



VIRGINIA MARINE PRODUCTS BOARD (VMPB)
Board Meeting Minutes
Thursday May 16, 2024/ 1:00 P.M.
VIMS, Waterman's Hall
Gloucester Point, VA

CALL TO ORDER: Mike Oesterling called the meeting to order at 1:00 P.M. nine board members were present which represents a quorum.

BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT:

Mike Oesterling
J.C. Hudgins
Daniel Knott
Monica Schenemann
William Sexauer
Beverly Ludford
Mike Congrove
Taylor Deihl
Jonathan van Senten

BOARD MEMBERS ABSENT:

Nathan Bussels
Trey Sowers

STAFF PRESENT:

Mike Hutt, VMPB
Owen Hynson, VMPB

GUESTS PRESENT:

Jamie Green, Commissioner of VMRC
John Cosgrove, Deputy Commissioner of VMRC
Melissa Ball, VDACS
Kim Husky, Cherrystone Aquafarms
Olivia Brocklebank, Intern at Ocean Harvesters

INTRODUCTIONS AND WELCOME:

Introduction of attendance at meeting. New VMPB member William Sexauer introduced himself to the other board members, Mike Oesterling informed the board that this was his term has expired and cannot be reappointed and this would be his last meeting, Mike Hutt informed the board of terms that are near expiring, J.C. Hudgins term expires on 6/30/24 and he will be ineligible for reappointment, Daniel Knott's term expires on 6/30/24 he has already been offered and accepted reappointment, Monica Schenemann term expires on 6/30/24 and she is eligible for reappointment, and Beverly Ludford's term expires on 6/30/24, and she is eligible for reappointment.

MINUTES:

Mike Congrove made a motion to approve the minutes from February 15, 2024, Jonathan seconded the motion, and the motion passed unanimously.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

Seafood Source News November 2023 Ads Activity Report: The total impressions as of the end of February 2024 were 640,433 impressions, the total clicks were 920 clicks and the click through rate was .14%. Seafood Source also gave us a free placement in their Weekly Global Newsletter the total impressions were 42,963 impressions, the clicks were 60 clicks and the click through rate was .14%. As of the end of March 2024 Seafood Source gave us free placement in the Weekly Global Newsletter with a total of 56,937 impressions, 57 clicks, and a click through rate of .10%. During the month of April 2024 VMPB ads were in Seafood Sources North American Newsletter which generated 79,413 impressions, with 196 clicks, and a .25% click through rate. Seafood Source also gave the VMPB placement in the Weekly Global Newsletter with a total of 45,824 impressions, with 82 clicks, and a click through rate of .18%.

Undercurrent News January 2024 Ads Activity Report: The total number of impressions as of the end of April 2024 were 226,482 impressions, 90 total clicks and the click through rate is .13%. The VMPB also received complimentary placement during this period which resulted in 64,846 impressions, 183 clicks, and a click through rate of .88%.

NBC 12 News Ad Campaign: Through the period of 11/1/23-1/31/24 the NBC 12 campaign has delivered over 2 million ads viewed, 3,000 website page leads, 1,100 likes, shares, or comments on social media, and the sponsored story is currently ranked #8 in engagement on their website.

ABC 13 News Ad Campaign: Through the period of 11/1/23-1/31/24 the ABC 13 campaign has delivered a total of 626 impressions, 3 clicks, and a .48% click through rate on Site Retargeting, 15,598 impressions, 15 clicks, and a click through rate of .10% on OTT Retargeting, and 44,643 impressions, 19 clicks, and a click through rate of .04% on 13 News Now Display.

Oyster FIP Progress Report, May 2024: The Oyster FIP continues to receive A ratings and is in compliance with Environmental & Social reporting requirements. The Oyster FIP is a three-year program and should be completed in April of 2026.

Monterey Bay Aquarium Virginia Oyster Rating: Virginia Oysters rating on Monterey Bay Aquariums website has been updated and Virginia Oysters are now listed as a "Buy" & "Best Choice"

Legislative Luncheon 2025: Mike Hutt has confirmed with Jay Braxton that this event will be held next year. The VMPB is scheduled for the first Wednesday of the first full week of session in 2025. The VMPB will discuss menu and catering for this event at the next board meeting.

2024 Virginia Waterman's Association Banquet: The 2024 Virginia Waterman's Association Banquet was held at Omega Protein on February 16, 2024. Mike Hutt and Owen Hynson attended and said it was a great event and fried Blue Catfish was served to attendees. J.C. reported that it was the largest attendance at the VMA banquet ever and that they might consider moving it to a location that can accommodate more people next year.

2024 SeaGrant Legislative Reception: The 2024 SeaGrant Legislative Reception was held at the Virginia Library in Richmond on February 28, 2024. Mike Hutt and Owen Hynson attended this event on behalf of the VMPB and reported that the event was well attended and that some members of the legislature were in attendance, and some were in meetings and could not attend. Sabine Rodgers used the VMPB display boats during the event.

SENA 2024: SENA is the largest seafood expo in North America. It was held March 10-12 in Boston. Mike Hutt and Owen Hynson attended this event for the VMPB. Before Mike and Owen were able to travel to the show the catering company that they had contracted to serve Wild Blue Catfish fillets informed them that they would not be able to work with them, Mike met with them during the show and guaranteed that they will be able to work with the VMPB during SENA 2025. At the 8/17/23 board meeting the VMPB approved using board funds to allow Ben Stagg to travel and assist Mike and Owen during SENA 2024. During the show they displayed Virginia Seafood products for potential buyers and gathered 65 trade leads that they send out to industry members after the show. Mike & Owen would like to thank Ben Stagg for his help during SENA 2024.

2024 VA Food & Beverage Expo: This event is held every other year and was held at the Richmond Convention Center on March 27, 2024. This is a one day show that VDACS provides the VMPB exhibition space for at no cost. Mike Hutt and Owen Hynson worked the VMPB booth for this event with a display of Virginia Seafood products, served Blue Catfish, and gathered 14 trade leads for the industry. Governor Youngkin and First Lady stopped by the VMPB booth during the event to support the Virginia Seafood Industry. Also, Governor Youngkin and First Lady Youngkin sampled wild caught Blue Catfish. Mike & Owen would like to thank Melissa Ball from VDACS for working the VMPB booth with them during the event.

SUSTA Spring Conference: The 2024 SUSTA Spring Conference was held in New Orleans between April 9-10, 2024. Mike Hutt and Owen Hynson informed the board that because of work related to SENA and preparation for SEG that they were both unable to attend the SUSTA conference.

SEG 2024: This event was held April 23-25, 2024, in Barcelona, Spain. Mike Hutt and Owen Hynson attended this event representing the SUSTA region. Mike Hutt went under SUSTA funds and Owen Hynson travel was provided by VMPB funds. SEG is the largest seafood expo in the world and SUSTA provides the VMPB with the ability to showcase Virginia Seafood at the SUSTA Pavilion. Mike Hutt and Owen Hynson gathered 78 trade leads for the Virginia Seafood industry during the event. Mike Hutt was a SUSTA co-activity manager for this event, so he helped co-exhibitors at the pavilion, gathered trade leads during the show, set up a seafood display including Virginia Seafood products, and worked with the chef to provide samples of wild blue catfish and scallops for the attendees. Owen Hynson assisted Mike Hutt with all these tasks during the show. Owen Hynson also completed all commercial invoices and health certificates for the samples shipped to the show.

Southern Association of State Department of Agriculture (VDACS) Hosting, June 2024: VDACS will be hosting this event for the other Southern Region Agriculture Departments. VDACS is interested in highlighting the Virginia Seafood industry during this event. They are taking a tour to Hampton on June 18th, 2024, during the event and have them tour the new VT Seafood AREC, and Blue Catfish processing at Amory Seafood and sampling wild blue catfish fillet.

SEA 2024: Mike Hutt is a co-activity manager for this event and will be traveling if enough companies sign up to make it viable for SUSTA. Mike Hutt and Owen Hynson are still looking for interested co-exhibitors to sign up for this show. This show will be held September 4-6, 2024, in Singapore.

Blue Catfish Marketing with Wholechain in Boston & Barcelona: The VMPB and VDACS were co-sponsors for two events held during SENA 2024 and SEG 2024. On the first night of SENA 2024 Mike Hutt traveled to the Boston Aquarium to give a presentation about Blue Catfish in front of attendees in the seafood industry including various potential buyers they were then given the opportunity to sample Blue Catfish. The same type of event was held on the second night of SEG 2024 at the Barcelona Aquarium. Mike Hutt reported to the board that the event generated a lot of positive feedback from the audiences for Blue Catfish and led to potential buyers requesting more information about Blue Catfish.

NEW BUSINESS

Skrimp Shack: On February 21st, 2024, Mike Hutt met with Kyle Rowley, owner of two Skrimp Shack franchises and the head buyer of 23 Skrimp Shacks locations to provide him with samples of Blue Catfish. Mike Hutt answered any questions he had as his cook prepared the samples and Kyle Rowley was very impressed with the Blue Catfish provided and after a soft launch of the product in select locations Skrimp Shack currently has a full launch of Blue Catfish at all 23 locations. Mike Hutt and Owen Hynson reported to the board that they stopped at the Skrimp Shack in Newport News before the board meeting and had the Blue Catfish.

Virginia Beach Rescue Squad Oyster Festival: This event took place at the Virginia Beach Convention Center on March 3rd, 2024. Mike Hutt and Owen Hynson attended this event on behalf of the VMPB. Mike and Owen were provided with a 10ft. booth and they bought educational material for anyone in the public interested in learning more about Virginia Seafood. This was a well-attended event but not a lot of traffic at the VMPB booth.

VT Sustainability Summit: The Virginia Tech Seafood AREC held a sustainability summit at the Virginia Tech Newport News Center on May 3, 2024. Mike Hutt gave an presentation on wild blue catfish on behalf of the VMPB and informed the board that it was a well-attended event. Johnathan van Senten informed the board that this was not originally intended to be an annual event but with the amount of positive feedback that they received the Seafood AREC might consider hosting this annually.

Virginia Beach Restaurant Association Call on Blue Catfish: Mike Hutt was scheduled to talk to the head of the Virginia Beach Restaurant Association on May 8th, 2024, to discuss a time for him to deliver samples of Blue Catfish. This call did not take place because the Virginia Beach Restaurant Association accidently scheduled it on the same day as one of their fundraisers, Mike Hutt is still waiting on them to reschedule and present wild blue catfish to their members.

Real Good Fish, Blue Catfish Tour: Mike Hutt will be giving Alan Lovewell and Bill Stride of Real Good Fish a tour of all four Blue Catfish processors in Virginia on May 23rd and May 24th, 2024.

Adams Summer 2024 VMPB Billboard Proposal: Mike Congrove made a motion to approve of the Adams Summer 2024 billboard proposal from the period of 5/20/24-7/14/24 for a total of \$9,000.00, Dan Knott seconded the motion, and after discussion a roll call vote was held.

- J.C. Hudgins-Aye
- Daniel Knott-Aye
- Beverly Ludford-Aye
- William Sexauer-Aye
- Mike Congrove-Aye
- Mike Oesterling-Aye
- Monica Schenemann-Aye
- Jonathan van Senten-Aye
- Taylor Deihl-Aye

Nine Ayes and the motion passed unanimously.

Lamar Summer 2024 VMPB Billboard Proposal: Beverly Ludford made a motion to approve of Lamar proposal #93008 at Laburnum Ave. at a rate of \$2,500.00 and proposal #93022 at Midlothian Turnpike at a rate of \$3,000.00 for a grand total of \$5,500.00 from the period of 5/20/24-9/8/24. JC Hudgins seconded the motion, and after discussion a roll call vote was held.

- J.C. Hudgins-Aye
- Daniel Knott-Aye
- Beverly Ludford-Aye
- William Sexauer-Aye
- Mike Congrove-Aye
- Mike Oesterling-Aye
- Monica Schenemann-No
- Jonathan van Senten-Aye
- Taylor Deihl-Aye

Eight Ayes and one No the motion passed 8-1.

Canada Inbound Buyers Tour: Between July 15-19th, 2024, VDACS will be hosting inbound buyers from Canada. VDACS is still getting companies signed up to come to Virginia for an industry tour.

2024 Black Tie & Boots Event: The 2024 Black Tie & Boots event will be held at the State Fair Grounds on the opening night of the fair, September 27th, 2024. Mike Hutt informed the board that the VMPB has been invited back to participate in the event again this year. Mike Hutt informed the board members that due to the amount of exposure and positive feedback that the VMPB receives for serving oysters at this event and with the minimal cost of shucking and sampling oysters for attendees that this event would be worth the VMPB participating in again. Johnathan van Senten made a motion to approve participating in this event with costs not to exceed a total of \$1,000.00, Taylor Deihl seconded the motion, and after discussion a roll call vote was held.

- J.C. Hudgins-Aye
- Daniel Knott-Aye
- Beverly Ludford-Aye
- William Sexauer-Aye
- Mike Congrove-Aye
- Mike Oesterling-Aye
- Monica Schenemann-Aye
- Jonathan van Senten-Aye
- Taylor Deihl-Aye

Nine Ayes and the motion passed unanimously.

Blue Catfish Video: Mike Hutt informed the board that he is currently working with VIMS, VMRC, and the VT Seafood AREC on making a three- to five-minute-long video on Blue Catfish harvesting, packing, and distribution.

Virginia Beach Restaurant Association – Meeting/Call, May 8, 2024: Mike Hutt informed the board that a grant of \$250,000.00 for processing Blue Catfish will be awarded to a company in 2025 and in 2026. When Mike gets information on when companies need to apply, he will pass that along to the industry.

Virginia Oyster Trail Oyster Brochure Changes Proposal: Mike Hutt informed the board members that he has been in contact with the Virginia Oyster Trail on changes that they would like to recommend to the VMPB about their Oyster Brochures. Mike Hutt informed them that if they would like to propose any changes at this meeting provide them a few weeks in advance to give the VMPB members a chance to review them and to present their proposal at this board meeting. Mike Hutt received the proposed changes on May 15th, 2024. He informed the Virginia Oyster Trail that he would forward the proposed changes to all the VMPB members after today's board meeting so that they have an appropriate amount of time to review them and to have someone from the Virginia Oyster Trail present at the next VMPB meeting on August 15, 2024, to present the proposal.

Virginia Ocean Plan: Johnathan van Senten informed the board of the Virginia Ocean Plan and said that he will forward information on it to anyone interested after the board meeting.

INTERESTED PARTY REPORTS

VIMS – No report.

Virginia Tech – Jonathan reiterated that the VT traceability summit went well and that they are considering turning it into an annual event, the Seafood AREC is currently pursuing a 10-million-dollar grant from SAS to study Blue Catfish value added products, uses for waste after processing, feedback from consumers, and workforce development programs, the deadline to submit this application is June 1st, 2024.

VMRC – Jamie Green informed the board that the VMRC Apprenticeship Program has tripled in size and that they occasionally close the application process so that they can accommodate this growth. They have hired a new position to help manage the program and are looking to expand it to include the central and western part of Virginia. Jamie also informed the board of an event for the Apprenticeship Program that VMRC held at VIMS on April 22, 2024.

Virginia Seafood Council – Kim Husky informed the board that AJ Erskine and Tommy Kellum are continuing to move forward with the Oyster FIP and the VSC is supporting proposed legislation to exempt seafood from H2-B limits.

Virginia Waterman's Association – JC Hudgins informed the board that the VWA sent an editorial to all major VA papers recognizing Hillary Kent's support of the bill protecting commercial watermen and women and that the VWA is supporting a proposed proclamation of Watermen Safety Day/Week. JC informed the board that it was a good Oyster Season, patent tonging ended in March and hand tonging ends in May. Crab Season has been decent so far with good prices. The VWA will be sponsoring boat docking contests in Reedville on June 1st, Yorktown on June 2nd, and Mathews on June 22nd. The next Crab Management Meeting will be held on May 29th, 2024. JC also informed the board that he blessed the fleet at Omega Protein on May 5th, 2024.

Shellfish Growers of Virginia – Kim Husky informed the board that Ben Stagg has resigned as Chairman of SGV. The SGV participated at the VMRC event at VIMS on April 22nd. The SGV is supporting proposed changes to the Farm Bill that include Aquaculture Farms in disaster relief. The SGV is also working with the VDEQ Shellfish & Sanitation Division to help get Virginia Clams eligible for export to the EU.

Omega Protein – Taylor Deihl informed the board that State Delegate Hillary Kent and State Senator Richard Stuart attended the blessing of the fleet on May 5th, 2024. The 2024 Menhaden season started the next day on May 6th, 2024.

Cooperative Programs

VDACS – Melissa Ball mentioned to the board to keep in contact with Jesse Phillips of VDACS for any collaborative projects that might be worth looking into.

Financial Report

Mike Hutt reported a carry over for FY 2023-2024 of \$592,308.42 and a balance of \$511,788.06 as of March 31st, 2024.

PUBLIC COMMENT - None

TRAVEL – The Board may request travel reimbursement.

ADJOURNMENT

Meeting adjourned at 3:17 PM.

Respectfully Submitted,



Mike Hutt
Executive Director



Co-Chair

DAVID KNOTT

