

Aquaculture Advisory Council

August 3, 2012

Meeting Minutes

Attendees: Secretary Douglas H. Fisher, Dr. Gustavo Calvo (Commissioner Bob Martin), Mr. Rich Ritota (Commissioner Mary O'Dowd), Dr. Dave Bushek, Mr. Mike DeLuca (Dr. Robert Goodman), Mr. George Saridakis, Mr. Steve Carnahan,

In Absentia: Ms. Caren Franzini, Mr. Oliver Twist, Mr. James Tweed, Mr. John Maxwell Mr. Paul Waterman, Mr. Robert Munson, Ms. Jeanette Vreeland, Mr. Gilbert Ewing Jr.

Public in Attendance: Mrs. Lisa Calvo, Mrs. Betsy Haskin, Dr. John Kraeuter Mr. Joseph J. Myers, Mr. Tony Ni

Secretary Fisher called the meeting to order. Mr. Myers performed roll call. There is quorum for this meeting.

Sec. Fisher asked for a motion to approve the minutes from the January 2012 meeting. Mr. Carnahan made the motion, which was seconded by Mr. Ritota. All voted in favor and the motion passed.

Mr. Myers gave background on the formation of the structure subcommittee of the AAC at the January 2012 meeting. The purpose of the subcommittee is to develop changes to the statute to reflect the structural changes to state government that have happened since the passage of the Act. The structural changes to the AAC are also needed to fully address the many vacancies on the AAC. A teleconference occurred in April 2012 and a series of recommendations were developed and distributed to the Council. The first recommendation is to change "Department of Commerce and Economic Development" to "Secretary of State." The second recommendation is to change "director of the Aquaculture Training and Information Center" with the "director of New Jersey Sea Grant" and the "director of the Aquaculture Technology Transfer Center" with "director of the Rutgers Haskin Shellfish Research Laboratory." Mr. Myers noted that after the conference call, another look at the statute listed Rutgers Cooperative Extension is jointly listed as part of the ATIC. Sec. Fisher asked how a non-profit such as Sea Grant can assume the role of a state agency. Mr. Carnahan added that they receive state funding. Mr. Carnahan added that the Sea Grant Advisory Committee is a key group that should be involved with the AAC. Mr. Saridakis added that the ATIC was a designation that was never used internally at CCCC. Dr. Kraeuter noted that the Director of the Agricultural Experiment Station is currently on the AAC. Mr. Ritota noted that the representation of NJ Sea Grant is paramount because of the nature of areas they cover such as marine spatial planning. The third recommendation is to add the Chair of the Shellfisheries Council as a third entity to the two non-voting seats, which would help get another person on the Council. The contributions of the Shellfisheries Council are noted on efforts such as Title 50, leasing policy development, and the establishment of the Aquaculture Development Zones. A fourth recommendation is to change the wording of one of the six public appointee seats. The recommendation is to Change "a representative of farmers" to "a representative of agribusiness." This change would also encourage aquaculture suppliers to be more involved in aquaculture development. Mr. Carnahan made the motion to approve the recommended changes to the statute changing the structure of the Aquaculture Advisory Council. This motion was seconded by Dr. Bushek. All voted in favor and the motion passed.

Mr. Myers reported that West Virginia recently implemented an aquaculture statute that resembled the structure of New Jersey's statute in many ways. One of the key aspects of the WV plan was a specific statement in the definition that the purpose of aquaculture is for trade and commerce. New Jersey currently includes the subsequent processing and marketing in the definition of aquaculture, but this is somewhat misleading. Changing this definition to eliminate the marketing statement, but include a connection the purpose of aquaculture to trade and commerce would be an improvement and preserve the intent of the business aspect. This can be accomplished at the same time the statute is changed to include the previous motion.

Dr. Kraeuter said that it is important to retain the statement that aquaculture products are the property of the owner. Dr. Calvo added that aquaculture products for the purpose of conservation should not be constrained. Mr. Myers said he did not believe there would be a constraint because aquaculture products could still be sold for conservation purposes. Mrs. Calvo asked if conservation efforts where products are not sold would not be made more difficult by setting trade and commerce as the primary objective. Mr. Myers said that the language would need to be added reflecting the existing exclusions for aquaculture reporting by state fish hatcheries. Mr. Ritota asked if there were any problem with the existing exclusions of public fish production and Mr. Myers said that the NJDA and Fish and Wildlife have collaborated on numerous occasions pertaining to animal health. Mrs. Calvo added that the protections for private aquaculture may not extend to non-profits. Mr., Myers said there are reporting requirements contained in the regulation and the changes we are discussing are in the statute. It will be important to ensure the changes to the statute do not negatively impact anything programmatic in the rule.

Mr. Carnahan asked who would be responsible for introducing these recommendations to the legislature. Sec. Fisher said that the Governor's Office could request these changes and the NJDA would take the lead. Sec. Fisher asked how the changes to Title 50 were handled once the AAC reached agreement on the final document. Sec. Fisher said the NJDA would determine how to best introduce these recommendations to either the Office of the Governor or the Legislature. He added that former Sec. Kuperus reached out to him when he was in the legislature and asked him to move forward Title 50. Dr. Kraeuter added that former Secretary Alampi asked the Governor at that time to request the State Aquaculture Plan. Sec. Fisher made the task of moving forward these recommendations to amend the statute an ACTION ITEM and for the NJDA.

Dr. Kraeuter briefly discussed the Washington State Shellfish Initiative which brought together many of the shellfish efforts in that state, modeled after the NOAA Shellfish Initiative. There are a multitude of initiatives related to shellfish in New Jersey that are only loosely coordinated and many of these could be tied together under one mechanism. A meeting was held with many of the same members who attend the AAC begin discussing the framework for a New Jersey Shellfish Initiative. There seems to be interest among industry groups to move this forward and involve the legislature. This initiative would tie together water quality, shellfish aquaculture and fisheries. Mr. Myers said that overall policy document could contain a portfolio of projects that are already underway. Sec. Fisher said that job creation and economic development should be key drivers. Dr. Kraeuter said that this initiative could allow existing funding to be leveraged to pursue of additional federal funds. Mr. Carnahan said this would be an intrinsic value of this initiative. Dr. Kraeuter said that many of the issues in the other initiatives cover business, research, permitting, environmental benefit and water quality. Sec. Fisher said that certain counties would benefit more than others and there are certain people want to do something for the industry, but they are never sure what to do. Mr. Ritota said that discussing shellfish in terms of the economy and shellfish may divert attention to scallop fisheries and divert attention away from shellfish aquaculture. Dr. Kraeuter said there is not a strong connection to bay ecology and water quality improvement with sea scallops. Dr. Bushek said that economic growth potential in shellfish is with aquaculture more than with sea scallops. Dr. Kraeuter said the purpose of the discussion is to bring these efforts to the attention of the AAC.

Mr. Myers discussed some of the recent shellfish marketing initiatives that are underway. These are rooted in the Aquaculture Plan Update and the problem solving workshops conducted with hard clam growers. A \$134,000 grant was submitted to the USDA – Federal-State Market Improvement Program with four research areas to address primarily hard clam marketing. The project proposes to better understand consumers in farmers markets and community-supported agriculture, perform a nutritional analysis on hard clams, conduct a sensory profile for hard clams from different regions at different times of the year, and to evaluate these sensory attributes with shellfish consumers. A second grant for \$44,000 was submitted to the USDA – Rural Development for a Rural Business Opportunity Grant Program to conduct a feasibility study on connecting

local shellfish to local food marketplaces. Two maps were distributed that help to visualize the local marketing strategy and to explain how the proposed feasibility study would be conducted.

Ms. Haskin said that she is looking forward to learning about the infrastructure costs and needs and how the cooperatives will address these needs. Mr. Ritota said the temperature monitoring equipment is relatively inexpensive and ice in coolers can be used to keep product at proper temperatures. Mr. Saridakis said that when he sold shellfish at farmer's markets, the refrigeration unit was kept away from customers and small batches were kept in coolers on ice. Mr. Ritota said the guidance document lists preferred means of keeping product at acceptable temperatures but it only required that the rules be followed and ice in coolers is acceptable as long as there is acceptable monitoring. Dr. Bushek asked if CSAs need to become certified shellfish dealers and Mr. Ritota said they only needed to meet guidelines as retailers. Mr. Ni said that the premiums are attractive for his oysters. Mr. Myers recommended that Mr. Ni attend the shellfish cooperative meetings that are being held monthly to understand how to target these markets. Mr. Myers said that he believed some CSAs may become certified dealers. Some growers may keep their truck on-site while product is being distributed. Sec. Fisher clarified that the NJDA does not set up CSAs. Communities or farms set up CSAs and the NJDA and others help to establish shellfish sales in these markets.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Dr. Kraeuter announced that the National Aquaculture Research Plan is available for comment. The plan is available on the NOAA Aquaculture website and comments are due by August 27, 2012. One of his major observations is that there is a need more focus on shellfish because the document is much too focused on finfish. Comments for this federal plan are being solicited by the Joint Subcommittee on Aquaculture.

Mr. Ritota asked if the recent convictions of illegal harvests of oysters in the Delaware Bay, given the sizeable amount over several years, will impact the oyster population. Dr. Bushek said that recruitment will not be affected, but these illegal harvests will affect future harvest quotas for several years. Mr. Ritota added that vibrio patterns noticed in New Jersey in recent years seemed to line up with the illegal harvests by the individuals convicted. Not only were they taking oysters from closed areas, they were temperature abusing products.

Mr. DeLuca announced the date for the open house at Aquaculture Innovation Center for a day in the end of September. The purpose will be to announce the award of a Rural Business Enterprise Grant. Mr. Myers announced that a joint press release will be held that same week to highlight the first year of operation of the Aquaculture Development Zone program.

The next AAC meeting is tentatively scheduled for October 19, 2012 and January 25, 2013. Sec. Fisher asked for a motion to adjourn. Mr. Carnahan provided the motion which was seconded by Dr. Bushek. All voted in favor and the motion passed.