

Joint LEC/LETC Virtual Meeting
October 12, 2021
Minutes
GENERAL SESSION
8:30 a.m. – 2:30 p.m. CST

Present at the virtual webinar:

Members

Jason Downey, ADCNR/AMRD, Dauphin Island, AL (*Vice-Chair*)
Duane Smith, NOAA, GCES, St. Petersburg, FL
Scott Pearce, FWC, Tallahassee, FL
Eddie Skena, LDWF, Baton Rouge, LA
Les Casterline, TPWD, Austin, TX
Lisa Motoj, USCG, New Orleans, LA
John O'Malley, NOAA OLE, St. Petersburg, FL (*proxy for Manny Antonaras and Joe Scarpa*)

Staff

Ava Lasseter, GMFMC, Tampa, FL
Carly Somerset, GMFMC, Tampa, FL
Dave Donaldson, GSMFC, Ocean Springs, MS
Steve VanderKooy, GSMFC, Ocean Springs, MS
Debbie McIntyre, GSMFC, Ocean Springs, MS
Donna Bellais, GSMFC, Ocean Springs, MS

Others

Dale Diaz, GMFMC Representative, Biloxi, MS
Jessica Stephen, NOAA/SERO, St. Petersburg, FL
Scott Bannon, ADCNR/AMRD, Dauphin Island, AL
Rich Malinowski, NOAA/SERO, St. Petersburg, FL
Michelle Masi, NOAA/SERO, St. Petersburg, FL
Michael Travis, NOAA/SERO, St. Petersburg, FL

The meeting was called to order at 8:30 a.m. by Vice-Chair, **Downey**.

The agenda was adopted on motion by **Skena** and second by **Casterline**. The summary of the LEC/LETC joint virtual meeting on March 9, 2021, was approved as written on motion by **Pearce** and second by **Skena**. **Donaldson** welcomed everyone and thanked them for their participation.

Election of Joint Committee Chair and Vice-Chair

Skena nominated **Pearce** for Chairman. On second by **Downey**, the motion passed unanimously. **Pearce** nominated **Casterline** as Vice-Chair with a second by **Skena**. The motion passed unanimously.

GMFMC LETC Session

Update on Changes to Electronic Reporting for Federally Permitted Vessels

Stephen provided an overview of electronic reporting programs in the Gulf of Mexico and an update on the timeline for implementing the SEFHIER program for for-hire vessels. For the trip declaration and reporting components that became effective January 1, 2021, LETC members discussed compliance issues, noting that warnings have been given and ignored. NOAA OLE added that they will begin moving from compliance assistance toward citations.

Somerset reviewed the Modification to Location Reporting Requirements for For-Hire and Commercial Vessels Framework Action. LETC members discussed the differences between the commercial and for-hire sectors' trips and the goals for each sector's electronic reporting. By consensus, the LETC made the following recommendations to the Council, recognizing that the commercial fleet has more flexibility in scheduling a trip and that they have been using VMS for many years with a very low rate of failure.

The LETC supports an exemption for unexpected equipment failure for the for-hire fleet (Action 1).

The LETC supports a requirement that the permit holder provide documentation to support the failure and subsequent repair following provisional approval of the exemption.

The LETC does not support providing an exemption for unexpected equipment failure for the commercial fleet (Action 2).

Changes to Cobia Management (Amendment 32)

Lasseter reviewed the actions in Amendment 32 including the preferred alternatives for reducing the possession limit and adopting vessel limits for the recreational and commercial sectors. The LETC did not provide any comments or recommendations.

Discussion on Heads and Fins Intact Regulation

This item was included on the agenda to provide the LETC with the opportunity to discuss the federal regulation that fish be landed with heads and fins intact. Some states allow fish to be filleted before reaching the dock, provided the fish were caught in state waters. The state

agency and NOAA OLE held discussions before this meeting and further discussion was not necessary.

Nomination Process for 2021 Officer/Team of the Year Award

Lasseter reminded the LETC that the initial call for nominations for the 2021 Officer/Team of the Year Award will be sent in December. LETC members agreed that the process went well last year and no changes were needed.

GSMFC LEC Session

General Discussion of the Future of the Strategic and Operations Plans

VanderKooy stated that historically the Strategic and Operations Plans were tools used by the LEC to plan what they wanted to accomplish in the future, possibly get support or funding for certain goals and initiatives that were often regional and cooperative in nature. **VanderKooy** explained that these documents were very instrumental years ago, with reference to JEAs and other projects. However, the utility of these documents may have changed over time. After an in-depth discussion, it was decided that each state rep will go through the plans and determine if these publications are useful in their current formats, could be useful in a different format, or if they are no longer needed. The LETC and LEC will address the future of these plans at the March meeting.

IJF Program Activities

Red Drum Profile Status

VanderKooy reported that the Red Drum Technical Task Force (TTF) met virtually in August due to a tropical storm and the increasing Delta variant causing us to cancel an in-person meeting in Panama City, Florida. The TTF plans to try again to meet in-person in Gulf Shores, Alabama in December. Quite a bit of the profile is written but this meeting will help finalize a number of sections. **Pearce** is the enforcement rep on the TTF and is coordinating the assignments with the LEC. **VanderKooy** noted that he has included more information in this profile on JEAs than previous since Red Drum is a Federal species. He and **Casterline** discussed the inclusion of IUU fishing for Red Drum in Texas which is fairly significant. **Casterline** pointed out that while the IUU funding does cover ports of entry, it doesn't include at-sea enforcement but the JEAs help. The other issue is that Red Drum is not included on the list of species under the IUU program at this time. **VanderKooy** asked about any IUU activities in other states and as expected, there really were not any.

The pandemic has impeded the progress of forming the new Mangrove Snapper TTF but work should begin in 2022. **Downey** will be enforcement rep on that TTF.

IJF Publications

VanderKooy stated that the annual *License and Fees* publication for 2020 was completed and copies were mailed out last month to the LEC and the Commissioners and Proxies. **McIntyre** will ask state LEC members for their rules and regs for inclusion in the *Law Summary* (AKA the Red Book) for 2021 in March of 2022. Both the *License and Fees* and the *Law Summary* pubs serve as historical references and a way to track license sales and regulatory changes over time. **VanderKooy** explained that this document should include each state or agency's information that applies to the majority of the year 2021 despite most states having different fiscal vs calendar years. All Commission publications are available on the Commission website.

State-Federal Report Highlights

Written reports were provided by most of the individual states/agencies in advance and are available upon request from the Commission office. **Skena** made a motion to accept reports with a second by **Downey**.

Having no further business to discuss, on motion by **Skena** and second by **Casterline**, the meeting adjourned at 11:45 a.m.

Written state reports are requested in advance and only highlights are presented for time purposes during state reporting item.