



FINAL
VIRGINIA MARINE PRODUCTS BOARD (VMPB)
Board Meeting Minutes
Tuesday March 4, 2025/ 1:00 P.M.
VIMS, Davis Hall
Gloucester Point, VA

CALL TO ORDER: Mike Hutt called the meeting to order at 1:00 P.M. six board members were present which represents a quorum. Co-chair Dan Knott called the meeting to order.

BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT:

Chris Sopko
Daniel Knott
William Sexauer
Beverly Ludford
Nathan Bussels
Trey Sowers

BOARD MEMBERS ABSENT:

Monica Schenemann
Taylor Deihl
Jonathan van Senten
Terri Graham Wallace
Mike Congrove

STAFF PRESENT:

Mike Hutt, VMPB
Owen Hynson, VMPB

GUESTS PRESENT:

Jordan Krevonick, Shellfish Growers of Virginia
Jamie Green, Commissioner of VMRC
Kim Huskey, Cherrystone Aqua Farms
Shelby White, VIMS
William Walton, VIMS
Tanner Council, Virginia Oyster Trail

INTRODUCTIONS AND WELCOME:

Introduction of attendance at meeting.

MINUTES:

William Sexauer made a motion to approve the minutes from November 14, 2024, Chris Sopko seconded the motion, and the motion passed unanimously.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

Virginia Oyster Trail – Oyster Brochure Suggestions: Tanner Council and Bill Walton from the Virginia Oyster Trail attended the meeting to give the VMPB an update on suggested changes to VMPB's oyster tasting brochure. VMPB board member Mike Congrove was on the Virginia Oyster Trails committee for suggested changes to the VMPB's oyster tasting brochure but was not in attendance at the meeting. Discussion was held among the VMPB about the supposed changes. Daniel Knott suggested that the Virginia Oyster trail along with other organizations like the VMPB, Virginia Waterman's Association, Virginia Seafood Council, and Shellfish Growers of Virginia can partner on any redesign to split the costs. William Sexauer made a motion for the Virginia Oyster Trail to continue on design changes to the VMPB's oyster tasting brochure and once their changes have been finalized to reintroduce them to the VMPB and other organizations that the Virginia Oyster trail would like to partner with and then the VMPB will decide if they want to be included in the redesign, Nathan Bussels seconded the motion, and the motion passed unanimously.

Seafood Source News February 2025 Ads Activity Report: The results for the VMPB's February 2025 Seafood Source advertising had not been finalized by the date of the VMPB board meeting.

Undercurrent News November, December 2024, January 2025 Ads Activity Report: The total number of impressions in 2024 as of the end of December 2024 were 988,432 newsletters sent, 809 total clicks and the click through rate is .27%. The VMPB also received complimentary placement during this period which resulted in 191,916 newsletters sent, 1,246 clicks, and a click through rate of 2.12%. The total number of impressions in 2025 as of the end of January 2025 were 172,324 newsletters sent, 66 total clicks, and a click through rate of .11%.

2024 Billboard Ads:

- **Adams:** The VMPB has an eight-week run with Adams between 10/21/24-12/15/24. From 10/21/24 to 12/15/24 Adams has guaranteed 67,200 plays and delivered 72,994 plays. Adams also delivered 2,386,852 impressions.

ABC 13 News Ad Campaign Report: The VMPB ad campaign with ABC 13 News from 11/1/24-1/31/25 results are as follows. On the 13News Now app ads featuring Menhaden, Clams, Oysters, Crabs, and supporting commercial watermen have made 123,045 impressions, been clicked on 65 times, and have a click through rate of .05%. ABC 13 News site retargeting has resulted in 123,329 impressions, 239 clicks, and a click through rate of .19%. ABC 13 Nes OTT retargeting has resulted in 273,336 impression, 444 clicks, and a click through rate of .16%.

NBC 12 News Ad Campaign Report: The VMPB ad campaign with NBC 12 News from 11/1/24-1/31/25 results are as follows. Ads ran on social media targeting seafood enthusiasts have been viewed a total of 2,261,655 times, 510,010 ads have been viewed on the 12 On Your Side weather app, and 1,143,123 targeted ad impressions have been served. There have been 3,920,000 total ads viewed, the VMPB was also given a sponsored article on NBC 12's website which has been read 11,148 times. This ad campaign has resulted in 15,730 website page leads.

Chesapeake Research Consortium Webinar Catfish Presentation: This webinar took place on November 20, 2024, and discussed the problems that the Virginia Seafood industry was facing due to invasive Blue Catfish and discussion was held on the best way to combat the issues. Mike Hutt attended this webinar on behalf of the VMPB and gave a presentation on Blue Catfish's impact on Virginia and what steps the VMPB has taken to combat the issue.

Virginia Tech Biomanufacturing Summit: This event was held in Richmond and took place on November 22, 2024. Mike Hutt attended the summit on behalf of the VMPB and discussed the with processors in attendance the possibilities of developing machines for processing Blue Catfish.

Shored Up Culinary Oyster Vocational Experience: This event was held on December 4, 2024, in Newport News. It was for culinary, vocational, and other students interested in learning about Virginia Oysters. Mike Hutt attended this event on behalf of the VMPB and gave a presentation on the Virginia Oyster industry, answered questions that the attendees had, and handed out Virginia Oyster Lover stickers, oyster tasting brochures, and mouse pads.

2025 VA Agribusiness Legislative Reception & Dinner: This event was supposed to be held on January 9, 2025, in Richmond. Mike Hutt & Owen Hynson were informed of its cancellation on January 8, 2025, due to the issues with accessing running water in Richmond at the time.

2025 SGVA Legislative Oyster Roast: This event was supposed to be held on January 13, 2025, in Richmond. Jordan Krevonick, Director of the Shellfish Growers of Virginia, informed the VMPB that this event was cancelled due to the issues with accessing running water in Richmond at the time.

2025 Legislative Seafood Luncheon: This event was held on January 15, 2025, in Richmond. Mike Hutt informed the board of the overwhelming positive feedback that he received from members of the Virginia legislature, executive office, and their respective aides. Mike had given each board member a copy of some of the letters and emails he received praising the event. Mike Hutt thanked Governor Glenn Youngkin for his support of this event and for him stopping by to participate with the VMPB. Mike Hutt also gave thanks to Johnny Graham and Graham & Rollins Seafood for all their help and support during this event, members of the VMPB, the Virginia Waterman's Association, the Shellfish Growers of Virginia, Melissa Ball and Laura Nay from VDACS, and Kim Huskey and AJ Erskine for their help and support during this event.

Seafood Expo North America 2025: Seafood Expo North America 2025 will be held between March 16-18, 2025, in Boston. Mike Hutt & Owen Hynson have both been approved to travel and Mike Hutt has confirmed with Levy that they will be handling the catering for the VMPB's Blue Catfish fillets. Mike Hutt informed the board that Levy's contract will total \$6,373.53, with this total the VMPB was informed that they will have a chef dedicated to their samples and a dedicated runner to deliver their samples during the agreed upon times. VDACS is supporting this cost with \$3,200.00 cost share. Hutt also informed the board that this amount was within the budget for what the board approved for SENA 2025 when passing the FY 24-25 VMPB budget but wanted to present the contract to the board and leave it open to discussion and a vote. William Sexauer made a motion to approve Levy's contract of \$6,373.53 for SENA 2025, Beverly Ludford seconded the motion, and a roll call vote was held.

- William Sexauer-Aye
- Chris Sopko-Aye
- Daniel Knott-Aye
- Beverly Ludford-Aye
- Trey Sowers-Aye
- Nathan Bussels-Aye

Six Ayes and the motion passed unanimously.

2025 Seafood Expo Global: Seafood Expo Global 2025 will be held in Barcelona, Spain between May 6-8th, 2025. Mike Hutt will be traveling as a co-activity manager for SUSTA, and they will be covering the cost of his travel. Owen Hynson will be traveling under VMPB funds to assist Mike Hutt with this event. Mike Hutt informed the board that currently five companies have registered to attend SEG 2025, and one Virginia company is still considering attending.

Blue Catfish Video: Mike Hutt is currently working with members of the industry, Virginia Tech, and VDACS on developing a video about Blue Catfish harvesting for marketing purposes. When Blue Catfish are more readily available Mike Hutt, and a commercial waterman will go out to shoot this video. Mike Hutt is hoping to accomplish this in the spring of 2025.

NEW BUSINESS

Mike Hutt Atlantic Aqua Farms: Mike Hutt informed the board that he traveled to Portsmouth, New Hampshire between January 27-29, 2025, on behalf of the VMPB to meet with Atlantic Aqua Farms to educate the sales and team on Virginia oysters.

2025 Sea Grant Reception: This event was held on February 6, 2025, in Richmond. Owen Hynson informed the board members that he attended this event on behalf of the VMPB. Owen said that attendance was slightly down from previous years but there was a good mix of industry members and state representatives. Jamie Green, Commissioner of the VMRC, also added that one of the reasoning for the lighter attendance was because of multiple events in the Richmond area that had to be rescheduled on this date due to the weather-related cancellations in the area.

Virginia Waterman's Association Annual Dinner: Daniel Knott informed the other board members that this event was previously scheduled for February 21 but was rescheduled for February 28, 2025, due to weather. The annual dinner was held at Omega Protein in Reedville and the dinner was a seafood boil with fried oyster appetizers. Daniel Knott said that the event was very successful and that they had over 200 attendees.

VDACS HOFEX Show Hong Kong: Mike Hutt informed the board that he was asked by VDACS to attend this expo that they were participating in from May 14-16, 2025, at no cost to the VMPB. Mike Hutt has been informed that VDACS is no longer participating in this event so the VMPBs involvement has ended as well. Mike Hutt was also told that VDACS would like to participate in this event in 2026.

VDACS Inbound Trade Mission from China & Canada: Mike Hutt informed the board that VDACS is currently working on putting together a trade mission for buyers from China & Canada interested in the Virginia Seafood industry. Currently they are planning on this trade mission taking place in June of 2025 and Mike Hutt will begin to look into potential seafood industry companies to take buyers to once he has date and attendance confirmation from VDACS.

SUSTA Hong Kong Inbound Buyers Mission: Mike Hutt informed the board that VDACS will be working with Mike Hutt, Owen Hynson, and Maryland's SUSTA members on a SUSTA sponsored inbound mission of buyers from Hong Kong in October of 2025. This mission would be a joint effort by Virginia and Maryland's SUSTA teams and will involve tours of both Virginia and Maryland's seafood industries. Mike Hutt will know more about dates of this event and planned stops once it gets closer to the tour date.

VDACS Catfish Website: Mike Hutt informed the board that VDACS is working on a website about Virginia Wild Caught Blue Catfish. VDACS will be handling the cost of creating and maintaining the website and has asked the VMPB for help when needed on content for the website.

Virginia Oyster FIP: Mike Hutt informed the board that the VMPB's financial support for the Virginia Seafood Council's Fishery Improvement Program for the Virginia Eastern Oyster had expired. As stated in their contract with the state of Virginia the VSC formally sent a letter to the VMPB requesting an extension of their support of the Virginia Eastern Oyster FIP until December 31, 2026, for a total of \$18,000.00. Discussion was held on the VMPB's continuation of the Virginia Eastern Oyster FIP. William Sexauer made a motion to extend funding of the Virginia Eastern Oyster FIP for \$18,000.00 until December 31- 2026, Trey Sowers seconded the motion, after discussion a roll call vote was held.

- William Sexauer-Aye
- Chris Sopko-Aye
- Daniel Knott-Aye
- Beverly Ludford-Aye
- Trey Sowers-Aye
- Nathan Bussels-Aye

Six Ayes and the motion passed unanimously.

INTERESTED PARTY REPORTS

VIMS – Shelby White informed the board that the Seafood Chefs Symposium will be held on March 11, 2025, at VIMS from 8:00 am-1:00 pm. Shelby also informed the board that she will be involved in an event for students supporting local seafood at a nearby school in Williamsburg.

Virginia Tech – No report.

VMRC – Commissioner Jamie Green informed the board that the VMRC’s F.I.S.H. program will be able to assist with future F.I.P. and M.S.C. certification on Virginia Seafood products and reiterated the importance of the current Virginia Eastern Oyster F.I.P. to the board members. Commissioner Green also stated that the VMRC will continue to support the VMPB with the creation of promotion and marketing material when possible.

Virginia Seafood Council – Kim Huskey thanked the board for their continued support of the Virginia Eastern Oyster F.I.P. and she reiterated that the currently “A” rating that the Virginia Eastern Oyster was maintaining, its compliance with Environment Reporting Requirements, and its Social Reporting Requirements can be used by anyone in the Virginia Seafood industry marketing and promoting Virginia Oysters.

Virginia Waterman’s Association – Dan Knott informed the board members of an issue watermen are facing in the Northern Neck about bio solids from Maryland. Bio solids are being shipped to the Northern Neck from Maryland for use as fertilizer. Currently, they are untested, so the Virginia Waterman’s Association is concerned with potential issues from fertilizer runoff.

Shellfish Growers of Virginia – Executive Director of the SGVA, Jordan Krevonick, reported that she will have a booth for the SGVA at the Chincoteague Seafood Festival on May 3, 2025. Jordan also informed the board that the date of the SGVA’s 2026 Legislative Oyster Roast will be on January 19, 2026.

Omega Protein – No report.

Cooperative Programs

VDACS – No report.

Financial Report

Mike Hutt reported a carry over for FY 2024-2025 of \$662,178.74 and a balance of \$435,400.62 as of January 31st, 2025.

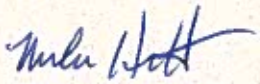
PUBLIC COMMENT - None

TRAVEL – The Board may request travel reimbursement.

ADJOURNMENT

Meeting adjourned at 3:26 PM.

Respectfully Submitted,



Mike Hutt
Executive Director



Taylor Deihl
Chair

