

**Draft Minutes Joint Meeting Virginia Aquaculture Advisory Board  
VFBF Aquaculture Advisory Committee  
November 15, 2019**

The VFBF Aquaculture Advisory Committee and the Virginia Aquaculture Advisory Board (AAB) met jointly on Friday, November 15, 2019 at the Marriott City Center in Newport News, Va.

Members Present: Heather Lusk (AAB), Kim Huskey, AAB Mike Schwarz (AAB), Bryan Plemmons(AAB), Anthony Marchetti(ABA),

Members Absent: John Hofmeyer

Guests Present Ellis Walton, Martin Gardener, VFBF Danielle Schools, VDOH; Johnthan Van Senten, VA Tech, Paul Zajicek, National Aquaculture Assoc.; Herman Ellison, USDA/NASS; and David Crosby, VSU, Tony Banks, VFB

Staff Present: Butch Nottingham, Dr. Joe Garvin

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 and Mike Schwarz were elected by the AAB to serve as chair and vice-chair, respectively.

On a motion duly made, seconded and carried, the minutes from the December 12, 2018 meeting were approved as distributed.

Committee members, board members and affiliated industry representatives provided their respective reports on the 2019 season and forecasts for 2020. There were no formal presentations given due to the meeting being held in conjunction with the bi-annual Virginia Aquaculture Conference.

Heather Lusk, Kim Huskey and Mike Oesterling made similar reports noting the clam market is good with increased demand exceeding supply and leading prices higher. The oyster market is experiencing similar conditions although not quite as strong as clams. Excess precipitation during the spring and extended hot and dry weather this summer affected production reducing shellfish growth and supply. User conflicts with landowners and others are still present in some creeks. Kim Huskey noted that Cherrystone had very good success with floating cages but needs to address problems with wild birds resting on the cages. Cherrystone is working with the county officials and Corps of Engineers on a dredging project for a nearby creek.

Bryan Plemmons reported rainbow trout demand exceeds supply in Virginia and surrounding states. Disease testing and certificates of health are essential for exporting trout and other species to other states. He reviewed a meeting which he participated in with VSU, VDACS, DGIF and VFBF to discuss the need for and encourage VDACS to provide testing for aquaculture species. Bryan announced that he has transferred ownership of his trout farm, Casta Line Trout Farm, to Laurel Hill Trout Farm of Pennsylvania. He encouraged everyone present to engage the new owners.

Marvin Gardner reported that Blue Ridge Aqua Farms is experiencing a good business producing 4.5 – 5 million pounds of tilapia this year. Their new feed mill has helped contribute to production growth and better performance. They are currently focused on increasing production significantly in order to justify a processing facility and enter the fillet market.

John Hofmeyer reported the Va. Aquafarmers Network (VAN) is working with Makers Market in South Hill to prepare and package VAN's ready-to-eat products. VAN will roll out the new products in 4

markets to test consumer acceptance. They plan to work with Dr. Kuhn at Va. Tech to develop additional recipes. VAN does not have any prawn supply and is challenged to identify new prawn production.

Herman Ellison, NASS state director, reviewed the 2017 Census of Agriculture aquaculture results. The 2018 Aquaculture Survey will be published December 19, 2019. He encouraged the audience to contact him with any questions.

Dr. David Crosby, VSU, summarized 2019 research and demonstration activities. He continues to perform health inspections and testing. He noted that he is nearing retirement and is encouraged that VDACS is preparing to provide the service. VSU is beginning more work on aquaponics including food safety, biofilters and other areas. VSU recently harvested prawn from 10 ponds after returning from the State Fair of Virginia. He noted the VSU aquaculture/aquaponics exhibit is very well received during the State Fair. They are also working on water pump issues at Randolph Farm.

Paul Zajicek, National Aquaculture Assoc. executive director, reported on an animal rights activist group that recorded undercover video at a Maine salmon farm. The video was not very successful and didn't gain any traction outside Maine, but additional efforts are anticipated. NAA is working with the Fish and Wildlife Service to expand bird predation permits.

Dr. Mike Schwarz, Va. Seafood AREC, reported funding for the new VA Seafood AREC building and facilities has been approved. Construction is pending one final architectural review and should begin in early 2020. A new faculty position devoted to traceability, block chain, and data management has been approved for the AREC. Visiting researchers will resume working on shrimp in 2020. Another firm will be working with the AREC to develop fish pellets that utilize crab by-product. The AREC will be collaborating with the Institute of Learning and Advanced Research in Danville on a new aquaponics initiative. The AREC will also be partnering with the Fralin Life Sciences Institute on campus as part of COASTAL@VT, a new university program.

Dr. Jonathan van Senten, Va. Seafood AREC, reported his work on regulatory costs for West Coast shellfish and national trout producers is now available on their website and upon request. He will begin similar studies for Atlantic shellfish, tilapia and hybrid striped bass in 2020. Mississippi State Univ. will conduct a study of catfish regulatory costs and the Univ. of Florida will study ornamental species. He is in the early stages of a potential joint project with Dominion Energy and Old Dominion Univ to examine co-locating aquaculture production with future offshore wind energy facilities.

Danielle Schools, VDOH shellfish safety, reported there are now 245 certified seafood dealers and the agency is experiencing a very good compliance. There are 10,000 acres of conditionally managed shellfish production areas. Each of the 100 areas must be sampled 6 times/yr. The agency is also working to help open additional grounds seasonally as conditions allow.

Dr. Joe Garvin, VDACS acting state veterinarian, reported Dr. Broaddus has been deployed by the US Army Reserves for 6 months. Dr. Garvin supervises VDACS' diagnostic labs. The Wytheville lab is working with DGIF on fish testing and he hopes to extend that service to private fish growers in 2020 after the lab becomes accredited.

Tony Banks, VFBB, reviewed the status of previous policy recommendations. He encouraged everyone to attend the conference's featured guest presentation by Jim Perdue of Perdue Farms who will discuss parallels between the poultry and aquaculture industries.

Ellis Walton reported his role on the York River Basin Advisory Committee as it reviews water quality policies and implementation. He encouraged everyone to attend and participate in the State Fair of Virginia, if they haven't already.

Under new business, several members discussed the former aquaculture/seafood exhibit held during the State Fair of Virginia located in Henrico. The exhibit was sponsored by the VA. Aquaculture Assoc. and Va. Marine Products Board. Staff will initiate a teleconference with likely stakeholders to discuss resuming the exhibit at The Meadow Event Park, perhaps as a single day or weekend event.

The Committee requested the next meeting be held in April or May 2020 at Graves Mountain Lodge and that it includes a tour of the trout facility.

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 11:30 p.m. for lunch.

Respectfully submitted,

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

Heather Terry Lusk

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

Butch Nottingham