**Shrimp Task Force Meeting**

**Wednesday, December 8, 2021, 10:00am**

**Terrebonne Port Commission**

**1116 Bayou Lacarpe Rd.**

**Houma, LA 70363**

**I.** Pledge of Allegiance

**II.** Roll call and introduction of guests

**Voting Member Present:**

Rodney Olander

Acy Cooper

Jeff Drury

Kristen Baumer

Alan Gibson

Andrew Blanchard

**Voting Members Absent:**

Lance Nacio

Ronald Anderson

Phillip Tran

Randy Pearce

Chalin Delaune

**Non-Voting Members Present:**

Peyton Cagle

Bryan Marie

Jack Isaacs

Gene Cavalier

**Non-Voting Members Absent:**

Meg Bankston

Justin Gremillion

**III.** Rodney Olander motioned to approve the October 20, 2021 meeting minutes, 2nd by Acy Cooper. Motion carries.

**IV.** Acy Cooper motioned to amend the agenda by deleting item I. To Hear a Presentation on Trends in Commercial White Shrimp and Brown Shrimp Landings by Size Category:2010-2020, and by moving item H. to K. under New Business, 2nd by Alan Gibson. Motion carries.

Rodney Olander motioned to approve the December 8, 2021 meeting agenda as amended, 2nd by Alan Gibson. Motion carries.

**V.** Financial Report-

Remaining Fund Balance- $672,569

Remaining Budget Balance- $65,331

Acy Cooper motioned to approve the financial report as presented, 2nd by Alan Gibson. Motion carries.

**VI.** Federal Shrimp Permit Report not provided due to access issues

**VII.** New Business

1. Gene Cavalier led discussion on the USDA Covid- 19 Grants

LDAF has applied for the USDA Processors Pandemic Response and Safety Program, which is for $4.2 million for processors and their expenses related to Covid, hope to hear if awarded the grant by Feb 2022. If the money is awarded, applications should be accepted by July 1, 2022. The eligible parties that would be able to apply would be anybody who has a wholesale retail business license, wholesale/ retail vehicle license, a residential vessel license or a residential seafood retail license. Plan to mail out notification cards for anyone who holds those licenses once the money is officially awarded. Right now the use of funds is limited to anything related to Covid. Can reimburse for expenses related to Covid that were incurred between January 2020 through December 30, 2021. Either to help protect workers, provide protective equipment (thermometers, installing new filters or signage) for Covid. Also if you had to do market pivots, retrofitting facilities (installing protective barriers buying new tables) to space out employees, transportation (additional transportation for workers or changing delivery routes), paying additional health services to protect your workers (vaccination, testing, healthcare treatment of infected employees, or paid leave for an infected employee). When you submit an application you will also submit receipts that show your expenses. Believe that the max ask is $100,000. Hope to have funds out to processors by March 2023.

1. CARES Act Funding

Acy Cooper stated that he was disappointed the way that the CARES Act funding was done this time

Excluded 250 people this time, next time something comes around asked that LDWF take into account the industry’s input and requests

Jason Foreba stated that every bit of money is rolled into payments that are currently awaiting NOAA’s approval; was sent over in the middle of October 2021, the first round of money looked at a three/ four-month period to determine losses because there wasn’t a whole year’s worth of data to look at at that time. NOAA did not directly require that we look at the whole year, that was a decision that was made at the state level. The biggest complaint that was received from the first round was that it was too hard to figure out what income was for a 3-month period, a lot of people complained and wanted it for the whole year. This round went with a year as it’s easier to calculate the loss over a year period, 1600 applied and about 800 approved, cannot recoup more money than what was lost and this includes the first round payments

Rodney Olander stated that why couldn’t we do either or? The state hurt 250 small businesses by not allowing people to do either or

Alan Gibson stated that this is why we need representation from the Governor’s office at the meeting

Why can’t you be compensated for any loss? NOAA has said that a 35% loss is the threshold to declare a fisheries disaster. 35% loss is in the CARES Act bill by congress, 2nd distribution expectation is that it was about to be approved, would estimate that checks should be sent out before the end of the year

Rocky De Charo suggested that everyone should have been sent a letter about CARES Act 2.0, every license owner, trip ticket holder and dealer

George Barisich stated that the shrimp industry would pay for the costs of sending everyone a letter

1. The task force heard an update on ASPA’s shrimp Industry efforts

Alex Johnson from ASPA, stated that ASPA is working towards creating a seafood safety net like the USDA does for farmers, working really hard to get wild-caught fisheries access to some of the USDA programs 1. Covid-related USDA access to federal procurement, and also access to grant money 2. Trying to get fair trade involved here, since 1980 imports have increased almost every year, trying to maintain the 5% but also increase it as well 3. Access to federal grant money and loan programs, ASPA is funding part of the bycatch study, also funding the sustainability study- Audubon GULF, COOL- Country of Origin Labeling, Made in America labeling

Acy Cooper stated that these efforts need to include the whole industry because if you do not have a vessel with a freezer on it you are excluded, requested that when you pass legislation and make changes try to look at the big picture and the whole industry

Andrew Blanchard stated that some of the other things that ASPA is doing is funding part of the bycatch study and the sustainability certification from Audubon Gulf

1. The task force discussed the damage assessment of the seafood industry after hurricane Ida

Andrew Blanchard led discussion- right now trying to get a damage assessment in all areas of the seafood industry, trying to get all areas of the seafood industry to complete a damage assessment survey and submit it to Dr. Rex Caffey, the deadline to submit the survey is Friday, December 10, anyone who has not completed the survey should try and complete it before then, the results are set to be presented to DC at the end of the year (2021)

Rodney Olander stated that the industry needs to get the word out on the surveys, asked that everyone put the word out

1. The board discussed freshwater disaster funding- 2019 fisheries disaster funding

Jason Froeba stated that the information will be sent to NOAA before the end of the year, working on making some adjustments to the plan because of all of the public comment received, working specifically on the Commercial and Charter Vessel Access Grants and received permission from NOAA to implement it in phases so we do not have to slow down some of the more important programs for some of the other programs that are going to occur later. We are going to submit our plan with the priorities of the program, priority number one is an equipment reimbursement program for the industry and we will go down our priority list and they will approve the things we have fully formatted and then they will give preliminary approval on these other tasks and additional information will be submitted at a later date.

There are three different reimbursement tiers, first tier is 10K (95%), second tier 20K (90%) and third tier is 30K (85%); there will be some eligibility criteria, going to open it up and it will be in the order the applications come in, will have a very robust outreach program before the programs open up, there will be letters that go out, emails, news releases, going to come to the task forces to announce it, will be on the radio, $58M for the whole fisheries disaster, $13M for hydrologic and grant programs was lower and went in and added as much money to the grant program as possible

1. The task force discussed traversing and offloading license

With the new license restructure there is a new offloading license permit- If you are a federal fishermen and you are not fishing in Louisiana you can come into Louisiana waters with just this one license

1. To discuss and consider the Audubon Gulf external review agreements

John Fallon led discussion on the item- Certifications are asking for an external review of management, the task force voted to support this activity with 25% of the total cost of $64,000, currently waiting on a response from LDWF legal on the agreement, will try to get a draft to the STF and Audubon

Acy Cooper motioned to appoint Andrew Blanchard to serve as a representative to approve the external review agreement on behalf of the task force once it is finalized, 2nd by Rodney Olander. Motion carries.

1. Discussed the new speckled trout regulations

Andrew Blanchard led discussion on the item- At the last LDWF Commission meeting this item was put on hold and the regulations will remain the same for the next year, Commission will revisit again at this time next year

Acy Cooper stated that to allow them to keep going is a big issue, can’t blame it on the shrimp industry, if it would have been commercial guys causing the issue it would have been gone a while ago but now that it’s a recreational issue it’s being kicked down the road

1. Jack Isaacs provided a presentation on commercial landings of shrimp and blue crabs from Lake Pontchartrain

 

Value per pound for Pontchartrain crab have been higher than most of the state

1. discussed Senate Resolution 105

Need a letter from the task force, the issue was not dealing with LA boats it was three Mississippi boats, when the activity is seen LDWF enforcement needs to be called, it’s an enforcement issue more than an industry problem, the law is already in place to take care of this, if we let this go down it can move on all across the state, if this goes on across the state the industry will be in trouble

A report is to be back to the Senate on or before February 4, 2022

We are currently doing everything we can to limit damage to crab traps, only have so many days and so many areas for shrimping in Lake Pontchartrain, would like to leave nighttime shrimping in Lake Pontchartrain as it is

Casey Russel, from the Rigolets, stated that every crab fishermen has 1000 of traps covering the whole bottom of the Lake Pontchartrain and the net the shrimpers are using takes up 62 feet why are they allowed to fish and shrimpers are not

Rodney Olander stated that over 25 years ago night shrimping was outlawed now you cannot even run a light boat through the cages, the issue is the amount of cages, always see them hauling new traps out and never see them bringing traps in

Acy Cooper motioned to keep the law as it currently stands, would like to work with the Crab Task Force and industry to come up with an agreement; if something is agreed upon the task force appoints Andrew Blanchard as STF representative for final approval on a joint letter with the CTF, 2nd by Kristen Baumer. Motion carries.

1. The board discussed the Shrimp Task Force trip to Washington, D.C.

Five board members planning to attend, ASPA is working on setting up meetings, working on an agenda for discussions

**VIII.** Public Comment

Barry Rogers stated that he would suggest to keep moving on with the ride along program this spring, would like to move forward with it

Julie Falgout announced that at the next STF meeting Dr. Robert Twilley will provide a presentation on a National Estuarine Research Reserve in Louisiana (NERR), partnership with NOAA, DNR, CPRA, for more information visit louisianaseagrant.org

Andrew Blanchard stated that at the last LDWF Commission meeting he asked the biology department to look at keeping the season open if possible, if sample sizes do not require a closure to keep the season open to allow fishing for as long as possible and run the three mile limit the same way

**IX.** Next meeting set for Wednesday, February 16, 2022 for 10am in Baton Rouge

**X.** Rodney Olander motioned to adjourn, 2nd by Acy Cooper. Motion carries.