

## **Maryland Aquaculture Coordinating Council (ACC) Minutes September 15, 2022**

### **Members Attending**

Kathy Brohawn  
Jeffrey Cornwell  
Kim Coulbourne  
Matthew Fleming (DNR Rep)  
Reggie Harrell  
Sen. Katherine Klausmeier (Sam  
Deschenaux, Rep)  
Del. Johnny Mautz

Catherine Medellin  
Ward Slacum  
Donald Webster  
John T. Barnette  
Scott Budden  
F. William “Bill” Kilinski

### **Guests Attending**

Kellie Dennis (DNR)  
Rebecca Thur (DNR)  
Alyssa Durner (DNR)  
Amanda Small  
Eve  
George O’Donnell (DNR)  
Jennica Moffat  
Mark Bryer  
Mary Horseman  
Nicole

Pete Grasso (DNR)  
Robin Brown  
Samantha Pellegrini (DNR)  
Sarah Widman (DNR)  
Steve Pattison  
Steve  
Val Perez  
Larry Jennings  
Logan Billlam  
Maureen Ferguson (NRP)

### **Call to Order**

Chair Webster called the hybrid meeting to order at 3:31pm. The Maryland Department of Natural Resources (DNR) staff took attendance with quorum confirmed.

### **Administrative**

#### Approval of July 2022 Meeting Minutes

The July 2022 meeting minutes were approved as submitted.

#### Announcements and Introductions – Chair Webster and Members

The Interstate Seafood Seminar Conference (ISSC) was held in Ocean City, Maryland earlier in the month for the first time in three years. It was very successful and had a very high turnout.

The 2022 Maryland Shellfish Growers Conference will be held at the Westin Hotel in Annapolis, MD on Tuesday, November 15.

### **Reports**

#### Department of Natural Resources, Aquaculture Division – Mr. Fleming and Ms. Thur, DNR

Mr. Fleming provided multiple updates prior to Ms. Thur providing the Leasing and Permitting Program report. On Monday, September 12, Federal representatives attended a celebration in Maryland of the 50-year anniversary of the Clean Water Act. On Tuesday, water quality results

were announced documenting a large portion of the bay meeting minimum standards, however, it was unfortunately lower than previous years in recent history.

In program updates, Lynn Fegley will serve as Fisheries Director for the next 6 months and the department thanked Mr. Luisi for his recent time serving in the position. Around 80 qualified people have applied for the aquaculture program Director position, with 20 highly qualified applicants selected for interviews. Additionally, the leasing and permitting program in the aquaculture unit advertised for two open positions and will start interviewing soon.

Since September 2010, the division has received 601 lease applications and the state has issued 339 new shellfish aquaculture leases covering 6697.6 acres. There are 471 active leases covering 7657.24 acres. Four hundred and fifty five leases have been permitted for 2022. Twenty-four lease applications are currently in the protest process.

Since the last ACC meeting, three public notice comment periods have closed, one of which resulted in a request for a public information meeting. An additional application is currently on notice in Calvert County and another is in process for approval of two additional leases that will be issued soon. In the next few months, there will be several virtual public information meetings with details to come. Transfers must be completed and returned to the department by October 15 for them to be executed prior to the annual use cutoff, when the department does not process transfers until the use documentation is complete for the current year.

#### Legislature – Delegate Mautz

There has been discussion regarding summer harvest but nothing has been finalized at this time. The Delegate noted that he has been working hard on his political campaign and is gearing up for the November election.

#### Department of the Environment – Ms. Brohawn, MDE

The Interstate Seafood Seminar (ISS) conference was held in Ocean City MD. It was very successful and had a great turnout. Next year the ISS will be held in North Carolina and more information will be provided as time gets closer. MDE was to be found in non-conformance during their recent FDA audit and the Department is working to resolve the issue.

#### Department of Health – Ms. Coulbourne, MDH

At the July ACC meeting, it was announced that there were multiple positions open in the unit, and they were pleased to provide an update that those positions were mostly filled and the unit is almost fully staffed. Additionally, MDH announced that the first in-person Hazard Analysis Critical Control Point (HACCP) training since the pandemic will be held in 2023 in April.

#### Oyster Recovery Partnership (ORP), Mr. Slacum

The Remote Setting Training program began in May and is currently winding down for the year. This year, participants in the program have use of 175 million larvae. ORP also manages a program for DNR to support enhancement of public fishing reefs. That program is still active but with activities winding down for the year as well.

### The Nature Conservancy (TNC), Mark Bryer

An update on the SOAR (Supporting Oyster Aquaculture and Restoration) program provided highlights of the program in recent years. The supported the industry during the COVID pandemic by purchasing market sized oysters using COVID relief grant funds and planted them in sanctuaries. The program operated in multiple states with more than one-third of oysters purchased from Maryland growers.

In Maryland, three sanctuaries received the oysters and surveys showed that an average of over 85% survived and are alive and thriving. TNC has future plans to conduct the program again in Maryland using federal funds from NOAA. This should support purchase of over 150,000 additional oysters. More information will be provided on the program for 2023 and beyond.

### University of Maryland College Park – Dr. Harrell

UMD-CP is currently reviewing Northeastern Regional Aquaculture Center (NRAC) proposals from the region, which extends from Maine to Maryland, for USDA funding. These cover a wide range of species and are required to include multiple states in the project.

### University of Maryland Center for Environmental Science (UMCES) - Dr. Cornwell

Dr. Michael (Mike) Sieracki from the National Science Foundation will be the new director of the Horn Point Laboratory, starting in October. They look forward to him joining UMCES and heading up the laboratory.

### University of Maryland Extension, Chair Webster

UMD Extension has a 5 year, \$10 million dollar project from the US Department of Agriculture to bring advances to oyster bottom culture production technology. It includes a National Advisory Board, with representatives from all coasts that met in Maryland this week. The project will develop similar technology to that used in agriculture. Drones are being created to assess oyster populations on bottom. The meeting also included site visits to producers in Maryland.

### **Continuing Business**

#### Shellfish Lease Bulk Tagging, Ms. Widman (DNR)

DNR and NRP staff met to discuss this issue, raised by industry in a prior meeting, and are in favor of moving a bulk tagging proposal forward. Some concerns were raised regarding enforcement that will need to be agreed on prior to regulatory review. The plan is to test how well the process works and identify issues that may arise to troubleshoot if and when possible. Once completed, the proposal will move through the regulatory process for implementation.

#### Wicomico River Dredging Project Update – Mr. Fleming (DNR)

The lower Wicomico River dredging project is a partnership between the county and DNR that identified over 70 acres that could serve as a placement site for about 140,000 cubic yards of dredge material. The project will be conducted under the management of the US Army Corps of Engineers and DNR is working with them to identify appropriate dredge material to restore wetlands and habitat sites. Dredging is scheduled to begin in late fall 2022.

#### Alternative Substrate Workgroup – Mr. Slacum

Due to the concern regarding shell shortage brought forth at the September meeting by ACC member Brown, the Council voted at that meeting to form a workgroup on Alternate Substrates to investigate and make recommendations on the issue. The first meeting, conducted the week prior to this Council meeting, included agreeing on basic procedures to move forward with researching options for, and identification of, alternate materials acceptable for substrate to create bottom leases and setting to produce spat on shell. The workgroup will hold four meetings through the end of 2022 and develop a report to the Council.

#### Summer Harvest Time Workgroup – Ms. Coulbourne

The currently approved program allows only 4-4.5 hours for harvesting from leases by the end of August due to daylight and time constraints. It was noted that, while there is a mandatory time required to have oysters under refrigeration by 10:30 am during July and August, the summer equinox occurs in late June with all days after becoming progressively shorter, making it harder for growers to operate. Council members have joined the workgroup and are working on the issue with a report expected in the first quarter of 2023. The current plan is based on sunrise so they are looking into alternate ideas on how to maximize hours for harvest.

#### **New Business**

##### Vessel Identification Equipment Presentation – Mr. Webster

Technology was presented during the ISS by a company in Woods Hole MA. Their device is a compact vessel monitor that operates on solar power and has assisted growers in other areas with the ability to be identified when carrying out projects requiring documentation of their location. It has potential to open access to aquaculture operations not feasible with current technology. It allows vessels to be tracked as they operate and Chair Webster stated that this could be used for the summer harvest time issue. NRP has expressed concern regarding enforcement potential and operational safety in hours before sunrise so this could aid them in their work. A presentation by the company will be requested for an upcoming meeting.

#### **Public Comments**

There were no public comments offered.

#### **Adjourn**

The meeting was adjourned at 4:34 pm. The next regular meeting is tentatively set for Thursday, November 10, 2022.