

# Title 43

## NATURAL RESOURCES

### Part I. Office of the Secretary

#### Subpart 3. Oyster Lease Damage Evaluation Board Proceedings

#### Chapter 37. General

##### §3701. Purpose

A. These rules are adopted pursuant to R.S. 56:700.10 et seq. to provide for the filing and processing, and the fair and expeditious settlement, of claims pursuant to Part XV of Chapter 1 of Title 56 of the Louisiana Revised Statutes of 1950. These rules are designed to insure that the claims procedure is as simple as possible, and these rules shall be interpreted in that spirit.

AUTHORITY NOTE: Promulgated in accordance with R.S. 56:700.10 et seq.

HISTORICAL NOTE: Promulgated by the Department of Natural Resources, Office of the Secretary, LR 25:308 (February 1999).

##### §3703. Definitions

A. As used in LAC 43:I.Subpart 3, unless the context requires otherwise, the terms set forth below shall have the following meanings.

*Biological Survey*—a survey made to determine the biological test data, which is reported on a form prescribed by the board.

*Biological Test Data*—surveys of oyster beds and grounds by a certified biologist to determine the quality, condition and value of oyster beds and grounds.

*Board*—the Oyster Lease Damage Evaluation Board.

*Certified Biologist*—a biologist certified by the board as qualified to make biological surveys.

*Department*—the Department of Natural Resources.

*Final Biological Survey*—the biological survey made and filed by the owner or leaseholder, as applicable, pursuant to §3903.C.

*Initial Biological Survey*—the biological survey made and filed by the owner or leaseholder, as applicable, pursuant to §3903.A.

*Intervenor*—a party having an interest in the proceedings who is granted permission by the board to take part in the proceedings to the extent reasonable and necessary to assert or protect such party's interests.

*Leaseholder*—an owner of an oyster lease granted by the Department of Wildlife and Fisheries.

*Mineral Activity*—exploration (including all seismic operations) production, transportation (of equipment or product) and any other activity associated with the production of oil and gas. Also referred to as *Oil and Gas Activity*.

*Owner*—an owner or operator of a mineral activity.

*Part XV*—Part XV of Chapter 1 of Title 56 of the Louisiana Revised Statutes of 1950.

*Party*—leaseholder, owner or intervenor.

*Secretary*—the Secretary of the Department of Natural Resources, or his designee.

AUTHORITY NOTE: Promulgated in accordance with R.S. 56:700.10 et seq.

HISTORICAL NOTE: Promulgated by Department of Natural Resources, Office of the Secretary, LR 25:308 (February 1999).

#### Chapter 39. Damage Evaluation Process

##### §3901. Request for Arbitration

A. Either an owner or a leaseholder who has been requested by an owner to enter into a settlement for damage to the leasehold which may occur due to the owner's proposed oil and gas activity that is expected to intrude upon the leasehold may file with the board a preliminary request for arbitration of the leaseholder's claim for damage in accordance with Part XV and LAC 43:I.Subpart 3.

B. The preliminary request shall contain the information required by a form prescribed by the board. A copy of the preliminary request and any annexed documents shall be served on the other party by the filing party.

AUTHORITY NOTE: Promulgated in accordance with R.S. 56:700.10 et seq.

HISTORICAL NOTE: Promulgated by Department of Natural Resources, Office of the Secretary, LR 25:308 (February 1999).

##### §3903. Biological Surveys

A. The initial biological survey shall be based on onsite inspection and evaluation and shall be made to determine the quality and value of the beds and grounds expected to be affected by the proposed oil and gas activity.

B. If a preliminary request for arbitration is filed but the owner does not file the initial biological survey report within 60 days of service of the preliminary request for arbitration, the leaseholder may apply to the board for an order to have the initial biological survey made and filed by the owner.

C. Upon completion of the oil and gas activity proposed by the owner, the owner shall have a final biological survey made at the owner's expense and filed with the board together with a request for arbitration within 60 days of completion of the oil and gas activity, to furnish a basis for determination of the actual damage to the leasehold sustained as a result of the oil and gas activity.

D. If the leaseholder believes that the oil and gas activity proposed by the owner has been completed, and that the final biological survey has not been timely made and filed by the owner, the leaseholder may call for a hearing to determine whether the owner has complied with §3903.C hereof. If upon hearing the board finds that the owner has not so complied, the board shall permit the leaseholder to have a final biological survey made and filed together with a request for arbitration, and the reasonable cost of this survey shall be assessed against the owner as part of the actual damage sustained by the leasehold.

E. The board shall engage experts to assist the board in establishing a uniform evaluation method to be followed by certified biologists in determining the quality, condition and value of the oyster beds and grounds before the oil and gas activity takes place and in determining the estimated damage or loss to the leasehold after the activity is completed.

F. The uniform evaluation method adopted by the board shall be made available to all parties and all certified biologists for use in proceedings before the board.

AUTHORITY NOTE: Promulgated in accordance with R.S. 56:700.10 et seq.

HISTORICAL NOTE: Promulgated by Department of Natural Resources, Office of the Secretary, LR 25:308 (February 1999).

**§3905. Certification and Selection of Biologists**

A. Biologists having a minimum educational attainment of a degree in a biological science, or having been accepted by a federal or state court in Louisiana as an expert witness in the field of oyster biology or oyster ecology may apply to the board for certification. The application for certification shall be accompanied by a résumé of educational attainments and work experience, certified copies of transcripts, and any other information considered useful to the board in assessing the qualifications of the applicant as to competency in making biological surveys required by Part XV and LAC 43:I.Subpart 3. The board shall consider the application for certification and information submitted in support thereof and may in the exercise of the board's discretion certify the applicant as a biologist qualified to make biological surveys required by LAC 43:I.Subpart 3.

B. The board shall annually review and maintain a list of certified biologists from which a selection must be made of a biologist to make any biological survey provided for by Part XV or LAC 43:I.Subpart 3.

C. The board may decertify the certified biologist, after a hearing, upon a finding of unsatisfactory performance.

D. When an owner is required to have a biological survey made under Part XV, he must choose one of a group of three certified biologists submitted by the board to the owner.

E. The selection of the group of three certified biologists to be submitted to the owner as provided above shall be made by the board from the list of all certified biologists, in the following manner.

1. The initial order of listing of the certified biologists shall be determined by drawing lots under the supervision of the board.

2. The initial group of three certified biologists shall be comprised of the top three individuals on the list.

3. The next group of three certified biologists shall be formed by striking the individual of the initial group chosen by the owner and adding the next individual listed below the initial group.

4. Succeeding groups shall be formed by proceeding down the list in like manner until there are less than three individuals left on the list, at which point a new list of all of the certified biologists shall be made and the order of listing redetermined by again drawing lots.

5. Selection of subsequent groups shall be made in the same manner as provided above for the initial list.

F. In the case of a biological survey made pursuant to §3903.D, the leaseholder may select a certified biologist in the same manner as an owner.

AUTHORITY NOTE: Promulgated in accordance with R.S. 56:700.10 et seq.

HISTORICAL NOTE: Promulgated by Department of Natural Resources, Office of the Secretary, LR 25:309 (February 1999).

**§3907. Estimated Damage Deposit**

A. Upon filing of the initial biological survey, the board shall determine the amount of the damage estimated to be sustained by the leasehold as a result of the proposed oil and gas activity, and shall notify the parties of the board's determination.

B. Upon a showing of urgent circumstances, the board will expedite to the extent practicable its determination of estimated damage.

C. Upon payment of a deposit with the board of the amount of the damage estimate made by the board, the owner may proceed with the proposed oil and gas activity. The deposit shall be invested with the state treasury as security for payment of any damage award and for payment of interest earned on the amount of the award.

D. If the deposit is not made within 30 days after notice of the board's estimated damage determination, the board may, in its discretion, dismiss the proceeding and order the owner to reimburse the leaseholder the amount of any filing fee paid by him.

E. The owner may, at any time prior to payment of the deposit, withdraw the owner's original request to the leaseholder to enter into a settlement, and proceedings hereunder shall thereupon terminate. Withdrawal shall be effective upon notice to the board and the leaseholder, and upon reimbursement by the owner to the leaseholder of any filing fee paid by him.

F. If, after the deposit is made, the owner does not commence the proposed activity within a reasonable time, the board may, upon hearing, award the leaseholder any filing fee paid by him and the reasonable cost of any survey

that may have been separately undertaken by him, pay such award out of the deposit, and return the balance of the deposit to the owner, with interest earned on such balance, and dismiss the proceedings.

**AUTHORITY NOTE:** Promulgated in accordance with R.S. 56:700.10 et seq.

**HISTORICAL NOTE:** Promulgated by Department of Natural Resources, Office of the Secretary, LR 25:309 (February 1999).

### **§3909. Hearings and Determination of Actual Damage**

A. Upon filing of the final biological survey together with a request for arbitration, the board shall call for a hearing to determine the actual damage sustained by the leasehold as a result of the oil and gas activity. The amount of actual damage determined by the board after hearing and review by the secretary shall be due by the owner to the board for the benefit of the leaseholder. If the damage award does not exceed the amount of the deposit made by the owner in accordance with §3907.B and D hereof, the board shall pay the amount of the award out of the deposit, together with interest earned thereon, to the leaseholder, and the balance, if any, shall be paid to the owner, together with interest earned on such balance. If the award exceeds the amount of the deposit the board shall pay the entire amount of the deposit, together with the interest earned thereon, to the leaseholder and shall order the owner to pay the leaseholder the amount of the difference between the award and the deposit together with legal interest thereon from the date of the initial deposit.

B. The determination of damage by the board and review by the secretary shall be based on the values shown in the biological surveys and shall reflect true and actual damage.

**AUTHORITY NOTE:** Promulgated in accordance with R.S. 56:700.10 et seq.

**HISTORICAL NOTE:** Promulgated by Department of Natural Resources, Office of the Secretary, LR 25:309 (February 1999).

### **§3911. Conduct of Hearings**

A. The board shall give reasonable notice of all hearings to all parties.

B. The notice shall include:

1. a statement of the time, place, and nature of the hearing;
2. a statement of the legal authority and jurisdiction under which the hearing is to be held;
3. a reference to the particular sections of the statutes and rules involved;
4. a short and plain statement of the matters asserted. If the board is unable to state the matters in detail at the time the notice is served, the initial notice may be limited to a statement of the issues involved. Thereafter, upon application, a more definite and detailed statement shall be furnished.

C. At the hearing, all parties shall have the opportunity to respond and to present evidence on all issues of facts involved and argument on all issues of law and policy involved and to conduct such cross-examination as may be required for a full and true disclosure of the facts.

D. The hearing record shall include:

1. all pleadings, motions, and intermediate rulings;
2. evidence received or considered or a résumé thereof if not transcribed;
3. a statement of matters officially noticed except matters so obvious that statement of them would serve no useful purpose;
4. offers of proof, objections, and rulings thereon;
5. proposed findings and exceptions; and
6. any decision, opinion, or report by the board or the secretary.

E. The board shall, at the request of any party or person, have prepared and furnish him with a copy of the transcript or any part thereof upon payment of the cost thereof.

**AUTHORITY NOTE:** Promulgated in accordance with R.S. 56:700.10 et seq.

**HISTORICAL NOTE:** Promulgated by Department of Natural Resources, Office of the Secretary, LR 25:310 (February 1999).

### **§3913. Discovery**

A. Parties may obtain discovery by written interrogatories, production of documents and things, requests for admission, and permission to enter upon land or other property for inspection and other purposes, limited in scope to the following matters:

1. the oil and gas activity conducted or to be conducted by the owner;
2. the quality and value of the oyster beds and grounds expected to be affected by the proposed oil and gas activity; and
3. the actual damage sustained as a result of the oil and gas activities.

B. The board in its discretion may allow discovery as to other matters, and in exceptional circumstances may allow discovery by deposition.

C. A party may serve upon any other party written interrogatories to be answered separately and fully under oath, unless objection upon stated grounds is made to an interrogatory. Interrogatories may be served with the preliminary request for arbitration or at any time after filing of the preliminary request, and shall be answered within 30 days after service.

D. Any party may serve on any other party a request to produce and permit the party making the request to inspect and copy any designated documents including writings, drawings, graphs, charts, photographs, and other data compilations from which information can be obtained or inspect and copy, test, or sample any tangible things which constitute or contain matters within the scope of permissible discovery and which are in the possession, custody, or control of the party upon whom the request is served; or permit entry upon designated land or other property in the possession or control of the party upon whom the request is served for the purpose of inspection and measuring,

surveying, photographing, testing, or sampling the property or any designated object or operation thereon, within the scope of permissible discovery. The request may be served with the preliminary request for arbitration or at any time after filing the preliminary request. The request to inspect and copy shall describe each item or category of items to be inspected with reasonable particularity. The request shall specify a reasonable time, place, and manner of making the inspection and performing the related acts. The party upon whom the request is served shall serve a written response within 15 days after service of the request stating that inspection and related activities will be permitted as requested unless the request is objected to in whole or in part, on stated grounds.

E. A party may serve upon any other party a written request for the admission, for purposes of the pending arbitration proceeding only, of the truth of any matters within the scope of permissible discovery set forth in the request, including the genuineness of any documents described in the request. Copies of documents shall be served with the request unless they have been or are otherwise furnished or made available for inspection and copying. The request may be served with the preliminary request for arbitration or at any time after filing the preliminary request. Each matter of which an admission is requested shall be separately set forth. The matter is admitted unless, within 30 days after service of the request, the party to whom the request is directed serves upon the party requesting the admission a written answer or objection upon stated grounds addressed to the matter. The answer shall specifically deny the matter or set forth in detail the reasons why the answering party cannot truthfully admit or deny the matter. A denial shall fairly meet the substance of the requested admissions; and when good faith requires that a party qualify his answer or deny only a part of the matter of which an admission is requested, he shall specify so much of it as is true and qualify or deny the remainder. An answering party may not give lack of information or knowledge as a reason for failure to admit or deny unless he states that he has made reasonable inquiry and that the information known or readily obtainable by him is insufficient to enable him to admit or deny. Any matter admitted is conclusively established unless withdrawn or amended prior to a hearing on the merits, or thereafter if not substantially prejudicial to the requesting party.

F. Discovery Proceedings. Discovery proceedings shall be conducted under the supervision of the board and any party may apply to the board for an order or other relief as justice may require. The board may, after hearing, impose upon any party who fails unreasonably to comply with discovery rules or with an order of the board the reasonable expenses, including attorney fees, incurred by the other party or parties as a result of such failure.

AUTHORITY NOTE: Promulgated in accordance with R.S. 56:700.10 et seq.

HISTORICAL NOTE: Promulgated by Department of Natural Resources, Office of the Secretary, LR 25:310 (February 1999).

### **§3915. Duration of Oil and Gas Activity by the Owner**

A. A proposed oil and gas activity shall be deemed completed when the last damaging event occurs during the course of the activity.

AUTHORITY NOTE: Promulgated in accordance with R.S. 56:700.10 et seq.

HISTORICAL NOTE: Promulgated by Department of Natural Resources, Office of the Secretary, LR 25:311 (February 1999).

### **§3917. Limitations for Filing of Claims**

A. The leaseholder must file his preliminary request for arbitration within two months of the date of receipt from the owner of the owner's request to the leaseholder to enter into a settlement for the damage which may be sustained due to the owner's proposed oil and gas activity expected to intrude upon the leasehold.

B. The owner may file a preliminary request for arbitration at any time after the owner determines in good faith that a settlement between the owner and the leaseholder cannot be reached. However, if the owner, by implementing the proposed oil and gas activity, intrudes on the leasehold prior to payment of the required deposit in accordance with Part XV, initiation of proceedings under Part XV shall thereupon become barred, and if proceedings are pending, shall thereupon be dismissed.

AUTHORITY NOTE: Promulgated in accordance with R.S. 56:700.10 et seq.

HISTORICAL NOTE: Promulgated by Department of Natural Resources, Office of the Secretary, LR 25:311 (February 1999).

### **§3919. Notices, Filings, and Service of Copies**

A. All notices, filings and service of copies provided for herein shall be in writing and shall be effective upon physical delivery to the proper recipient or upon placing same in the U.S. mail, certified, with receipt requested, addressed to the proper recipient. Notices, filings and service of copies may also be transmitted by facsimile equipment and shall be effective upon transmittal, if followed by delivery or mailing of the original document within a reasonable time.

AUTHORITY NOTE: Promulgated in accordance with R.S. 56:700.10 et seq.

HISTORICAL NOTE: Promulgated by Department of Natural Resources, Office of the Secretary, LR 25:311 (February 1999).

### **§3921. Fees**

A. The filing fee of \$500 shall be paid to the board upon filing the preliminary request for arbitration.

AUTHORITY NOTE: Promulgated in accordance with R.S. 56:700.10 et seq.

HISTORICAL NOTE: Promulgated by Department of Natural Resources, Office of the Secretary, LR 25:311 (February 1999).

### **§3923. Judicial Review**

A. Any party who is aggrieved by the final decision or order in these proceedings is entitled to judicial review thereof.

B. Proceedings for judicial review of the final decision or order shall be instituted by filing a suit for judicial review

Title 43, Part I

in the district court of the parish in which the oyster lease is situated within 30 days of service of the notice of the final decision or order. Copies of the petition for judicial review shall be served upon the board and all parties to these proceedings.

AUTHORITY NOTE: Promulgated in accordance with R.S. 56:700.10 et seq.

HISTORICAL NOTE Promulgated by Department of Natural Resources, Office of the Secretary, LR 25:311 (February 1999).

