

**Final Joint Minutes VAAB-  
VFBF Aquaculture Advisory Committee  
December 12, 2018**

The VFBF Aquaculture Advisory Committee and the Virginia Aquaculture Advisory Board (VAAB) met jointly on Monday, December 12, 2018 at the Virginia Farm Bureau West Creek Office in Goochland, Va.

VAAB Members Present: Heather Lusk, Chair. Mike Schwarz, Kim Huskey Mike Osterling, , and Bryan Plemmons

VFBF Members present: Ellis Walton, Chr., James Graves, Bryan Plemmons, Heather Lusk

Guests Present: Reza Ovissi, Va. Tech; Butch Nottingham and Bill Scruggs, VDACS; Brendan Delbos, Va. Dept. of Game & Inland Fisheries; Herman Ellison, USDA/NASS; Shellfish Growers of VA; and David Crosby, VSU

Staff Present: VFB-Tony Banks, Stefanie Kitchen, Kaitlyn Maxian, Sara Owens and Whitney Perkins, VDACS- Butch Nottingham, Bill Scruggs

Chairman Walton called the meeting to order at 10:00 a.m. and gave an invocation. Attendees introduced themselves.

Butch Nottingham, VDACS Marketing Specialist, reviewed AAB membership and terms. Heather Lusk was nominated as Chair and Mike Schwartz as Vice Chair and were elected unanimously by the members.

On a motion duly made, seconded and carried, the minutes from the April 16, 2018 meeting were approved as distributed.

Mike Osterling, SGOV, reviewed the planning committee's initial plans for the 2019 Virginia Aquaculture Conference scheduled for November 15 -16, 2019 in Newport News. No significant program changes are envisioned based on 2017 attendee feedback. Emphasis will be made to assure continued successful trade show. Meal and break sponsorship opportunities are being considered for 2019. Attendees can expect a modest increase in registration fees. Members were asked to consider persons to nominate for the 2019 distinguished service award.

Mike Osterling and Kim Huskey reported on the Secretary of Natural Resources M. Strickler's Clam and Oyster Aquaculture Work Group activities. Governor Northam is very supportive of the shellfish industry and charged the Work Group with resolving use conflicts to help foster industry growth. The Work Group is focused on finding solutions to conflicts between shellfish growers and other uses, namely waterfront property owners, boaters and local governments. The Work Group is also exploring how best to balance the shellfish economy with continued growth of underwater grasses. The VA Marine Resources Commission has indicated it will step up in resolving use conflicts in its permitting process in response to Work Group discussions. The Work Group consist of General Assembly Members growers, environmental organizations, local governments and landowners. Its final report is expected to be released in the next few weeks.

Dr. Reza Ovissi discussed seafood quality, safety and bioprocessing research and programs occurring at the VA Seafood AREC. Seafood safety projects include biosensor and sanitizer applications for seafood and other foods. He is working microbiome and food safety for aquaponic systems and live feed recirculating systems. Ovissi summarized several bioprocessing and biomaterial projects including applications in pharmaceutical, cosmetics, functional foods, agriculture and industry. These projects involve both domestic and foreign collaborators and developers. Efforts so far have led to 6 patents and 2 patent applications and technology prototypes. A Center for Marine Bioprocessing in Virginia is being planned.

Dr. Mike Schwarz, VA Seafood AREC, reviewed the funding and architectural renderings for the new VA Seafood AREC building and facilities located adjacent to the existing building. Nearly all funding is approved, except for the City of Hampton's share, which is expected to occur shortly. The building and facility will be owned the Virginia Tech Foundation. Staff has provided HACCP training to 40 companies and 55 individuals, conducted multiple food processing validations, and provided STEM 360 education to over 1,200 students. Schwarz noted the AREC is in a good position to be an active site for the Virginia Tech's Smart Farm initiative for CALS. He also reviewed Jonathan van Senten's work in examining regulatory costs for West Coast shellfish and national trout producers as well as a commercial feasibility study of US aquaculture. New projects include examining regulatory costs of East Coast shellfish, catfish, hybrid striped bass, tilapia and ornamental species. Future projects include examining the feasibility of US aquaponics and reducing certification and inspection costs for US aquaculture through technology adoption.

Producers and industry representatives provided the following comments:

- Clam market is good and it has been a good year for seed. The oyster market is changing with increasing competition. Production will need to move to floating cages to meet new demands. (Terry)
- Experiencing above average precipitation; however, the previous drought years have hampered trout demand and production. Electronic notification for DEQ permit notices was approved by the General Assembly. Electronic notification is saving producers about 80% on advertisement costs (Plemmons)
- Continue to host very popular fishing events for children. Heavy March rains displaced many trees creating altered stream flows of which many have not been restored to historical channels. (Graves)
- Strong demand on clams and agree market is changing for oysters. Working on a floating cage study with VIMS and remain hopeful floating cages will show positive interactions with subaquatic vegetation. (Husky)
- VDGIF just began its trout stocking (Oct – May) and anticipates releasing 750,000 7.5 inch fish and 100,000 fingerlings. The agency stocked 50,000 0.5 inch catfish in ponds in 2018. (Delbos)
- Hybrid striped bass and rainbow trout remain very popular (VAN, Banks)
- Promoting aquaculture via urban ag and youth projects. Examining solar technology applications for aquaculture. Providing health certifications for trout sales out-of-state. Working to improve water quality and dissolved oxygen in pond culture. Bluegill, crappie, and largemouth bass can now be raised and sold as food fish and would be ideal for farm ponds. Finding new markets for these species is a challenge. (VSU)
- USDA's 2018 catfish and trout studies should be released 2/15/19 and 2/25/19, respectively. The US Aquaculture Census will begin 01/14/2019 and should be published 10/10/2019. (Ellison)

Tony Banks, VFBF, reviewed the status of federal labor legislation, the 2018 farm bill and 2019 VFBF policies. The Committee recessed for lunch.

Bryan Plemmons raised the availability and cost issues associated with health testing and certificates for trout and other species being exported to other states. Staff will coordinate a meeting with growers, VDACS, VDGIF and VSU to discuss the issue further.

The committee made recommendations to the VFBF Board Directors. **See Recommendations for Policy Development.**

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 1:30 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

\_\_\_\_\_, Chair

Heather Lusk

\_\_\_\_\_, Secretary

Butch Nottingham

## **RECOMMENDATIONS FOR POLICY DEVELOPMENT**

**The Aquaculture Advisory Committee requests the VFBB Board of Directors approve the following policy recommendations be sent to VFBB Resolutions Committee for their consideration.**

### **Aquaculture**

**110**

We believe VDACS' animal health laboratories should be staffed and equipped to provide health diagnostic services that facilitate the interstate movement and export of aquaculture species from Virginia.