

Informational Minutes
Virginia Aquaculture Advisory Committee
November 17, 2017

The VFBF Aquaculture Advisory Committee and the Virginia Aquaculture Advisory Board (VAAB) met jointly on Friday, November 17, 2017 during the Virginia Aquaculture Conference at the Newport News Marriott City Center, Newport News, Virginia.

Members Present: Heather Lusk, Vice Chairman John Hofmeyer, and Bryan Plemmons

Members Absent:

Guests Present: Eric Aschenbach, Va. Department of Health; Mike Schwarz, Carole Engle and Jonathan van Senten, Va. Tech; Mike Osterling, Va. Shellfish Growers Association; Brendan Delbos and Marie Davis, VDGIF; Herman Ellison, USDA/NASS; Brian Nerrie and David Crosby, VSU; and Dick Snyder and Chris Bentley, VMRC

Staff Present: Butch Nottingham, VDACS

Since there was not a quorum present, no official business was conducted and the election of officers was postponed until the next meeting.

VAAB and VFBF Advisory Committee members provided updates from their specific industry segments and operations. For clams and oysters the weather has been good in 2017 including an extended warm fall. Shellfish demand and prices continue to increase with growers struggling to keep production up with demand. Recent drought is significantly hurting trout production, perhaps the worst yield in recent memory. 2018 trout production is expected to decrease; however, demand for trout remains very good. Hybrid striped bass continue to sell well in wholesale and retail. Southern tilapia production is increasing, but 2016 was good for Blue Ridge Aquaculture. They are now operating their own feed mill and hope to eventually plan to sell feed to other growers. The Virginia Aqua-farmers Network is continuing to develop ready to eat meals for its four species.

Brendan Delbos announced that Ron Southwick had retired as state aquaculture coordinator and that he has replaced Ron at the Va. Dept. of Game and Inland Fisheries. Brendan looks forward to working with the industry in his new capacity.

Eric Aschenbach, Dept. of Health, reported there were algal blooms this year, but not significant enough to warrant closure of any shellfish grounds. DOH is working with VIMS on toxic bloom research. *Vibrio* is increasing nationally, but has remained at a steady level in Virginia despite increased oyster production.

Mike Schwarz, Va. Tech Seafood AREC, announced Va. Tech and the City of Hampton have reached an agreement for the construction of a new multipurpose building to replace existing structures at the AREC. Va. Tech is expected to contribute one-third of the \$12 mil budget and is working with Hampton to fund the balance which will include Hampton requesting \$6.5 mil in funding from the General Assembly. Soft research funding is increasing for work in hatcheries and live feed, including two new positions. He hopes to refill Michael Jahnke's former position in August 2018 with another tenure-track faculty. Committee members were very supportive of construction funding for the AREC. Jonathan van Senten and Carole Engle, Va. Tech Seafood AREC, reported on compliance cost research and production budgets for several different species and production cultures, including commercial aquaponics.

Dick Snyder, VIMS Eastern Shore, confirmed there is funding for construction of five new buildings at Wachapreague for lecture, labs, office, dormitory and hatchery space. The facility current hosts visiting researchers for 4,000 hours/year. Research is focused on hatchery water, hard clam genetics and breeding, and growing oysters and 400,000 scallops for aquaculture and wild release. Chris Bentley was hired from the private sector to manage the lab facility.

Mike Osterling, Va. Shellfish Growers Assoc., commented that the shellfish industry was enjoying a prosperous year that includes no rise in Vibrio. So far, very little legislation has been brought forward and it remains to be seen who Governor-elect Northam will appointment to his cabinet.

Brian Nerrie reported that VSU recently completed its fish school for producers. VSU is starting an urban aquaculture effort at its remote site in Petersburg. David Crosby reported working with trout on disease issues. He will begin working on commercial production protocols for bluegill, crappie and bass as well as forced-air cage culture for catfish and other species.

Herman Ellison, State Director, USDA/NASS encouraged growers to respond and complete the 2017 Census of Agriculture. NASS will likely conduct its next aquaculture survey in 2018.

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 2:30 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

_____, Chairman
Heather Lusk

_____, Acting Secretary
Butch Nottingham