

**Artificial Reef Council Meeting – April 10, 2017, 8:00 am**

Louisiana Room, LDWF Headquarters, Baton Rouge, LA

Council Members:

Chris D’Elia, Dean of the College of the Coast and Environment, LSU

Robert Twilley, Executive Director of Louisiana Sea Grant

Patrick Banks, Assistant Secretary of the Office of Fisheries, LDWF

Attendees:

Douglas Peter, BSEE

Chris Auer, FMOG

Clint Rayes, ExxonMobil

Greg Southworth, OOC

Jerry Gilmore, TSB/ExxonMobil

Gene Williams, Talos Energy LLC

Chris D’Elia, LSU

Jason Duet, LDWF

Jason Froeba, LDWF

Deb Abibou, CRCL

Christy Russell, CRCL

Amy Smith Kyle, TNC

- 1) The recording begins with the meeting in progress, Mike McDonough is describing a map that shows the Program’s offshore reefs, both Planning Area and Special Artificial Reef Sites (SARS). He then describes a ‘zoomed-in’ map showing same. He explains that reefs sites, once created, are all the same. SARS must meet additional criteria; he then lists those criteria (the criteria are attached to these minutes via the updated SARS amendment). He gave examples in which the SARS amendment has been updated or revised in the past.  
In 2008, SARS became controversial—the shrimping industry felt the Program was taking up too much ‘trawlable bottom.’ The Program tries to mitigate this by ‘giving back’ area in the Planning Areas, and tries to avoid it by only developing around existing platforms (obstructions). The Program was definitely developing a lot of SARS from hurricane-toppled platforms. M. McDonough goes on to list current SARS and which

were hurricane-toppled (all but a few—many from Katrina and Rita). The Council established a moratorium on new SARS proposals from that point on. Already approved sites were ‘grandfathered’. MMS, now BSEE enacted its own moratorium on SARS at around the same time.

In 2013, BSEE lifted their moratorium, but enacted a restriction on the reefing of hurricane-toppled platforms.

There are several potential advantages to the Program to lifting the moratorium. Offshore, the percentage of structures being reefed is decreasing; nearshore: Program unable to reef some ‘orphaned’ structures outside of nearshore planning areas.

Installs in GOM are declining, removals are increasing, only 200 platforms left—reefing not likely to increase. Also, nearshore planning areas do not overlap greatly with “Red Snapper” water depths.

‘Good’ SARS opportunities are those where there are a ‘lot’ of platforms that would have to go to far or shallower existing reef sites. There are not a lot of these areas left, so SARS development will have a natural limit going forward. (Shrimpers have had concern about too many of these projects).

The proposal is to lift the SARS moratorium, enact a restriction on reefing storm-toppled platforms, to subtract areas of higher shrimp trawl effort when subtracting from the planning areas, to define ‘currently trawlable habitat’.

M. McDonough gives a summary of public comment received: a summary of the public comment is attached to these minutes.

M. McDonough reads changes to the SARS Amendment (attached to these minutes as above).

M. McDonough describes the ‘ideal’ SARS proposal, what information will be used to evaluate it, including shrimp trawl effort data, OCS blocks and standing platforms.

M. McDonough describes what the SARS approval process would look like if changes are adopted, moratorium lifted (approved revised flowchart attached to these minutes).

Patrick Banks asks if there are any questions from the Council members.

Dean D’Elia asks about poor GPS reception, can we do anything to help?

M. McDonough replies that he doesn’t know about equipment, explains how Program is responsible for informing NOS for charting, which is where chart-plotting companies get their info. Program will further attempt to get the info out as much as possible.

P. Banks asks, were the moratorium to be lifted if Council would still have to review each proposal individually?

M. McDonough answers that is correct.

R. Twilley asks if Program removes area from Planning Areas or if Council plays a role.

M. McDonough proposes that Program can recommend acreage for removal of Planning Areas to Council concurrent with final approval for a SARS proposal, get Council's approval for both.

R. Twilley answers that that is what he would like to see. He also asks if Shrimp Task Force will be able to weigh in on how they feel about effort.

M. McDonough answers that Shrimp Task Force meetings are among the meetings the Program will take SARS proposals to for public comment.

P. Banks states that he would like to know if shrimping industry feels the same as what data appear to indicate. He asks if Council would like to make a motion or open floor to public comment; Council would like comment first.

With no public comment Dean D'Elia motions to accept. Dr. Twilley seconds.

M. McDonough asks that they make a separate motion that Council will approve the removal of the acreage from the planning areas.

Dr. Twilley really wants to see a lot of vetting with each project, make sure industry concurs with language of SARS amendment regarding 'trawlable' and 'effort'.

The Council members all agree and reiterate that the public comment period will be crucial. Dr. Twilley likes that SARS will be targeted to areas with concentrations of platforms.

Deborah Abibou asks about the restriction on storm-topped structures—are they removed?

M. McDonough answers that the Federal government will require their removal

D. Abibou comments that public comment numbers were low, asks if there is plan to better engage the public.

M. McDonough answers that Program took every suggestion and request for a meeting that it could find. Numbers still typical of experience.

D. Abibou states that CRCL has new engagement program, suggests providing food or compensation.

M. McDonough states that Louisiana Fisheries Forward has helped increase engagement, that Program is willing to consider any partnership that would help.

Dr. Twilley states that Sea Grant does 'dock days' and a fisheries summit at which info about these proposals can be distributed.

P. Banks calls for a vote on the motion to accept lifting the SARS moratorium and the revisions to the SARS amendment. Motion carries.

M. McDonough updates Council that Program has reefed 5 new structures (since previous meeting) and has received a Corps permit for the Bay Marchand 3 reef.

Craig Gothreaux states that there are 30 inshore reefs, 2 more very close to completion. Program has over 3000 acres of established area. Three projects for the current fiscal year: East Calcasieu, St. John, and Point Mast reefs. Point Mast is in Lake Pelto/Timbalier, partnership with CCA; St John is in Lake Pontchartrain, also with CCA; waiting on permits for both. Permit for East Calcasieu is in hand, replacing Oyster Reefs. Department has \$6 million in Recreational Use Restoration funds (from DWH oil spill) for artificial reefs.

Dr. Twilley mentions he has heard that some reefs may have sunk over the years, asks if there is a plan to monitor deployments in the future.

- 2) C. Gothreaux mentions that Biowest surveys found little reef material at a few sites, plan to enhance those with more material. Will also be doing a lot of biological monitoring. All projects approved for Restoration funds must include monitoring plan.

Dean D'Elia asks if there is plan to look at all past sites and how frequently this is done.

C. Gothreaux answers that reefs within basins have been prioritized, so far focus has been on Independence Island, comparing techniques and material types.

Dean D'Elia asks if this will allow for improvements.

Yes

Meeting adjourned