

ALLIGATOR ADVISORY COUNCIL

2022-2023

ANNUAL REPORT



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INTRODUCTION

Louisiana leads the United States in the production of alligator skins. After rebuilding the population through research, management and law enforcement during the 1960's, the wild harvest from 1972 through 2022 has produced 1,158,197 wild skins. In 2022, the alligator industry, including the wild harvest, egg collection, and farm raised alligators, has generated approximately \$79 million in economic benefit to the state of Louisiana.

The wild harvest has averaged approximately 19,275 skins annually, worth over \$4.3 million dockside including meat during the past 5 years. The 2022 wild harvest of approximately 23,000 alligators was valued at over 5.5 million, which includes the value of the alligator meat. In calendar year 2022, farmers sold 309,984 skins, which averaged 28.56 cm belly width and were valued at over \$64 million, including the value of the alligator meat. Since 1986, the Louisiana alligator ranching program has collected over 12.5 million eggs and returned just over 1.3 million healthy alligators back to the wild.



WASHINGTON D.C. EDUCATION

The Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries (LDWF) contracted with Glenn Delaney to stay abreast of any federal administrative or legislative activities that might be of interest to LDWF, the Fur Advisory Council, or the Alligator Advisory Council.

Mr. Delaney maintained his dialogue with key Members of Congress, Committees, and their staff to educate them on issues important to Louisiana's sustainable use wildlife programs including a broad range of funding and policy legislation under consideration in the 118th Congress.

He continued to monitor and provide analyses of legislation advanced by animal rights groups on Capitol Hill so that they could be addressed in a timely and effective manner.

He also focused on new bills introduced in the House and Senate to amend the Lacey Act, similar to legislation included in the "America COMPETES Act" in the 117th Congress, that have the potential to prohibit interstate commerce and imports of certain species if determined by the Department of Interior to be "injurious." This included reptiles and their offspring and eggs.

With letters of support from the AAC, he also continued to successfully pursue the LA Congressional Delegation for the funding of research on infectious diseases affecting Louisiana's alligator farms in both the FY 23

and FY 24 appropriations cycles. The FY23 Omnibus Appropriations Conference Report included the funding requested by Mr. Delaney and championed by Senator Bill Cassidy (R-LA) through which USDA APHIS has now provided \$500,000 for this research. Dr. Javier Navarez at the LSU School of Veterinary Medicine reports that this APHIS funding will support the following research priorities of the Department and Alligator Advisory Council:

- Determine West Nile virus and Chlamydia antibody status of alligator hatchlings
- Screening of alligators for Chlamydia in order to accomplish the following:
 - Sequence and attempt to speciate the chlamydial DNA positive amplicons
 - Use the data to develop and validate PCR-based screening assays specifically for the Chlamydia affecting alligators
 - Compare in situ hybridization to PCR-based testing of frozen tissues and deparaffinized tissues for documentation of chlamydial nucleic acid
 - Full genome sequence the chlamydial organism

For the FY23 appropriations cycle, Mr. Delaney's efforts have resulted in the inclusion of another \$500,000 in APHIS funding for this research in both the House and Senate Agriculture Appropriations Committee Reports. This time, Senator Cassidy's efforts were supported by Senator John Kennedy (R-LA), and they were joined by Congress-

man Garret Graves (R-LA) and Congresswoman Julia Letlow in the House in securing these provisions which will not likely be enacted into law until the end of calendar year 2023.

Mr. Delaney worked closely with LDWF administration and program managers to address pertinent federal administrative and legislative issues. The funding for the contract was split equally between the Fur Advisory Council and the Alligator Advisory Council's budgets.



ALLIGATOR MARKETING & TECHNICAL REPRESENTATION

The Alligator Advisory Council, in partnership with LDWF, engaged Christy Plott of Monarch Marketing for expert representation at global meetings focused on alligator and crocodile management, rules, enforcement, and trade. Additionally, her role involved promoting Louisiana alligator hides. Ms. Plott fostered collaborations with institutions like the Crocodile Specialist Group (CSG), International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN), Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES), and other conservation bodies. She also holds a position on the Board of Directors with the International Crocodilian Farmers Association.

Ms. Plott attended two major international meetings on behalf of the Louisiana Alligator Advisory Council including the 26th CSG-IUCN Working Group Meeting in Chetumal, Mexico from July 2-9, 2022 as well as the 19th CITES Conference of the Par-

ties in Panama City, Panama for two weeks in November of 2022. These two major international meetings hosted over 150 nations and 3,500 delegates. Key discussions spanned the world trade in wildlife, human-wildlife conflict, livelihoods and rural communities, zoonotic diseases, and curbing the illegal wildlife trade.

In March of 2023, Ms. Plott shared her insights and the story of the Louisiana alligator at the 50th Anniversary of CITES and the United Nations World Wildlife Day alongside U.S. Fish and Wildlife, Secretary of the U.S. Department of Interior, Deb Haaland, as well as the Secretary General of CITES, Ms. Ivonne Higuero. The event was held at the prestigious National Geographic Theatre in Washington, DC. She addressed the successful conservation story of the Louisiana alligator and how sustainable trade in leather and meat has played a role in the recovery of the American alligator.

Monarch Marketing traveled to numerous international and domestic tradeshows to promote Louisiana alligator to the luxury fashion world, emphasizing the positive impacts of using exotic leather in terms of community benefits, habitat and species conservation, and climate change mitigation through wetland rejuvenation. Ms. Plott exhibited at prominent fashion platforms such as Lineapelle in Milan, the Boot and Saddle Makers Show in Wichita Falls, Texas, as well as the Western and English Saddle Show in Dallas Texas.

Louisiana alligator leather has been showcased across diverse media platforms, from podcasts and YouTube sessions to online and print articles, all championing sustainable practices and Louisiana's stewardship of the American alligator.





INTERNATIONAL ALLIGATOR & CROCODILE TRADE STUDIES

The Alligator Advisory Council and LDWF contracted with the World Conservation and Monitoring Center to develop the International Alligator and Crocodile Trade Studies report. This report has been funded since 1988 to monitor world trade in all crocodylians and to increase accountability of sustainable management practices.

EDUCATION & OUTREACH

LDWF/AAC staff attends many outreach events with live hatching alligators, alligator skins and skulls and talks to the public about the alligator success story. Staff participated in several large educational events such as the Louisiana Envirothon targeting high school students, LSU Ocean Commotion and 4-H events targeting elementary and middle school children. Staff presented at numerous schools and libraries state-wide and at numerous wildlife celebration days state-wide. The Council provided biological facts and educational support to other LDWF staff who presented at schools and at other outreach events.

The Council and LDWF also partnered with a number of educational and outreach organizations such as the Audubon Zoo and Wetland Watchers to reach a broader audience. LDWF provided an alligator purse to Mia Stewart, Miss Alligator Festival queen for 2022-2023. She has attended Louisiana fairs, festivals, parades and balls representing the Alligator Festival and promoting the sustainable use of alligator.



2022-2023 EXPENDITURES

The Alligator Advisory Council operates within the Department of Wildlife and Fisheries and is responsible for reviewing and approving recommended marketing, research, and educational programs to be funded from the Louisiana Alligator Resource Fund to ensure that any monies from the funds are expended for the specific goals of the council.



ALLIGATOR RESOURCE FUNDS	
Budgeted	\$500,000
Salaries	\$43,788.21
Related Benefits	\$21,609.54
Operating Expenses	\$315.85
Supplies	\$16.43
Professional Services	\$296,499.50
Interagency Transfer	\$120
Alligator Resource Funds Expended	\$362,350
Remaining Balance	\$137,650

LOUISIANA ALLIGATOR ADVISORY COUNCIL MEMBERS

AAC MEMBERS LANDOWNER REPRESENTATIVES

Tom Benge - Eastern Coastal Zone
206 Decatur Street, New Orleans, LA 70130
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Term: July 1, 2019 - June 30, 2025

Tim Allen - Central Coastal Zone
P.O. Box 206, Houma, LA, 70361
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Term: July 21, 2021 - July 20, 2027

Rudy Sparks - Western Coastal Zone
P.O. Box 460, Patterson, LA 70392
rsparks@cox-internet.com
Term: July 1, 2023 - June 30, 2029

ALLIGATOR HUNTER REPRESENTATIVES

Tony Howard - North of US Hwy 90 Representative
170 Thomas Street, Sarepta, LA 71071
mahoward@centurytel.net
Term: July 1, 2019 - June 30, 2025

Ryan Smith - Southeast Representative
985.397.3936 | Stmarywildlifesolutions@gmail.com
Term: July 22, 2021 - July 21, 2027

ALLIGATOR FARMER REPRESENTATIVES

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