**Oyster Task Force Meeting**

**Tuesday, September 23, 2020, 1:00pm**

**LDWF Headquarters**

**2000 Quail Dr., Baton Rouge, LA 70898**

**I. Pledge of Allegiance**

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

**Voting Members Present:**

Tracy Collins

Byron Encalade

Jakov Jurisic

Mitch Jurisich

Brad Robin

Brandt Lafrance

Al Sunseri

Sam Slavich

Willie Daisy

**Voting Members Absent:**

Shane Bagala

Dan Coulon

John Tesvich

Peter Vujnovich

**Non-Voting Members Present:**

Carolina Bourque

Justin Gremillion

Brian Marie in for Edward Skena

Harry Vorhoff

**Non-Voting Members Absent:**

Brian Lezina

**III.** Jakov Jurisicmotioned to approve the July 7, 2020 meeting minutes, 2nd by Tracy Collins. Motion carries.

Jakov Jurisic motioned to approve the September 16, 2020 special meeting minutes, 2nd by Tracy Collins. Motion carries.

Jakov Jurisic motioned to amend the agenda by taking up item C. as item A., 2nd by Sam Slavich. Motion carries.

Jakov Jurisic motioned to approve the September 23, 2020 meeting agenda as amended, 2nd by Sam Slavich. Motion carries.

**IV.** Treasury Report

Remaining Fund Balance: $482,038

Remaining Budget Balance: $136,656

Jakov Jurisic motioned to approve the treasury report as presented, 2nd by Willie Daisy. Motion carries.

**V.** Committee reports:

**A.** Public-Private Oyster Seed Ground Committee report

Discussion:

* CPRA moving forward with the OLACP public meetings, recommended that the OTF send a letter to CPRA to request holding off on public meetings until the OTF and oyster industry have an opportunity to weigh in and provide input. Also to request that CPRA work with the OTF and LDWF to work through some of the issues prior to public feedback
* Senate Concurrent Resolution (SCR56) proposed by Senator Hewitt asked that CPRA, LDWF, and OTF get together to work on a plan, feel that the guidelines under this resolution were not met. OTF planning to send a letter asking to please hold off on public meetings; asking that process is halted immediately
* Oyster Strategic Plan, some of the strategic plans are implemented into the OLACP recommendations and the task force feels as though these plans are also moving forward without regard to the guidelines of Senate Concurrent Resolution 56

Jakov Jurisic motioned to approve the committee recommendations, 2nd by Brad Robin. Motion carries.

B. Brian Marie provided the task force with an enforcement report:

August 18th – September 9th

**Region 4** (Iberia)

None

**Region 5** (Calcasieu and Cameron)

None

**Region 6**: (Terrebonne, Lafourche, Grand Isle)

Terrebonne

1-Violate sanitary code (logbook)

1-Fail to have proper numbers on vessel

**3 sacks seized**

Lafourche

9-Take oysters from an unapproved area (polluted)

2-unlawfully take oysters from state water bottoms

3-Fail to have commercial license in possession

3-No commercial gear license

2-Violate sanitary code (logbook)

2-Violate sanitary code (Refrigeration)

**67 sacks seized**

**Region 8**: (Jefferson, Plaquemines, St. Bernard, Orleans, St. Tammany)

Plaquemines

1-Violate sanitary code (logbook)

**2 sacks seized**

Acquisition received, enforcement just received a camera to go on one of the drones that was not equipped with zoom capabilities. Through grants we acquired the money to purchase a 6th drone for oyster enforcement

C. Legislative Report- no report

D. Legal Report- no report

E. Research Report- oyster consumer fact sheets were distributed from LA Direct Seafood

F. Coastal Restoration- no report

G. Marketing Report- Jakov Jurisic stated that he would inform the board when the next SPMB meeting is set

H. Health report- still dealing with fallout from Hurricane Sally, due to high waters we can’t get to actual areas to sample (areas 3, 4, and 5) FDA is allowing one line run instead of 2 because of time that has passed. Letters to reopen Areas 26-28 sent off to be signed to reopen tomorrow morning once signed

Map showings have been postponed as of now due to Covid-19; the task force requested that a short email be put together to send out to the industry on map showings

I. Aquaculture Report- no report

J. Joint Task Force Working Group- no report

**VI.** New Business

1. Marc Maniscalco led discussion on the upcoming Oyster Lease Renewal Process and potential changes for the year

Renewals start on November 1 instead of December 1, just in case something happens it will give more time and allow people to space out when they are coming in, signature on the application will serve as a signature on the lease; will have to send in renewal fees and rent

1. The task force discussed the OLACP and CPRA’s proposed changes

Chip Kline stated that he doesn’t want CPRA to be perceived as an agency that does things in a vacuum, the OLACP is something that is put into place to help the oyster industry; there is no policy or firm recommendations being considered at this time; the task force referenced Senator Hewitt’s resolution, CPRA was very involved in writing the resolution. The resolution is specific to the Strategic Plan for the overall productivity and sustainability of the oyster industry and we are working with LDWF and there will be a lot of collaboration from this entity and the oyster industry on that plan. The OLACP is somewhat separate from the strategic plan. There will be a lot of collaboration with the Corp as well as the oyster industry; can set up meetings specifically with the OTF but the public meetings that are currently on the books will remain

$215M two marsh creation projects in the Lake Borgne area and in Spanish Pass; two of the largest marsh creation projects in the history of the program and it would be nice if CPRA and the oyster industry standing side by side in announcing these projects

Bran Haase provided a presentation on the OLACP study to develop recommendations for program improvements

Submission of Views and Recommendations: Propose your views, recommendations, and solutions via:

* Email to coastal@la.gov
* Voicemail message to (225) 342-4968
* Chat during 9/21 & 9/23 Webinars
* Deadline for submission is October 7, 2020

Mitch Jurisich stated that there is some common good that can come out of this, the issue is that the study was brought to the public at the same time as the oyster industry, can work together to improve if CPRA would come to the task force first; the industry and the task force should have been involved in the process from the beginning; when you have examples out there included in your presentation for the public to view you have already released a preliminary plan

Brad Robin stated that his biggest problem is the picture that is being painted to the public, the oyster industry spends millions of dollars planting rock and building up the coast, the industry spend around 100 million dollars of BP money planting cultch on oyster grounds and developed, in over 100 years, some of the best leases in the world now these same areas are the ones affected by projects

Byron Encalade stated that oysters equals community, asking CPRA to look at the humane side of this and the communities that the industry supports and creates

Kirk Panigale of Breton Sound Oyster Company stated that he has been watching the bayou deteriorate for 50 years, there are so many other solutions to the problem that we have, why don’t we use the sediment from the river, build the islands up and use the resources we have instead of putting oystermen out of business

Al Sunseri asked if a small group (CPRA, LDWF, OTF) could get together to meet with CPRA to discuss the strategic initiatives

Jakov Jurisic stated that for the last 8 years the oysters industry has put back into the water somewhere around $150 million and you do not hear anyone talking about it

Mitch Jurisich stated that he is hoping to work with CPRA and WLF on this program and plans to take it up in committee first

Chip Kline stated that based on everything he has heard he has a very clear understanding of how CPRA is perceived. In full disclosure, since these are public funds being used for the program we were taking it to the public. I think that we can continue to work through these issues. The last public meeting is on November 18 which should be enough time for CPRA to get with the OTF and all of the oyster industry stakeholders to discuss the issues and get feedback

1. Patrick Banks led discussion on the oyster strategic plan

Mitch Jurisich stated that the task force raised some concern about the strategic plan at the Public-Private Committee meeting and the concerns are very manageable and he feels that the OTF and LDWF can move pretty quickly to come to some resolve

Patrick Banks stated that there is currently no update due to hurricane response, CARES ACT, and the flood disaster spending plan have over shadowed the work on the Strategic Plan. Met with CPRA to discuss some sticking points

Mitch Jurisich asked that LDWF meet with CPRA and OTF to work through the issues with the Strategic Plan in Committee

1. Mitch Jurisich led discussion on proposals to hire a PR firm to represent the task force

Mitch Jurisich stated that John Tesvich had been working on getting together some proposals from PR firms, believed that Beuerman Miller Fitzgerald had submitted something and would try to have them come present at a future meeting

Jakov Jurisic motioned to postpone the item to the next meeting, 2nd by Brandt Lafrance. Motion carries.

1. Cole Garret provided an update on the approval of funding and hiring of legal counsel to represent the Oyster Task Force

The request was made from the task force to hire outside counsel a few months ago and the law provides specific authority for the Oyster Task Force to do so however, it is outlined that it should be for legislative purposes, for adjudication or to litigate. The proposal provided by Mr. Piacun on behalf of the task force was to provide general legal counsel and a more specific scope of services is needed

Jakov Jurisic asked to which statute? 56:421/ 36:610

Cole Garrett stated that he can work with the chair of the legal committee or anyone the chairman dedicates to narrow the scope of services

Patrick Banks stated that it would help determine the scope of services if some of the tasks expected from this hire could be laid out, it would help further structure the contract the Department has to manage

The task force mentioned some examples of how to further the Scope of Services:

Represent the industry in legislative proceedings

Interpretation of law

Letter writing skills

Legal opinions and advice

Sam Slavich stated that every one of the members on the task force have asked their personal attorney at some point to interpret documents, legal language. It would be good to have counsel available to interpret the law and help the task force understand legislative items, etc.

The first step is further revising the scope, then LDWF legal will make a recommendation to the Secretary and the Secretary will make a decision on whether or not to approve, it will then go to the Attorney General’s office for approvals

Sam Slavich motioned to authorize the legal subcommittee to finalize a narrowing of the scope of services to meet the statutory requirements of title 56:421, 2nd by Jakov Jurisic. Motion carries.

VII. Public Comment

Mitch Jurisich stated that the Special Session is being called by the legislator, discussed possibly getting the vessel seed permit bill in again during special session, getting with Representative Cormier on this item. The bill was pulled last time and would like to resubmit

VIII. Next meeting not set, date time TBD

IX. Board unanimously motioned to adjourn. Motion carries.