

GULF OF MEXICO REGIONAL PANEL ON AQUATIC INVASIVE SPECIES MINUTES

Monday and Tuesday, October 20-21, 2003

New Orleans, Louisiana

CALL TO ORDER

Ron Lukens called the meeting to order at 1:00 pm and began the meeting with introductions of the Panel members and guests. The following were in attendance:

Attendees

Phil Bass, Mississippi DEQ, Jackson, MS
Earl Chilton, TPWD, Austin, TX
Alfred F. Cofrancesco, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Vicksburg, MS
Vincent F. Cottone, Chevron/Texaco, New Orleans, LA
Dale Diaz, MDMR, Biloxi, MS
Pam Fuller, USGS, Gainesville, FL
Leslie Hartman, AL Marine Resources Division, Dauphin Island, AL
Thomas L. Herrington, FDA/GOMP, Stennis Space Center, MS
William D. Holland, Stennis Space Center, MS
Jan Hoover, USACE, Vicksburg, MS
Jim Kruse, Texas Sea Grant Program, Houston, TX
Herb Kumpf, At-Large Member, Panama City, FL
Jim Long, National Park Service, Atlanta, GA
Mark McElroy, LDWF, Baton Rouge, LA
Roberto Mendoza, UANL, Mexico
John E. Meyers, U.S. Coast Guard, New Orleans, LA
Marilyn O'Leary, Louisiana Sea Grant Program, Baton Rouge, LA
Richard Orr, NISC, Washington, DC
Harriet Perry, CFRD/GCRL/USM, Ocean Springs, MS
Cynthia Sarthou, Gulf Restoration Network, New Orleans, LA
Don C. Schmitz, FDEP, Tallahassee, FL
Joe Starinchak, USFWS, Arlington, VA
John Teem, Florida Department of Agriculture/Division of Aquaculture, Tallahassee, FL
W. Jay Troxel, USFWS, Atlanta, GA
David W. Yeager, Mobile Bay National Estuary Program, Mobile, AL

Staff

Ronald R. Lukens, Assistant Director, GSMFC, Ocean Springs, MS
Nancy K. Marcellus, Administrative Assistant, GSMFC, Ocean Springs, MS

At this time Lukens asked if there were any members of the public that wished to address the Panel. There were no requests by the public to speak.

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REVIEW AND ADOPTION OF AGENDA

The following changes to the agenda were presented:

- Joe Starinchak's presentation "National Outreach and Education Program" will be moved to today's 2:00 pm time slot.
- Leslie Hartman's presentation "Mobile Bay Rapid Assessment Project" will be given by Harriet Perry.
- Al Cofrancesco's presentation "U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Report on Armored Catfish" will be given by Jan Hoover at 10:00 am Tuesday.
- At 1:30 pm on Tuesday Earl Chilton's report will include water spinach and a Rio Grand update.

A motion to adopt the agenda with the changes listed above was made by Herb Kumpf. The motion was seconded by Marilyn O'Leary and unanimously adopted.

ADMINISTRATIVE REPORT

2004 Grant Agreement - In September 2002, the Gulf States Marine Fisheries Commission began administration of the Gulf of Mexico Regional Panel on Aquatic Invasive Species (Gulf Regional Panel), under the Aquatic Nuisance Species Task Force, authorized by the Non-Indigenous Aquatic Nuisance Protection and Control Act of 1990. The 2004 Grant Agreement (October 1, 2003 - December 31, 2004) for administration of the Gulf Regional Panel has been submitted and approved. The Gulf Regional Panel is supported by 2 grants since it also receives funding in the amount of \$40-50,000 from the Sport Fish Restoration Program grant.

Mexico Membership - The Panel discussed offering Mexico membership on the Gulf Regional Panel. Chilton also mentioned the possibility of adding a government representative from Mexico to the Panel membership.

Marilyn O'Leary made a motion to invite Roberto Mendoza as a voting member of the Panel representing Mexico. Earl Chilton seconded the motion, and the motion passed.

Regarding the second seat for Mexico, Marilyn suggested that Chilton speak to government representatives and see if they are working on invasive species in the Gulf of Mexico. **A motion was made by Cynthia Sarthou to add the second seat for a government representative from Mexico. Chilton seconded the motion. Without objection it was so ordered.** Lukens is to find out from Sharon Gross if there is a process to follow regarding international participation.

Mississippi DEQ Membership - Since the Governor of Mississippi named DEQ as the lead agency in Mississippi for invasive species, the Panel discussed adding MS DEQ as a voting member of the Panel. **Dale Diaz made the motion and was seconded by Harriet Perry to add MS DEQ as a voting member of the Gulf Regional Panel. The motion carried.**

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Panel Operating Procedures - A copy of the Gulf of Mexico Regional Panel on Aquatic Invasive Species Standard Operating Procedures were distributed to the Panel for adoption. A motion was made by Herb Kumpf and seconded by David Yeager to adopt the Standard Operating Procedures. The motion passed unanimously and the Standard Operating Procedures were adopted.

Vice-chairman Issue - Lukens noted that the Panel vice-chairman, Tom McIlwain, has retired from federal service and will no longer be a member on the Panel. Election of a new vice-chairman will be handled under "Other Business." The term is for 2 years with reconsideration after 2 years.

NATIONAL OUTREACH AND EDUCATION PROGRAM

Joe Starinchak, FWS, Outreach Coordinator for ANS Task Force and FWS National Outreach and Education Program gave a presentation on their national outreach and education program. The purpose of this presentation was to provide an overview of how this issue has been addressed at a national level.

Starinchak reviewed the national campaign "Stop Aquatic Hitchhikers!" The primary sponsors of the campaign are the national Aquatic Nuisance Species (ANS) Task Force, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the U.S. Coast Guard. Campaign sponsors will use a variety of means, such as public service announcements, stickers, posters, magazine and newspaper articles, television and radio programs to make the public aware of this issue. A web site called "Protect Your Waters" (www.protectyourwaters.net) has been developed for recreational users who want to help stop aquatic nuisance species.

Richard Orr of the National Invasive Species Council reported that the Council added 2 new staff positions (his and a secretary), and a 3rd position for education and outreach will be advertised in 2-3 months. He is working with the Council and ISAC to rewrite the National Plan.

Ron distributed the agenda for the ANS Task Force Meeting to be held in Arlington, Virginia on November 4-5, 2003. New plans up for approval include Hawaii, Indiana, and Wisconsin. There is also a proposal for a new Mid-Atlantic Regional Panel (approval by ANSTF).

STATUS OF NISA REAUTHORIZATION

Lukens indicated that the NAISA bills (H.R. 1080, 1081, and S. 525) are stalled, and there is not likely to be any movement in the process until 2004. He stated that private property rights were an issue with some western Congressmen and Senators, and ballast water regulations were still an issue with the shipping industry.

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REVIEW OF SOUTHEAST AQUATIC RESOURCES PARTNERSHIP ANS PLAN

Lukens reviewed the Southeast Aquatic Resources Partnership (SARP) ANS Plan. The SARP Mission Statement states “...With partners, protect, conserve and restore aquatic resources, including habitats, throughout the Southeast for the continuing benefit, use and enjoyment of the American people.” This will be accomplished through coordinated management and advocacy.

SARP issue areas include public use, fishery mitigation, imperiled fish and aquatic species recovery, interjurisdictional fisheries, aquatic habitat conservation, and aquatic nuisance species.

The ANS goal statement is to prevent and control the impact of invasive species. ANS Objectives include:

- prevent new aquatic nuisance species introductions in the Southeast
- eradicate new aquatic invasive species, when possible
- limit the spread of existing aquatic invasive species in the Southeast
- identify needed ongoing actions crucial to achieving the goal
 - monitoring and detection of aquatic invasive species
 - data and information management
 - education and outreach (public and agencies)
 - research and development.

The next steps are to recognize other activities ongoing (Regional Panel and others), implement as much as possible with existing resources, and to seek new funding (IAFWA grant).

WORK GROUP REPORTS

Information Management Work Group - Lukens reported that the work group is working on the web site Non-Native Aquatic Species in the Gulf of Mexico Region. The work group has had one conference call and a meeting at the USGS office in Gainesville, Florida to talk about the web site development. The Panel has ownership of the website. Included on the web site is a Map of the Gulf; What’s New; New Invasions; Gulf of Mexico Regional Panel on Aquatic Invasive Species; What is an invasive species?; Species of the Month; Kid’s Corner; What’s in my state?; Stop Aquatic Hitchhikers; as well as links to other sites. The work group asked the Panel for permission to launch the site and make it available to the public.

O’Leary suggested that before the site is launched, make sure everything is ready. Do not put “under construction” sections on the site. She added that perhaps a Panel button could be added to areas that would only be accessible to the Panel via password.

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Don Schmitz also suggested a public friendly section. Cynthia Sarthou added that the public friendly section could be offered first with a link to more technical sections of website. Lukens concluded that these issues should first be resolved within the work group.

Education and Outreach Work Group - Marilyn O'Leary reported that the membership to the work group has been named. The work group has worked very hard and conducted an informal survey on what is going on in the Gulf region.

The work group is developing a science fair protocol to raise the consciousness of the entire science community. Jim Long and Chuck Jacoby have done the majority of the work on it.

A work group meeting will be held Wednesday at 8:30 am. Topics of discussion include the possibility of developing an identification pamphlet for the regional panel, development of a Kid's Corner, possibility of a regional panel newsletter, discuss the adoption of the logo for aquatic hitchhikers, and language on the website

Research and Development Work Group - Harriet Perry indicated that the first meeting of the work group will be on Wednesday. They have held one conference call. If any Panel members are interested in research and development, the meeting will start at 8:00 am. The primary goal will be to set some research priorities.

Early Detection/Rapid Response Work Group - Lukens reported that no chairman has been named for the work group. The dates of December 11-12 have been discussed for a possible meeting. \$20,000 is available to spend on workshops or whatever is needed to develop a rapid response plan.

The floor was again opened for public comment. No public comment was given.

INVASIVE SPECIES IN MEXICO

Roberto Mendoza from the Universidad Autónoma de Nuevo Leon in Mexico gave a detailed presentation reviewing invasive species in Mexico. Several Panel members expressed an interest in receiving a copy of the presentation. Mendoza said he would give a copy to Lukens for distribution to Panel members.

RISK ASSESSMENTS: A TOOL FOR EVALUATING NON-NATIVE SPECIES

Richard Orr gave the presentation "Introduction to Risk Analysis for Determining the Invasiveness of, and Appropriate Response to, Non-Native Aquatic Species."

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Definitions:

Risk - Is the likelihood and magnitude of an adverse event.

Risk Assessment - The estimation of risk

Risk Management - The pragmatic decision-making process concerned with what to do about the risk.

Risk Analysis - The process that includes both risk assessment and risk management.

The Risk Assessment and Management (RAM) Committee was initiated by, and is under the auspices of, the Aquatic Nuisance Species Task Force. The Task Force was created for the purpose of developing a strategy in which the appropriate government agencies could meet the goals of the Aquatic Nuisance Prevention and Control Act of 1990. The Task Force was "...established to coordinate governmental efforts related to nonindigenous aquatic species in the United States with those of the private sector and other North American interests". The Task Force is co-chaired by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration.

The Generic Nonindigenous Aquatic Organisms Risk Analysis Review Process is the risk process developed through the RAM committee to help meet the requirements of the Aquatic Nuisance Prevention and Control Act. The objective of the Review Process is to provide a standardized process for evaluating the risk of introducing nonindigenous organisms into a new environment and, if needed, determining the correct risk management steps needed to mitigate that risk.

The Review Process provides a framework where scientific, technical, and other relevant information can be organized into a format that is understandable and useful to managers and decision makers. The Review Process was developed to function as an open process with early and continuous input from all identified interested parties. It was designed to be flexible and dynamic enough to accommodate a variety of approaches to nonindigenous organism risk depending on the available resources, accessibility of the biological information, and the risk assessment methods available at the time of the assessment. The Review Process may be used as a purely subjective evaluation or be quantified to the extent possible or necessary depending on the needs of the analysis. The process will accommodate a full range of methodologies from a simple and quick judgmental process to an analysis requiring extensive research and sophisticated technologies.

In addition to numerous projects and other pertinent work, the following quality criteria were used in designing the Review Process:

Comprehensive - the assessment should review the subject in detail and identify sources of uncertainty in data extrapolation and measurement errors. The assessment should evaluate the quality of its own conclusions. The assessment should be flexible to accommodate new information.

Logically Sound - the risk assessment should be up-to-date and rational, reliable, justifiable, unbiased, and sensitive to different aspects of the problem.

Practical - a risk assessment should be commensurate with the available resources.

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Conducive to Learning - the risk assessment should have a broad enough scope to have carry-over value for similar assessments. The risk assessment should serve as a model or template for future assessments.

Open to Evaluation - the risk assessment should be recorded in sufficient detail and be transparent enough in its approach that it can be reviewed and challenged by qualified independent reviewers.

The ultimate goal of the process is to produce quality risk assessments on specific nonindigenous aquatic organisms or with nonindigenous organisms identified as being associated with specific pathways. The assessments should strive for theoretical accuracy while remaining comprehensible and manageable; and the scientific and other data should be collected, organized and recorded in a formal and systematic manner.

The assessment should be able to provide a reasonable estimation of the overall risk. All assessment should communicate effectively the relative amount of uncertainty involved and, if appropriate, provide recommendations for mitigation measures that reduce the risk.

Caution is required to ensure that the process clearly explains the uncertainties inherent in the process and to avoid design and implementation of a process that reflects a predetermined result. Quantitative risk assessments can provide valuable insight and understanding; however, such assessments can never capture all the variables. Quantitative and qualitative risk assessments should always be buffered with careful human judgment.

If all were certain, there would not be a need for risk assessment. Uncertainty, as it relates to the individual risk assessment, can be divided into three distinct types:

- a) uncertainty of the process - (methodology)
- b) uncertainty of the assessor(s) - (human error)
- c) uncertainty about the organism - (biological and environmental unknowns).

Each one of these presents its own set of problems. All three types of uncertainty will continue to exist regardless of future developments. The goal is to succeed in reducing the uncertainty in each of these groups as much as possible.

The “uncertainty of the process” requires that the risk methodologies involved with the Review Process never become static or routine but continue to be modified when procedural errors are detected and/or new risk methodologies are developed.

Some of the information used in performing a risk assessment is scientifically defensible, some of it is anecdotal or based on experience, and all of it is subject to the filter or perception. After Orr’s presentation, Lukens mentioned pursuing the possibility of having a risk assessment workshop or conference.

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U.S. ARMY CORPS OF ENGINEERS REPORT ON ARMORED CATFISH

Jan Hoover from the Vicksburg Waterways Experiment Station in Vicksburg, Mississippi gave the presentation “Suckermouth Catfishes - Threats to Aquatic Ecosystems of the United States?”

In appearance and in habitats, the suckermouth catfishes or “plecos” of South and Central America are markedly different from the bullhead catfishes of North America. With more than 550 species, suckermouth catfishes constitute the largest family of catfishes in the world. Popular with home aquarists because of their distinctive appearance, hardiness, and propensity for cleaning algae from all submerged surfaces, suckermouth catfishes have been commonly imported into the United States since the mid-20th century, and the number of taxa imported has increased during recent decades. Consequently, it is not easy, at present, to precisely identify specimens of suckermouth catfishes when they are found in U.S. waters.

The distinctive feeding and reproductive behaviors of suckermouth catfishes, coupled with large size and high population densities, constitute significant threats to native fish communities and to aquatic habitats of the United States. Potential and documented impacts of suckermouth catfishes include: disruption of aquatic food chains; impacts to native species; mortality of endangered shore birds; changes in aquatic plant communities; and bank erosion. Suckermouth catfishes present a cumulative series of threats to aquatic ecosystems unprecedented in recent history.

In the early 1990s, bighead and silver carp were viewed largely as a localized and innocuous phenomenon of the lower Mississippi Basin. Little effort was made to study, contain, and manage those species. Today they threaten the upper Mississippi Basin and the Great Lakes. In recent years, suckermouth catfishes have appeared in a greater number of locations and in greater taxonomic diversity than ever before. Failure to promptly contain and manage them could result in a similar range expansion with potential for disastrous environmental consequences. To effectively control these species, innovative barriers, management techniques, and public awareness programs are required.

MONITORING AND DETECTION OF *CAULERPA TAXIFOLIA* IN FLORIDA

John Teem gave the following overview of monitoring and detection of *caulerpa taxifolia* in Florida:

Caulerpa taxifolia

- marine macroalgae from South Pacific, coastal Australia, also native to Caribbean
- used as an aquarium plant in Europe and North America
- aquarium plant was likely source of infestation in Mediterranean
- in the Mediterranean, *Caulerpa* (Mediterranean clone) overgrows other plants, altering the ecosystem
- introduction detected at Carlsbad CA in 2001

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Invasive Characteristics

- grows fast on different substrates
- reproduces by vegetative fragmentation
- tolerates variable temperature and salinity regimes
- lacks predators, produces toxin that discourages grazing by sea urchins

Monitoring Program

- must be supported on a low budget
- must provide a cost-effective survey of areas of highest risk
- must have capability to detect invasive *C. taxifolia* and distinguish it from native *Caulerpa* species.

Teem offered that if anyone has anything they would like to have analyzed, to send it to him.

STATUS OF STATE PLANS

Louisiana - McElroy reported that Louisiana is getting close to finalizing its plan. A meeting is scheduled next week to look at an implementation table and what kind of body, person, or group do they want when the plan is finalized to work with the different entities on implementation. They have received a lot of support from the current Governor and have 29 members on their Task Force. The election for a new governor is approaching and the Plan must be signed by the Governor for the ANS to approve it as a state plan.

Mississippi - Phil Bass reported that Governor Musgrove named the Mississippi Department of Environmental Quality as the lead agency in Mississippi to develop the plan. Their agency has no regulatory authority for invasive species. They are talking to the Department of Agriculture to work on the plan as a cooperative effort. One meeting has been held and a second meeting is planned for Thursday. They are inviting other agencies to participate in the plan development, and current plans are to contract with someone to write the plan.

Texas - Earl Chilton reported that Texas does not have an Executive Order. They are the only agency in the state that regulates exotic species. Plans are to do an initial first draft and then call in other state agencies to review the plan. They hope to submit their plan to the ANS Task Force within a year.

Florida - Don Schmitz reported that after 2 years the Governor has endorsed the Statewide Invasive Species Strategic Plan for Florida. They are in the process of finalizing an MOU between 10 agencies and universities. The Plan is out for federal review and federal comments are due December 19. After the federal review it should be ready to forward to the ANS Task Force. The next working group meeting is November 21, and they will find out then when the plan will be forwarded to the Task Force (probably mid-January).

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Lukens noted that when plans are forwarded to the ANS Task Force, they must be under cover letter signed by the Governor of the respective state. Before formal submission, Ron can forward a copy of the state plan to the ANS Task Force for a preliminary review so they can look through it and make sure everything is there for approval. Then they will send it back to the state so it can be signed by the Governor for formal submission. Once it is signed by the Governor, it is final and would be hard to change after the fact.

Plans must be approved by ANS Task Force to be eligible to financial support.

Alabama - A lead agency for invasive species in Alabama has not been identified at this time. Lukens mentioned the possibility of resubmitting the original letter to the new Governor.

TWO PROBLEMATIC AREAS IN TEXAS

Earl Chilton reported on water spinach in Houston area. A sting operation was conducted at warehouses and grocery stores. They have also held public hearings with Cambodian growers and Vietnamese (Cambodians grow it and Vietnamese buy it). They are concerned about the growth rate and the fact that it also grows from fragments. It has been growing in the Houston area for a number of years and does not appear to have escaped, even after numerous floodings, but they will continue to look. At this time they are not planning to take it off the prohibited list yet, but may be issuing permits for growing.

Regarding water hyacinth in the Rio Grande, they are working with biological controls and mechanical controls since they are reticent to use pesticides in the river. Water lettuce is in river now and this year is the first time to see alligatorweed in the river. They have also found *Lyngbya* growing in the river this year. *Arundo donax* is another problem with the growing concern of water loss.

Asian carp identification cards were distributed to the Panel. The cards were produced by Illinois-Indiana Sea Grant, Illinois Natural History Survey, Illinois Department of Natural Resources and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service for the Great Lakes Sea Grant Network. Contact Jay Troxel or Pat Carter if interested in large numbers of the cards for distribution.

ALABAMA - MISSISSIPPI RAPID ASSESSMENT TEAM (AMRAT)

David Yeager and Harriet Perry reported on "AMRAT Mobile Bay September 2-5, 2003" which consisted of 15 sampling sites.

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Rapid Assessment Process

-Field collections and observations

-sample accession

-sample analysis

54 species of fish

32 species of molluscs

58 species of arthropods

19 species of annelids

10 miscellaneous

19 species of algae

204 species of plants

2 new molluscs

1 dead Asian clam

1 "lost" Permit

Some statistics

60 + participants

9 boats

+ newspapers, 5 TV stations, 1 radio station

Schmitz inquired whether they had anything written on the procedures and plans used. Yeager replied that he could get it and that it was patterned after assessments done in Naragansett Bay and San Francisco.

STATUS OF SEA GRANT LINE ITEM IN NOAA BUDGET

Lukens reported that he contacted Dorn Carlson regarding federal funding for invasive species work and the status of the '04 Sea Grant budget. Carlson replied via e-mail (copy in folder) that Sea Grant invasive species funding (the funding that supports the projects that won in the national competition earlier this year) looks stable. Ballast water is a complete unknown to him. The \$20K for regional rapid response planning may be stable at 2003 levels.

A PROPOSAL TO ESTABLISH A TAXONOMIC REGISTRY SUBCOMMITTEE

Don Schmitz presented a proposal to establish a taxonomic registry subcommittee who will develop a database that includes information about university, government, and non-government organization personnel involved in the identification of non-native species for the entire Gulf state region of the United States. Accurate taxonomic identifications are the foundation of any rapid response effort.

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Using surveys, the subcommittee will identify key personnel for specific taxa and/or groups of species. The result will be a searchable Internet database and the establishment of a taxonomic network with which anyone can rapidly identify experts for all taxa found in the Gulf region and be able to send unknown species to them for quick identification.

The survey results will be compiled into a database by the subcommittee and the resulting database will be posted on the Gulf of Mexico Regional Panel on Aquatic Invasive Species website using existing web interface platforms and available personnel. The proposed Internet registry and database will enable Gulf state technical personnel to find taxonomic scientists easily. In addition, citizens, such as fishermen and outdoorsmen, who observe what appears to be a new introduction, cannot easily find out whom to contact about identifying a suspect species, and valuable opportunities to contain or eradicate a harmful species are often missed. To avoid overloading the network with identification requests that aren't really necessary, a gateway will be established through which such non-governmental requests would first interact with the network for screening purposes.

To carry out the survey and follow-ups, the subcommittee will develop a survey form, and working with the Gulf of Mexico Regional Panel on Aquatic Invasive Species members, the subcommittee will perform the initial research to find all of the agencies and universities potentially involved with non-native species identifications. Once the key personnel are identified, they will be contacted by e-mail or phone and be asked if they want to become part of this network of taxonomists. Those that agree will become official members of the Gulf of Mexico Regional Panel Aquatic Invasive Species Taxonomic Network and receive a framed document recognizing their official membership and area of expertise. Also, the survey will identify those taxa for which little or no taxonomic expertise exists in the Gulf region. And, from that, the subcommittee can seek experts outside of the Gulf region who might be called on for such assistance as is needed.

Lukens agreed that it would be a good idea to establish a taxonomic work group. Harriet Perry expressed an interest in working with that group. The Panel agreed with this concept and it was decided that Schmitz would chair the work group and Perry would serve as vice chair. It was mentioned that it would be helpful to have representation from each of the states.

NEXT MEETING

The consensus of the Panel was to hold the next meeting the week of March 29, 2004 in Orange Beach, Alabama or San Antonio, Texas.

OTHER BUSINESS

Jay Troxel mentioned the possibility of considering adding the states of North Carolina, South Carolina and Georgia to the GOM Regional Panel membership. It was suggested that Lukens confer with Sharon Gross to investigate if these states would be interested in joining the Gulf Panel. A

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motion was made by Tom Herrington to pursue the concept of adding these three states to the Panel membership. Herb Kumpf seconded the motion.

Schmitz indicated that he would like more information before agreeing to this since the states now involved have the Gulf of Mexico in common.

It was clarified that the motion is just for Lukens to explore the issue. The motion passed.

Election of vice-chair - Harriet Perry made the motion to nominate David Yeager to hold the position of vice-chairman of the Panel. The motion was seconded by Tom Herrington. Marilyn O'Leary moved to close the nominations and was seconded by Cynthia Sarthou. There being no further nominations, Yeager was elected to the position of vice-chairman.

Herb Kumpf suggested that the Panel sponsor a symposium on the status of invasive species in the Gulf of Mexico. The Panel decided to formulate a work group to work on this task. Kumpf will chair that work group. Schmitz agreed to join the work group and it was suggested that there be at least one representative from each state. Contact Herb by November 15 if you are willing to serve on the work group. A steering group will compile some dates to hold the symposium.

Before the meeting adjourned, Lukens again provided the opportunity for public comment. No comments were received.

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 4:30 pm.