

## Upstate on the fisheries Washington DC Trip July 15-18, 2019

### Attendees on the Washington trip were:

Shrimp Task Force (STF) Members- Acy Cooper LSA, George Barisich LSA, Craig Authement Dock Owner, Andy Gibson ASPA and Andrew Blanchard ASPA.

Marla Cooper- Secretary LSA

Eddy Hayes- Attorney ASPA

Patrick Banks- Assistant Secretary LDWLF

Kirk Lepine- Plaquemines Parish President

John Helmers- Plaquemines Parish Coastal Director

Ryan Bradley- MSCFU (Mississippi) joined the group on Wednesday July 17<sup>th</sup>

Offices visited: Senator John Kennedy Louisiana, Senator Richard Shelby Alabama, Senator Doug Jones Alabama, Senator Cindy Hyde-Smith Mississippi, Congressman Steve Palazzo Mississippi, Senator Roger Wicker Mississippi, Senator Bill Cassidy Louisiana, Congressman Clay Higgins Louisiana, Congressman Garrett Graves Louisiana, Minority Whip Steve Scalise Louisiana and the Office of NOAA/White House Council on Environmental Quality

### Discussions:

1. The importance of The Department of Commerce declaring a fisheries disaster so that immediate aide could possibly go to **commercial fishermen and related business** as grants and not SBA loans. Fishermen area barely making it today and cannot afford another loan note. The structure of distributions was discussed to make sure that financial aid goes to commercial fishermen first and not every agency that has their hand out. This will be worked on if and when a disaster is declared by Commerce. The state WLF has to show a 35% decrease or lower in catches to prove a disaster. It has already done so with data provide from January to May of this year. The data from June and July isn't in yet but is expected to show a greater loss. I have attached the data that was presented in each meeting by Patrick Banks and was also submitted to The Department of Commerce. They are well aware that ALL fisheries; finfish, shrimp, oysters and crab are showing a great loss. \$150 million was already appropriated for fisheries disasters we just wait now for The Department of Commerce's decision (This is Preliminary Data and is subject to change). The river has been maintaining its highest levels for over 280 days and fishermen need help now!
2. A similar federal program for our fisheries like the AG has for the farmers, (Farmer Bill) that would be in place and provide immediate aid to the fisheries during a disaster. We suggested that tariff money that they are collecting and now going into the General Fund could be used to fund this. Our DC delegation and their aids are looking into this. It was suggested that the federal government subsidizes our harvesters for their products just as they do farmers for their products. This was taken into consideration for discussion and research.

3. Imported Shrimp- The banned antibiotics and how importers “port shop” after the US refuses shipments and send them back in through a different country since our country only inspects 1%. It was explained how other countries destroy tainted seafood instead of sending it back. Also discussed was asking the president to put a cap on imports. More and more are coming into our country, even more than is being consumed is coming in and being put in cold storage. As we all know, we cannot compete with this. Mr. Hayes stated in meetings that our government was possibly going to do a **“Section 301”** on imports from India. We asked in every meeting to please urge the president to include shrimp in this if it is done.

**Section 301 of the Trade Act of 1974-Section 301** of the U.S. [Trade Act of 1974](#) (last edition March 23, 2018<sup>[1]</sup>), ([Pub.L. 93–618, 19 U.S.C. § 2411](#)) authorizes the President to take all appropriate action, including retaliation, to obtain the removal of any act, policy, or practice of a foreign government that violates an international trade agreement or is unjustified, unreasonable, or discriminatory, and that burdens or restricts U.S. commerce. Section 301 cases can be self-initiated by the [United States Trade Representative](#) (USTR) or as the result of a petition filed by a firm or industry group. If USTR initiates a Section 301 investigation, it must seek to negotiate a [settlement](#) with the foreign country in the form of compensation or elimination of the trade barrier. For cases involving trade agreements, the USTR is required to request formal dispute proceedings as provided by the trade agreements.<sup>[2]</sup> The law does not require that the U.S. government wait until it receives authorization from the [World Trade Organization](#) (WTO) to take enforcement actions, and the President is increasingly focused on enforcing [intellectual property](#) (IP) rights (under Agreements that may be outside of the WTO) under the **“Special” 301 amendments**<sup>[3]</sup> but the U.S. has committed itself to pursuing the resolution of disputes under WTO agreements through the WTO dispute settlement mechanism, which has its own timetable.<sup>[4]</sup>

4. Fresh water intrusion on the entire Louisiana coast into our estuaries, diversions, opening of spillways and the Corp of Engineers. It was highly discussed about the present and future conditions of fresh water intrusion into the entire coastline of our state and this being from not only the Bonne Carre Spillway but also from the Atchafalaya River and surrounding areas spilling into our estuaries. They seem to be aware of this being an entire state issue. They are getting all the reports of no seafood being caught and dead fish surfacing from fresh water lesions. We stressed the importance of using sediment for coastal restoration and to build barrier islands and that what is happening now is only a little bit of what diversions will cause. We stated that we are losing fishermen every year from hardships caused by disaster after disaster and now state and federal projects and regulations will finish our industry off and how this will affect whole communities and entire states. We also discussed and explained how the Corps is dredging only one pass at the mouth of the river and dumping the sediment into the other passes and stopping them up. This is not letting a natural river flow. All river passes need to be dredged to an acceptable depth so that in Spring water coming down the Mississippi River would have more outlets to flow through and possible not backup into our estuaries causing so much destruction to the fisheries. Commerce on the Mississippi River during all this was also discussed. The river was closed due to the high level for 18 hrs. and caused 130 vessels to anchor and wait. This stopped commerce in our state. The Corp of Engineers needs to reassess their decisions on needless dumping of sediment and laws need to be changed so that they can dump this sediment in areas to restore our entire coast.

The meetings all went very well. Everyone working together such as members of the Shrimp Task Force, harvesters, buyers and processors made a great impact on each office. Having the Assistant Secretary of the LDWLF and a government official such as President Lepine, sharing and agreeing with our discussions and suggestions on issues helped also. All offices were on the same page with us asking for immediate financial aid due to fresh water intrusion into our estuaries in our entire state and all other issues discussed and how important they are to our industry.

Each of the Senator's and Congressmen's office has aids that work on different issues. Their aids that work with the fisheries and Corps issues attended all meetings.

We met with Senator Cassidy and his aids and the Congressman stated "You all have been knocking and knocking on doors and you all are now being heard!"

We met with Congressman Scalise and his aids and he was very supportive of our issues and discussions. His aid that works with the Corp was very interested on the sediment issues and discussions on this and will we will follow up with each other on this.

All other meetings were with the Senators and Congressmen's aids and assistants but they will report back to their "Bosses" on all discussions and issues. They all assured us they are presently working on all issues discussed.

Congressman Graves invited all Louisiana visitors (and Ryan Bradley and his two sons) to his office that week to a special night tour of the Capitol by the Congressman himself. This proved to be very successful because we had the opportunity to discuss one on one with him the issues at hand. He was very supportive to us and has been working on issues at hand.

**The meeting with NOAA/White House Council on Environmental Quality was a very important meeting.** Members of the STF, Marla Cooper LSA and Eddie Hayes ASPA, attended this meeting. In this meeting we met with Brandon Elsner who is on special assignment (**He was sent to meet with us from the White House**) and Melanie (I didn't catch her last name but will get it on follow up correspondence). It was stated by Brandon that the President's Office of Management and Budget does not like to pay money straight to citizens. NOAA will most likely have to come up with some sort of spend plan and have another agency issue disaster monies. Their office would have to put together a revenue formula so that true loss could be assessed and would most likely be done through their office and NOAA. Discussion also included some sort of Seafood Crop Insurance, Subsidies and a young fishermen's program due to the fact that most fishermen and docks as well as processors are in the mid 50 year old range and not many of the younger generation are becoming involved or just cannot make it in the fisheries today and that the Seafood Deficit must be reduced in Commerce. We stated that we must come up with programs and incentives to keep our industry working and younger people involved. **It was stated that our fisheries are being discussed in the white house and that we are getting recognition there.** We brought up the fact that representatives of other American Industries are being mentioned and are meeting with the President and ours is being left out. We were assured that our messages and issues will get back to the president and his staff. We will follow up on this.

**Many important issues were discussed on this trip.** I cannot even touch on all that as discussed. You all can rest assured that every aspect and every issue of this industry and all fishery issue as well as community issues we are all facing, was brought to Washington DC last week. All from Louisiana that were in attendance had their say on everything. We feel we were successful and did make an impact. We will give you all updates when follow-up correspondence or any decisions by Commerce is made.

I will put this info in an email to members and a postal mail letter to members and put some on the LSA website. My notes might seem repetitive but all issues were discussed in all offices and I am reporting back to you all from notes I took.

If you all have any questions you can reply to this email or call Acy, George or myself. Hopefully I didn't leave any topics of discussion out. But if I did please email reply to this email and I will answer you as soon as I can.

Thanks!

*Marla*