime fishing, especially not in his area

Britney Breaux stated that she does not agree with nighttime fishing but believes that the 30 minutes before sunrise is not enough time, would suggest looking into moving it to an hour

Industry feedback reflected that they are not in favor of nighttime crabbing in Terrebonne Parish

1. The board discussed Crab Task Force seat vacancies and possible nominations and board member meeting participation

Al Cassagne motioned to request that LDWF nominate Ed Frekey to the CTF as a commercial hard crab fishermen, 2nd by Laquita Meek. Motion carries.

The task force discussed board member meeting participation and asked that a letter be sent out to anyone who missed the last 3 meetings consecutively

Al Cassagne motioned to write a letter to any board member who has not attended the last three consecutive meetings to give warning of removal request should they not attend the next meeting or provide written excuse for absence, 2nd by George Jackson. Motion carries.

The task force opened up the floor for officer elections

Al Cassagne motioned to nominate Britney Breaux as Chairman and Chalin Delaune as vice chair of the crab task force, 2nd by George Jackson. Motion carries.

**VII.** Public Comment

John Fallon with Audubon Gulf stated that there are some big conversations happening in the certification world, both with RFM and MSC, nothing to impact what was previously voted on or the industry’s current certifications but from the MSC perspective they are going through a standard review right now so in June they may announce some changes to their certification. It will not impact this industry for several years to implement, but as you go through this next audit this is something to keep in the back of your mind and talk to your assessment body just to see if there are things that you will need to take into consideration moving forward. From the RFM front, talking with the State of Louisiana right now about the long-term sustainability of that program and the potential of working with another group in the US who runs another RFM program to create a more unified, US based RFM certification. Happy to provide a more formal presentation on these things later on in the summer.

**VIII.** Next meeting set for Tuesday, August 2, 2022 for 1:00pm at the Terrebonne Parish Main Library in Houma

**IX.** Chalin Delaune motioned to adjourn, 2nd by Eric Blanchard. Motion carries.