

DRAFT
VIRGINIA MARINE PRODUCTS BOARD (VMPB)
Board Meeting Minutes
Thursday November 13, 2025/ 1:00 P.M.
VIMS, Davis Hall
Gloucester Point, VA

CALL TO ORDER: VMPB Chair Taylor Deihl called the meeting to order at 1:12 P.M. Four board members were present, which represented a quorum.

BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT:

Monica Schenemann
Michael Congrove
Chris Sopko
Jonathan van Senten
Taylor Deihl
Daniel Knott
William Sexauer
Beverly Ludford
Nathan Bussels

BOARD MEMBERS ABSENT:

Terri Graham Wallace
Trey Sowers

STAFF PRESENT:

Mike Hutt, VMPB
Owen Hynson, VMPB

GUESTS PRESENT:

Joe Guthrie, VDACS Commissioner
Jamie Green, VMRC Commissioner
Melissa Ball, VDACS
JC Hudgins, President of the Virginia Waterman's Association
Jordan Krevonick, Executive Director of Shellfish Growers of Virginia
Stephanie Heinatz, Consociate Media
Kim Huskey, Cherrystone Aqua Farms
Karen Hudson, VIMS
Shelby White, VIMS

INTRODUCTIONS AND WELCOME:

Introduction of attendance at meeting.

MINUTES:

Johnathan made a motion to approve the minutes from the June 11, August 14, October 7 board meetings, Chris seconded the motion, and the motion passed unanimously.

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UNFINISHED BUSINESS

VMPB Executive Director's Position: Mike Hutt informed the VMPB board members that he will be retiring effective immediately as of December 1, 2025. Bill Scruggs informed the VMPB board members that VDACS will begin listing the VMPB Executive Director position after the New Year holiday in January. VDACS Commissioner Joe Guthrie and VMPB board chair Taylor Deihl presented Mike with a certificate of appreciation for his years of service with the state and at the VMPB. Beverly made a motion appointing Taylor as the temporary acting Executive Director of the VMPB, Monica seconded the motion, and the motion passed unanimously.

VMPB Office Lease: VDACS Commissioner Joe Guthrie informed the board members that VDACS will be terminating the lease at the VMPB office in Newport News effective January 1, 2026. VMRC Commissioner Jamie Green informed the board members that the VMRC has office and storage space dedicated to the VMPB at the VMRC office in Hampton and this will be made available to them once renovations are completed. In the meantime, the VMPB employees will continue to work from home. Commissioner Guthrie and Commissioner Green both stated that they would provide the VMPB with office space and supplies when needed and that the VMPB can use the VMRC office in Hampton as the current physical address of the VMPB.

Proposed VMPB Budget For FY 25-26: Mike Hutt presented the board members with the proposed VMPB budget for FY 25-26. This proposal was originally presented at the 8/14/25 board meeting but a quorum was not met at the meeting, so a vote was not held. William made a motion to approve the budget, Dan seconded the motion, after the discussion a roll call vote was held.

- William Sexuaer-Aye
- Taylor Deihl-Aye
- Daniel Knott-Aye
- Beverly Ludford-Aye
- Mike Congrove-Aye
- Nathan Bussels-Aye
- Johnathan van Senten-Aye
- Monica Schenemann-Aye
- Chris Sopko-Aye

Nine Ayes and the motion passed unanimously.

Electronic Virtual Meeting Policy: Melissa Ball of VDACS presented the VMPB with a proposal to adopt a virtual meeting policy. This virtual meeting policy would be similar to other Virginia commodity boards policies only allowing up to two full virtual meetings in one calendar year, not allowing for the board to hold two virtual meetings in a row, and allowing hybrid in person virtual meetings in which a physical quorum will need to be met at the meeting in person. William made a motion adopting the policy, Johnathan seconded the motion, and the motion passed unanimously.

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Consociate Advertising Presentation: Stephanie Heinatz of Consociate Advertising gave an informal presentation to the VMPB on how Consociate Advertising could help improve the VMPB's social media and advertising exposure. Johnathan made a motion for Stephanie to return during the next scheduled VMPB board meeting to present the VMPB a formal proposal to vote on. Johnathan then amended his motion to make it an online meeting held in January, Monica seconded the motion, and the motion passed unanimously.

VMPB Legislative Seafood Luncheon: JC Hudgins, president of the Virginia Waterman's Association informed the board that himself and other members of the Waterman's Association will be helping participate in the VMPB's Legislative Seafood Luncheon. JC suggested to the board that the menu be Blue Catfish fillets, crab cakes, seafood gumbo, mac & cheese, collards, and hush puppies. Mike Hutt informed the board that he and Owen will work with Johnny Graham on getting an agreement in place with Johnny Graham on providing the catering for the event. The luncheon will be held on January 21, 2026, the first Wednesday during the first full week of the legislative session. Nathan made a motion for Mike and Owen to get an agreement with Johnny Graham in place for the food, supplies, and catering for the event at the cost of \$8,500.00 which is the amount approved in the VMPB FY 25-26 budget. Johnathan seconded the motion and the motion passed unanimously.

Seafood Source News October 2025 Ads Activity Report: The VMPB received comp placement in SeafoodSource.com during October. The VMPB also received one month of comp placement in Weekly Global Newsletter during October. The value from the comp advertising during October was \$6,275.00. As of October 2025 the VMPB received on Seafood Source News 2,899,519 total deliveries, 835,357 total opens, and 195 total clicks on Virginia Seafood ads. The number of impressions as of the end of October 2025 in Seafood Source advertising comp advertising was 69,495, the total number of clicks was 46, and the CTR was .07%. The VMPB Weekly Global Newsletter October 2025 numbers were 225,716 deliveries, 69,693 total opens, and 36 total clicks.

Undercurrent News September & October 2025 Ads Activity Report: The total number of impressions as of the end of October 2025 were 861,360 newsletters sent, 329 total clicks and the click through rate was .11%. The VMPB also received complimentary placement in the months of September during this period. The total number of impressions as of the end of September 2025 were 92,197 newsletters sent, 1,779 total clicks, and a click through rate of 5.41%.

Adams 10/27/25-11/10/25 Advertising Activity Report: For the first two weeks of the VMPB ad run with Adams on their billboard off I-64 in Hampton the VMPB was guaranteed 16,800 plays. The VMPB has received so far 18,661 plays and 596,588 total impressions.

Lamar 7/7/25-8/31/25 Advertising Activity Report: Starting on 7/9/25 the panel on Broad Street in Richmond had 37,296 anticipated deliveries. Lamar over delivered on this projection with 64,786 deliveries through 8/3/25. Starting on 7/21/25 the panel at the Mechanicsville Turnpike had 27,972 anticipated deliveries. Lamar over delivered on this projection with 51,982 deliveries through 8/17/25.

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NBC 12 News: The results so far from the NBC campaign started on November 1, 2025 through November 10, 2025 are 322,170 total ads viewed, 179 total website page leads, 85,048 ads viewed on the weather app, and 237,119 ads ran on social media targeting seafood enthusiasts. The key areas targeted in this campaign are Northern Virginia, Richmond, Norfolk, and Roanoke.

VDACS Blue Catfish Work Group: VDACS Commissioner Guthrie informed the board that the Blue Catfish Work Group final report is out and is available for the public to view. He noted that progress has been made introducing Blue Catfish to the correctional and school systems. The Blue Catfish work group recommends another full-time position in the VMPB promoting Blue Catfish. Beverly made a motion for the VMPB to endorse the Blue Catfish Work Group final report, Dan seconded the motion, and the motion passed unanimously.

Shipping Shellfish To The EU Update: Kim Husky informed the board she has worked with the Virginia Department of Shellfish and Sanitation, and they have completed the application for shipping Clams to the EU. Kim Husky met with Melissa Abbott of the FDA, and she will accept Virginia's application to ship clams to the EU. She also met with the United States Trade Representative's office, which was supportive of shipping clams to the EU and suggested to follow back up with the FDA. With the government shut down the application was not submitted, and Kim is following up with Shellfish and Sanitation to submit the application to the FDA.

VDACS Blue Catfish Harvesting Video: Mike Hutt informed the board that the VMPB is still working on completing a video on Blue Catfish and that Spring and Fall are the best times of the year in which to film a video. Mike also suggested to the board to work with Stephanie from Consociate Advertising on creating this video if they approve her proposal.

Seafood Expo Asia 2025: Mike Hutt informed the board that Seafood Expo Asia 2025 was held between September 10-12, 2025 in Singapore. Mike Hutt attended the event as the SUSTA co-activity manger for which his travel costs were reimbursed back to the VMPB by SUSTA. Mike informed the board that four SUSTA region companies were in the SUSTA pavilion including one Virginia company. Mike also informed the board that the VMPB collected 29 trade leads for Virginia companies during the event.

SUSTA Wild Blue Catfish Promotion: Mike Hutt informed the board that SUSTA ran a program featuring Wild Blue Catfish the day after Seafood Expo Asia ended on September 13, 2025, from 2:00 am-5:00 am for seafood markets in Singapore looking for new products to feature. Because Mike Hutt was departing from Singapore this day Stone Slade from Maryland was the SUSTA activity manager for this event.

SUSTA Hong Kong & China Inbound Buyers Mission: Mike Hutt informed the board that VDACS worked with Mike Hutt, Owen Hynson, and Maryland's SUSTA members on a SUSTA sponsored inbound mission of buyers from Hong Kong and China from October 12-14 of 2025. This mission was a joint effort by Virginia and Maryland's SUSTA teams and involved tours of both Virginia and Maryland's seafood industries. Mike Hutt was in charge of showing the tour group parts of the Virginia seafood industry on October 13th and 14th and then dropped off the tour group off in La Plata, Maryland for Stone Slade of the Maryland SUSTA team to finish the tour of the Maryland seafood industry.

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Virginia Aquaculture Conference: Mike Hutt informed that the 2025 Virginia Aquaculture Conference will take place in Newport News from November 14-15, 2025. Mike Hutt also informed the board that Mike and Owen have paid the VMPB's booth cost and will be in attendance handing out promotional material and signing interested aquaculture growers up for their Virginia Oyster Aquaculture Directory.

Virginia Beach Restaurant Association Event: This event is scheduled to take place on November 18, 2025. Mike will reach out to Martha Davenport, the organizer of the event, to see if it is still going to take place.

Agribusiness Legislative Reception: Mike informed the board that he does not have confirmation if this event will be taking place, but he will continue to investigate this. Commissioner Guthrie informed the board that this event is being held on January 15, 2026 and that he will reach out to get Mike into contact with the correct people to talk to for participating in this event.

Virginia Food & Beverage Expo: Mike informed the board that as of now this event is still scheduled to take place on March 25, 2026, at the Richmond Expo Center. Mike Hutt informed the board that the VMPB has booth space that VDACS has provided for them for this event and that Owen will be there with marketing material, samples, a seafood display, and will be gathering trade leads for the industry.

SENA 2026: Mike Hutt informed the board that SENA 2026 will take place in Boston between March 15-17, 2026. Mike Hutt informed the board that VDACS international marketing department has agreed help support the VMPB with pre show planning and will send someone to Boston to help Owen with the booth set up, handing out Blue Catfish samples, gather trade leads, and help with the break down of the booth after the show.

SEG 2026: Mike Hutt informed the board that SEG 2026 will take place in Barcelona between April 21-23, 2026. Owen Hynson informed the board as one of the SUSTA co-activity managers for this show he has already sent out a recruitment flyer to Virginia companies for this event.

SEA 2026: Mike Hutt informed the board that the show dates for SEA 2026 have just been released and that SEA 2026 will be held in Singapore between September 2-4, 2026. Owen Hynson will be one of the SUSTA co-activity managers for this show.

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. Mike Hutt informed the board that the VMPB has provided VDACS with pictures, recipes, and videos for the website but has not received a timeline line yet for when it will be completed. Mike Hutt will reach out to VDACS and see if there are any updates from them.

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NEW BUSINESS

2025 SUSTA Winter Meeting: Mike Hutt informed the board that this event is scheduled to take place in Durham, NC between December 8-11, 2025. Owen Hynson will be attending this event on behalf of the VMPB.

2026 SeaGrant Reception: Mike Hutt informed the board that this event is scheduled to be held on February 11, 2026 at the Library of Virginia in Richmond. The VMPB will be providing the reception with our insulated display boats for the event and Owen Hynson will be attending the event on behalf of the VMPB.

2026 Virginia Waterman's Association Annual Membership Dinner: JC Hudgins informed the board that the date of the dinner will be February 13, 2026 and the dinner will be moved from Omega Protein to the festival hall at the Reedville Volunteer Fire Department in order to accommodate more people.

VDACS SENA 2026 Canadian Inbound Buyers Mission & Dinner: Mike Hutt informed the board that this event was scheduled for March 15, 2026 after the first day of SENA 2026. This event was being led by the VDACS marketing team but they have since cancelled it. As of now they are still planning on taking buyers by the Virginia isle during SENA 2026 and would still like to schedule and inbound buyers mission at a date to be determined after the show.

INTERESTED PARTY REPORTS

VIMS – Shelby White informed the board that the current Shellfish Growers report that they have been working on has been released and that a new Shellfish Growers survey will be going out as well, VIMS is also working on an infographics card with a link to the survey on it. Shelby also let the board know that VIMS will be hosting a Young Fisherman's Workshop in January 2026. Shelby also mentioned that the fishery resource grant is open for applications now.

Virginia Tech – Johnathan informed the other board members that Phase 2 of the Economic Impact study has been finalized and passed out the condensed fact sheet and infographic. Anyone wanting to view the full report can do so online or get into contact with him for the full physical copy. Due to an over estimate on the amount of traveling needed to complete the impact study there will be over \$30,000.00 that the VMPB budgeted for the impact study that will not be invoiced to them.

VMRC – Commissioner Green informed the VMPB that the VMRC apprentice program is going well, they are currently looking for more mentors to add to the program before they increase the student count. He also noted that the beginning outlook for the oyster season is strong.

Virginia Seafood Council – Kim Husky informed the board that there was a VSC board meeting on 11/8/25. The current VSC board chair is Hannah Kellum and they are soon going to appoint AJ Erskine as the new board chair. The VSC is comprised of 30 members with 5 board members, and their two priorities currently are the Oyster FIP and the H2A/B visa issues.

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Virginia Waterman’s Association – JC Hudgins informed the board that the VWA Crab Feast on September 20th was successful, they will give out four \$1,000.00 scholarships. Crab pot season ends on December 21, 2025, prices have been good this year. Oyster season opened on October 15 and the James and Potomac rivers have been strong so far, the Rappahannock has been kind of slow. JC also informed the board that the VWA will be at the Reedville Museum Oyster Roast.

Shellfish Growers of Virginia – Jordan Krevonick informed the board that the SGV will have a booth at the 2025 Virginia Aquaculture Conference. Jordan also informed the board that the SGV will be holding their legislative oyster roast on January 14, 2026.

Omega Protein/Ocean Harvesters – Taylor Deihl informed the board that the Menhaden quota was cut 20% coast wide for one year despite the stock assessment coming back finding that Menhaden are not being over harvested.

Cooperative Programs

VDACS – Commissioner Guthrie told the board that he has been in discussion with the FDA and USDA on returning Blue Catfish processing regulations to the FDA. He said that both agencies have been receptive and will follow up and report back any findings.

Financial Report

Mike Hutt reported a carryover for FY 2025-2026 of \$453,401.82 and a balance of \$386,398.38 as of September 30th, 2025.

PUBLIC COMMENT – No comment.

TRAVEL – The Board may request travel reimbursement.

ADJOURNMENT

Meeting adjourned at 4:13 PM.

Respectfully Submitted,

Mike Hutt
Ex. Director

Taylor Deihl
Chair