**DRAFT**

**Louisiana Shrimp Task Force Meeting Minutes**

**Alan Gibson, Chairman**

**Wednesday, August 5, 2020, 10:00 a.m.**

**VIA Webinar**

**I.** Pledge of Allegiance

**II.** Meeting Operating Procedure

**III.** Roll Call

**Voting Members Present:**

George Barisich

Acy Cooper

Lance Nacio

Rodney Olander

Steven Sode

Kristen Baumer

Alan Gibson

Andrew Blanchard

Craig Authement

**Voting Members Absent:**

**Non-Voting Members Present:**

Peyton Cagle

Brian Marie in for Edward Skena

Jack Isaacs

Gene Cavalier

**Non-Voting Members Absent:**

Meg Bankston

Justin Gremillion

**IV.** Acy Cooper motioned to approve the May 6, 2020 meeting minutes, 2nd by Lance Nacio. Motion carries.

**V.** George Barisich motioned to amend the agenda by adding two items to the end of New Business on the agenda: F. To Hear an Update on STF Drones- LDWF/ STF and item G. To Discuss Submitting Comment Regarding the Mid-Breton Sediment Diversion- STF, 2nd by Kristen Baumer. Motion carries.

Acy Cooper motioned to approve the agenda as amended, 2nd by George Barisich. Motion carries.

**VI.** Financial Report

Remaining Fund Balance- $624,985

Remaining Budget Balance- $34,842

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

**VII.** Federal Shrimp Permit Report- the task force reviewed the Federal Shrimp Permit list

**VIII.** New Business

1. Jason Froeba provided an overview of the CARES ACT and 2019 Fisheries Disaster Funding

**CARES Act Fisheries Funding – Louisiana White Paper**

**7/7/2020 - DRAFT**

**CARES Act Facts**

* $300 million total provided for “Assistance to Fishery Participants” in the U.S.
* Louisiana’s allocation was announced in May by NOAA and equals $14,785,244 (before administrative costs)
* Administered through NOAA Fisheries and payments to fishery participants will come from the Gulf States Marine Fisheries Commission (GSMFC).

**Eligibility Requirements**

The CARES Act and NOAA Fisheries have established the following eligibility requirements:

* “Fishery Participant” – Tribes, persons, fishing communities, aquaculture businesses, processors, or other fisheries related businesses.
  + Gear and vessel suppliers, repair facilities, retailers, restaurants, and bait and tackle operations are not viewed as fisheries related businesses
* Must have incurred economic revenue losses greater than 35% as compared to the prior 5-year average revenue
* Freshwater fisheries, including wild crawfish are ineligible
* Must reside in the state that is providing funding
* New businesses and entrants in 2020 with no prior revenue history are ineligible

Eligible entities must possess a 2020 LDWF license or permit. If the entity is not legally required to have a license or permit, the entity must show proof that the business is currently active. Eligible entities must have reported seafood sales on LDWF trip tickets in 2018 or 2019. If the entity is not legally required to submit trip tickets, the entity must show proof of business activity in 2018 or 2019. These qualifying criteria are intended to capture those individuals that have been directly affected by COVID-19 and not those that have either entered or exited the fishery prior to or after COVID-19, while also taking into consideration the impacts of the 2019 flood disaster.

**Louisiana Spending Plan (IN DEVELOPMENT)**

LDWF submitted a draft plan to Gulf States Marine Fisheries Commission on July 7, 2020, which must be reviewed and approved by NOAA prior to implementation. LDWF is hopeful implementation will begin sometime in August. Below are some highlights from the current draft plan.

* Sector Allocations
  + Will be centered on participant sector (fishermen, dealers, processors, etc.) rather than fishery (crabs, shrimp, oysters, charter, etc.).
  + Will be based on NOAA information they used when allocating between states. LDWF may adjust to account for the size of each sector when determining the allocations.
  + LDWF is prioritizing full-time fishery participants by utilizing certified license endorsements for the commercial fisherman and charter sectors. For the remaining sectors, LDWF will use a comparison of trip ticket landings or revenue compared to other fishery participants in the same sector and fishery.
* Application and Payment Process
  + Identified approximately 12,300 potential applicants
  + Opening date of application period will be dependent upon NOAA approval of the spending plan. However, LDWF intends to have a relatively short application period of six weeks and restrict the application process to a web-based format. LDWF intends to work with a contractor to provide language and application assistance via phone and video chat, or in person.
  + LDWF intends to implement a two phased payment process that will include an initial minimum payment followed by a second payment, the amount of which will be determined by the amount of funds remaining after all applications have been processed. LDWF intends to withhold a percentage of funding from each sector to ensure funding is available for every eligible applicant.

Alan Gibson asked how will the program be announced and when? New releases will be sent out and task forces and industry participants will be notified of the date and time and how to apply/ what is needed to qualify. The application period will be open for a minimum of 6 weeks

**2019 Fisheries Disaster Funding – Louisiana White Paper**

**7/7/2020 - DRAFT**

**Fisheries Disaster Funding Facts**

* $165 million total appropriated by Congress for declared fisheries disasters in the U.S. during the 2019-2020 federal FY
* Louisiana’s allocation was announced in late May by NOAA and equals approximately $58 million (before administrative costs)
* Administered through NOAA Fisheries with a grant coming directly to LDWF once a grant application and spending plan are approved by NOAA
* Funds cannot be used for activities for which the recipient has already been reimbursed

**Purpose of Fisheries Disaster Funding (as outlined by NOAA)**

* To restore the fishery or prevent a similar fishery disaster in the future and assist fishing communities affected by the fishery disaster
* Programs should strengthen long-term economic and environmental sustainability of the fishery
* May include direct payments to fishery participants, but an economic impact analysis and additional justification must be provided explaining why direct payments, instead of long-term economic and environmental measures, are the best mechanism to address the fishery disaster

**Louisiana Spending Plan**

There is no timeline/deadline for plan development, but LDWF staff will begin focusing on developing this plan once the CARES Act spending plan is submitted and approved. Below are some preliminary ideas for the spending plan. LDWF will work closely with the industry members to develop a final spending plan proposal.

* Potential Allocations Methods
  + Will likely follow the economic impact evaluation conducted by LDWF and NOAA following the 2019 flooding event
  + Based on the percentage each fishery contributed to the overall economic impact evaluation
  + Allocated to different coastal regions of the state based on impacts from flooding in those regions
* Potential Programs
  + Programs and guidance provided by the 2019 Louisiana’s Seafood Future project (<https://www.laseafoodfuture.com/>) for all affected fisheries
  + Direct payments – such payments could be included as a way to assist fishery participants in recovery and expand on CARES Act funding efforts
  + Implementation of parts of the draft Oyster Management and Rehabilitation Strategic Plan currently in preparation by LDWF (cultch planting, spat-on-shell deployment, expanding hatchery seed-production capabilities, etc.)
  + Expand derelict crab trap removal programs
  + Provide reimbursement assistance to fishery participants for activities/initiatives that help them be more efficient in their operations or more resilient to future disasters
  + Provide funding for projects that address low shrimp prices (e.g. increased inspection of shrimp imports, etc.)

George Barisich asked that LDWF get in touch with him when they are ready to roll out the program as he has plenty of ideas as well as some old program details that might work

Acy Cooper stated that when money came down for Katrina the industry had a say on where the money went and he asked that LDWF reach out to the industry and stakeholders to make suggestions and share opinions on where the money should go

1. Peyton Cagle provided a presentation on the upcoming Fall Inshore Shrimp Season

**LDWF Recommendations:**

From the Mississippi/Louisiana state line westward to the eastern shore of South Pass of the Mississippi River to open at 6:00 a.m. August 10, 2020 **except** for the Biloxi Marsh which will open at 6:00 a.m. August 24, 2020.

From the eastern shore of South Pass of the Mississippi River westward to the Atchafalaya River Ship Channel at Eugene Island as delineated by the River Channel Buoy Line to open at 6:00 p.m. August 10, 2020.

From the Atchafalaya River Ship Channel at Eugene Island as delineated by the River Channel Buoy Line westward to the Louisiana/Texas state line to open at 6:00 a.m. August 10, 2020 **except** for the Mermentau River which will open at 6:00 a.m. August 24, 2020.

Andrew Blanchard requested some data from the ride-along samples

Side-by-side samples in Vermillion, Barataria, Terrebonne and Pontchartrain-

Vermillion- 65 count average, commercial gear in Vermillion saw a 45 count average

Terrebonne- 77 count average with commercial

CSA 3- over 100 count average with commercial gear having an 85 count

CSA1- 200 count with commercial gear at 100 count average

George Barisich stated that he participated in Lake Borgne and saw a lot of small shrimp

Lance Nacio stated the for the brown shrimp season, fishermen were hit pretty hard with low prices, this is a long season we have and the only way fishermen are going to make money is if they have a sizable shrimp to sell. The conditions are good right now to allow the shrimp to grow, suggested holding off about a week to allow for some growth

Craig Authement asked how much can shrimp grow in size in a week? Peyton Cagle stated that with the right conditions shrimp can grow around 10mm

Acy Cooper the main thing fishermen are worried about is price and most fishermen don’t want to go out and catch small shrimp and have low prices

Harrison Granger stated that shrimp are still small August 17 for Terrebonne

Larry Barrios- Barataria/ Terrebonne to open 6pm

Angela Portier stated that small boats in her area want to see the season open on August 17, one week sometimes can make all the difference, want shrimp at a more marketable size

George Barisich motioned that the Shrimp Task Force request that the LDWF Commission open the 2020 Fall Inshore Shrimp Season on August 17 at 6am in Zone 1, Zone 2 on August 17 at 6pm with the Biloxi Marsh remaining closed for 2 extra weeks. Zone 3 and Vermillion to open on August 17 at 6am, 2nd by Lance Nacio. Motion does not carry with roll call vote: 2 yes, 3 no and 1 abstained – Acy Cooper

Kristen Baumer stated that his opinion would be to stick with the WLF opinion on opening on August 10

Kristen Baumer motioned to accept the LA Department of Wildlife and Fisheries’ season recommendation, 2nd by Craig Authement.

George Barisich stated that he is very disappointed and he doesn’t feel like this is the right decision at this time, especially in his area

Lance Nacio spoke to about 20 fishermen and none were in favor of the August 10 opening, all were in favor of the August 17th opening

Acy Cooper stated that everyone should make it a point to attend the WLF Commission meeting and comment on this item

George Barisich made a substitute motion that the task force take no position on the setting of the season at this time, 2nd by Lance Nacio. Motion does not carry with roll call vote 2 yes, 3 no, 1 abstained- Acy Cooper.

The original motion was called to question: Kristen Baumer motioned to accept the LA Department of Wildlife and Fisheries’ season recommendation, 2nd by Craig Authement. Motion carries with roll call vote- 4 yes, 2 no, 1 abstained- Acy Cooper

Rodney Olander stated that the docks and processors are in favor of opening on the 10th and the fishermen are in favor of opening on the 17th because they want a larger grade of shrimp

Andrew Blanchard stated that making the recommendation on opening on the August 10 is not about docks and processors

Harrison Granger- Terrebonne Parish Zone 2 August 17

Cathy Cortez stated that Zone 2 should open on August 10

1. Peyton Cagle and Acy Cooper led discussion on an adaptive management strategy that may allow for some portions of State inside waters to remain open for a period of time after the spring inshore closure

There has been some discussion of adaptive management strategies due to changes in environment and weather, seeing earlier seasons sometimes in spring, flooding, etc. One of things the Department is looking at is trying to determine areas in some of our basins that we are able to distinguish a line. This line would only be used for leaving a portion of the inshore waters open for an extended period of time past the rest of the inshore waters being closed. Similar to what is done in Zone 1, when the inshore season is shut down, a lot of times Lake Borgne and Mississippi Sound may remain open. We are going to look at historical data collected in the same samples that we use to monitor for a closure of the spring inshore season. Try to plot those out on maps and form a line that, over several years, falls in the same place over and over again during the same time. This line would not be utilized every year, nor would it be changed or debated on, it would be solely based on data that was collected over 10-15 years. So this is the strategy currently being discussed. Something will be put together more formally in the fall and will most probably be brought back to the task force.

Acy Cooper stated that the industry had a good situation this year and it shows that something like this could work. In the spring season, a hurricane hit and the shrimp disappeared for about two weeks. After about two weeks the shrimp showed back up and they were 40/50s and 36/40s and by that time there was only about two weeks left in the season. At the close of the spring season fishermen were still catching 40/50s and 36/40 brownies. By distinguishing this line, some areas can remain open for a certain amount of time until we start to see little shrimp show up. This would be beneficial for the industry, it may not happen every year but even every five years or so it would be a positive for the industry.

Peyton Cagle stated that the line that the Department would be distinguishing would be something recognized by the industry. It would not be a statute or something we use to determine the shrimp inside/outside line. This line would strictly be used to extend the spring shrimp season. It would not be to open this line early or to leave it open the entire time between spring and fall, and it would not be to open the fall season early. It would just be a line to extend the spring inshore season when the data indicates that we can

Andrew Blanchard stated that one of the problems the industry has is they need more fishing time. This proposal is the perfect opportunity to give the industry more fishing time when the product is available to catch in between the brown and the white shrimp season.

Lance Nacio stated that in his area it would be beneficial to keep the season open longer. Some recommendations that were made a while back that may be beneficial revisiting was to create some sanctuary areas that do not produce anything other than 100ct white shrimp. There are other issues that need to be discussed that do not just include keeping the spring season open longer. Better management of the resource would make everyone more profitable, It would bring up the landings and landings is something this industry has been lacking in for the last couple of years. Is it the fact that we are opening seasons early, keeping them open too long? What is affecting landings and causing them to go down? Look into doing things that are going to help being those landings go up

George Barisich stated that as long as we have the ability to extend an area he thinks it’s a good thing

Alan Gibson stated that one thing not mentioned enough is habitat loss, believes that this issue needs to be addressed more. A tremendous amount of money is spent studying the barrier islands but not building them. Levees are being built north to protect the people that live here and the businesses, and as this continues we are losing the estuary inside. Really need to start addressing the functionality of the levees and what they are going to do. We also need to pay attention to these other issues like the loss of habitat, the same product is not going to be produced in an open lake as what was produced in a marshy environment

Alan Gibson asked Peyton to keep the task force updated as this proposal progresses

1. The task force discussed the possibility of shrimp certification paperwork being mailed out with license renewals

In 2011 legislation was passed that said in order to be a certified a fishermen you would have to have 50% or greater of your income come from commercial fishing, would like to add an exemption in through legislation that says that if you have tax exemption number you would not have to do the certification. Also, since certification is required every year, maybe when LDWF sends license renewals out in the mail, the certification paperwork can be included and this can be done at the same time

Cole Garrett stated that the commercial fishermen program was put in to benefit the commercial fishermen, it helps to distribute disaster funding and identify those people who are “fulltime” fishermen. Stated that he would speak with licensing staff to see what can be done as far as certification notifications being simultaneously sent out with license renewals. Also will inquire about putting a certification mark on licenses based on receiving the Department of Revenue’s information

Jason Froeba stated that when a fishermen goes to the Department of Revenue and applies for a tax exemption, they transfer that information to LDWF. So if you have a commercial fishing license with LDWF and you are on the Department of Revenue’s list for tax exemption, you are certified in the LDWF system. That was the original certification and that was in place before this form that LDWF has now was even developed, so that never went away

1. The board discussed and considered funding for a STF Trip to D.C. to attend US Trade Commission Hearing Re: U.S. Imports and Economic Impact ono U.S. Commercial Fisheries

Acy Cooper stated that the meeting is set for September 3 and may be over webinar. If the meeting ends up being held over webinar the task force will not need to attend but can participate over the web. The main thing is to see how many task force members would like to attend if it Is in person and if they would like to testify- will need name, phone number and information submitted ahead of time as there is a cut-off date. Anyone who would like to go or participate should reach out to Acy Cooper.

Jack Isaacs stated that the main focus of this meeting is IUU fishing- illegal, unreported and unregulated. Plans to share an article with the task force on this and if anyone from the task force plans to testify he is happy to help

1. Brian Marie provided the task force with an update on shrimp task force enforcement drones

Have been conducting test flights in Lake Borgne area, 10 more officers were supposed to be trained right now to be pilots but the training has been postponed due to Covid. So as of right now there are 10 trained pilots. As of now have not made a closed season case with a drone. Testing to see the capabilities for other violations. If you have a report or complaint for enforcement please call- 1800-442-2511

1. The task force discussed submitting Comment for the Economic Impact Statement for the Mid-Breton Sediment Diversion

Acy Cooper stated that comment period will end on August 16 and that he would recommend that the task force submit comment in opposition to the Mid-Breton Sediment Diversion

Acy Cooper motioned to submit comment on behalf of the Louisiana Shrimp Task Force regarding the EIS for the proposed Mid-Breton Sediment Diversion, 2nd by George Barisich. Motion carries.

Brian Lezina stated that comments are accepted through August 16 to the Corps, also include any items that the task force would like to see addressed as well

**VI.** Public Comment

Peyton Cagle stated the Shrimp Bycatch Study observer trips have been completed, last week we got the data from the contractor so now we begin the process for the next couple of weeks/ months of analyzing the data and putting together reports for fishery improvement projects. In looking at your budget you guys have dedicated $30,000 towards the study for payment to the fishermen and reporting and basically anything that needed to get done. There is still about $8-$9,000 of that dedicated funding to still be pulled from the STF account

Thomas Hymel from Sea Grant provided a presentation on Louisiana Direct Seafood, money came down for Covid relief, anyone in the state can participate in the program- selling whole sale seafood product, direct marketing for fishermen. For more information, visit <https://louisianadirectseafood.com/>

**VII.** Next meeting set for Wednesday, ~~November 4, 2020~~ December 9, 2020 for 10am at the St. Bernard Port Harbor and Terminal Building, located at 100 Port Blvd., Chalmette, LA 70043

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