**OTF Enforcement Committee Meeting August 6, 2014**

**Meeting called to order at 10:15 a.m.**

**Meeting attendees:**

Willie Daisy

Francis Ernst

Dale Chaison

Lawrence Chaison

Roger Watkins

Shane Bagala

Al Sunseri

Dan Coulon

Byron Encalade

Matthew Slavich

Tory Voisin

John Tesvich

Lt. Jason Russo

Mr. Dan Coulon called the meeting to order.

Enforcement works 80 hours in pay period (two weeks).

Average 3 hours spent per case in court. In the region there 20 agents, which includes two lieutenants who are not always in the field. Additional 6 agents were just hired into this region.

Lt. Russo read a statement:Due to ongoing litigation over the VMS component of the Public Oyster Seed Ground Vessel Permit, LDWF cannot alter the manner in which it collects or utilizes data received pursuant to that program until such time as the litigation has reached a final and unappealable resolution.

Al Sunseri asked enforcement if legislation requiring all oyster harvest vessels to have VMS on it would be helpful and enforcement said that yes, GPS would be helpful, but you also have to have visual evidence of dredges in the water.

Committee members also asked if they could help speak with state legislators about securing dollars to fund more enforcement positions.

John Tesvich mentioned the strike force that the department created but has since become defunct.

Mr. Ernst mentioned the possibility of the Coast Guard assisting, but Lt. Russo said that they are not a similar enforcement agency to LDWF and they have to operate differently as a military agency.

Mr. Dan Coulon asked how much the VMS system costs, how many vendors are there and would it benefit the agency. Al Sunseri thought that the systems run about 200-300 a month with a monthly service fee.

The system that enforcement uses costs in the thousands of dollar range and the owner has to pay for the unit and the monthly service fee. Al Sunseri asked enforcement to provide the list of approved vendors.

John asked about the vessels crossing state lines and Lt. Russo could not comment on those.

Al Sunseri made a motion that the enforcement committee supports legislation to support requiring VMS on all oyster harvesting vessels. Second by Wilbert Collins. Motion passed.

This motion will go to the task force to refine the motion specifics.

Oyster Inspector used to be a position at LDWF and this person worked mainly at the docks enforcing regulations. Checking for mislabeling and other things. Al Sunseri asked that the task force support reinstating the position of an oyster inspector. Lt. Russo said that even in the absence of an oyster strike force the enforcement agents log a lot of hours on oysters.

Dan Coulon asked how a VMS system could help with the NSSP regulations.

Penalties would need to be developed for those who don’t have a VMS system.

Meeting adjourned at 11:55 a.m.