**Shrimp Task Force**

**Wednesday, July 5, 2023, 10:00am**

**LDWF Headquarters**

**2000 Quail Drive**

**Baton Rouge, LA 70898**

**I.** Pledge of Allegiance

**II.** Roll Call

Voting Members Present:

Rodney Olander

Acy Cooper, Jr.

Jeff Drury, III

Alan Gibson

Andrew Blanchard

Voting Members Absent:

Lance Nacio

Phillip Tran

Kristen Baumer

Randy Pearce

Chalin Delaune

Non-Voting Members Present:

Olivia Ledet

Jack Isaacs

Gene Cavalier

Non-Voting Members Absent:

Peyton Cagle

Edward Skena

**III.** Rodney Olander motioned to approve the May 3, 2023 meeting minutes, 2nd by Andrew Blanchard. Motion carries.

Rodney Olander motioned to amend the agenda, adding an item under new business, item A. To Discuss USDA Covid-19 Grants for Docks and Processors, 2nd by Andrew Blanchard. Motion carries.

Rodney Olander motioned to approve the July 5, 2023 meeting agenda as amended, 2nd by Andrew Blanchard. Motion carries.

**IV**. New Business:

1. Nicholas Cole, director of LA Agriculture Finance Authority led discussion on Covid-19 grants for docks and processors

LA Seafood Processors Pandemic Response and Safety Block Grant Program:

Eligibility

In order to be eligible for the benefits under the Louisiana Seafood Processors Pandemic Response and Safety Program, an applicant must meet the following requirements:

* Must have had a 2020 and/or 2021 Louisiana Residential Wholesale/Retail Seafood License – Business, Residential Wholesale/Retail Seafood License -Vehicle, Residential Seafood Retail/Dealer License – Business, Residential Seafood-Retail/Dealer License – Vehicle, or Residential Vessel Licenses issued by the Department of Wildlife and Fisheries.
* Sole proprietorships, partnerships (general, limited, or LLP), corporations (S Corps, C Corps, and LLCs), cooperatives, joint ventures, and other entities may participate. Processors and At-sea Processors attest that they change the physical condition of a fisheries resource suitable for human consumption, retail sale, industrial use, or long-term storage including cooking, canning, smoking, salting, drying, shucking, filleting, freezing, or rendering into meal or oil.
* Dealers attest that they receive fish by way of purchase and sell directly to restaurants, markets, other dealers, processors, or consumers without substantially altering the product.

Award

Awards will be 100 % grants. Total awards will be a maximum of $100,000 depending on the availability of funds. The applicant’s award amount will be based on the amount of pandemic-related loss expenses preparing for, preventing exposure to, and responding to the COVID-19 pandemic for seafood processing facilities and vessels. If eligible requests for funds exceed the dollars available, awards will be made on a pro-rata share.

The applicant will be responsible for submitting receipts for the use of funds in order to receive the grant award. Please attach any receipts relating to these expenses to the application. Receipts must be dated January 27, 2020, through December 31, 2021, and indicate payments have already been made. LDAF/LAFA may request expense justification for eligible expenses.

ELIGIBLE EXPENSE CATEGORIES:

**Workplace Safety Measures**: Workplace safety measures, including, but not limited to, personal
protective equipment, sanitizer, hand washing stations, air filters, thermometers, cleaning supplies, or
similar items.

**\*Market Pivots:** Market pivots such as the transition to virtual/online sales costs (online platform development
and fees, online marketing, credit card processing fees), supplies, and new signage.

**\*Retrofitting Facilities:**Retrofitting facilities for worker and consumer safety (retrofitting harvester
vessels for onboard vessel processing to maximize open-air activities, plexiglass, walk-up windows, heat
lamps, fans, tents, propane, weights, tables, chairs).

**\*Transportation:**Additional transportation costs incurred to maintain social distancing.

**\*Worker Housing:** Additional worker housing costs incurred to maintain social distancing or to allow for
quarantining of new or exposed employees.

**\*Medical:**Unreimbursed costs associated with providing or enabling vaccinations, testing, or healthcare
treatment of infected employees, including any paid leave.

Acy Cooper stated that the Covid-19 relief was originally for docks and processors and the industry is now hearing that it is opened up to fishermen. A letter was sent out to maximize the grant process asking for more trip tickets. If the fishermen are going to be involved it needs to be opened up to all fishermen.

Nicholas Cole stated that nothing about the process has changed, because the grant allowed for up to a max of $100K for an award were telling applicants to maximum as far as every valid expense that someone might have, this does not mean any rules would be bent in order to approve any types of expenses this amount. The total allocation for the grant ended up being just over $3.4M from the aware and by far and away exceeded the approval requests for that total. So actually are now having to go through a pro-rata share allocation process. There will not be anyone that is receiving the total $100K amount because everyone was going to have a pro-rata share of what their approved expenses were. There are 248 total submitted applicants for the grant. Notification letters will go out on July 10 letting applicants know of approval or denial of their requests for grant funds under the program. The only *As of right now fishermen are not included in this grant program*

1. Acy Cooper led discussion on hiring a new lobbyist firm to represent the Shrimp Task Force

Acy Cooper stated that unfortunately he received the devastating news that Brian Shinault with American Strategic Partners had passed away. The task force will need to consider hiring a new firm in the future.

Allyce Trapp and Jeff Brooks provided a brief presentation from the Adams and Reese firm

Acy Cooper stated that idea is to allocate any funding that was left over from the American Strategic Partners contract over to a new contract with Adams and Reese

Rodney Olander motioned to hire Adams and Reese as the new lobbyist firm representing the shrimp industry, dedicating any left-over funding from the American Strategic Partners contract to a new contract with Adams and Reese, motion withdrawn until further information is received on funding and a conference call with Adams and Reese has taken place to discuss priorities and a new contract

Andy Gibson the biggest concern pushed aside for 30 years- there is extra inventory from imports and it’s crashing the markets and pricing, need to slow down product coming in, Covid-19 and fisheries disaster funding is just a band-aide, the industry needs assistance with key issues now

Acy Cooper requested a conference call regarding issues and top priorities of the industry with Adams and Reese for further discussion, the task force plans to take this up for further consideration and discussion at a future meeting

1. The task force heard an update on shrimp industry meeting with the Governor

Olivia Ledet stated that the meeting memo and request has been submitted and prioritized to the Governor’s office, the main priority is a meeting with the Shrimp Task Force, LDWF and LDH, but the memo also covers other actions the Governor can take and things that can be done in the meantime until the meeting is set. LDWF sent over a letter with the memo that is ready to be signed if the Governor approved that urges the Animal and Plant and Health Inspection service to pursue increased inspection on shrimp imports, also detailed in the memo is how the Governor can work with other coastal governors to form a coalition and then to continue to work diligently with the Federal delegation and staffers, talked to a Higgins staffer this morning and they are continuing to push for the Seafood Safety and Standards Act and they are working with the Ag Committee to do an import study in the Farm Bill and they sent a request to USDA to buy surplus shrimp in the market

Alan Gibson thanked Olivia Ledet for being at the meeting, it would help to have better rapport with the Governor on what is being done before these meetings in DC, Planning a July 10 Washington, D.C. trip

1. The task force considered funding for the LDH shrimp testing program

Representative Timothy Kerner led discussion stating that years ago identified 75 wholesalers who deal with imported shrimp and charged them a fee and used that fee to start testing imported seafood, only testing for a small amount of stuff, this year put a bill in but the bill did not pass all the way through the legislature, but agreed that if we found up what Japan and EU is testing for they agreed to do it, the $150,000 for testing was not put into the bill but the money may be able to be put back into the bill through Joint Budget Committee, looking for a jumpstart of funding to get the testing started, legislation passed last year, The bill proposed gives LDH the authority to destroy product that tests positive with any means they see fit, the legislation also designates a task force for this purpose, when the task force is created the State is going to fund testing, 75 importers $100 flat rate and would like to be a price/ lb

Rodney Olander asked what kind of timeframe are you thinking to find funding for the testing, July 21st is the Joint Budget meeting

USA tests for 12 and EU tests for 34

Rodney Olander motioned to dedicate $50,000 in funding to LDH for the testing of imported shrimp, 2nd by Andrew Blanchard. Motion carries.

Alan Gibson requested that there be an increase on inspections closer to the 34 like European Union, increased testing from 12

Alan Gibson asked when the task force is set up to notify the STF so that the industry can be included as much as possible, should have a seat on the board

**VI.** Public Comment

Rocky Decharo stated that bay boats continue working the bays when commercial white shrimp is shut down, these guys can work the beach to catch live shrimp, issue more and more people getting a license for live bait shrimp, season needs to be closed for all people; Commission passed a rule to allow bait fishermen to catch in closed season would like to request further discussion on this at a future meeting

Patrick Banks provided a brief update on the 2019 Fisheries Disaster funding, stated that they had to make several revisions to the spend plan, as of recently NOAA’s attorney stated that a match could not be required for the funding, the match has been eliminated and the spend plan was sent back still waiting on NOAA to make the final call on the approval of funding, hurricane 2020 disaster- feds agreed to disaster, LDWF put together economic impact analysis and submitted to feds and it was declared by the feds now have to wait for money to be appropriated for the disaster to the state and a spend plan will be developed and the spend plan will go to NOAA for approval; 2021 Hurricane disaster Office of Community Development, in process of getting a declaration for 2021 disaster as well

Since Katrina at lot of regulations on fisheries disasters has been put into place and direct payments are not common, the bar is higher at this point

George Barisich stated that TEDs in skimmers in 40ft boats and above and they will be coming for all boats eventually, voted to give LDWF the ability to enforce teds with the exception that shrimp would be removed from the Monteray Bay red list, STF should send letter regarding the issue suspend LDWF’s/ the State’s ability to enforce TEDs in skimmer nets; the task force plans to discuss this further at the next meeting; Patrick Banks stated that he will look further into this but believes this will have to be done legislatively; Rodney Olander suggested inviting NOAA to the next meeting to answer some questions

Jack ITC- Anti- Dumping, the International Trade Commission is going to come up with a report July 18 with their recent findings, will take a look at the report and get back to the task force on the findings at a future meeting

Wade Nunez, St. Bernard fishermen, May 3 to now pulling up research and reports on health issues of imports, spoke at the Health and Welfare Committee, the health issues need to be addressed, need consumer awareness, STF lobbyist needs to look into this and the Governor’s office needs to be brought on board to the issues

**VII.** Next meeting set for Wednesday, August 2, 2023 for 10am at LDWF Headquarters in Baton Rouge

**VIII.** Rodney Olander motioned to adjourn the meeting, 2nd by Andrew Blanchard. Motion carries.