

Sport Fishing and Boating Partnership Council
October 28-29, 2013
New Orleans, Louisiana
Meeting Minutes

Location: Omni Royal Orleans, 621 St. Louis Street, New Orleans, LA

Welcome and Introductions- Council chair Thom Dammrich and Designated Federal Officer Doug Hobbs called the meeting to order. Rachel Jacobsen, Acting Assistant Secretary for Fish, Wildlife and Parks and Garret graves, Chair of the Coastal Protection and Restoration Authority of Louisiana gave welcoming remarks on behalf of the Secretary of Interior and also Governor Bobby Jindal of Louisiana.

State and Federal Natural Resources in New Orleans and Surrounding Areas- Randy Pausina, Assistant Secretary, Office of Fisheries, Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries and Kenneth Litzenberger, Bayou Sauvage National Wildlife Refuge Manager, gave opening presentations on the diverse fish and wildlife natural resources within the New Orleans and adjacent areas. The presentations were well received and attendees were impressed with the diversity of resources available within the immediate area.

RESTORE Act Update and National Ocean Policy Implementation- Rachel Jacobsen, Acting Assistant Secretary for Fish, Wildlife and Parks and Garret graves, Chair of the Coastal Protection and Restoration Authority of Louisiana and others speakers gave updates on the RESTORE Act and National Ocean Policy. The presentations resulted in effective discussions between presenters and attendees. The Council is keenly interested in these issues because of the ramifications to area recreational anglers.

Department of Interior Idle Iron Policy and Rigs to Reef Program Update- Department of Interior and state agency representatives gave an update to the Council on the Department's idle iron policy as a follow up to a previous Council meeting focused on this topic. Speakers presented the current status of the Department's actions and policy implementation changes that resulted from the Council's focused meeting on this issue previously in Corpus Christi, Texas. Council members were appreciative of the update and also of the Department's actions on this issue that is critically important to providing off-shore habitat for anglers and also providing an economically and environmentally feasible option for oil rigs in the Gulf of Mexico.

Assessment of the National Outreach and Communication Program- Council vice chair Scott Kovarovics lead a discussion on the Council's efforts with assessing the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's National Outreach and Communication Program. The Council has begun its initial activities of this assessment that is expected to be completed in the summer of 2014. The program received approximately \$12 million annually from the Sport Fish and Boating Restoration Trust Fund. The current assessment will be the third time the Council has completed of this high visibility program.

Update on U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Fish and Aquatic Conservation Program Activities- David Hoskins, Assistant Director- Fish and Aquatic Conservation Program, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, gave updates on several activities of the Service's program. Mr. Hoskins answered a wide range of questions regarding the Service's national fish hatchery program and a progress report on the Program's development of a new strategic plan.

Update on Reauthorization of the Sport Fish Restoration and Boating Trust Fund- Ron Regan, Executive Director, Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies, gave an update on the reauthorization of the Sport Fish Restoration and Boating Trust Fund. This trust fund is critical to the nation's aquatic conservation and recreation programs and is the primary source of federal funding for several important grant programs. A prolonged reauthorization process is anticipated due to on-going activities with Congress and the Highway Bill reauthorization.

Action Items: Several action items resulted from the meeting including:

- 1) Council monitoring and advice on National Oceans Policy- The Council will continue to monitor the National Ocean Policy and seek ways to effectively represent America's boaters and anglers throughout on-going policy discussions of federal agencies and stakeholders involved in this program.
- 2) Rigs to Reefs- The Council requested to remain updated and involved in the Department of Interior's policy processes associated with the Rigs to Reefs efforts as they relate to recreational angling.
- 3) National Wildlife Refuge Vision Implementation- The Council lauds the efforts of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's National Wildlife Refuge System and their willingness to include the Council in the strategic visioning process and strategic plan implementation efforts. The Council requested to participate in work teams and other efforts of these on-going implementation activities.
- 4) National Outreach and Communication Program Assessment- The Council will continue on and expand its current assessment efforts of the National Outreach and Communications Program. The Council expects the assessment, which is being completed by the Council's Outreach and Communications Committee, to be completed in the summer of 2014.