

**Aquaculture Advisory Council  
January 29, 2021  
Meeting Minutes- Conference Call Meeting**

**Members Present:** Sec. Douglas Fisher, Mr. Joseph Cimino (Acting Comm. Shawn Latourette), Ms. Melanie Willoughby (Sec. Tahesha Way), Mr. Loel Muetter (Comm. Judith Persichilli), Dr. Dave Bushek, Dr. Douglas Zemeckis, Mr. Mike De Luca (Dr. Robert Goodman), Ms. Lisa Calvo, Mr. Barney Hollinger, Mr. Maury Sheets, Mr. Bill Avery (G. Saridakis), Mr. Ned Gaine (John Maxwell), Ms. Elizabeth Haskin, Mr. Bob Rush, Mr. Steve Fleetwood, Dr. Amanda Wenczel.

**Members Absent:** none.

**Public in Attendance:** Roll call of attendees not taken; names were stated when making comment.

Sec. Fisher called the meeting to order; a quorum was present (roll call at 10:40am- quorum was present entire time).

Approval of meeting minutes- October 2020. N. Gaine opposed meeting minutes due to brevity over his introductory public comment and the comments at the second public comment session.

Roll call of minutes approval:

Sec. Fisher- Abstained  
J. Cimino (Act. Comm. LaTourette)- Aye  
M. Willoughby (Sec. Way)- Abstained  
L. Muetter (Comm. Persichilli)- Aye  
D. Bushek- Aye  
D. Zemeckis- Aye  
M. De Luca (Interim Dean Lawson)- Aye  
L. Calvo- Aye  
B. Hollinger- Aye  
B. Avery (G. Saridakis)- Abstained  
N. Gaine (J. Maxwell)- No  
M. Sheets- Aye  
E. Haskin- Approve with changes suggested

Majority in favor; motion to approve minutes carries.

*Public Comment*  
No comments.

*New Business*  
No new business.

*Aquaculture Development Plan*- A. Wenczel.

Majority of meeting time spent discussing the December 2020 version of the Aquaculture Development Plan Update.

S. Fleetwood- Plan got too big and went too far. Makes the NJ industry sound dysfunctional but we're not. In national meetings, NJ is one of the few without big issues. Narrow the Plan to what we can do or what we can change. Sec. Fisher- Need a sense of guardrails on where to go, or where to cut. S. Fleetwood- described the ISSC, NSSP information. Much of shellfish aquaculture is outside the control of state agencies/actions. Some issues cannot be changed by the State.

Addressing Big Picture Items

Roll of AAC. N. Gaine- Stressed role of the AAC and NJDA in the marketing and promotion role. There is no other agency in the State that has the expertise to serve this role.

Sec. Fisher- (1) sounds like not serving this role to industry satisfaction. If the industry is going to work towards something it should be to get us funds to serve this role. Almost all funding for marketing is from the federal government. We can do the job, we need the funding. (2) we can produce seafood marketing items and have done that in the past. No one picks them up and uses them like other industries.

N. Gaine- AAC needs to work to get NJDA more money- make our aquaculture products more competitive in NJ.

M. Willoughby- to whom are we "marketing"? General public? Supermarkets? Sec. Fisher- all of the above. M. Willoughby- asked for clarification on Jersey Fresh and aquaculture. Sec. Fisher- Federal Specialty Block Program funds most (almost all) of our promotional programing for Jersey Fresh. Aquaculture is not a specialty crop.

M. Willoughby gave brief overview of her role as a new representative- NJ Business Action Center, Dept. of State

D. Zemeckis- brought forward role of AAC to advise NJDA and other State agencies on existing and proposed rules & policies. AAC should determine how to move forward with that portion of the Council's charge.

B. Hollinger- provided comments on the ADP relative to the Aquaculture Development Act.

J. Cimino- on record that Fish and Game and Marine Fisheries Councils sent proxies to the AAC meeting seeing that the roles/engagement of these representatives has been brought forward with the ADP. [Roll Call followed comment]

L. Calvo- Interpretation of the AAC role and "development" of the industry. Consider if this means growing industry, strengthening engagement of current industry.

M. Sheets- discuss in this meeting, and then if items need decisions/voting, that can be itemized for next meeting.

B. Haskin- have a meeting with growers to further discuss their comments on the ADP.

S. Fleetwood- (1) Speaking to comments from L. Calvo- we (industry & AAC) need to really consider current industry versus adding more people. Those in the industry right now have gone through a lot and survived this last year. We need to consider what they need. (2) As a Delaware Bay Shellfish Councilmember, some items blindsided me and sounded like shortfalls of that Council.

N. Gaine- Highlighted quantity of comments shows buy-in from industry into the ADP Update. The 2011 version had discussions at AAC meetings.

B. Rush- questioned why Fish and Game Council and Marine Fisheries Council are non-voting?  
A. Wenczel- membership is dictated in Statute (Aquaculture Development Act).

D. Bushek- present the ADP at the Shellfish Council meetings.

Sec. Fisher- to close out this portion of discussion, move forward with growers meeting. Members wanted to attend were noted with scheduling and follow-up to occur outside of the AAC meeting.

Matt Williams- Discuss the 14-pages of comments with ADP committee and AAC. Sec. Fisher- Discuss at the growers meeting. We can't cover every comment, we address it by collating the thoughts provided. M. Williams asking for the purpose of this [AAC] meeting if not to address the comments. A. Wenczel- comments not being ignored, cover at the growers meeting. The Council needs to address bigger picture items. Council discretion as to how comments and drafts move forward.

Discussion on the Purpose of the Plan, Goals, Audience, Authors. B. Hollinger read the Purpose of the Plan from the 1995 (original) version of the ADP.

B. Avery- go back to the original plan and obstacles. We have also had a bunch of accomplishments (listed several).

Sec. Fisher- acknowledged the successes of the industry and the brilliance of the AAC members in their respective roles. AAC is here to advance the industry by maximizing resources while protecting the public & protect the growers. That's why the AAC brings together state representatives, researchers, and growers to address all these different needs of the industry (examples of red knot, nursery systems, etc.). In the Plan we need strategies, we need things we can do to change the situation.

M. De Luca- following up on Sec. Fisher comments. The last plan (2011) had recommendations but no action items, no actions or acting authorities to take action on the recommendations. The committee had grower representation and conducted a growers survey. The target audience was

discussed with agencies, Legislature and AAC. All together these items drove the structure and development of the plan.

*Aquaculture-Red Knot Stakeholder Committee-*

M. De Luca- provided update. (1) Proposed change to Conservation Measure 13. Currently no new gear installation over April 15- June 7. Change to allow installation of new gear and equipment as needed, during other visits to farm site. R. Babb- Agency Workgroup reviewing, formal response in February. (2) Discussed forming a Science Advisory Committee- let research priorities drive membership. More discussion in future meetings.

*Councilmember Comments*

N. Gaine- initiated discussion on Right to Farm and applicability to aquaculture. Concern over aquaculture not being eligible.

General discussion on where the questions arise with Right to Farm- location? Land ownership? Leases? Relationship of Right to Farm and Farmland Assessment noted as one of the items that is currently under review. NJDA continues to investigate this topic.

B. Avery- right to farm fact sheet requested. Sec. Fisher- one will be developed.

B. Avery during comments noted resignation of George Saridakis. Further review of this seat required.

*Public Comment*

Matt Gregg- Provided details on applying for Right to Farm in Ocean and Monmouth Counties. Denied in Ocean County due to Farmland Assessment eligibility in Right to Farm. Think land ownership is issue. Beekeeping as example to fix this. Sec. Fisher- took 7 years to get the beekeeping legislation passed. Same option may not work for aquaculture.

Dale Parsons- What is seafood marketing budget? Sec. Fisher- Zero dollars. D. Parsons- how can we get money? Sec. Fisher- briefly described the budget process and stated no funds included for seafood marketing over past several years.

Meeting adjourned.

\*Pertinent comments provided in the “chat” window during the meeting are included here. The chat is not moderated during the meeting to provide responses beyond acknowledging comments received.

[1/29 10:39 AM] David Bushek

Jersey Fresh is very successful in promoting traditional terrestrial aquaculture. It's counterpart, which the AAC was actively involved in developing is Jersey Seafood and has been far less successful.

<https://www.jerseyseafood.nj.gov/>

[1/29 10:39 AM] David Bushek

\*traditional terrestrial Agriculture

[1/29 10:50 AM] David Bushek

Jersey fresh is a "marketing" campaign more so than "promoting". Sorry, words matter.

[1/29 11:00 AM] Chris Scales (Guest)

To Betsy Haskins comment. If there is a meeting with the growers, it might best be done at the regional shellfish council regular meeting. So we don't add yet another meeting to attend and it involves the shellfish councils directly. Chris Scales New Jersey Shellfish Association.

[1/29 11:46 AM] Chris Scales (Guest)

There are quite a few younger people or young retired who want to enter the industry. I know of six who have been frightened away by the huge investment, uncertain markets, and seemingly overwhelming regulatory issues. The persistent ones take on apprenticeship roles, but usually become disillusioned when they can't make a living wage. No solution or action items here, just some background. Chris Scales. NJ Shellfisheries Association.

[1/29 11:50 AM] Bob Rush (Guest)

Chris that assessment is right on. I had originally started with CCC Aquaculture program in the early 2000's to expand on our other fishing businesses but soon changed our direction due to the monetary risks and investments needed before the new company ever generated dollar 1. I understand the CCC program later did not make it and was disbanded not long after.

[1/29 11:53 AM] Fisher, Douglas (AG)

thank you all this has been a good discussion and i am sure we will develop the plan you can all feel comfortable with. Secretary

[1/29 12:02 PM] Chris Scales (Guest)

Right to Farm for small nursery facilities is a major concern among growers. NJ ~Shellfisheries Association. Some members are also concerned that their nursery property taxes may become cost prohibitive.