

**Aquaculture Advisory Council
January 25, 2019
Burlington County Soil Conservation District
Columbus
Meeting Minutes**

Members Present: Ms. Monique Purcell (Sec. Douglas Fisher), Mr. Joseph Cimino (Comm. Catherine McCabe), Mr. Loel Muetter (Comm. Shareef Elnahal), Dr. Dave Bushek, Mr. Mike De Luca (Dr. Robert Goodman), Dr. Douglas Zemeckis, Ms. Lisa Calvo, Mr. Barney Hollinger, Mr. George Saridakis, Mr. John Maxwell, Mr. Maury Sheets, Dr. Amanda Wenzel

Members Absent: Mr. Joseph Constance (Sec. Tahesha Way), Ms. Betsy Haskin

Public in Attendance: Bill Riggin, Danielle Bytheway, Jeff Normant, Bill Avery, Virginia Wheatly, Matt Gregg, Betsy M^cShane, Scott Lennox, Brick Wenzel, Matt Williams

Ms. Purcell called the meeting to order; a quorum was present.

Motion to approve Oct 12, 2018 minutes made by Ms. Calvo, second by Mr. Hollinger. All in favor; motion carried.

Public Comment- none.

AAC By-Laws:

Ms. Calvo- Correct ex-officio agencies to state current agencies/representatives, include what role they are serving.

Dr. Wenzel- confirm that quarterly meetings on Fridays are acceptable to current Council. All in favor of Fridays. Retain months for quarterly meetings.

Additional edits discussed. Dr. Wenzel to send out edited version to Council for review prior to next meeting (scheduled for April).

Mr. Sheets requested a copy of the statute. To be sent out via email.

Dr. Bushek suggested that Marine Fisheries Council and Fish and Game Council are two additional Councils to increase communication with, similar to previous efforts to increase communication with the Endangered and Nongame Species Advisory Council. Mr. Maxwell also noted the Shellfish Council is absent from the agendas/AAC representation. Dr. Wenzel noted that formal membership is within Statute, but these Councils can be added to the agendas should there be updates. Ms. Calvo also noted that it could benefit to keep the Shellfish Council and AAC separate but still have a representative present to ensure dialog. Ms. Purcell stated that now may be an appropriate time to look into updating Statute. Dr. Zemeckis requested agendas & minutes of other Councils as prep material for AAC meetings until these items are resolved.

Aquaculture Development Plan:

Ms. Purcell moved forward with forming a subcommittee to update the ADP. Mike De Luca, Barney Hollinger, Lisa Calvo, Loel Muetter volunteered from the Council. Matt Gregg, Bill Avery, Russ Babb (NJDEP) volunteered from the public attendees.

Motion to form the subcommittee by Mr. Hollinger, second by Dr. Bushek. All in favor; motion carried.

Discussion on the format and content of the plan, comparing 2011 to 1995, commenced with Mr. Hollinger. Ms. Purcell clarified that the 1995 plan was before the Aquaculture Development Act (legislation that created AAC and other aquaculture items). The more recent updates have a different purpose, but the subcommittee is welcome to take the ADP in the direction needed for current issues & industry needs. The 2011 update is a starting point, but the new update can certainly have more substance.

Mr. Avery commented that a subcommittee needs to have a clear charge to ensure progress is made.

Ms. Calvo questioned timeframe. Ms. Purcell suggested one year for a product to be developed from the subcommittee but the timeline will be better defined after the subcommittee meets a couple of times. Mr. Cimino concurred that a timeline will need to come from the subcommittee and report out to Council in a quarterly meeting.

Mr. Saridakis suggested a New York State Aquaculture plan for reference.

Aquaculture Red Knot Stakeholder Committee Update:

Mr. De Luca- the SC met just after the last AAC Meeting. Recommendations were developed at that October meeting, and provided from the SC to the AWG (the Agency Workgroup for red knots- USACE, USFWS, NJDEP, NJDA) in early November. The recommendations include:

- (1) Lowering rack height from 12” clearance to 9” clearance based on research from the summer of 2018 (specifically highlight the work conducted by Dr. Daphne Munroe);
- (2) Make seasonal access restrictions consistent with beach access, and move the start date (for access Conservation Measures) to May 7th (from May 1st) with the provision of earlier CM implementation if the birds arrive earlier;
- (3) An expanded work window around tide was discussed but no consensus, so the SC recommended the AWG support more research on this item (the 2-hours before and 2-hours after low tide currently in the PBO); and
- (4) Recommendation to allow boat access at any time so long as 500’ from tide line is maintained, with allowing closer than 500’ during the 4-hour access time for those accessing from land (access via boat during those 4 hours does not need to maintain distance from tideline).

The SC sought clarification on whether the expansion of the ADZ was included/considered in the current allowable take levels within the PBO and permits. The SC also requested information on any additional expansion plans beyond the ADZ, if the DEP has any such plans.

Mr. Hollinger noted that a few of the SC members did not concur with the changing of the rack height due to lack of agreement that the summer 2018 data was sufficient for such a change. That recommendation did not move forward this year. Dr. Bushek added that the AWG wants consensus, we [SC] thought we had that- and it's in our notes- but at the [Nov] meeting that consensus was revoked. Additional discussion on the summer 2018 research occurred. Matt Williams reiterated that the work of the SC was done prior to meeting with the AWG but when the SC-AWG met, it was all rehashed and revoked. A big sticking point was requiring additional science as a condition of the change in rack height, which cannot be added as a Conservation Measure.

The next SC meeting will include a review of the by-laws and discuss rotating the chairs.

Russ Babb commented on the AWG “response” to the SC recommendations. The timeline that was developed (for AWG decision and response) is now pushed back due to the Federal Shutdown with one of the members not in the office- Wendy Walsh- since late December. The original plan was to have everything done by early February but that is in a holding pattern. Also working with Cape May County to stress the need for collaboration on horseshoe crab passage research the County plans to fund in 2019.

Discussion on Sweet Amalia farm occurred. The farm is in the Northern Section of the PBO Action Area, with several conditions coming forward in 2019 including relocation to the Southern Section.

Ms. Calvo stressed that the SC should consider how they handle science and scientists since it seems this 2018/2019 review did not consider the research objectively. Mr. De Luca noted that the science was considered, and a bigger issue may be communication. Matt Williams also noted that any recommendation from the SC must be directed to the Conservation Measures, and sometimes a study may not directly help with decision-making.

Councilmember Comments:

Dr. Bushek- (1) Haskin Lab has a new project looking at improving broodstock line for higher salinity tolerance (specifically aimed at Atlantic Coastal Bays). (2) Another project, in partnership with Ryan Carnegie, is looking at developing a shellfish disease database. If you want to move seed between states, individual testing is required to limit pathogen transport. The database is aimed at creating a more transparent source-to-plant grounds view of where shellfish are moving and where potential pathogens are known to be found. Additionally, the project is working on a Hatchery Certification that would allow hatcheries that use sterile water and culture conditions to test less frequently, allowing for a more immediate transfer to buyers. Potentially build to a tiered process- tier 1 for local and tier 2 for east coast distribution. All Hatchery Certifications would be voluntary. Third-party audit yearly. ***More information available- Contact Dr. Bushek***

Mr. De Luca- (1) AIC will soon begin oyster seed production; orders accepted until Feb. 15th. (2) Nursery space will be made available to growers this year similar to last year (at the AIC). (3) At NACE Conference talks on GIS for identifying suitable aquaculture sites, which should be critically considered by the Council/NJ.

Ms. Calvo- (1) Reiterated the NACE was hugely informative and there is a wealth of information to learn from other states- e.g., Maine, Mass. (2) Looking for funding to support workforce development programming.

Old Business:

Dr. Wenzel provided a reminder that the Census of Aquaculture should have been received in December. If not, the second mailing in January did not occur due to furlough of USDA, NASS. Several on the AAC and public noted receiving the mailing in December.

Public Comment:

When will the 2019 *Vibrio* Plan be released (Scott Lennox)? Mr. Muetter- the *Vibrio* Plan is updated every year and released in late spring.

Bill Avery asked for clarification that a restaurant is a retail sale due to new tagging requirements. Mr. Muetter confirmed that a restaurant is a type of retail sale. Mr. Hollinger stated that the changes with tags stem from ISSC [Interstate Shellfish Sanitation Conference] and managing for *Vibrio* cases. Mr. Muetter added that while it may be more of nuisance, it can be beneficial to have the tags should an outbreak occur because the grower will know if there really is an issue with their product.

Mr. Avery also suggested that there are brochures on safe handling for oysters or shellfish and maybe they could be distributed to where licenses are sold. This is in response to some discussions (outside of the AAC meeting) that some waterbodies could be opened up to recreational oyster harvest. Mr. Muetter recommended maybe the DOH has an online forum which could share that information.

Mr. Maxwell added that the recreational harvest is being discussed for areas of the Atlantic Coast. There are concerns due to the lack of conditions for recreational harvest. Nor are there stipulations that a commercial harvester couldn't recreationally harvest.

Meeting adjourned.