

**Aquaculture Advisory Council
October 30, 2020
Meeting Minutes- Conference Call Meeting**

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

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

Public in Attendance: Roll call of attendees not taken; names were stated when making comment.

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

Approval of meeting minutes- January 2020. B. Avery made motion to approve, B. Hollinger second. All in favor, so moved.

Approval of meeting minutes- May 2020. B. Hollinger made motion to approve, B. Avery second. All in favor, so moved.

Public Comment

N. Gaine provided prepared statement.

New Business

1. CARES ACT Fisheries Funding- J. Cimino. 30-day window for applications. Low participation (as of AAC meeting date); may extend window. The DEP will determine total needs (requested) for each sector before checks are cut. Press release on program will be shared with AAC.
 - a. Several comments on seasonality making it difficult to estimate need for this program. For instance, if cannot be made more than whole, growers would have to determine sales between application date and end of year, but restaurants could close tomorrow.
 - b. J. Cimino- the program requirements that are limiting enrollment are dictated in the Act.
2. Support NJ Seafood- see website www.nj.gov/dep/njseafood
3. What's the Catch? - D. Zemeckis. NJAES program in October 2020 for National Seafood Month. Plan is to continue the programming, well received. Recordings of the two seminars are available on the Rutgers Cooperative Extension website.
4. Shellfish Enhancement- L. Calvo. Emergency funding for pandemic assistance to aquaculture from National Sea Grant office. NJ applied & was funded to buy oversized oysters from growers. Four restoration sites selected. Planted 66,000 of total 76,000 estimated to be purchased. The remaining 10,000 will be used for the SOAR (Pew/TNC) project (see next item on AAC agenda). Price per oyster, \$0.65/oyster; 16 farmers, 4,200 oysters/farmer. Follow up monitoring.

5. SOAR- TNC/Pew Charitable Trust- Zach Greenburg. (SOAR = Supporting Oyster Aquaculture and Restoration) Project to buy oversized or unmarketable oyster product in phase 1- operating in seven states, including NJ. Phase 2 is forthcoming, for more information see website: <https://nature.org/soar> or contact Zach for more information.
6. Spatial Planning- M. De Luca. GIS-based tool to help with identifying future areas for aquaculture in the future. Collecting available data/datasets, some very large. Delays with field work data collection; currently planned for spring 2021. Advisory committees to review data and ID gaps.
 - a. Question how this tool connects with prior work on identifying lease areas. Compliment to efforts that were done in the past and work to see where aquaculture can go in the future.
 - b. Working only in-water; not identifying or studying locations on land where aquaculture could be in the future.
7. Lease Renewal 2021- J. Normant. Due to Covid, package for lease renewal mailed out to 2020 leaseholders. Renew as soon as possible to avoid delays.
 - a. New leases- plan is to begin allowing appointments in January for new lease applications (had been on hold with Covid).
 - b. Transfers- not during the renewal timeframe. Transfers will be allowed again in January, once the renewal push is completed.
8. Aquaculture Permits 2021- S. Gentile. Due to Covid, visitors to the office are discouraged- office is not frequently staffed. Best option is to email your applications to the main BMW email. Mail entire package to the P.O. Box if you need to provide a check.
 - a. Depuration- use the P.O. Box and get applications in as soon as possible.
 - b. N. Gaine- can we stop changing numbers on permits. S. Gentile- some numbers include year of issuance, so I can look into it but system is not designed for that.
 - c. N. Gaine- 2019 NSSP mitigation of birds, will that be included in 2021 application. S. Gentile- yes, this will be requested as well as asking for monthly production numbers. We have already been asking for bird deterrent information when a floating gear application came to the office for 2020 permits.
9. AFL renewals- A. Wenczel. 2020 renewals and new issuances will be in early 2021 for those who use the AFL application as the Operational Plan for the BMW permits.

Aquaculture Development Plan- A. Wenczel. Asking for comments on the current draft, especially from the Shellfish Council members present at /on the AAC. J. Maxwell- new members and need to review as a council (Shellfish Council, Atlantic Coast Section), so please send out copy to members. B. Hollinger- also resend to Delaware Bay Section members.

M. De Luca- is there a timeline for this next comment period? After some discussion, late January 2021 was agreed to as a target deadline for the plan Update.

M. Williams- have public comments been included in latest draft? If so, public review of latest document is needed.

B. Avery- change the date of the plan to make it seem timely.

N. Gaine- questions over public review. Discussion confirmed that public review of document would occur.

Aquaculture-Red Knot Stakeholder Committee- M. De Luca. In last meeting discussed last year recommendations- two out of the three SC recommendations were approved by AWG. Science threshold to change recommendations discussed and will be brought forward for discussion with AWG.

- Decided a focused research agenda should be developed before a science review committee is formed.
- SC discussed CM 13, installation of new gear. Discussed a change to allow installation of new gear. Currently growers stockpile gear on lease in case they need it within the window of no new gear.
- D. Bushek presented data on bird count data. Summarized that moving of farms (opening/closing/moving within the Action Area) does not appear to impact bird counts over timeframe.
- N. Gaine- SC- (1) AWG meetings should be open to the public. This has been requested in the past. (2) Farmers on ADZ required to carry insurance and indemnify State of NJ. Researchers must be allowed on my farm per the PBO. This is an unfair burden on my insurance. Are researchers going to carry insurance? Put us on their insurance? R. Babb- we can look into this item further with our legal. D. Bushek- previously looked into this and Rutgers insurance has a hold harmless clause for the farmers when research is occurring on a farm. Not sure how this would be with other research entities. N. Gaine- this needs to be addressed with other researchers, and I want the AWG to discuss.

Councilmember Comments

M. Purcell- acknowledge and give credit to growers during this difficult time and your creativity to continue to market product with numerous closures. Thanks all those looking for solutions and helping growers. Sec. Fisher worked with DOH to ensure growers could sell direct.

J. Cimino- echo sentiments of M. Purcell. DEP will continue to pursue efforts to support industry.

L. Muetter- Dept will continue to work with sister agencies to advance aquaculture, with protection of public health.

D. Bushek- (1) Continue to work on biosecurity for interstate seed transport project. Connected with Jan Lovy in DEP pathology to advance project. Hatchery visits postponed with Covid but finding solutions. (2) Some mortality samples found with high MSX infection. MSX is prevalent in the area, which is why hatcheries use MSX resistant lines- may want to request this seed. (3) Clam infection first found in soft-shell clams may now be in hard clams. Massachusetts mainly.

D. Zemeckis- new project (USDA funded) stakeholder interviews & nationwide survey to determine seafood preferences. Including health aspects, marketing, preferences.

M. De Luca- (1) AIC seawater tanks replaced (failures past year to both tanks). Survey sent to growers to estimate demand for seed. (2) Project to develop/select for oysters for high salinity,

hard clams for high heat tolerance, and bay scallop reintroduction in back bays has been very successful. Bay scallops to market size in one growing season.

L. Calvo- (1) Repeating my annual request for the red knot survey data to be released for review by the public. (2) NESARE grant funding available- growers should look into program. Daphne Munroe and Dale Parsons have a partnership grant through NESARE to look at shell hash and hard clams. Some tracking of cownose rays included in the study.

B. Hollinger- Seated on State Board of Agriculture in August to represent aquaculture. Reach out with item you wish to bring forward to the Board.

J. Maxwell- Atlantic Coast Shellfish Council has a new member and Council has been meeting more regularly in late summer through fall.

M. Sheets- Congratulations to Barney. Questioned if any growers in NJ went out of business due to Covid. B. Hollinger- have not heard of anyone.

Old Business

CFAP 2- A. Wenczel. USDA CFAP (Coronavirus Food Assistance Program)- initially excluded shellfish growers. In the second round, shellfish growers are eligible so long as the product is for human food. Enroll through USDA, FSA office. L. Calvo- process is very easy and FSA is great to work with for enrollment.

Public Comment

M. Williams- we need marketing. This is not going away any time soon, and we need a market and a push to support us.

B. McShane (NRCS)- Funds are still available for EQIP in 2020 (Nov. 20th)

R. Babb- Public comment period for the Aquaculture Opportunity Areas (federal initiative). One phase for currently identified areas of Gulf of Mexico and off Southern Coast of California. Second phase is looking for future areas.

N. Gaine- echo comments of M. Williams. Barney on Board work to move aquaculture to Jersey Fresh. NJ is lacking state-wide advertising and marketing program which includes promotion of seafood. If need money, add that money is need in the Plan.

Marketing discussion ensued.

Meeting adjourned.