

**DRAFT Joint Law Enforcement Committee (LEC)/Law Enforcement Technical Committee
(LETC) Meeting Summary**

Wednesday, March 15, 2023
9:00 am – 3:00 pm EDT

**CLOSED SESSION
9:00 a.m. – 9:45 a.m.**

The meeting summary for the closed session is confidential and a copy will be maintained by the Council.

**GENERAL SESSION
10:00 a.m. – 3:00 p.m.**

Members in Attendance:

Leslie Casterline, TPWD, Austin, TX (Vice-Chair)
Manny Antonaras, NOAA, OLE, St. Petersburg, FL
Dean Aucoin, II, LDWF, Baton Rouge, LA
Patrick Carron, MDMR, Biloxi, MS
Jason Downey, ADCNR/AMRD, Dauphin Island, AL
John O'Malley, NOAA, OLE, St. Petersburg, FL
Duane Smith, NOAA, OGC, St. Petersburg, FL

Staff and Others:

Joe Spraggins, Gulf Council representative, MDMR, Biloxi, MS
Ava Lasseter, GMFMC
Steve VanderKooy, GSMFC
Bernie Roy, GMFMC
Carmen Rickel – TPWD
Joseph Hudson – Public

The meeting was called to order at 10:10 a.m. by Vice-Chairman **Casterline**. The agenda was adopted on motion by **Carron** and second by **Aucoin**. The minutes of the joint LEC/LETC meeting from October 2022 were approved as written on motion by **Aucoin** and second by **Carron**.

Gulf Council LETC Items

SEFHIER Program Update

The SEFHIER program has been struck down by a federal court and all enforcement of its provisions has been suspended. As noted earlier, status of funding is still to be determined, but no further expenditures should be made for this program.

Potential Changes to Reef Fish Harvest Restrictions

Lasseter reviewed recent and current Council actions related to harvest restrictions. **Lasseter** noted that she could continue the Council meeting email updates if the members find them useful, but that communication of Council actions to law enforcement appears to have improved.

The Council took final action in January 2023 to increase the **commercial trip limit for gray triggerfish** from 16 to 25 fish per trip. The action is expected to be implemented later this year. The Council is expected to take final action on two documents that would affect the harvest restrictions for greater amberjack and gag. For the **commercial trip limit of greater amberjack**, LETC members noted that estimating weights at sea is difficult and counting fish is simpler.

By consensus, the LETC feels that trip limits set in numbers of fish are more enforceable than a maximum weight.

In discussing the **recreational fishing season for gag**, a member wanted to remind the Council that in-season closures are more difficult for officers than fixed closed seasons.

Council SOPPs regarding fishing violations (update)

Lasseter informed the group that the Council had approved its recommendations to revise the SOPPs regarding the types of penalties to be reported as fishing violations for advisory panel applicants.

GSMFC LEC Items

Mangrove Snapper Profile Preparations

VanderKooy reminded the group that **Downey** is the enforcement representative for the management profile, and he will be contacting the group to complete the history of management across states.

Commission Publications

VanderKooy will ask the state members for their rules and regulations for inclusion in the *Law*

Summary (AKA the Red Book) for 2022 around the first of April. **VanderKooy** stated that Commission staff will be working on the annual *License and Fees* publication for 2022 beginning in May and it will be completed by the October meeting. Both the *License and Fees* and the *Law Summary* publications serve as historical references and a way to track license sales and regulatory changes over time. All Commission publications are available on the Commission website.

State Report Highlights

A motion to accept the reports as written was made by **Aucoin** on second by **Carron**. Written reports are available upon request from the Commission office.

Other Business

VanderKooy informed the group that the next meeting would be in-person in October at a location in Louisiana to be determined. The meeting adjourned at 10:50 a.m. on motion by **Carron** with second by **Aucoin**.