

Needs Assessment for the 2020 and 2021 Hurricanes

Louisiana Fishing Community Recovery Coalition (LFCRC)

White Paper

Louisiana Hurricanes of 2020 and 2021

From August 2020 to August 2021, Louisiana witnessed the landfall of four major hurricanes in a little over twelve months. On August 27, 2020, Hurricane Laura was the first to make landfall in Cameron Parish with sustained winds of 150 mph and a maximum storm surge of 18 feet above sea level. Hurricane Laura maintained category four strength 40 miles inland,, causing major damage to coastal fishing communities and to the Lake Charles area. On October 9, a category 2 storm, Hurricane Delta, made landfall at nearly the exact location, further compounding the damages to the already heavily impacted area. On ,October 28, Hurricane Zeta made landfall as a category three storm in southeastern Louisiana causing substantial damages to coastal communities in Orleans, Plaquemines, and St. Bernard Parishes. Ten months later, on August 29, 2021, Hurricane Ida came ashore at Port Fourchon in Lafourche Parish as a category four storm with sustained winds of 150mph. Hurricane Ida cut a path 40 miles wide from coastal Louisiana to the north shore of Lake Pontchartrain and devastated the fishing communities in Lafourche, Terrebonne, and Jefferson Parishes.

Major storms have hit Louisiana's coastal fishing communities in the past, but to experience four major hurricanes in a year is unprecedented. The fishing communities of southwest and southeast Louisiana are vitally important to the state's commercial fishing sector accounting for 80% of Louisiana's commercial fishing population and infrastructure.

Louisiana Fishing Community Recovery Coalition

Following Hurricane Ida, the Louisiana fishing community came together to form the Louisiana Fishing Community Recovery Coalition (LFCRC) that included commercial, recreational, and charter leaders (see Page 4). The Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries, the LSU AgCenter, and the Louisiana Sea Grant serve in a supporting role for the coalition. The coalition members have discussed ongoing challenges facing their respective industry sectors, industries, and formulated a list of conditions that the various sectors need to help in recovery.

Value of Louisiana Fishing Industries

- According to Southwick and Associates, the total economic value of Louisiana's commercial and recreational fisheries within the state of Louisiana totaled an estimated \$4.0 billion in 2019.
- Louisiana's commercial fishing landings totaled over \$300 million in dockside value in 2019.
- Much of the seafood landed in Louisiana, particularly shrimp, blue crabs and oysters, are shipped to other states for further processing and handling. The economic impact of Louisiana commercial fishing at a national level is larger than the numbers cited above.
- Charter boat operations lead hundreds of thousands of angler trips every year and are an important part of Louisiana's \$3.2 billion recreational fishing economy. These trips earn an estimated \$60.6 million in revenue.
- Louisiana's marinas, located mostly in vulnerable coastal areas, earn an estimated \$61.2 million in revenue every year serving commercial fishers, private anglers, and charter boat operations.
- The total business valuation of commercial fishing vessels, seafood dealers and processors, marinas, and charter boat operations combined is an estimated \$1.4 billion.

Louisiana Hurricanes of 2020 and 2021 Impact Assessment

- **\$579.9 million** is the total average estimated loss attributed to the four major storms of 2020/2021.
- The real estimated damage to fisheries infrastructure is \$305 million. Hurricane Ida alone accounted for 70% of this total, and wind was the primary driving force behind the significant impacts of all four storms. Fisheries infrastructure includes commercially active fishing vessels and seafood dealers, seafood processors, charter boat operations, and coastal marinas.
- Revenue losses for the 22 coastal parishes totaled \$155.3 million for 2020/2021 and carry over into 2022.

- Cameron, Calcasieu, Jefferson, Lafourche, St. Charles, St. John, and Terrebonne Parishes projected annual revenue losses approaching or exceeding 35%.
- Estimated total resource losses (oysters and finfish) are \$119.6 million for 2020/2021.

Post Storm Industry Needs

- Debris and underwater obstruction removal
 - Soon after the passage of storms, obstructions in affected waterways should be identified and removed to restore areas to pre-storm conditions.
- Vessel recovery
 - These storms sunk, stranded, or fully grounded many vessels. Assistance in identifying and recovering these vessels is another need that is vital for the industry to get back on its feet.
- Suspension/implementation of unique management decisions (TEDS, closures, etc.)
 - NOAA allowed limited tow times in place of TED usage after Hurricane Ida. This type of action will enable fishers a way to cope with debris so that they can get back on the water.
 - Closures to specific fishing grounds due to possible health concerns are another way to address safety issues following these significant events.
 - Temporary suspension of regulatory inspection requirements (both federal and state) could also be very helpful to fishing industry dealers and processors following storms during times when consistent utility service is difficult and staffing is limited.
- Communications
 - One of the biggest challenges after a major storm is the need for direct communications. Communication failures and power outages make it challenging to coordinate a response. Therefore, the deployment of portable assets such as emergency wireless communication centers is vital.
- Access
 - The opening of ports and waterways quickly is necessary to get the industry back on its feet.
 - Identifying and restoring local aids to navigation and assessing local waterways for obstructions and shoaling is critical for the local fishing industry.
- Ice production and cold storage
 - The provisioning of fuel, power, and water is necessary to provide dealers/processors and fishers with the ability to ensure a safe, quality product.
- Logistical planning
 - Development of a census or database of all fishing-related infrastructure allowing for rapid assessment of and response to infrastructure damages is needed. Such a system could help direct where fuel, power, water, and ice are needed the most. In addition, updating infrastructure information annually before each hurricane season is critical.

Potential Storm Recovery Projects/Programs (\$200 million total)

- Address shrimp and other seafood imports (\$15 million)
 - Help offset market challenges that increased imports have caused to local shrimp and other seafood
 - Grant funds to inform the public of imported shrimp's potential dangers and examine the economic benefits of increased shrimp import inspections
- Hardening of vessel launches, docks, piers, and marinas (\$60 million)
 - This program would allocate funds to existing boating and fishing access grant program and make available to public entities wishing to construct new facilities or improve existing facilities.
 - Improvements could make fishing industry-related structures more resilient to natural disasters, such as raising the height and reinforcing docks/piers, backup equipment or secure cold storage and processing facilities.
 - Improvements could make structures more portable and mobile. Critical equipment could be mouted to skids and trailers allowing for transport out of and back into impacted areas.
 - This program could produce Harbors of Refuge (Safe Harbors) for our vessels and other critical infrastructure along the coast to protect them from storm surge

- Fuel, Insurance, and Bait subsidies (\$60 million)
 - This program would help those in the fishing industry and fishing-related businesses, offset the rising cost of related expenses by providing direct payments, or tax incentives (refunds) to commercial and charter fishing vessel owners.
 - Subsidies could increase fishing, transportation, and processing capacity by offsetting costs. Insurance rates for vessels and businesses can be costly, so many do not carry insurance.
 - Many fishers and related businesses have taken out debt to recover from previous disasters, making it increasingly unlikely to continue taking on additional debt.
 - A program that could assist in determining insurance needs (education) and provide more affordable coverage could be an excellent option for the industry.
 - A program to develop crop insurance similar to the agricultural industry would allow industry participants to insure their average / expected annual catch against natural disasters and unexpected fishery failures.
 - This could be utilized in lieu of direct payments and encourages continuity of operations
- Equipment reimbursement grants (\$30 million)
 - The objective of this program is to increase the profitability, sustainability, and adaptability of the fishing industry, including the replacement or upgrading of lost equipment for vessels, docks, marinas, bait shops, cold-storage and processing facilities.
 - This could include green and blue upgrades allowing the industry to continue to operate when public utilities, such as electricity, are unavailable.
 - Equipment meeting this objective could be a valuable resource in the long-term recovery and resiliency of the fishing industry and could include items such as portable bait systems, ice machines, and systems that operate using alternative sources of energy.
- Promotion and marketing programs for Louisiana seafood (\$10 million)
 - This program would aim to increase consumer confidence along with helping commercial fishermen and processors receive a premium price for their product and ensure Louisiana’s seafood industry can compete and endure in the constantly changing global market place. A marketing company or the LSPMB can identify strategies to set Louisiana seafood apart.
- Workforce development (\$10 million)
 - This program would provide grants to assist members of the Louisiana seafood industry adversely impacted by natural disasters by providing training to enter, remain and advance in the fishing industry.
 - Training on development of disaster response protocols
 - Training for development of “continuity of operations” plans
 - This program could also address an aging workforce by developing ways to recruit younger fishermen
 - Identify and promote methods and procedures that improve the profitability of commercial fishing, charter fishing, marina operations, and seafood processing.
 - Outreach to high school and college-age students, making them aware of the career opportunities as a commercial or charter fisher.
 - Alternatively, these grants develop programs including career education, career training, and specialized skills for those wishing to leave the fishing industry.
- Oyster public seed ground cultch plants (\$5 million)
 - This program will allow LDWF to continue the practice of placing reef material in public areas that are conducive to oyster reef habitat development.
- Administrative and Planning Support (\$10 million)
 - State and local governmental entities will oversee and administer the above programs for industry, and would incur substantial expenses during the process

Industry Entities Participating in LFCRC

- Gulf Seafood Foundation
- American Shrimp Processors' Association
- Coastal Conservation Association
- Crab Processors
- Crab Task Force
- Daybrook Fisheries
- Finfish Processors
- Finfish Task Force
- Gulf Coast Live Bait Association
- Gulf Seafood Foundation
- Louisiana Charter Boat Association
- Louisiana Restaurant Association
- Louisiana Seafood Exchange
- Louisiana Shrimp Association
- Marinas
- Omega Protein
- Oyster Processors
- Oyster Task Force
- Shrimp Task Force

Entities Providing Support to LFCRC

- Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries
- Louisiana Sea Grant Program
- Louisiana State University – Ag Center
- Louisiana Department of Natural Resources
- FEMA, Community Planning & Capacity Building
- Office of Lt Governor Billy Nungesser
- Louisiana Seafood Promotion and Marketing Board
- Shell Oil
- US Coast Guard
- US Dept. of Commerce, Economic Development
- US Dept. of Interior, Restoration & Damage Assessment
- US Env. Protection Agency, Community Revitalization